

UNSETTLING COMMUNITIES

diversity, mobility and displacement
in an age of growing authoritarianism

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Book of Abstracts

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Institute for Research into
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and Superdiversity

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¹ The Book of Abstracts was curated by Beth Richardson and Nando Sigona.

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Plenary 1 | Coloniality and the politics of mobility and difference

The session will examine how colonial histories and their contemporary afterlives shape mobility, immobility and the production of difference, particularly in this authoritarian juncture we are living through. It aims to connect debates on migration and borders with wider questions of race, citizenship, belonging and unequal access to movement, while reflecting on what a coloniality perspective enables us to see differently.

Chair: **Dr Kamran Khan** (University of Birmingham)

Speakers:

- **Professor Anna Amelina** (Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany)
- **Professor Adrian Favell** (University College Cork, Ireland)
- **Professor Ipek Demir** (University of Leeds)

About the speakers

Professor Anna Amelina is a sociologist and Professor of Intercultural Communication at Chemnitz University of Technology. Her research interests include intersectionality, gender and care, and the nexus of postsocialist-postcolonial relations. Her 'doing migration' approach examines social constructions of 'migration' and 'migrants'. Her recent work is the co-edited special issue "Vulnerable (Im)mobilities Between Imperial Legacies and Colonial Logics of War", published in *Mobilities* (Vol. 21, 2026).

Professor Adrian Favell is Professor of Social and Political Theory at University College Cork and the founding director of the Radical Humanities Laboratory. He is the author of *Philosophies of Integration* (1998), *Eurostars and Eurocities* (2008), *Before and After Superflat* (2012), *Immigration, Integration and Mobility: Collected Essays* (2015), and *The Integration Nation* (2022). Web: www.adrianfavell.com

Professor Ipek Demir is Professor of Diaspora Studies and was Director of the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, University of Leeds (2020-2025). She authored [*Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation*](#) (2022) and recently co-edited [*The Modern World After Colonialism: Remaking the Social Sciences*](#) (2026). She currently holds a Leverhulme Major Fellowship.

Plenary 2 | Sanctuary and the end of asylum

The session will examine the meaning, possibilities and challenges of sanctuary at a time when access to asylum is being progressively restricted, and protection is increasingly temporary, conditional and externalised. It will consider how sanctuary is imagined and practised by states, cities, institutions and communities, and whether it can offer a meaningful response to, or risks compensating for, the erosion of asylum.

Chair: **Professor Jenny Phillimore** (University of Birmingham)

Speakers:

- **Professor Jonathan Darling** (Durham University)
- **Dr Amani Hassani** (Brunel, University of London)
- **Professor Rachel Humphris** (Queen Mary, University of London)

About the speakers

Professor Jonathan Darling is Professor of Human Geography at Durham University. He is author of *Systems of Suffering: Dispersal and the Denial of Asylum*, which explores Britain's system of support for asylum seekers. His latest book, *Taking Back Control: How Populists Captured the Asylum Debate* will be released by Manchester University Press in early 2027.

Dr Amani Hassani is a Lecturer in Sociology at Brunel University London. Her research examines Denmark's 'ghetto policies' and their effects on racialised residents, focusing on the intersection of racialisation, welfare, and border governance. As an urban ethnographer, she critically examines Islamophobia and questions of racial and social justice in urban settings.

Professor Rachel Humphris is Professor of Political Anthropology at Queen Mary University of London. Her research examines borders, welfare states, citizenship and inequality, including the role of gender and race in welfare states and digital and AI infrastructures.

Semi-plenary 1| Enforcement, deportation and bordering

The session will explore how immigration enforcement and deportation operate across institutions, places and scales, extending beyond the territorial border into workplaces, welfare systems and everyday life. It will consider both the changing infrastructures of bordering in the US, Mediterranean and English Channel and their unequal consequences for migrants and communities, including the forms of resistance and contestation they generate.

Chair: **Professor Nando Sigona** (University of Birmingham)

Speakers:

- **Professor Ernesto Castañeda** (American University, Washington DC)
- **Dr Lucy Mayblin** (University of Sheffield)
- **Dr Ćetta Mainwaring** (University of Edinburgh)

About the speakers

Professor Ernesto Castañeda is the Director of The Immigration Lab and The Center for Latin American and Latino Studies and Full Professor of Sociology and International Affairs at American University. His latest coauthored books include "Global Pathways to Becoming New Americans," "Immigration and Urban Vitality: How Newcomers Make Cities Stronger," and "Immigration Realities: Challenging Common Misperceptions." Castañeda's insights and commentary are frequently featured in public talks, policy discussions, and major media outlets, including the BBC, France24, DW, Al Jazeera, and multiple Spanish-language media outlets.

Dr Lucy Mayblin is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Sheffield. Lucy Mayblin is a political sociologist whose research focuses on borders, human rights, policy-making, and the legacies of colonialism. She is particularly interested in how policymakers imagine the world, and how this leads to particular kinds of bordering projects being taken, often with significant social justice implications.

Dr Ćetta Mainwaring is a Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the University of Edinburgh. She leads a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship on 'Immigration Detention: Investigating the Expansion and Global Diffusion of a Failed Project'. Thom Tyerman and Andonea Dickson are Research Fellows on this project at the University of Edinburgh and lead on the US and Australia country case studies, respectively.

Semi-plenary 2| Policy, advocacy and story telling

The session will consider how evidence and stories about migration are produced, communicated and mobilised across policy, law, journalism and advocacy. It aims to explore the opportunities and tensions involved in translating complex experiences into forms that can influence public debate and policy, including questions of voice, representation, evidence and political impact.

Chair: **Professor Daniel McNeil** (University of Birmingham)

Speakers:

- **Zoe Bantleman** (Barrister and Legal Director, University of Oxford | JUSTICE)
- **Daniel Trilling** (Writer)
- **Danai Papachristopoulou** (Refugee and Migrant Centre)
- **Dr Mihnea Cuibus** (Migration Observatory, University of Oxford)

About the speakers

Zoe Bantleman is a barrister and Legal Director of JUSTICE, the erstwhile Legal Director of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), and an editor of the Journal of Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law, who is writing her DPhil at the University of Oxford.

Dr Mihnea Cuibus is a Senior Researcher at the Migration Observatory, University of Oxford. His research focuses on unauthorised migration and border enforcement in the UK. A leading media spokesperson for the Observatory, he makes regular appearances on the UK's top current affairs programmes. He holds a DPhil in Politics from Nuffield College, Oxford.

Daniel Trilling is a journalist and author who writes about migration, nationalism and human rights. His books include "If We Tolerate This: How the British Establishment Made the Far Right Respectable" and "Lights in the Distance: Exile and Refuge at the Borders of Europe". He was a finalist for the Orwell Prize in 2023 and 2022.

Danai Papachristopoulou is the Legal Casework Manager of the charity The Refugee and Migrant Centre, overseeing the organisation's provision of free accredited immigration advice and leading on the organisation's legal policy work. Before joining RMC, Danai worked as an asylum lawyer in Lesvos and Athens, representing asylum-seekers and refugees. Danai holds an LLM in International Law from the University of Birmingham.

Panel 1 | Spaces of belonging, identity and home

Chair: Professor Adrian Favell (University College Cork)

Keira Pinqiao Wang (Swansea University), *Buoyant belonging, precarious citizenship: Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong migrants in Wales*

Abstract: This paper explores how recent Chinese and Hong Kong migrants respond to growing authoritarianism—manifesting in: 1) the immigrant-hostile environment in British society, 2) Hong Kong's changing socio-political landscape since China's growing influence in 2020, and 3) China's more assertive global image. Rejecting hostile immigrant framing, they utilise self-agency to redefine migration as buoyant belonging alongside precarious citizenship, such collective consciousness is shaped by home and host societies' structures, cultures, and power. The study draws on 12 in-depth interviews and one year of participant observation among Chinese and Hong Kong immigrants in South Wales. Through comparative exploration, it highlights a common pattern in how migrants make sense of their identity, with nuances linked to idiosyncratic factors but ultimately explained by structural factors that enabled their mobility. The Hong Kong community tends to exhibit a cordial determination to belong to the host society, grounded in their embrace of diversity and support for democratic values and further justified by the colonial legacy of the British Empire in Hong Kong. Yet the possibility of tightened citizenship policies places them in a vulnerable position, challenges the cultural-economic contributions underpinning their anticipated belonging. The Chinese community's determination to belong is more characterised by personal experience, particularly the anticipated accumulation of economic, educational, or cultural capital that motivated their initial transnational mobility. The precarity of their citizenship status centres more on transnational mobility, which is conditioned by the evolving UK-China geopolitical dynamics.

Bio: Pinqiao Wang (Keira) is a second-year PhD student in sociology at Swansea University. She is a recipient of the Swansea University International Postgraduate Research Excellence Scholarship. Her research interests include political sociology, migration studies, and China studies.

Olivia Petie (University of Birmingham), *Home-making in an unhome: everyday experiences in asylum hotels*

Abstract: Since 2020 the UK Home Office and private providers have increasingly relied on hotels to house people seeking asylum, peaking at 56,000 residents in June 2023 (Home Office 2024). Hotels are highly politicised and presented as taxpayer-funded luxury (Darling and Burridge 2025) despite poor conditions and residents not receiving the same services as paying guests (Sturge and Gower 2020). This presentation draws on concepts of home-making and unhome as a framework for understanding everyday life inside these hotels. Home can be a place, a feeling, idea and imaginary (Blunt 2006). Feeling at home is an ongoing process, rather than a fixed entity (Phillimore 2013) and the process by which people construct home is known as home-making. For example, people attempt to feel at home in a new place through specific objects (Grønseth and Thorshaug 2022) or foods (Vandevoordt 2017). Even when faced with uncertainty, people living in protracted displacement will organise what they can control through home-making (Brun and Fábos 2015). The related concept of unhome describes circumstances or processes that systematically prevent or deprive people from making a home (Fathi 2022). Drawing on longitudinal interviews with people seeking asylum, stakeholder interviews, and ethnographic methods, this presentation will share key findings on how residents personalise space, create routines, forge relationships, and assert agency—even in contexts of unhome. The findings offer a nuanced account of everyday life within asylum hotels and contributes to broader debates on hospitality, precarity, and the meaning of home.

Bio: Olivia is a part-time ESRC funded Doctoral Researcher at the University of Birmingham, based within IRiS. Her research explores how hotels are used as accommodation for people seeking asylum in the UK, drawing on concepts on (in)hospitality and (un)home. Olivia's research draws on ethnographic approaches and qualitative longitudinal research.

Orouba Othman (Birzeit University | Université libre de Bruxelles), *Non-Place, Memory, and Imaginaries of Return in Gaza*

Abstract: Under genocide, Palestinians in Gaza do not experience limited stations of exile. Instead, expulsion and forced displacement unfold in relentless circular rhythms that never end, until the concept of place dissolves and the meanings of time change radically. This paper maps the spatial, temporal, emotional, and linguistic trajectories of forced displacement endured by Gazans for nearly two years. These trajectories are shaped by compulsory movement under fire belts and evacuation orders issued by the Israeli colonial authorities. More than 86% of Gaza's geography has been devastated, transforming an already refugee population into forced exiles from camps established after the Nakba of 1948. The specificity of displacement in Gaza lies in compulsory immobility within zones of inevitable death, where exhausted bodies move repeatedly between sites of destruction amid sealed borders and systematic urban erasure. Such relentless movement deprives Gazans of "direction" in existential, social, and political senses. The question "Where do we go?" expresses not only the death of place but life within "non-place," producing social death and feelings of temporariness in fragile tents amid graves and waste. Drawing on oral history narratives and testimonies of displaced people, and on auto-ethnography grounded in the researcher's experience of repeated family displacement, the paper examines how continuous displacement functions as a colonial strategy of social death without physical annihilation. Yet homes persist within embodied memory; loss amplifies their presence and unleashes future-oriented imaginaries grounded in the reappropriation of place. Solidarities rooted in shared suffering and new kinship formations among women in the camps seek to reenact home symbolically on the ruins of their houses.

Bio: Orouba Othman is a joint PhD candidate in Social Sciences at Birzeit University, co-supervised with Université libre de Bruxelles. Her research explores pain, hope, and critical temporalities in Gaza from decolonial perspectives. She published in *Idafat Journal* (2024) and contributed a chapter with the Institute for Palestine Studies (2024).

Yunchong Bao (University of Birmingham), *International romantic relationships and marriages involving Chinese nationals in the UK and China*

Abstract: This paper explores international romantic relationships and marriages involving Chinese nationals, aiming to compare the lived experiences, aspirations and encountered challenges of mixed couples residing in China and the UK. Three core research questions guide this study: what factors shape these couples' relationship experiences in the two distinct contexts, how cross-border immigration affects the daily operation of their partnerships, and how they perceive parental and public attitudes towards cross-national relationships, along with the impacts of such attitudes.

Employing a qualitative methodology, this research conducts in-depth semi-structured interviews with 26 mixed couples, including 12 based in the UK and 14 in China, with one same-sex couple included in each group. The participants represent diverse nationalities such as Britain, France, Tunisia, Japan and Ethiopia. Among the respondents living in China, members from ethnic minority groups are also covered. They span all age groups from university students to retirees, as well as varied occupational and educational backgrounds. Their relationships are classified into three stages: early stage (less than 5 years), middle stage (5 to 10 years) and late stage (more than 10 years). This research reveals key similarities and cultural divergences in cross-national unions, and offers practical insights into transnational intimate relationships across different social environments.

Bio: Yunchong is a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham within Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology. Her research explores lived experiences, challenges and aspirations of Chinese-involved cross-national romantic relationships and marriages in China and the UK, and examines family and societal influences on mixed-couple partners, using qualitative semi-structured interview methods.

Panel 2 | Creative representations and contestations

Chair: Professor Cláudia Hilsdorf Rocha (State University of Campinas, UNICAMP, Brazil)

Christine Vicera (National University of Singapore), *Archiving Against: Critical Collective Memory Work with Minoritised Im/migrant Communities in Hong Kong*

Abstract: Be/longing is a community arts-for-education lab founded in 2021 that uses storytelling and creative practice to address racism in Hong Kong and the historical erasure of its minoritised communities. This work emerges in a context where Hong Kong's neoliberal racial governance often operates through the erasure rather than the explicit naming of race. Through its Community Storytelling Programme and public exhibitions, be/longing collaborates with minoritised individuals and communities to co-create art that documents the lived experiences and hi(stories) of Hong Kong's ethnically diverse communities. The paper situates this cultural production in the aftermath of the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019–20 protests—moments of hegemonic crisis when belonging to Hong Kong was publicly contested and ethnically non-Chinese Hongkongers were again marginalised within dominant political imaginaries. Bringing together collaborative autoethnography and arts-based research, this paper examines how creative practices at be/longing—such as collaborative photography, writing, and exhibition-making—function not only as cultural production but as forms of critical collective memory work. This practice enables ethnically non-Chinese Hongkongers to articulate critical questions on race and belonging within and against the imposed category of “ethnic minority,” and where inter-ethnic solidarity emerges within Hong Kong's racial governance. Rather than framing these practices merely as “counter-archival,” the paper proposes to disarticulate alignments between documentation and political inclusion, and visibility and recognition. The paper traces how collective memory work with/in (together with, and grounded in) Hong Kong's minoritised communities reworks relations of knowledge and care within conditions of racialised migration in a postcolonial, semi-ethnocratic, Asian context.

Bio: Christine Vicera (PhD Student, National University of Singapore) is co-founder of be/longing, a community arts-for-education lab. Her PhD thesis examines how Filipino im/migrants negotiate belonging and (in)visibility in Hong Kong, foregrounding im/migration hi(stories) and life-making practices as sites of care and alternative knowledge production under global racial capitalism and postcolonial governance.

Clem Atkins (University of Birmingham), *A Big, Big, BIG Journey: The Role of Illustrated Animals in Children's Migration Narratives*

Abstract: Animal figures have long played a role in children's literature. In contemporary work, they are increasingly being used to explore the theme of human migration in illustrated books. Whilst popular characters, such as Paddington Bear, have attracted scholarly attention within migration and post-colonial studies, the broader body of contemporary works that utilise animal protagonists to narrate migrant experience has received far less academic attention. This paper investigates the growing trend in illustrated children's books published since the 2010s, focusing on authors including Michael Rosen, Duncan Tonatiuh, and Chris Naylor-Ballesteros. This study draws on close-reading analysis informed by biopolitical theory and Critical Animal Studies. In doing so, it identifies three key narrative functions performed by the illustrated animal figure. First, the Framing Device enables authors to depict “unseen” or migration stories - though sometimes at the cost of obscuring the focus on ethnically diverse human characters. Secondly, as a Parable commenting on themes of power and social belonging, diverse animal bodies are used to model social acceptance and explore the politics of embodiment. Finally, as Tangible Anchors of belonging, recognisable or “real” animals such as pets and wildlife operate as stabilising symbols of belonging for migrant communities. This paper demonstrates how contemporary children's literature adapts animal symbolism to reflect evolving

Western anxieties about immigration. Moving beyond simplified readings of animals characters' aesthetic "cuteness" and sentimental appeal, these animal-centred narratives provide young readers with accessible yet politically charged means of engaging with the complex socio-political realities of migration.

Bio: Clem is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Birmingham, where he also completed his BA and MA. His research examines the uses of animals in visual media, exploring human migration narratives. He also works as the EDI Student Ambassador for the College of Arts and Law.

Qinran Wang (University of Birmingham), *Shifting Perspectives: A study of the voice of refugees in the context of "humanitarian gaze" in refugee documentaries through Iranian refugees in Birmingham*

Abstract: This practice-as-research project is an experiment which focuses on exploring potential new methods to step out of the "Humanitarian Gaze" frame in refugee documentaries. It is part of my PhD thesis, which focuses on developing the "Humanitarian Gaze" theory by recognising and analysing this phenomenon in refugee documentaries, and exploring potential methods to deconstruct the framework. Taking the "humanitarian gaze" as its theoretical framework, the study attempts to reflect upon how this phenomenon, prevalent in refugee media content, operates within contemporary governance and capitalist contexts, rather than engaging in traditional "humanitarian sympathy" towards refugee experiences. Using participatory and collaborative methods, it follows Iranian Christian refugees in Birmingham as they navigate the UK asylum system, religious identity, cultural belonging, and working life, and examines how these structural conditions shape everyday emotions and practices. And because of the transnational background of the researcher, in the process of its implementation, this study gradually took on the characteristics of an auto-ethnography. Based on six months of ethnographic fieldwork, the film draws on sustained informal meetings and conversations concerning asylum processes, work and daily life, social and family relations, and access to support. It foregrounds experiences often marginalised in refugee imagery and public discourse, while revealing the operation of contemporary governance, asylum, and welfare systems. The presentation will include clips from the film and reflections on the creation.

Bio: Qinran (Leo) Wang is a filmmaker, photographer and currently a PhD candidate studying at the University of Birmingham. He is dedicated to anthropological research on refugee, migrant and human rights issues using innovative and practical audio-visual methodologies. His PhD thesis aims to study and deconstruct the 'humanitarian gaze'.

Filyra Vlastou Dimopoulou (National Technical University of Athens | Paris 1 Sorbonne University), *Shifting imaginaries of refugee deservingness through the lens of the Lavrio camp in Greece*

Abstract: What a single refugee camp can tell us about how have imaginaries of refugee deservingness been produced, transformed, and contested across local, national, and transnational scales in different historical moments of post WWII Europe? This presentation takes the seventy-years old camp of Lavrio in Greece (1947-2023) as an analytical entry point to study shifting imaginaries of refugee deservingness not as fixed moral categories but historically and spatially produced through migration regimes and socio-political processes. It argues that that imaginaries of deservingness are crucial, because they produce diverse positionalities and hierarchies along the spectrum of privileges and precarities, shaping the reception conditions of refugees on European, national and local scales. Doing so, this presentation approaches the camp of Lavrio as relational space (Lafazani, 2026), neither exceptional nor bounded, but embedded within multiple and intersecting social, political, and economic processes. Drawing on archives, oral history and empirical ethnography, it shows: (a) how the figure of the "deserving political refugee" was constructed in the immediate post WWII period in Europe, (b) how the 2015 reception crisis and contemporary migration governance transformed the boundaries between the "deserving refugee" and the "undeserving migrant" and (c) how imaginaries



of deservingness are negotiated in the realm of everyday life. With this presentation, I aim to contribute to a novel understanding of refugee camps not as insular spaces but as connected to, and interwoven with, their surroundings and the wider histories of displacement.

Bio: Filyra Vlastou-Dimopoulou is a PhD candidate (near completion) in the field of historical geography and migration studies, at the National Technical University in Greece and at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University in France (Co-direction). She has worked as a researcher in international, European, and national projects in research centers in Greece and abroad.

Panel 3 | (Ir)regularity, labour, and financial wellbeing

Chair: Dr Laurence Lessard-Phillips (University of Birmingham)

Beatriz de Figueiredo (European University Institute), *Working in the Catch-22: Informal Livelihoods and the Co-Production of Irregularity in Italy*

Abstract: When I worked as a migrant legal assistant in Naples, the fact that bureaucracy was set up to make legal status hard to achieve was a given. Perhaps second only to regularization, migrants asked about where and how to find jobs, and under what working conditions. What I witnessed was the interpenetration of labour and migration governance, the places where they dovetail and clash — resulting in periods of irregularity. To understand how irregularization unfolds on the ground, this paper focuses on the awkward or difficult points of friction between bureaucrats, market actors and migrants themselves. By understanding irregularity as a process rather than a fixed legal status, this paper brings actors back into analysis and develops a “bottom-up” perspective on how irregularization is produced and navigated in practice, starting where institutional logics collapse. From this angle, migrants’ livelihood strategies become practices of social navigation through which individuals not only endure precarious presents but also cultivate futures within restrictive migration regimes. In tracing livelihood-making in relation to employment, this paper contributes to “de-exceptionalize the migrant” by highlighting migrants’ inclusion in value production and excavating connections among workers, ultimately unsettling the figure of the homogenized “citizen-worker” of a Fordist past. The intention is to foreground a nuanced understanding of irregularity by ethnographically demonstrating its unevenness and situating different possible coping strategies within broader structures of governance, connecting irregular and regular migrants as well as citizens. These practices invite us to rethink modes of protection beyond the formal wage contract and consider how informal labour arrangements might contain worthy possibilities for alternative futures.

Bio: I am a first-year PhD researcher in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at EUI, with a background in Anthropology. My research straddles irregular migration, informal economies and the urban scale, focusing on how irregular migrants navigate legal and employment status in Italy to conceptualize future-making in spaces of friction.

Iram Amir (SOAS, University of London), *Export-Oriented Citizenship: A Comparative Analysis of South Asian Labour Migration and the Coloniality of the GCC Corridor*

Abstract: This paper provides a comparative analysis of Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, situating these mobility regimes within broader structures of colonial power and racial capitalism. While South Asian migrants underpin Gulf economies, they are subject to racialised labour segmentation and legal precarity. Drawing on a Pakistan-focused case study, supported by comparative data from India and Bangladesh, I argue that these patterns are shaped by both racialised demand and the remittance-dependent development models of sending states. Moving beyond presentist accounts, I utilise the frameworks of coloniality of migration and racial capitalism to demonstrate how contemporary governance reproduces imperial extractive logic. By tracing continuities between British imperial labour regimes and postcolonial practices, the research introduces the concept of “export-oriented citizenship.” This theorises a regime where states govern mobile citizens primarily as economic instruments, prioritising remittance flows over political belonging. Centring the conference’s focus on geopolitics and regimes of belonging, I argue that sending states are central to sustaining these racialised patterns. Furthermore, the paper engages with the “politics of refusal”—how migrants navigate and contest these extractive structures to reimagine their own futures. Ultimately, this work contributes to decolonial scholarship by challenging dominant framings that treat Gulf migration as ahistorical. It offers a critical intervention into how hostile environments are co-produced by sending and receiving states, reflecting an uneven landscape of global mobility and protection.



Bio: Iram is a researcher specialising in decolonial migration theory. They hold a BSocSci (Honours) in Sociology from the National University of Singapore and an MSc in Migration, Mobility and Development with Distinction from SOAS. Their research investigates "export-oriented citizenship" and colonial genealogies of labour migration in the South Asia-GCC corridor.

Tobiloba Afolabi (Aston University), *Shadows that Linger: Colonial Legacies and the Financial Well-Being of Ageing Migrants*

Abstract: This paper examines how ageing migrants manage their financial well-being in the face of everyday life realities in a foreign country. Despite growing recognition of superdiversity in research, less is known about ageing migrants' financial experiences in the UK, especially in terms of stability and obligations, including support as they age. Many a time, these experiences are characterised by the legacy of colonialism, which continues to impact migration patterns, access to opportunities, and economic outcomes; thereby informing migrants' journeys and family relationships. Using insights from an ongoing qualitative study, this paper investigates how older migrants navigate their financial lives through family expectations, community ties, and transnational relationships. It highlights conceptual understandings of financial well-being in later life, as shaped by relationships and history. It further reflects on how family obligations, sense of belonging, and interactions with UK systems stem from current social dynamics and ongoing colonial impacts, which often drive economic disparities and diasporic obligations. By positioning financial well-being within broader themes of identity, belonging, and historical roots, this paper adds to the body of knowledge on ageing in increasingly diverse societies. It emphasises that financial well-being is a multifaceted experience that is rooted in social, emotional, and historical factors such as migration histories, intergenerational ties, and daily encounters, rather than just an economic state. This study opens discussions on how ageing migrants handle financial challenges and opportunities within the changing contexts of diasporic settings.

Bio: Tobiloba Afolabi is a doctoral researcher at Aston University studying migration and financial well-being in later life. Her research views financial well-being holistically, looking beyond just financial numbers to understand the unique experiences of ageing migrants in precarious situations, and the factors that shape those experiences.

Vaibhav Ojha (online- Boston College), *Does Marriage to a Native Citizen Improve Labor Market Outcomes for Immigrants?*

Abstract: Marriage to a native citizen is often viewed as a marker of immigrant integration, but whether such marriages translate into measurable labor market gains remains unclear. This paper examines whether intermarriage with a native-born spouse improves employment outcomes for immigrants in the United States. I use harmonized microdata from the 2000 U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS) spanning 2001--2022, focusing on prime-age married immigrants residing in metropolitan areas. A central challenge is that immigrants who marry natives may differ systematically from those who do not. To address this selection problem, I exploit variation in immigrant gender ratios across metropolitan marriage markets as a source of plausibly exogenous variation in the likelihood of marrying a native-born partner. Intuitively, when the local share of immigrant women is relatively high, immigrant men appear less likely to intermarry. The analysis asks whether this shift in marriage patterns is associated with differences in employment probabilities. The results provide suggestive evidence on whether intermarriage serves as a channel of economic assimilation and point to several possible mechanisms, including access to native networks, improved geographic mobility, and naturalization.

Bio: My name is Vaibhav Ojha, and I am a fifth-year Ph.D. candidate in Economics at Boston College. My research lies at the intersection of macroeconomics and labour economics, with interests in migration, changing modes of work, discrimination, and labour market structural transformation.

Panel 4 | Border regimes and resistance

Chair: Professor Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham)

Beth Richardson (University of Birmingham), *Torture in the Context of Asylum: Shifting the Focus from the Individual-Humanitarian to the Decolonial*

Abstract: Existing scholarship exploring the treatment of torture and torture survivors within asylum systems typically focuses on the role of individual factors- such as survivor trauma and decisionmaker qualities- whilst advocating piecemeal humanitarian reforms intended to ‘humanise’ such processes. Consequently, the colonial underpinnings of the institutionalisation of torture, international law, and bordering practices remain largely unacknowledged. This paper argues for a shift away from a focus on individual factors and piecemeal humanitarian reforms towards a decolonial framing which, by interrogating the coloniality of these practices, points to a different understanding of torture in the context of asylum. Such an approach lays the foundations for scholarship which centres survivors’ experiences and expertise, whilst resisting complicity in ‘border monstrosity’ (Tyerman and Van Isacker, 2025), the tokenisation of survivors, and the fetishisation of suffering. Crucially, a decolonial approach also invites engagement with more transformative responses to the structural harms of asylum processes, such as border abolitionism.

Bio: Beth is conducting an ESRC-funded PhD exploring torture survivors’ experiences of UK asylum interviews. Beth is also currently a Director at *Conversation over Borders* and has worked alongside forced migrants since 2009, most recently as Head of Clinical Services (West Midlands) at *Freedom from Torture* until 2025.

Irene Saggese (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa & Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici, Naples), *Migration and the Border as a Philosophical-Political Site: Rethinking Political Community Beyond the Nation-State*

The figure of the migrant marks a point of radical exteriority that brings into question the presumed stability of the modern political and juridical order. Rather than representing solely a humanitarian or social issue, migration exposes a structural tension within the nexus linking humanity, citizenship, and political belonging. The presence of the migrant disrupts the assumed overlap between the human being and the citizen, revealing the fragile grounding of the modern regime of rights. In particular, the condition of statelessness shows how the “right to have rights” depends on historically contingent political frameworks rather than on any natural foundation. Drawing on a philosophical genealogy that includes Hannah Arendt’s analysis of statelessness and Giorgio Agamben’s notion of “bare life,” this paper approaches migration as a critical site from which the contradictions of the modern system of rights become visible. The migrant embodies a paradoxical condition of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion through which sovereign power operates. Within this perspective, the border emerges not simply as a territorial boundary but as a productive apparatus that regulates mobility and differentiates bodies. Engaging with critical border theory – particularly Sandro Mezzadra’s concept of “border struggles” – the border is understood as a dynamic space where practices of control and forms of resistance intersect. Migration thus appears as a process through which new political subjectivities emerge in tension with governmental power (Foucault). From this standpoint, migration invites a reconsideration of political community beyond the immunitary logic of the nation-state, opening a space to rethink the fragile and relational character of the common (Nancy; Esposito).

Bio: Irene Saggese is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa and a fellow at the Italian Institute for Historical Studies in Naples. Her research focuses on twentieth-century French and German political philosophy, with particular attention to migration, borders, sovereignty, territoriality, and geophilosophical approaches to space.

Kirstin Sonne (University of Edinburgh), *Contesting transitoriness: civil society organisations' practices to counter the forced im/mobility of people seeking protection*

Abstract: The European migration landscape is understood to be divided into “transit” and “destination” countries, based on South-North and East-West migration trajectories, which forcibly displaced people are assumed to follow. In this imaginary, Malta, one of the entry points into the EU for people seeking protection, most of whom (in defiance of EU policy) move on to other countries in Europe, belongs to the former category. By contrast, the UK’s size, economy, and colonial history position it within the latter. This paper considers the role of migrant-supporting and migrant-representing civil society organisations in these discrepant contexts. An analysis of their work reveals the inadequacy of the transit/destination country distinction: in both Malta and the UK, people seeking protection largely remain in a state of “permanent transit”, or forced im/mobility, determined by hostile reception conditions, restrictive asylum policies, and employment and housing-related precarity. However, both between and within contexts, organisations differ in their responses to this state of transitoriness. While some counter it by intervening in processes of migration governance, others expressly advocate for protection seekers’ rights to settlement, while others still accept their transitoriness as a political and social reality and work to empower them within these confines. Drawing on participant observations and interviews with civil society organisation representatives, this paper situates itself within debates on “humanitarian” vs “solidarian” responses to forced migration. It explores how organisations across geographies and ideologies engage in processes of contestation, complicity and compromise to create alternative modes of being to permanent transitoriness.

Bio: Kirstin Sonne is a PhD candidate in Politics at the University of Edinburgh, where she researches the political imaginaries of civil society organisations supporting and advocating for people seeking protection in Malta and the UK.

Nabila N. Islam (Brown University), *Cruel and Usual: Recursive Racial Cruelty at the US Immigration Courts*

Abstract: In this paper, I advance a theorization of recursive racial cruelty by focusing on the suffering of racialized respondents in the US immigration courts and connecting it to the routine functioning of the US empire and colonial racial capitalism. Immigration courts operate within the US Department of Justice, where immigration judges hear the government’s deportation cases against non-citizen respondents. As the legal avenue for settling questions of deportation and asylum, these courts are often posed as humane and just alternatives to the spectacular public displays of cruelty involving militarized raids, abductions and expedited deportations that have characterized the Trump administrations. Using ethnographic data from 42 cases in Boston from 2020-2, which took place during both Trump and Biden’s presidential terms, I argue that the immigration courts are in fact a parallel public-facing staging ground for racial cruelty for the US empire-state. The courts work daily to reinforce a racialized politics of imperial membership. In the process, it also circulates money out of the hands of racialized respondents and their families, so that eventually profit can be made. Furthermore, the racial cruelty exercised in the immigration courts is recursive in two ways. For each respondent, such cruelty recurs and builds in every stage of the court proceedings, from the initial hearing to the adjudication of bond to the final deportation order. Because of the ongoing effects of US imperialism, racial cruelty also recurs generationally and sometimes transnationally during respondents’ lifetimes.

Bio: Nabila N. Islam is a doctoral candidate in sociology at Brown University. She is affiliated with the Border Criminologies group at Oxford and the Center for Black, Brown, and Queer Studies. Her research examines how racial capitalism and coloniality have structured the British and US empires’ governance of human movement.



Panel 5| Border Economies: Surveillance, Militarisation, and Resistance

Chair: Dr Cetta Mainwaring (University of Edinburgh)

In contemporary politics, migration is a deeply charged issue that drives the momentum of far-right movements and the rise of authoritarianism. In this context, this panel brings together scholars examining expanding border economies to critically interrogate the multifaceted dynamics of border violence and control within late capitalism. We conceptualize the border industry as a nexus where militarization, surveillance technologies, and state violence converge, entangled with global processes such as war, climate crisis, and the financialization of borders.

By situating border economies within these interconnected spheres, the panel illuminates how border enforcement extends beyond national security, functioning as a profitable and self-reinforcing sector that sustains and amplifies systemic inequalities and exclusion. Surveillance systems, private security contractors, and technological innovations are embedded in broader capitalist logics that commodify human mobility and frame migrants as security threats.

Moreover, the panel foregrounds the forms of resistance emerging from and against these border economies—from grassroots migrant organizing to transnational activist networks—highlighting the contestations that challenge the normalization of militarized borders. Through interdisciplinary approaches, this panel contributes to a deeper understanding of how border economies operate as a critical site for analysing the entanglement of state power, capital accumulation, and social struggles.

Dr Joe Turner (University of York, with non-presenting co-authors Arshad Isakjee, Lucy Mayblin, Thom Davies, Tesfalem Yemane), *The Border-Security Economy in the English Channel: Small Boats, Racism and Late Imperialism*

Abstract: The movement of people in small boats across the English Channel to claim asylum has created a political and media spectacle in the UK. This article examines the bordering infrastructure along the Northern French Coast and in the UK which have shaped these criminalised journeys. Contributing to debates on the fragmentation of state power, we interrogate the political economy of bordering and the wider global and social interests that shape the border-security economy in the English Channel. Whilst it is well documented that coercive policing, surveillance, and the fortification of ports such as Calais have directed people towards maritime routes in the Channel, what is less developed is an understanding of whose interests are served by these strategies. We thus ask: In whose material and symbolic interests do borders such as this operate? Drawing on conceptualisations of racial capitalism and historical materialist state theory, we identify three overlapping dynamics: 1) Neoliberal hegemony and the reproduction of consent; 2) The investment in private border security and state contracting as a mechanism of elite wealth extraction; and 3) global dynamics of labour, dispossession and accumulation under late imperialism. In this way, we explore how the 'small boats' phenomenon—in a continuum with other border zones—reveals how borders operate as both sites of crisis management and capital accumulation under neoliberalism.

Bio: Joe Turner is Senior Lecturer in International Politics, University of York. Joe's research explores how border violence is shaped by imperial and colonial histories and hierarchies of human value. He is the author of *Bordering Intimacy: Postcolonial Governance and the Policing of Family Life* (Manchester University Press, 2016), *Migration Studies and Colonialism* (2021, Polity). He is currently writing two collaborative books, one on the UK-France borderzone and another on postcolonial historical methods.

Dr Travis Van Isacker (University of Bristol), *Chains of suspicion: search and rescue (SAR), criminalisation, and 'knowledge over' Channel migrants through technological surveillance*

Abstract: In November 2021 more than thirty-one people lost their lives in a shipwreck in the Channel. Those on board made numerous distress calls to both French and UK coastguards but were not



rescued. The ship sent to their location instead found three other inflatable dinghies which were rescued instead. Because the distress calls from the original boat stopped, coastguards mistakenly assumed the occupants had been rescued; in fact, they were drowning. UK commanders cited a lack of aerial surveillance, and the subsequent loss of 'maritime domain awareness', as a key factor in why the sinking dinghy was not rescued. This 'technosolutionist' perspective on the event has precipitated a large investment in surveillance technologies in recent years - including drones, fixed-wing aircraft, AI powered long range shore cameras, and telecommunications software to extract positions directly from mobile devices. Today coastguards rely upon the digital images produced by this surveillance network to provide a form of 'knowledge over' travellers, and to organise their SAR operations. However, whilst captured ostensibly for the purposes of a SAR mission the images are also being readily shared with immigration police to be treated as evidence in the prosecution of persons alleged to drive the boats. While security has been widely acknowledged as a driver of technological surveillance at borders, we can observe in the case of the Channel how 'suspicion' - first as to whether or not travellers are reliable narrators of their own journeys to who might be 'facilitating' others' journeys - is also highly influential in establishing an entangled surveillance regime across government agencies which can become operationalised for both SAR and criminalisation purposes.

Bio: Travis Van Isacker is Research Fellow at the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies at the University of Bristol, UK and fellow at Migration Mobilities Bristol. His current research at the ESRC Centre for Sociodigital Futures is on the transformation of border infrastructures through new digital technologies. Previously he was Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Brighton, UK.

Dr Martin Lemberg-Pedersen (University of Warwick), Market crafting and political economy of European border security sectors

Abstract: This article analyzes opaque, shifting and reversible relations of profit and positionality between private and public actors in the border security sector, including for the European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex). Focusing on various stakeholders, public institutional subsidizing, conglomerate and subsidiary strategies, guarantees from national banks or venture capital influences this sector. As ministries and state agencies facilitate tenders, contracts and research and development (R&D) on control technologies through discursive framings about military threats and urgent gaps, industrial competitiveness, job creation, or European autonomy in geopolitics. One future venue to examine is how military or dual use export licences to externalised infrastructures of migration control facilitate international crimes. The paper concludes with some observations on the political economy of border security and the military sector, and implications for human rights, transparency and accountability.

Bio: Martin Lemberg-Pedersen is Honorary Associate Professor at the Department of Politics and International Studies (PAIS), the University of Warwick. From 2021 to 2024 he was the Head of Policy and Documentation at Amnesty International Denmark, from 2020 to 2021 he was Associate Professor at the University of Copenhagen. and between 2016 and 2020 an Assistant Professor at Global Refugee Studies, Aalborg University.

Dr Cetta Mainwaring, Dr Thom Tyerman, Dr Andonea Dickson (University of Edinburgh), *The Carceral Web: Transnational Economies of Immigration Detention*

Abstract: This article maps and analyses the imbricated forms of corporate and state power that forms the basis of expanding detention regimes in the US, the UK and Australia, countries that have the largest and most privatized detention estates in the world. We propose theorising these relationships as a carceral web that entraps people, spaces, and communities. We argue that the web is transnational, sticky and elastic, made possible by the alliance between corporate and state power that produces carceral economies and carceral subjects. Harm is fundamental to the carceral web: we view harm as both intrinsic to the function of immigration detention and integral to wider processes of carceral exploitation and extraction by which corporate profit is obtained and state power is

maintained. More than just adopting similar detention policies, the countries under examination have adopted a carceral logic, with its touchstones of deterrence and crisis, in response to migration and surplus labour. These logics are rooted in racial capitalism, and a historical racial ordering.

Bio: Cetta Mainwaring is a Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the University of Edinburgh. She leads a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship on 'Immigration Detention: Investigating the Expansion and Global Diffusion of a Failed Project'. Thom Tyerman and Andonea Dickson are Research Fellows on this project at the University of Edinburgh and lead on the US and Australia country case studies, respectively.

Panel 6| Thinking through the potential of relational resistance

Chair: Dr Lucy Mayblin (University of Sheffield)

Discussant: Professor Òscar Prieto-Flores (University of Girona)

Òscar Prieto-Flores is Associate Professor in the Department of Pedagogy at the University of Girona (accredited as Full Professor). He is currently Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of IMISCOE (International Migration Research Network), the most consolidated international network of academics on migration, and directs the research project of the Social Observatory of La Caixa Foundation: SAFESPACES, Social Mentoring, Well-being and Mental Health with racialised migrants and refugees.

This panel brings together a set of papers which all speak to themes of relationally (who are we to each other?) and how that relationally might be mobilised for political resistance to exclusionary border regimes in times of rising authoritarianism and racism against people labelled 'migrants'. The papers explore a knot of concepts and lived relational phenomena including reciprocity, solidarity, humanitarianism, kindness, and resistance. These things happen, imperfectly, in the home, in the neighbourhood, in medical centres, in the mountains, the seas, and the cities. Such relations are complex and imperfect, fraught with tensions and overlaid with power relations. But at the same time, they are a lived refusal to relate on the terms dictated by states, enshrined through laws, policies, and statuses. When do these actions matter on a larger scale, forming the foundations for political change, and when do they simply fail to shift the broader picture? We invite you to consider these questions with us.

Professor Gabriella Elgenius (University of Gothenburg), *Kindness and the Politics of Hope in Superdiverse Neighbourhoods: Civil Society Practices and the Socio-Psychological Dimensions of Integration*

Abstract: This paper explores kindness as a relational and political practice of civil society practices in superdiverse neighbourhoods, rooted in the socio-psychological dimensions of integration, where hope, compassion, and resistance serve as key dimensions of analysis. This paper focuses on civil society's ways of working through community-based initiatives and how kindness and hope act as vehicles for participation and resistance against neoliberal models that reduce migrants to economic units. Drawing on previous theoretical and empirical insights, the paper examines how civil society fosters encounters that challenge stigmatizing and exclusionary narratives about migrants and their descendants. It reflects critically on collaborative, community-engaged approaches, showing that kindness is not merely a sentiment but a practice capable of reframing integration as a relational process rooted in dignity, respect, and co-creation. This paper builds on fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with civil society representatives in seven areas in Sweden and the UK, collected over 2019–2024.

Bio: Gabriella Elgenius is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Gothenburg and the Director of the Centre of Global Migration. Gabriella.elgenius@gu.se

Professor Aleksandra Grzymala-Kazłowska (University of Warsaw), *Unpacking the multilevelness and temporalities of reciprocities: comparing Ukrainian forced migrants homestay in Poland and the UK*

Abstract: Migration studies rather focus on negative features of intergroup relations, paying less attention to positive aspects of encounters that facilitate migrants' adaptation, settling and integration. One key element in relationships, exchanges and social interactions is reciprocity.

However, despite its fundamental role, reciprocity remains both empirically understudied and theoretically underdeveloped. This paper seeks to develop the understanding of reciprocity, drawing on interviews with individuals hosting Ukrainians displaced after the outbreak of the full-scale war in Poland and the UK. Given the number of people seeking protection in Europe, alongside the diminishing reception and institutional integration they receive, the idea of involving private individuals to support displaced migrants, as in refugee home-staying, is important and necessary. However, to be effectively developed, a better understanding is required. Thus, the paper will focus on reciprocity as a key mechanism for generating positivity, potentially occurring during encounters between refugees and private supporters who provide them with accommodation, as well as its facilitators and consequences. This presentation will not only provide a comparative overview of empirical findings on reciprocity emerging from 29 interviews in Poland and 26 in the UK with hosts of Ukrainian war refugees but will also propose a multilevel and time-sensitive framework for the analysis of reciprocity.

Bio: Dr Hab. Aleksandra Grzymala-Kazłowska is Professor at the University of Warsaw in the Faculty of Sociology and at the Centre of Migration Research. She is also Editor-in-Chief of the Central and Eastern European Migration Review. akazłowska@uw.edu.pl

Dr Natasha Nicholls (University of Birmingham), *Kindness as Everyday Humanitarianism: The Micropolitics of Community Sponsorship*

Abstract: Kindness is sometimes invoked in discussions of refugee welcome, yet it is rarely theorised as a form of political practice. Drawing on interviews with 30 volunteers involved in the UK Community Sponsorship scheme, this paper reconceptualises kindness as a form of quiet politics enacted through everyday humanitarian action. Volunteers described their support in apolitical terms: buying bicycles to prevent children's exclusion, accompanying families to medical appointments, navigating welfare systems, and responding flexibly to financial and cultural needs. These acts were framed as simple gestures of care. However, situated within the gaps between state provision and lived experience, such practices take on political significance. In mediating access to resources, interpreting bureaucratic systems, and challenging local hostility, volunteers subtly contest exclusionary migration regimes, often without naming their actions as political. This paper argues that kindness operates as a micropolitical practice that holds the potential to reshape power relations and belonging from within everyday spaces. Through sustained, relational engagement, volunteers enact alternative modes of reception that blur the boundaries between humanitarian care and political action. Reciprocity emerges as sponsored refugees become advisors and contributors, disrupting binaries of 'helper' and 'helped' and reconfiguring sponsorship as a more horizontal form of solidarity. By positioning kindness as quiet politics, the paper demonstrates how refugee reception is not only administered through policy, but continuously enacted and reconfigured through small-scale, relational interventions.

Bio: Dr Natasha Nicholls is an Honorary Research Fellow and a member of the Community Sponsorship Research Hub at the University of Birmingham. Natasha has been researching migration since 2019, with expertise in community sponsorship, complementary pathways, the impact of migration on healthcare access and creative and participatory methods.

Dr Lucy Mayblin (University of Sheffield), *Finding hope in the criminalisation of solidarity*

Abstract: This paper draws from an ongoing open access dataset project which seeks to map the criminalisation of solidarity, humanitarianism, and spontaneous acts of help offered to people on the move globally (www.crimesofsolidarity.org). In this dataset we of course find the authoritarian practices of state authorities, oriented to maintaining and always enhancing border security. Border security practices work to sort people into different categories according to country of birth, in binaries and hierarchical relations -citizen/migrant, legal/illegal, and all of the gradations in between.

But there is another reading of this dataset which is one of resistance and hope -denials that migration status should sort who lives or dies, who sleeps in the street or in a bed, who should have food and who should not. While acknowledging the real existence of uneven power relations, saviourism and the professionalisation of humanitarianism, in this paper I centre what this dataset can tell us about resistance to global border regimes, and hope that they could one day be undone.

Bio: Lucy Mayblin is Senior Lecturer in sociology at the University of Sheffield.

Panel 7| Migrant labour and migration regimes

Chair: Dr Seb Rumsby (University of Birmingham)

Dr Analisa Smythe (The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust), Dr Jon Gorry (Nottingham Trent University) and Daphne Laing (Build a Bridge Ltd), *The Adaptation and Integration of Internationally Educated Nurses working in the National Health Service: Walking in Their Shoes*

Abstract: Introduction: The study explored the adaptation and integration of internationally educated nurses working in the National Health Service (NHS) and highlights the need to facilitate more opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and relationship-building between international and local nurses to improve integration. Method: The aims of this study were met using Knowledge Exchange (KE) methodology (Cruickshank et al. 2013). A purposive sample of 32 participants was recruited to take part in five workshops which were conducted in NHS organisations in the Midlands. The workshops comprised of IENs, clinical colleagues and managers. Transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. The study was funded by Nottingham Trent Knowledge Exchange and carried out May-December 2025. Discussion: There was consensus that intercultural training and the opportunity to “walk in their shoes” should be offered to all staff. This would encourage reflection and sharing of the experiences and challenges of working in multicultural multi-ethnic groups; and not least, enhance a sense of belonging within teams and the organisation. Two-way learning was a recurring theme throughout the study. Conclusion: The findings suggest that IENs can find it challenging to integrate. Relationships appeared to have a profound impact on belonging and professional identity.

Bios: **Dr Analisa Smythe** is a qualified is a Mental Health Nurse and has worked in research for over twenty-five years. Her research experience is predominately in interventions to support the wellbeing of the nursing workforce. **Daphne Laing** designs and delivers training solutions to support the acculturation and integration of international healthcare professionals in NHS. **Dr Jon Gorry** has over twenty-five years’ experience teaching and learning a wide variety of subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the fields of Politics, Political Economy, Sociology, International Development, and International Relations.

Dr Heila Sha and Professor Christopher Forde (University of Leeds), *Skills Recognition, Labour Market Access and Everyday Work: Migrant Workers’ Experiences of Social (In)Justice in the UK*

Abstract: How do migrant workers in the UK experience social (in)justice amid rapidly changing immigration and labour policies aimed at limiting and controlling migrant inflows? This paper examines migrants’ experiences of (in)justice in relation to skills recognition, labour market access, and everyday work in the UK. The study is part of a European Horizon project on skills shortages and migrant employment across five EU and six non-EU countries. The analysis draws on 43 qualitative interviews and 316 survey responses from non-EU migrants living in the UK. Findings show that only migrants with highly specialised skills report a skills match between their qualifications and employment. Most respondents struggle to secure work aligned with their skills and are often compelled to accept low-paid and precarious jobs. Employers’ preference for UK qualifications and work experience is frequently cited as a barrier, while recent immigration policy changes are also perceived as restricting access to suitable employment. Experiences of workplace justice are mixed: some migrants report supportive environments, while others describe managerial exploitation, unstable income, and heavy workloads. Many participants view recent policy changes—particularly increased salary thresholds and longer routes to indefinite leave to remain—as unfair. Anti-immigration discourse and activities are also seen as discouraging and demotivating. This research advances debates on migration, employment, and social (in)justice by highlighting how institutional policies, organisational practices, and individual experiences interact to shape migrants’ perceptions

of inclusion and exclusion. It also offers policy-relevant insights in the context of post-Brexit labour shortages in the UK.

Bio: Dr Heila Sha (Saheira Haliel) is a Research Fellow at Leeds University Business School, working on skills/labour shortage and employment of migrant workers in the UK as part of EU Horizon Project-Skills4Justice. She's trained as a social anthropologist, with research expertise in migration, gender, eldercare, (transnational) marriage, cross-border trade, family business, work and employment, with particular regional focus on China, Central Asia and UK. Saheira has published widely with internationally recognised publishers and in leading academic journals, including her first monograph in 2017, titled *Care and Ageing in Northwest China* (Lit, Berlin), and journal articles in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Global Networks*, and *International Migration* etc. She has contributed a chapter to *The Palgrave Handbook of South-South Migration and Inequality*.

Professor Chris Forde is Professor of Employment Studies in the People, Work and Employment Department and Co-Director of the Centre for Employment Relations Innovation and Change at the University of Leeds. He is also Deputy Director of the ESRC Digital Futures at Work Research Centre, where he co-leads the Digit Data Observatory.

Andi Holik Ramdani (Hashimoto Foundation Societas Institute), *Needed but Not Welcomed: Indonesian Construction Workers and Conditional Belonging in Japan's Migration Regime*

Abstract: Japan's growing demand for foreign labor, particularly in the construction sector, has led to an increased acceptance of migrant workers from the Global South. However, this inclusion remains highly conditional, temporary, and shaped by restrictive migration regimes. Drawing on theories of migration control and conditional belonging, this presentation examines Indonesian construction workers in Japan as a case that reveals the contradictions of being simultaneously needed and excluded. Based on qualitative interviews and survey data conducted in 2025, the study highlights how Indonesian workers are recruited to fill critical labor shortages under programs such as the Technical Intern Training Program and Specified Skilled Worker scheme. While these frameworks facilitate entry into Japan's labor market, they also impose strict limitations on duration of stay, job mobility, and access to rights, preventing long-term settlement and stable integration. At the same time, this structural exclusion is increasingly accompanied by rising anti-immigrant sentiments and social tensions. Migrant workers often encounter subtle discrimination and limited social acceptance, despite their essential contributions. This presentation argues that Japan's migration regime reflects a broader paradox of Global North societies: migrant workers are economically indispensable yet socially marginalized, highlighting the urgent need for more inclusive approaches to migration and belonging.

Bio: Andi Holik Ramdani is a researcher at the Hashimoto Foundation Societas Institute, Japan. His research focuses on migration, multicultural coexistence, and labor mobility in Asia, with particular attention to Indonesian migrant workers, international students, migration governance, and Japan–Southeast Asia relations.

Camila Orbegozo, Dr Ceren Ozgen, and Professor Matt Cole (University of Birmingham), *When Migrants Arrive: Quasi-experimental Evidence on Prices and Labour Costs in Colombia*

Abstract: Between 2017 and 2022, Colombia experienced a rapid and significant increase in labour supply, driven by the arrival of nearly 3 million displaced Venezuelans. The prevalent high labour informality allowed them to immediately access and compete in the labour market, even without a work permit. In this paper, we use the initial large influx of Venezuelans (2017–2019) as an exogenous shock to labor supply, similar to a quasi-natural experiment, of almost perfect substitutes for native workers, to estimate the causal impact of immigration on sectoral wages and consumer prices. By

reducing real wages and labour income by approximately 6% and 11% per hour worked in the manufacturing, retail sales, and hospitality sectors, the migration shock provided a cost advantage for these industries in the recipient regions and triggered an expansion in labour demand. However, aggregate non-regulated consumer prices decreased by only 1.5%. Furthermore, evidence suggests that, unlike the service sectors, only the manufacturing sector passed a portion of these cost savings on to final consumer prices. In general, the forced-migration shock generated a differentiated sectoral effect with both competitive and distributional consequences.

Bios: **Camila Orbegozo** is a 2nd year PhD student – Economics Department, University of Birmingham. **Ceren Ozgen** is Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Birmingham and research fellow at IZA. **Matthew Cole** is Professor of Environmental Economics at the University of Birmingham. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and a Fellow of the ESRC Peer Review College.

Panel 8| Refugees, diaspora and citizenship

Chair: Dr Laurence Lessard Phillips

Professor Caroline Oliver (UCL), *Experiences and outcomes of Afghan relocation and resettlement in England*

Abstract: Refugee resettlement ostensibly offers legitimate, safe and ‘controllable’ pathways for forcibly displaced populations, albeit increasingly through exceptional, bespoke and nationality-based programmes. However, little is known about how such ad hoc policymaking is practically implemented or experienced. This paper presents an analysis of the implementation of schemes and experiences of Afghan relocation and resettlement in the UK, following the collapse of the elected Afghan government in 2021. It draws on extensive mixed-method research, including a survey of resettled Afghans and participatory qualitative research with both Afghans and stakeholders in England. Our research indicates that resettlement, even while largely state-led, was not a controllable process, but necessarily shaped by conditions of enduring emergency. Rapid, ‘add on’ and abrupt policy changes were both catching up with, and regularly changing, in response to practical realities. Our evidence suggests that inconsistencies affect both those within and outside this protection. Nevertheless, by focusing on participants’ experiences, much can be learned about the opportunities of organised resettlement policy for providing refuge at scale.

Bio: Caroline Oliver is Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Education, UCL.

Dr Catherine R. Craven (University of Sheffield), *Diaspora Governance in Practice: Tamil diaspora mobilization, global governance and power in an entangled world*

Abstract: This presentation will introduce a new book that presents a novel perspective on the workings of power in an entangled international system, through a grounded analysis of the increasingly prolific and salient phenomenon of diaspora governance - the many and varied ways in which state and non-state actors seek to engage, manage or control diasporic communities and individuals across borders. The book develops an innovative relational approach to understanding the politics of diaspora governance in practice, including through a novel "ethnography of entanglements" methodology. It follows the encounters between global Tamil diaspora organisers and activists with the forces of power that seek to variably engage, control and repress their mobilization after the end of the Sri Lankan civil war - from states, to global bureaucracies, to securitizing discourses and beyond.

Bio: Catherine Craven is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Sociological Studies, Politics and International relations at the University of Sheffield.

Dr Erasmo Sossich (Independent Researcher), *Urban exiles: asylum and citizenship between the camp system and the urban ghetto*

Abstract: The contribution analyses the transformation of asylum into an urban exile, focusing on the denial of the “right to the city” and the consequent exclusion from “citizenship” brought about by the campization of the Greek reception system. It is claimed that the extra-urban confinement of refugees, limiting both individual and collective agencies, has effectively negated the practice of those ‘acts of citizenship’ and ‘substantive’ citizenship through which migrants had historically overcome the lack of ‘formal’ citizenship. To do so, the contribution focuses on the case of Eleonas refugee camp evacuation, strongly opposed by its inhabitants, determined not to be “transferred” out of the city. Moving from an ethnographic account of this experience, it's claimed asylum has been reconfigured as a double exile, firstly as expulsion and displacement from one's polity and country of origin, secondly as expulsion and displacement, from the polity and the urban world of the host country. Finally, the contribution highlights how migrants have adapted their agency, adopting new evasion-like

(translocal) strategies in order to find shelter in specific segments of the housing market and in new urban ghettos, in turn transformed into unexpected sanctuary spaces of citizenship.

Bio: Born in 1993 in Trieste, Italy, in 2025 I discussed my thesis "Urban Exiles. Migration governance, asylum, displacement and segregation in Athens", concluding a PhD in Sociology at the Università degli Studi di Milano. Currently without affiliation, I research global and urban displacement processes through qualitative methodologies.

Arwanto Arwanto, Dr Laura Loyola Hernandez, and Dr Deirdre Conlon (University of Leeds), *Lives after education access: refugee lived citizenship in a transit and non-signatory to refugee convention country*

Abstract: This paper examines how refugee parents and children in Pekanbaru, Indonesia, interpret, negotiate, and sometimes resist educational policies in their everyday lives through the lens of lived citizenship. While existing studies on lived citizenship (e.g., Lister 2007; Larkins 2014; Olsson 2017) have explored how children enact citizenship, they primarily focus on non-displaced populations in Global North contexts. Limited attention has been given to refugee children in transit countries of the Global South, where citizenship is unattainable, and inclusion is conditional. This study addresses that gap by examining how refugee children in Indonesia practise lived citizenship amid institutional and social constraints, offering new insights into the interplay between policy, affect, and everyday citizenship. Building on Lister's (2007, 2017) and Kallio, Wood, and Häkli's (2020) conceptualisation, lived citizenship emphasises how individuals experience and enact belonging, participation, and recognition beyond formal legal status. Using observations, interviews, and workshops involving ten refugee children (Rohingya and Afghan), their parents, and teachers, this study reveals that access to education produces conditional inclusion. Refugee children are expected to conform to the 'imagined Indonesian students' to gain recognition. Furthermore, children enact citizenship through everyday acts of participation, negotiation, and resistance in school spaces and beyond. These performances of citizenship extend into family and community life, reshaping refugees' everyday experiences of 'being a family'.

Bios: **Arwanto Arwanto** is a PhD Student of School of Geography, University of Leeds and lecturer of IPDN, Indonesia. My project focuses on refugee education policy in Indonesia, a transit and non-signatory to refugee convention country, examining the policy's rationale and implications on refugee lives. **Laura Loyola Hernandez** is Associate Professor in Human Geography. Areas of expertise: Feminist political geography, decolonial thought, critical race studies, social media, activism, policing, migrant experience, critical pedagogy. **Deirdre Conlon** is Associate Professor. Areas of expertise: critical migration and border studies; U.S. immigration detention system; immigration enforcement; carceral geographies; borders and belonging.

Panel 9| Un/welcome: The structural and discursive positioning of migrants by host communities

Chair: Dr Rachel Ayrton

Dr Franka Zlatić (University of Zadar), *Racialising the “Other ‘Other’”: Media Representations of Indian Labour Migrants in Croatia*

Abstract: Migration scholarship has largely focused on East–West mobility within Europe, often overlooking emerging migration patterns in which migrants move to regions characterised by lower socio-economic standards and political volatility. Recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe complicate established hierarchies of migration destinations. Following the EU enlargements of 2004, 2008, and 2013 countries such as Croatia have increasingly become sites of labour immigration, particularly for workers from South and Southeast Asia. In recent years, Croatia has become one of the largest issuers of first residence permits for employment in the European Union. This paper examines how these new migration dynamics are represented in Croatian media through an analysis of portrayals of Indian labour migrants. The study situates these representations within longer histories of regional othering, in which Eastern Europe, and the Balkans in particular, has historically been constructed as Europe’s internal “Other”. The arrival of Asian migrant workers introduces new racialised boundaries within this already stratified symbolic geography. Drawing on a critical discourse analysis of Croatian media coverage and associated online commentaries, the paper explores how narratives of labour migration reproduce hierarchies of belonging and exclusion. Media portrayals frequently frame Asian migrants as culturally incompatible, economically instrumental and socially distant, while online responses reveal the circulation of racist and xenophobic discourse. The paper contributes to debates on racialisation and regimes of belonging by examining how migration is narrated in an emerging destination country on Europe’s semi-periphery.

Bio: Franka Zlatić is a postdoctoral researcher in sociology at the University of Zadar. Her research focuses on migration, belonging and social inequalities, with particular attention to racialisation, mobility and representation. She works with qualitative and visual methods and is currently completing a book on youth migration and belonging.

Dr Melati Nungsari and Dr Kirstine Varming (Asia School of Business), *Good, bad, and beyond: Host community stereotypes of refugees*

Abstract: Low-and middle-income countries host nearly three-quarters of the world’s refugees, yet research on refugee stereotypes and their social consequences remains heavily concentrated in high-income settings. This imbalance obscures how stereotypes operate in countries where refugees lack legal recognition, where welfare and labor protections are limited, and where public attitudes significantly shape the conditions of daily survival. Malaysia, home to almost 200,000 refugees despite not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, offers a critical context for examining these dynamics. This study analyzes six focus group discussions with 47 Malaysian participants to assess the content, sources, and implications of refugee stereotypes in a developing-country setting. Using inductive content analysis of 382 excerpts, we identify a wide range of both positive and negative stereotypes, with self-generated opinions emerging as the most common source. Mapping these perceptions onto the Stereotype Content Model, developed by Fiske et al. (2002), reveals nuanced combinations of perceived intentions and capabilities that underpin both empathy and hostility toward refugees. These stereotypes, when reinforced through prejudice, discrimination, and stereotype threat, erode refugees’ sense of belonging and constrain long-term socioeconomic

outcomes. Yet, the predominance of self-held rather than socially attributed stereotypes suggest meaningful opportunities for change. We argue that developing-country contexts such as Malaysia require tailored interventions that leverage media narratives, counter-stereotypical representations, and low-cost intergroup contact to shift public attitudes. By centering a middle-income host country, this paper underscores the urgent need to address stereotype-driven barriers to refugee well-being in the places where most displaced people reside.

Bios: **Melati Nungsari** is an Associate Professor of Economics at Asia School of Business and a Research Affiliate at MIT Sloan School of Management. **Kirstine Rahma Stroeh Varming** is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the ASEAN Research Center at Asia School of Business in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Dr Frank van der Velden (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz) *“Thou shalt love your neighbour as thyself”: But immigrants are not neighbours!*

Abstract: Attempts by the extreme right to justify concepts of “remigration” and conditional belonging by misusing Christian topics. Right-wing hostility to immigration means that solidarity applies primarily to the immediate social environment and to ethnic kinsmen. As a result, migrants (or people who are considered to be migrants) are continuously (re)marginalised and blamed for processes of social transformation. This leads to an erosion of the ‘global ethics’ framework. This ethnicisation of the principle of solidarity is increasingly being justified by a misunderstood ‘Christian view of humanity’ and biblical arguments: “Thou shalt love your neighbour as thyself” – but immigrants are not neighbours! Thus, conditional belonging, and racialised citizenship is justified by allegedly Christian topics. Stereotypes and distrust of certain religious communities – e.g. Muslims – lead to reimagining new borders along religious / cultural diversity in the attempt to justify an uneven migration management. The lecture addresses the question of the extent to which these religiously connoted enemy images serve as the glue of international networks to justify global inequalities, anti-immigration policies and the erosion of human rights along a matrix of religious/cultural othering. This reinforces the cohesive forces between the various far-right movements in Russia (Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church), the USA (evangelical networks around Trump) and Europe. As a consequence, human life at the external borders of the “spheres of influence” is no longer considered equally worthy of protection. In order to contest this political framing of religious ethics, the lecture provides examples of good practice in interreligious networking and in co-produced and community-engaged collaboration approaches from international peacebuilding projects in Bosnia and Germany. It thus aims to improve religious literacy and strengthen civil institutions in dealing with religious and cultural diversity.

Bio: Dr. Frank van der Velden (born 1964) is the representative for Islamic affairs for the Catholic Diocese of Limburg. He is a lecturer in interfaith learning at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Mainz, and a member of the interdisciplinary “Rat für Migration” (council for migration).

Dr Katarzyna Bylow (Adam Mickiewicz University), *Migrancy at school in times of ‘crisis’*

Abstract: This contribution centres on local models of education provision to foreign-born and newly arrived migrant students. Grounded in a case study of a ‘preparatory education’ programme developed in a major Polish city, it highlights the significance of tiered national, regional, municipal, and micro-level policy-making for transnationally mobile populations. The inductive research methodology informing the analysis, including interviews with migrant families and other stakeholders, group discussions, and participant observation, enabled identification of the

exclusionary and inclusionary potential of specific measures, and revealed how the dynamics between these two poles have changed over time. The findings highlight implications of an ongoing emergency character of educational interventions directed primarily at the majority-minority groups in Polish schools, while overlooking other newly arrived and migrant children. The mobility trajectories (imagined, potential, or actual) of children arriving from areas affected by armed conflict, with migration framed as 'crisis', lead the existing, tailor-made solutions developed within multi-level governance models, to gradually prioritize mental well-being of migrant children over their local-language proficiency, equal opportunities, social and educational inclusion and integration. By attending to the legacies of purpose and the specific problematizations of migrancy at school, this research shows how complex intersections of separation and integration in educational settings are constructed over time by those directly engaged in enacting policies that shape children's education and migrancy.

Bio: Katarzyna Byłów, PhD - social anthropologist and linguist, currently a post-doctoral researcher in the project "Good Beginnings, Promising Futures. Migrant Children in Polish Schools" at the Centre for Migration Research (CeBaM), Adam Mickiewicz University in Poland.

Panel 10| Digital Borders and Migrant Futures: AI, Language and Everyday Connectivity in Contemporary Migration Regimes

Chair: Professor Cláudia Hilsdorf Rocha (State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil)

Discussant: Dr Angelo Martins Junior (University of Birmingham)

Across the globe, migration governance is increasingly mediated by digital infrastructures—from algorithmic border control and biometric surveillance to platform labour and mobile communication networks. These developments are reshaping not only how mobility is regulated but also how migrants learn, organise, and sustain communities across borders. In a context marked by intensifying authoritarianism, restrictive migration policies, and expanding technological governance, digital systems have become key arenas where mobility, belonging, and inequality are negotiated.

This panel examines the intersections of migration, digital technologies, and language practices across diverse contexts, highlighting how migrants encounter and reshape emerging “digital borders.” Bringing together perspectives from applied linguistics, migration studies, and digital sociology, the papers explore how technological systems structure contemporary migration regimes while also creating opportunities for collective agency and social connection.

The contributions address three interconnected dimensions. First, they investigate the role of artificial intelligence and algorithmic infrastructures in migration governance, emphasising how migrant labour sustains digital economies while these same technologies are increasingly used for surveillance and border enforcement. Second, the panel explores the relationship between language, education, and AI through collaborative initiatives aimed at promoting linguistic empowerment, social justice, and decolonial learning in contexts of vulnerability. Third, it examines the everyday digital practices through which migrants build support networks and navigate displacement, focusing on communication platforms such as WhatsApp and their importance in sustaining diasporic communities.

The panel shows how digital technologies can both reproduce inequalities and enable new forms of solidarity, knowledge production, and resistance in an increasingly technologised world.

Professor Cláudia Hilsdorf Rocha, Dr Angelo Martins Junior, Professor Ruberval Franco Maciel (State University of Mato Grosso do Sul), *Languages, Sustainable Technological Innovation, and Social Justice: Research on Contexts of Vulnerability in Brazil and UK*

Abstract: This paper aims at critically presenting the main results of an ongoing collaborative project entitled Languages, Sustainable Technological Innovation, and Social Justice: Investigating Processes in Artificial Intelligence for Decolonial Learning in Contexts of Vulnerability in Brazil and in the UK (CNPq/Brazil/443985/2024-3). Coordinated by Cláudia Hilsdorf Rocha (UNICAMP, Brazil) and Angelo Martins Jr (University of Birmingham, UK), the project involves the participation of a multidisciplinary and interinstitutional group of Brazilian researchers to investigate the potentialities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in socially engaged initiatives aimed at fostering sociopolitical rights, language learning, and language awareness in scenarios linked to crisis migrants and/or other socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. From a critical perspective, which is deeply concerned with both symbolic and material effects of research practices, the project draws on the concept of language as a powerful tool to confront dominant power. The role of generative technologies in times of planetary devastation, genocides and increasing authoritarianism is likewise treated critically to develop more informed approaches regarding its use in the creation of cultural artifacts capable of contributing to social and language empowerment. Sustainability is also a cross-theme, aiming at fostering ways to entangle language (education), technology and migration and to promote initiatives

Bios: **Cláudia Hilsdorf Rocha** is Professor in Applied Linguistics at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP, Brazil). CNPq Productivity Researcher (CNPq/Brazil). **Ruberval Franco Maciel** is Full Professor at the State University of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS, Brazil).

Abstract: Brazil became part of what has been described as the routes of contemporary migration about two decades ago, driven by environmental disasters, geopolitical conflicts, and economic crises. Although the country has an Immigration Law often regarded as progressive, there is still no national policy specifically aimed at receiving and supporting crisis migrants. In the absence of such a policy, different organizations and institutions have stepped in to fill this gap, developing initiatives intended to promote the inclusion of migrant and refugee populations. This paper presents the Welcoming through Languages Group (Grupo de Acolhimento em Línguas), created and coordinated by Dr Ana Cecília Cossi Bizon at the State University of Campinas. The group brings together researchers and students working in the field of Portuguese as an Additional Language and seeks to connect research, teacher education, and university extension activities, in partnership with a range of public actors. Through these collaborations, the group aims to generate knowledge and resources that can contribute to the development of public and language policies focused on the inclusion of migrants and refugees. Among the initiatives developed by the group are social translation, community interpreting, and the teaching of Portuguese. The first part of the paper outlines the main theoretical concepts that inform the group's work, including welcoming, reterritorialization, and education of the surroundings. The second part focuses on some of the group's main initiatives developed since 2019 and analyzes narratives from different actors involved in these actions, highlighting the impact of the group's micro-level policies.

Dr Stefano Piemontese (University of Birmingham) and Lawrence Jabs (University of Bologna), *Remote Migrants, Digital Borders: Mapping the AI–Migration Nexus*



Bios: Dr Stefano Piemontese is based at the Institute for Research into International Migration and Superdiversity, University of Birmingham (UK). Lawrence Jabs is based at the Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali Università di Bologna (Italy).

Professor Igor José de Renó Machado (Federal University of São Carlos), *The digital experience of Brazilian immigrants: Tales from WhatsApp groups in Ireland*

Abstract: In this presentation, I argue that WhatsApp has become an essential tool for Brazilian immigrants in Ireland, helping them organize their daily routines and foster social connections. Through ethnographic accounts, I demonstrate how these WhatsApp groups bring together friends, acquaintances, and even strangers navigating similar challenges, forming crucial support networks for immigrants. The pervasive use of these digital groups underscores how the immigrant experience is now deeply intertwined with digital platforms and mobile technologies. By exploring these narratives, we gain insight into the unique ways digitalisation shapes migration in the context of late capitalism, the gig economy, and the growing digitisation of everyday life.

Bio: Igor José de Renó Machado is based at the Federal University of São Carlos, Migration Studies Lab (LEM), Brazil.

Panel 11| Spatial governance and experiences of asylum accommodation

Chair: Dr Paolo Novak (SOAS University of London)

Discussant: Professor Jonathan Darling (Durham University)

This session explores the critical nexus between the provision of asylum seeker accommodation and the legal evolution of 'protection' through a comparative lens focusing on the European Union and the United Kingdom. While international and domestic laws define a state's formal obligations to those seeking sanctuary, the lived reality of protection is often better articulated through the material and administrative standards of the sites where asylum seekers are housed.

We argue that to understand the substantive scope of protection, one must look beyond statutory language to the empirical realities of accommodation. By exploring these realities, we can reveal the underlying forces, priorities, tensions, and shifts in the governance of asylum.

This panel traces how asylum systems have evolved not just through legislative reform, but through the granular development of legal procedures, administrative protocols, and day-to-day practices. Through the specific case studies, papers explore how decisions are made about where to put asylum-seekers, what are the impacts and experiences of these decisions on asylum-seekers and refugees, and what this all means for our understanding of "protection." Collectively, these papers demonstrate that the evolution of the ways in which asylum accommodation is conceived, transformed into policies and in turn into practices, serves as a primary indicator for the shifting boundaries of rights and the hardening (or softening) of the state's protective reach.

Dr Anna Lindley (SOAS University of London), *Exploring local / national government relations around asylum accommodation arrangements in the UK*

Abstract: Where to 'put' displaced people in the UK has become an increasingly contentious policy issue since 2021, with a marked increase in the Home Office's use of hotels for asylum-seekers, as a contingency measure in response to increased need and difficulty sourcing regular housing. These shifts in accommodation arrangements have been met with both significant solidarity and support efforts, as well as significant bouts of hostility, from local actors. This paper draws on primary research with local authorities in London to reflect on some of the challenges and approaches that emerge in relation to fulfilling statutory duties to displaced residents. It uses the lens of multi-level governance to explore how contradictions and conflicts arising between national and local levels, specifically linked to the centralisation and privatisation of asylum accommodation, are navigated at the interstices of government, private sector and civil society.

Bio: Anna Lindley is Reader in the Department of Development Studies at SOAS University of London, focusing on global migration and displacement dynamics, politics and experiences. Recent work has investigated NGO and local authority approaches to refugee homelessness prevention in London and Oxford.

Professor Giorgia Donà (University of East London), *Private hosting for refugees: The politics of 'domestic humanitarianism'*

Abstract: With the rising number of asylum seekers facing homelessness, there has been an increase in private hosting initiatives that support people made destitute. These grass-root alternatives to institutional refugee housing fill gaps left by state mechanisms. This different approach to accommodating refugees, away from the realm of government, is simultaneously related to it. While operating under the guise of 'domestic humanitarianism', homestay arrangements also challenge or undermine asylum accommodation policies by raising questions about state's responsibility to protect, and what that responsibility entails. Drawing from mapping of organisational policies and hosting

practices, and informal conversations with guests and hosts, this presentation probes new contributions to understanding the intersection of civic and state responsibility to protect. In this moment of intensified public engagement with border politics, private hosting, which is synonymous with opening, challenges everyday bordering practices in asylum accommodation, and has the potential to reshape the policy landscape from the grassroots level.

Bio: Giorgia Dona is Professor and co-director of the Centre for Migration, Refugee and Belonging at the University of East London, focusing on global refugee movements, child and youth migration, and digital migration studies. Her interest in researching refugee homestays arises from her personal experience of hosting.

Dr Charlotte Sanders (SOAS University of London), *Protection as a Lived Experience in UK Asylum Hotel Accommodation*

Abstract: This paper draws upon two years of ethnographic research with asylum-seekers in 'contingency' hotel accommodation in London and South England to explore the effects of hotel use on asylum-seekers' physical health, mental wellbeing and access to resources essential for rebuilding their lives in the UK, including financial, social and legal resources. In short, this paper asks what the hotel system as an 'innovation' in the spatial governance of asylum means for protection itself, as not only a legal right for asylum-seekers but also as a qualitative lived experience. Lingering on the claim of asylum-seeking interlocutors that their hotel was a 'prison', the analysis centres accommodation as a key mechanism through which social inequalities and exclusions are sedimented in the asylum system, with enduring consequences even for those successful in their asylum claims. That hotels are often located in urban centres, and allow residents to leave and enter, poses new questions regarding the production of 'everyday borders' (Yuval-Davis et al 2018) between asylum-seekers and the local areas in which they are accommodated. Considering the turn to hotel use within the broader context of neoliberalism, the paper explores the locational politics of asylum hotel procurement, considering how this shapes classed and racialised experiences of arrival and protection for asylum-seekers. In addition, the analysis draws connections between forms of accommodation and vulnerability to illegalisation within a UK policy terrain which is increasingly hostile to asylum-seekers. Finally, the paper ends by considering what projected turns to new forms of asylum accommodation might mean for the future of protection.

Bio: Charlotte Sanders is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at SOAS University of London, conducting ethnographic research on the relationship between migration, housing, and health in the UK context. Recent research has focused on lived experiences of asylum hotel accommodation and refugee homelessness in London and South England.

Dr Paolo Novak (SOAS University of London), *Asylum Liminality and Protection Thresholds*

Abstract: This paper investigates the threshold of international protection, understood as the shifting boundary between legal obligation and administrative practice. It does so through an examination of the liminal nature of asylum seeker statuses and their physical accommodation in a central Italian province. The paper explores the evolution of legal frameworks regulating asylum in Italy and explores how the state of "in-betweenness" is codified through administrative procedures and mechanisms. It argues that while international protection is often theorized as a stable (however temporary) legal status, its substantive scope is produced within the precarious, liminal spaces of the border regime. Drawing from institutional ethnography of Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS) in the province of Macerata, I utilize the concept of liminality to "read" the tension between de jure legal categories and de facto material practices of asylum. The paper identifies the threshold of protection as the specific point where administrative procedures, such as the privatisation of services, the racialised incorporation of different migrant communities, the deployment of deservingness criteria and the creation of uneven geographies of housing, reinforce or hollow out the state's protective mandate. I



argue that the threshold of protection is not a fixed legal line, but a material boundary constantly redrawn through the intersection of administrative conduct and the lived reality of the room, the hostel, and the camp. In this view, "accommodation speaks" to a shift in governance where the liminal state of the asylum seeker becomes a permanent site of state intervention and boundary-making.

Bio: Paolo Novak is Senior Lecturer in Development Studies and Co-Director of the Centre of Migration and Diaspora Studies, SOAS London. His work draws on feminist and postcolonial spatial theory to study the contested geographies, scales, and territorial formations of borders and migration. He is the author of *Buildings of Refuge* (BUP 2025).

Panel 12| Mixed-heritage relationships and racialised boundaries in European societies

Chair: Dr Elizabeth Mavroudi (Loughborough University)

This panel explores research on the complex histories, lived experiences, dynamic identities and cultural representations of mixed-heritage relationships in Europe's present and past. It showcases the work of some of the research team members of our international cross-disciplinary network 'Mixed relationships and racialised boundaries in European societies (1920s-present)'. It also presents the results of our participatory pilot research on mixed race families, their identities and digital use in Germany and Norway. The Network is funded by the Independent Social Research Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK. Taking a comparative, cross-disciplinary European perspective and mixed-methods approach, our research programme provides an intersectional analysis of lived experiences, histories and identity constructions of interracial families in European societies with a critical historiographic examination of the societal legacy of their cultural representation in media and public discourse. It also aims to explore digital media as a critical creative space in which people with mixed-heritage backgrounds can express self-representations and share alternative perspectives and counter-narratives to mainstream representations and increasing far right authoritarianism in a European context. Using a critical, de-colonial and intersectional perspective enables us to capture the complexity of mixed-heritage families' life histories and to examine how different markers of identity/difference (incl. 'race', gender, sexuality, class and generation/age) impact on them and shifting identity constructions in historical and contemporary perspectives. Finally, this panel and project demonstrate the importance of critically assessing ongoing impacts of past migrations, racisms, representations and inequalities on current racialised minority identities and politics.

Dr Iris Wigger (Loughborough University), Dr Margaret Byron (University of Leicester), and Dr Elizabeth Mavroudi, *Introducing the 'Mixed relationships and racialised boundaries in European societies (1920s-present)' research network*

Abstract: The paper will discuss the academic, theoretical and empirical rationale for our project and network in more detail, outlining the main literature and research perspectives involved and the activities associated with it. The paper will also outline our research questions, aims and methods we have used in our qualitative pilot research projects in Germany and Norway. The purposive sample of participants for our pilot research is diverse, including people from different ethnic and social backgrounds. Using a critical, postcolonial, intersectional perspective will allow us to capture the complexity of mixed heritage families' life histories and experiences across generations, and to examine how markers of difference impact on interracial relationships and shifting mixed-heritage identity constructions. We will discuss the importance of historiographic, rhetorical analysis of the historical legacy of racialised media/wider public discourses and racially structured discriminations associated with mixed-heritage couples/families in European history and their contemporary repercussions based around the concept of 'intersectional stereotyping' (Wigger 2019). The paper will also highlight the need for such collaborative, international networks and critical research as a means to generate substantial knowledge on the complex histories, identities, lived experiences and representations of black and white mixed-heritage families in Europe. Generating critical understanding and knowledge can help us to deal with the legacy of past as well as present colonialisms, oppressions, racisms and the rise of far right populism and to unravel the ways belonging and inclusion for mixed-heritage families can be promoted. Finally, the paper will outline next steps for our research network.



Bios: Dr Margaret Byron (Associate Professor in Human Geography, University of Leicester). Research interests focus on post war migration from the Caribbean to Britain and Western Europe and the trajectories and experiences of this diaspora. Her main publications include: Byron M., Condon, S. (2008). *Migration in Comparative Perspective: Caribbean Communities in Britain and France*. Routledge. **Dr Iris Wigger** (Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Loughborough University and Visiting Associate Professor in Sociology, University College Dublin). Research interests in historically grounded racism analysis, Critical Race/Whiteness Studies, mixed-heritage relationships, 'intersectional stereotyping', and migration. Her recent publications include the 2017 book on *Intersections of Race, Nation, Gender and Class in 1920s Germany* and 2024 paper on Navigating 'race' and challenging racisms in the Academy: in *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. **Dr Elizabeth Mavroudi** (Reader in Human Geography at Loughborough University) is a migration and diaspora scholar with many publications focusing on migration and inclusion, diasporic identity, politics and (dis)connections with homeland/host contexts, and the complexities that such cross-border hybridities and in-betweenness can create in material, emotional and embodied ways for those in diaspora.

Dr Margaret Byron, Dr Iris Wigger, Professor Rebecca King-O'Riain (Maynooth University), Dr Tony Sandset (online, University of Oslo), Professor Tracey Owens Patton (University of Wyoming), and Elizabeth Mavroudi, *Negotiating mixed-heritage family identities in Germany and Norway: Exploring representations, lived experiences, agency and digital spaces*

Abstract: This paper will address 3 key research questions we are raising in the 'Mixed-relationships-racialised boundaries' research project: 1) What are main patterns in the complex histories and shifting experiences and identities of black/white mixed-heritage families in European history? 2) What role do intersecting markers of identity and difference (e.g. 'race', ethnicity, religion, nation, gender, sexuality, age) play in the identity constructions of interracial families and different generations? 3) In what ways can digital media serve as a space for mixed-heritage peoples' self-representations and be mobilised to shape (counter-) self-narratives, alternative perspectives, challenge stereotypical representations and provide a sense of belonging and support? It will do so by discussing findings of our pilot project research in Norway and Germany with four diverse mixed-heritage families with the descendants of first-generation interracial couples, children/grandchildren. This paper will focus specifically on their dynamic and changing identity negotiations through time in terms of intergenerational differences (Song 2017; Doucet et al 2019) and the opportunities as well as challenges this creates, such as intergenerational trauma and feelings of empowerment and agency. More specifically we will reflect on the material and digital everyday spaces and places where such identities, and belonging are articulated, narrated and performed. We explore how these self-representations on, for example, social media platforms, act as a space to counter stereotypical narratives of 'mixed race' and 'mixedness', to voice alternative narratives and construct 'digital diasporas' (Ponzanesi 2020) and 'hybrid agency' (Godin and Doná, 2017) as a form of meaningful politics and resistance to far right xenophobia, racist stereotyping and Othering.

Bios: Professor Rebecca King-O'Riain is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Maynooth University with research interests in: globalization, popular culture, emotions, and technology; racial/ethnic beauty pageants (*Pure Beauty: Judging Race in Japanese American Beauty Pageants* - University of Minnesota Press); critical race theory; qualitative methods; interracial marriage and multiracial people (*Global Mixed Race* - New York University Press). **Dr Tony Sandset's** (Center for Sustainable Healthcare Education, Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo) work focuses on the history of mixed-race identity seen through a historical lens of colonialism and imperialism. He is also interested in mixed race identity formation, issues around health for people of mixed-race decent, as well as the biopolitics of mixed-race relationships and the categorization of people of mixed-race backgrounds. **Professor Tracey Owens Patton** (University of Wyoming) is Professor of Rhetoric and Critical Cultural Studies & Media Studies and Interim Director of Graduate Studies in the

Department of English at The University of Wyoming. Patton's area of specialization is critical cultural communication, rhetorical studies, and transnational studies. She is the author of *A Nation's Undesirables: Mixed-Race Children and Whiteness in the Post-Nazi Era* (2024) and co-author of *Gender, Whiteness, and Power in Rodeo: Breaking Away from the Ties of Sexism and Racism* (2012).

Dr Bolaji Balogun (SOAS), *Critical Mixed-Race Studies and Identity Formation in Poland*

Abstract: As scholars increasingly examine how ideas of race, belonging, and national homogeneity are constructed and contested across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), discussions on race and national identity are beginning to gain attention. Despite this growing body of work, existing scholarship has yet to fully grapple with the diverse range of racial identities present in CEE. At the same time, calls for Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS) to develop into a more global field have not fully engaged with racial mixedness in this part of Europe. Consequently, there remains a notable gap in both fields: the experiences of mixed-race people in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in countries such as Poland, have received little substantive scholarly attention. Taking these absences as its point of departure, this talk brings Critical Mixed Race Studies into conversation with emerging debates on race, racism and national identity in Poland. By situating mixed-race experiences within a broader socio-historical context shaped by narratives of ethnic and racial homogeneity, the talk examines how racial difference is recognised, negotiated and sometimes denied in contemporary Polish society. In doing so, it extends the theoretical and empirical terrain of research on race and racism in the region, while also contributing to ongoing efforts to globalise CMRS beyond its focus in Western Europe and North America.

Bio: Dr Bolaji Balogun is a Political Sociologist at SOAS University of London, where he contributes to transnational debates on race and colonialism. He is the author of the award-winning article "Eastern Europe: The 'other' geographies in the colonial global economy" and the "ground-breaking" book *Race and the Colour-Line: the Boundaries of Europeanness in Poland*

Dr Tony Sandset (online, University of Oslo), *Beyond Anglo-American Frameworks: Toward a Scandinavian Critical Mixed-Race Studies*

Abstract: Critical mixed-race studies has matured into a significant interdisciplinary field, contributing vital insights to scholarship on racial identity, power hierarchies, and the politics of racial categorization. However, the field's development has been shaped predominantly by U.S. and UK contexts, which have set the terms for its key questions, analytical frameworks, and conceptual vocabulary. This paper asks what happens when critical mixed-race studies is situated within a Scandinavian socio-political landscape — and what such a repositioning might offer the broader field. I develop a set of conceptual arguments for how Scandinavian-based critical mixed-race scholarship can both draw on and push beyond Anglo-American perspectives. Scholarship rooted in U.S. and UK traditions has foregrounded racialization and racial hierarchy as central analytical categories — perspectives that remain underutilized in Scandinavian research contexts. At the same time, Scandinavian migration and ethnic studies have long engaged with the roles of culture, religious identity, and language in shaping processes of belonging, exclusion, and identity formation — dimensions that have received comparatively less attention in Anglo-American mixed-race scholarship. I argue that a productive exchange between these traditions is not only possible but necessary, and that attending to the specificities of the Scandinavian context can decenter dominant frameworks while enriching the field's conceptual repertoire. The paper thus poses a broader disciplinary challenge: how might critical mixed-race studies integrate these complementary analytical orientations into a more globally responsive scholarship?



Panel 13| Settling and unsettling communities: Multiculturalism, conviviality, adaptation, and resistance

Chair: Dr Kamran Khan (University of Birmingham)

Dr Rachel Ayrton (University of Birmingham), *Conviviality at 20: trends in the empirical application of conviviality in Social Science Journals*

Abstract: In a moment where ‘raising the colours’ and a political race to more restrictive and punitive migration policies dominate the public sphere, questions of how people live together in the context of difference are as urgent as they have ever been. Since the publication of Paul Gilroy’s *After Empire* over twenty years ago, there has been an explosion of interest in the concept of conviviality as a tool for examining the ‘unkempt, unruly and unplanned multicultural’ taking shape on the streets of postcolonial cities (Gilroy 2004, x). The resulting field is empirically rich, with many sociologists turning their attention to manifestations of conviviality in the everyday lives of human populations. After two decades of development, how does this body of work define and operationalise conviviality, and with what implications for the modes of sociality capable of countering postcolonial melancholia? This paper presents the findings of a scoping review conducted of sociological and adjacent literatures published between 2004-2024 using the concept of conviviality with reference to Gilroy’s work. It gives an overview of the temporal, geographic and disciplinary scope of the field based on review of nearly 300 papers, contextualising the detailed excavation of 139 empirical studies. Various positioning conviviality as social practice, capability, space and/or culture, this body of work speaks to key debates around what depth/intensity of relationality the term encompasses; what conditions and conditionalities give rise to conviviality, with implications for its relative (in)stability; and, critically, how conviviality accommodates, coexists with or resists conflict and hierarchical power relations.

Bio: Rachel Ayrton is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the Institute for Research into Migration and Superdiversity, University of Birmingham. Her research concerns the nexus between conflict, conviviality and peacebuilding in diasporic contexts.

Dr Ijeoma Mercy Amaugo (Abia State University), *Gendered Exploitation and Reproductive Injustice: Mapping Baby-Factory Networks in South-East Nigeria*

Abstract: In South-East Nigeria, hidden “baby-factory” networks exploit young women and vulnerable families, often without their consent. These practices not only violate reproductive rights but also destabilize communities, fracture families, and perpetuate social inequalities. Despite their serious social impact, little research has systematically examined how these networks operate, who is affected, and the broader social and cultural factors that allow them to persist. This study explores the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of baby-factory networks. Using a mixed-methods approach, it combines qualitative interviews with approximately 25–30 survivors and affected family members, field observations, and document analysis to map the networks’ operations and their impact on communities. Preliminary analysis reveals that poverty, patriarchal norms, and weak institutional oversight create conditions where these networks thrive. Beyond individual harm, the networks disrupt social cohesion, displace affected women from family and community support, and exacerbate vulnerabilities in already marginalized populations. Gender, class, and institutional failure intersect to create persistent inequalities. By highlighting how localized exploitation contributes to broader social disruption, this study emphasizes the urgent need for coordinated intervention from policymakers, civil society, and community organizations. Addressing these injustices is essential for protecting reproductive rights, strengthening community resilience, and reducing social instability. This research

contributes to understanding how structural inequalities and gendered exploitation can “unsettle” communities in Nigeria.

Bio: Dr Ijeoma Ogba-Amaugo is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher at Abia State University, Nigeria. Her research focuses on gender, health, and social inequalities, with particular interest in reproductive justice, women’s health, and community vulnerability in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr Robert Higgins, *The Identity Multiplier: Agentic Capital and Strategic Biculturalism among Vietnamese Students in Superdiverse Japan*

Abstract: Traditional approaches to migration frame cultural identity as a deficit-based barrier to assimilation. This paper challenges such conventional paradigms by introducing the concept of the Identity Multiplier, exploring how migrants navigate overlapping social strata characteristics of superdiversity. Utilising data from a three-year longitudinal research project, the study tracked Vietnamese university students in Japan as they leverage their heritage identity not as a cultural weight, but as a dynamic psychological and strategic asset. In the context of Japan’s evolving demographic landscape, these students navigate a superdiverse reality where variables of legal status, labor market position, and transnational ties intersect. Moving beyond Bourdieu’s notions of inherited cultural capital, the findings indicate that students who maintain strong roots while selectively adopting Japanese social norms experience a multiplying effect. This hybridity functions as identity capital, acting as a crucial buffer against the challenges of discrimination and isolation inherent in modern unsettling communities. Through the lens of identity capital theory (Cote et al., 2016), this paper argues that biculturalism in a superdiverse era is not a state of being caught between two worlds. Instead, it represents a nuanced form of agentic multiplication, a process that converts diverse cultural competencies into expanded social and symbolic capital. By repositioning heritage identity as a tool for resilience and navigation, the study suggests that recognising the agency of superdiverse individuals is essential for rethinking integration in an age of growing global instability and exclusionary politics.

Bio: Robert M. Higgins (PhD) has been teaching and researching in Japanese higher education for 20 years. His research interests relate to situated language policy planning agency, particularly the performative action roles of teaching practitioners and students in the internationalisation of higher education. His research has been published internationally in *Current Issues in Language Planning* (2016; 2024).

Dr Charlene Rose (University of Birmingham), *How the Caribbean cuisine addressed the gaps between the concepts of creole and superdiversity?*

Abstract: When looking at how Caribbean restaurants and takeaways advertise to the Ladywood constituency through their signage there were signs that superdiversity could potentially further the creolisation of the Caribbean food itself, which is already a creole of different cuisines. As factors such as age, religion and place intersect with the Caribbean community there was a response to the diverse demographic landscape of Birmingham in relation to the food, particularly within the Ladywood constituency. Whilst the Caribbean community had traditional dishes, they were simultaneously adapting them to locally available ingredients, consumer preferences, and the broader superdiverse environment. These adaptations illustrate how food evolves within specific areas but, more significantly, highlight the relationship between superdiversity and creolisation. Each concept revealed gaps in the other, suggesting an interplay where superdiversity shapes creole cuisine while creolisation, in turn, reflects and accommodates an ever-changing social and cultural landscape.

Bio: Charlene is currently a CENTA Teaching and Training Fellow, responsible for the planning, preparation and delivery of training sessions for CENTA students. She is also an interdisciplinary

researcher with interests that lie in the fields of food, advertising, superdiversity, and public and school engagement.

Panel 14| Bordering and de-bordering

Chair: Professor Irina Kuznetsova (University of Birmingham)

Dr Marie Godin (University of Leicester, University of Oxford) and Dr Derya Ozkul (University of Warwick), *Digital Everyday Bordering: Navigating the UK's eVisa System in a Hostile Environment*

Abstract: This paper examines the UK's transition to a fully digital immigration system through the introduction of eVisas and the "View and Prove" share-code mechanism, analysing how migrants navigate these new forms of digitalised internal border control. Promoted by the Home Office as a modern and secure replacement for physical documents, digitalisation is unfolding within a hostile immigration environment that embeds immigration checks into everyday life. Drawing on scholarship on digital borders, identification, and everyday bordering, we conceptualise these developments as digital everyday bordering: migrants must repeatedly authenticate their status through online infrastructures used not only by the state but also by employers, landlords, airlines, and local authorities. Based on 40 in-depth interviews with migrants from diverse backgrounds, we show that experiences of the system are highly uneven. Outcomes are shaped by digital literacy, access to resources, language proficiency, disability, and the complexity of legal histories. Some participants face heightened risks of becoming effectively undocumented due to difficulties navigating digital platforms or resolving technical errors. Even migrants with secure statuses, such as permanent residency, encounter new vulnerabilities when older paper-based proofs cannot be transferred into digital form. Those with stronger digital skills and more stable legal positions tend to manage the system more successfully. Nevertheless, most participants describe the digital regime as stressful, opaque, and time-consuming, requiring constant management of "identity wallets" and maintenance of hybrid "immigration portfolios" that combine digital and physical evidence. We argue that digitalisation reinforces existing inequalities, generates new dependencies, and deepens precarity within an already stratified immigration regime.

Bios: **Marie Godin** is a Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Leicester in the School of Geography, Geology, and the Environment. Additionally, she is a research affiliate at the Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. Marie has served as the Co-Primary Investigator of the 'Digitising Identity' project. She is also an associate editor for the Journal of Migration Studies, a publication of Oxford University Press (OUP). **Derya Ozkul** is an Associate Professor in Sociology and a Co-Director of the Social Theory Centre at the University of Warwick. She is also a Research Affiliate at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. Derya has served as the Primary Investigator of the 'Digitising Identity' project. She has published extensively on the politics of migration and displacement, including a comprehensive research report titled 'Automating Immigration and Asylum'.

Professor Rachel Humphris (Queen Mary University of London), *(Un)Learning Deservingness: bordering from within the welfare/workfare state*

Abstract: As European welfare states increasingly rely on automated decision-making systems (ADM), interoperable databases, and machine learning, everyday bordering is becoming increasingly digitalised. This paper bridges digital welfare state research (Eubanks, 2017; Dencik and Kaun, 2020; Redden et al., 2020; Dencik, 2022; Bennett et al., 2024) and digital migration studies (Maxwell and Tomlinson, 2022; Narita, 2023) to examine how algorithmic systems produce legal precarity within the UK welfare/workfare state. Drawing on critical theories of citizenship (Goldberg, 2007; Gonzales and Sigona, 2017; Shilliam, 2018; Isin, 2024), the paper argues that welfare and migration

infrastructures are structured by a shared moral economy of deservingness. These infrastructures classify both ‘failed citizens’, those imagined as unable to meet liberal norms of contribution (Anderson, 2013) and ‘non-citizens’ through the same data-driven logics. Risk scoring, behavioural proxies, and interoperability enact forms of internal bordering, where access to welfare becomes conditional, revocable, and probationary. The paper explores how algorithmic bordering blurs the distinction between citizen and migrant, producing new forms of legal liminality (Menjívar 2006). These processes disproportionately affect racialised and marginalised groups, generating intersectional experiences of insecurity across welfare, migration, and data regimes. By situating welfare technologies within moral and political economies, the paper reframes the digital welfare state as a key site of bordering from within, while also pointing toward some ideas for solidarity informed by practices within so-called sanctuary cities.

Bio: Rachel Humphris is Professor of Political Anthropology at Queen Mary University of London. Her research examines borders, welfare states, citizenship and inequality.

Dr Mir Abdullah Miri (University of Exeter), Holly Rooke (University of Sheffield) and Professor Corinne Squire (University of Bristol), *‘People from refugee backgrounds can benefit from higher education like anybody else’: How de-bordering technologies and educational justice discourses can support refugees’ HE access*

Abstract: University provides financial, psychological, social and career benefits for refugees, and economic and social gains for host countries. Recognising higher education’s (HE’s) value, UNHCR has set a target of 15% of refugees accessing university by 2030. Currently, around 9% of refugees worldwide attend university. Even in high-income, high-HE access countries like the UK, everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018) and expulsive environments (Herd, 2023) exclude refugees from HE. However, ‘de-bordering’ technologies can support refugees’ HE access (Dona et al., 2026). Drawing on a differentiated understanding of de-bordering technologies as politico-legal, epistemic, socio-economic and psycho-social, and on Hage’s (2015) call for alter-political alongside anti-political contestation, we analyse our 2022-4 interviews with 38 refugees and others in HE, further education, local authorities, NGOs and informal networks, about constraints and affordances on refugees’ HE access. Participants foregrounded refugee-centred, welcoming, holistic approaches - ‘alter-university’ technologies, dissociated from universities’ dominant audit and profit framings. As well, they acknowledged the value of ‘anti-political’ work to revise university pre-requisites and curricula, increase resources, and oppose racism and discrimination. They also emphasised the importance of working across all sectors at once. Participants’ stress on deploying de-bordering technologies everywhere, cross-sectorally and intersectionally, indicated the broader discourse of educational justice within which they positioned HE de-bordering. We conclude with policy and practice suggestions for pursuing an anti-racist, educational justice strategy for HE de-bordering.

Bios: **Mir Abdullah Miri** is Postdoctoral Research Associate on the University of Exeter Nuffield Foundation project, ‘Education pathways for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children’. As a researcher with lived experience of forced displacement, he addresses refugee education through a relational, social justice lens. He has worked extensively in academia, research, consultancy and training. **Holly Rooke** is a PhD candidate at the University of Sheffield, researching ‘Home and homelessness in the hostile environment’. She is a member of South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group. She has previously worked in local government, with NGOs supporting people experiencing homelessness, and co-ordinated the Open Learning Initiative. **Corinne Squire** is Chair in Global Inequalities, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. She is co-author with Giorgia Dona and Aura Lounasmaa of *Debordering Higher Education* (Bristol University Press, 2026) and co-

coordinates the Open Learning Initiative, OLIVE (<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/edi/olive/>), supporting people from refugee backgrounds into higher education.

Dr Camilla Spadavecchia (Tilburg University), *Paths of Dissent: Italian Anarchists, Migration, and Transnational Networks, 1880–1920*

Abstract: This study presents a preliminary analysis of a small set of anarchist trajectories, forming part of a broader research project on migration from Italy to Argentina during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1880–1920). Focusing on a limited number of individual trajectories, this initial study applies a microhistorical methodology to reconstruct the mobility of anarchist individuals and their transnational networks. The research makes use of the mobilities paradigm to understand the mobility and immobility of people, ideas, and objects, examining how these movements—and the constraints on them—shape transnational networks, social relations, and political practices. This perspective situates the physical journeys of anarchists alongside the circulation of anarchist ideas and the formation of transnational political networks. Personal histories are reconstructed using archival records, newspaper materials, and correspondence between Italian consulates and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the Casellario Politico Centrale, where these anarchists were registered as “subversives” and surveilled by the Italian state. Historical newspapers such as *La Gazzetta di Parma* and *Il Piccolo* complement these sources, helping reconstruct individual movements and state surveillance. These anarchists were part of broader Italian migration flows, and their mobility created transnational political networks, revealing how individual trajectories contributed to the circulation of anarchist ideas and practices and discourses across the Atlantic. Studying their mobility specifically also challenges conventional notions of diaspora, showing how political, social, and economic trajectories intersected in complex, non-linear ways. Their trajectories also question standard definitions of political migration.

Bio: Camilla Spadavecchia is an Assistant Professor and Academic Director in the Department of Culture Studies at Tilburg University, in the Netherlands. Her research focuses on migration, migration representation and migration policies with an intersectional perspective.

Panel 15| Unsettling Humanitarianism: Islamic Philanthropy, Power and Protection in Contexts of Displacement

Chair: Dr Sandra Pertek (University of Birmingham)

Discussant: Jonathan Benthall (Royal Anthropological Institute)

This panel brings together interdisciplinary perspectives to interrogate how Islamic philanthropy, Gulf State aid practices, and Muslim led humanitarian actors are reshaping global aid architectures. Amid intensifying crises, shifting geopolitical alignments, and renewed scholarly interest in vernacular and faith sensitive humanitarianisms, the panel examines how Islamic norms, values, and institutions both complement and challenge dominant humanitarian paradigms.

Together, the four papers illuminate the multiple scales at which Islamic humanitarian action operates—from state level foreign aid strategies to grassroots interventions, from doctrinal ethics to everyday organisational practices. They investigate how Islamic giving traditions, gendered vulnerabilities, and political pressures intersect with contemporary debates on neutrality, professionalisation, environmental destabilisation, and the blurring of humanitarian and political boundaries.

Altea Pericoli's contribution examines how Gulf States negotiate the global humanitarian order through Islamic normative frameworks and foreign policy interests, offering new empirical insights from the Syrian response. Natalia Paszkiewicz and Sandra Pertek analyse how Islamic philanthropy, approached as a relational ethics of care and justice, can reconfigure humanitarian professionalism—especially concerning gendered power dynamics. Nabil Muhammed and Sandra Pertek explore the opportunities and gaps in British Muslim charities' responses to women in displacement, outlining a rights based, faith sensitive model for protection and inclusion. Jonathan Benthall situates contemporary debates within a longer historical trajectory, interrogating claims of Islamic exceptionalism and warning against the risks of eroding the humanitarian principle of ring fencing charity from political and military entanglements.

Collectively, the panel highlights the plural, contested, and evolving nature of Muslim led humanitarianism, and invites reflection on how faith informed practices can enrich and transform the global humanitarian landscape.

Dr Altea Pericoli (Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Princeton), *Islamic aid and Gulf states in contemporary crises: Setting the framework*

Abstract: This presentation draws on the central argument of the book “Islamic aid and Gulf states in contemporary crises” which is based on the existence of non-universal but coexisting values that inspire humanitarianism, and the confrontation between values and practices in humanitarian aid implementation. The Gulf States, like any other donor states, are guided by the structural norms of the aid system and the politicisation of aid itself. However, originating from a different political and cultural background, including different Islamic understandings, they bring with them distinct practices and approaches within the system that can no longer be ignored. The author brings together an analysis of Islamic norms and foreign aid interventions by the Gulf States through the study of various levels of aid implementation and policies, and examines their behaviour in a specific case study: the Syrian humanitarian response from 2015 to 2023. The analysis explores the top-down decision-making process of aid allocation by Qatar, the UAE and non-state regional actors, as well as the humanitarian negotiations and aid distribution conducted by Gulf charities and local organisations in Syria after 2015. The presentation provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of Gulf States' foreign aid describes the Islamic values of humanitarianism and the Islamic social welfare instruments used for humanitarian financing, including zakat, sadaqa and waqf. It introduces new empirical evidence on the aid structures and project implementation of Qatar and the UAE in Syria. It also



explores an innovative conceptual framework on Gulf States' foreign aid analysis, which is applicable beyond the case studies. Finally, it analyses the aid interventions of Qatar and the UAE in Syria and for the Syrian refugee issue in the period 2015-2023.

Bio: Altea Pericoli is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow (2025–2028) jointly affiliated with the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University and the Department of Economics at Ca' Foscari University. From 2024 to 2025, she held a postdoctoral position in geopolitics and regional cooperation at the Centre for Advanced Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University. Her research focuses on the history of foreign aid provided by the Gulf States and on the values and norms of Islamic Humanitarianism. In 2023, she was awarded the Early Career Development Scholarship by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies to develop her PhD dissertation into a monograph.

Dr Natalia Paszkiewicz and Dr Sandra Pertek (University of Birmingham), *Multipolar humanitarianism, gendered vulnerability and professionalism: How can Islamic philanthropy transform the aid sector*

Abstract: The presentation draws on the social constructivist analysis of preliminary findings from 'Making Aid Work for Displaced Women' project, namely desk-based review and data collection in Qatar and the UK. Applying relational humanitarianism and global care ethics, we investigate in what ways Islamic philanthropy, conceptualised as a distinct set of values, beyond a financing modality, has a potential to transform aid sector; or if it risks being co-opted through replications of its structures, including those that disempower women, and are imposed in the name of professionalisation and secular status quo. Islamic philanthropy is a set of practices that include obligatory alms giving (zakat), charitable acts (sadaqa) and endowments (waqf) rooted in a rights-based ethics of wealth redistribution and a quest to build a more just society. In the context of funding cuts and growing crises, major actors in the aid sector have turned to Islamic financing. This shift could reform the humanitarian system, traditionally reluctant to engage with faith-based values or reproduce the very exclusions it seeks to overcome. Key themes that emerge indicate that stakeholders navigate complex power relations whereby what is deemed 'professional' is derived from the mainstream system with its ingrained patterns of humanitarian masculinities and women's victimisation. Different ways of doing good may be sidelined as 'unprofessional', and Islamic finance's social-justice orientation, considered by some as integral to Muslim giving, risks being dismissed as 'too radical'. There is a danger of instrumentalising Islamic social funding instead of embracing an alternative humanitarian framework that emphasizes relationality, equity and care as both metaphysical and social duties.

Bios: **Dr Natalia Paszkiewicz** is a Research Fellow on the 'Making Aid Work for Displaced Women' project, bringing two decades of experience with migrants and refugees. Trained in applied anthropology, she focuses on transforming forced-migration governance. Her work spans UKRI projects on domestic violence, global displacement fieldwork, and research on refugee livelihoods and protection. **Dr Sandra Pertek** is a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow and Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham. She researches gender, violence, religion, forced migration and humanitarianism, leading studies across the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Her UKRI project, "Making Aid Work for Displaced Women," advances innovative humanitarian financing and faith-sensitive protection strategies.

Nabil Muhammed (SOAS) and Dr Sandra Pertek (University of Birmingham), *Women's inclusion and protection: British Muslim charities' response to displacement*

Abstract: As part of the Making Aid Work project, we examine how Islamic philanthropy (IsP) may strengthen pathways to protection and inclusion for women in refugee, displacement and forced migration contexts. By drawing on a practical, historical, ethical and scriptural framework for women-centred IsP, we assess how faith-inspired interventions mitigate harm, restore dignity, and support resilience. We demonstrate how IsP can systematically fund mechanisms such as debt relief, psychosocial support, skills development, and education and livelihoods for women in crises. The

fourfold framework codifies ethical imperatives of protection, dignity and economic security. We complement this framework with a mapping of British Muslim charities' interventions for displaced women. Findings show diverse protection, health, livelihoods, and education programmes, ranging across GBV one-stop centres, psychosocial support, women-friendly spaces, maternal health services, dignity kits and livelihoods programmes for widows and female-headed households. These interventions suggest efforts of Muslim charities to operationalise culturally resonant mechanisms towards faith-sensitive care and to disrupt a continuum of violence against displaced women. While contemporary faith-inspired organisations are crucial agents in mitigating precarity in displacement, the fourfold framework has yet to be reflected widely in practice. Significant institutional gaps remain with gender policies, safeguarding frameworks and limited gender-disaggregated outcome monitoring. Further work on gender justice policies is needed, coupled with institutionalisation of faith-based ethical principles. Integrating IsP into organisational strategy offers a scalable, gender-responsive model to bridge the theory–practice gap and strengthen long-term impact of aid for forcibly displaced women.

Bio: Nabil Muhammed is a Research Fellow on the 'Making Aid Work for Displaced Women' project and a PhD candidate in Near and Middle Eastern Studies at SOAS. His research examines British Muslim charities' institutional practice. He brings a decade of experience across research, media, development, public policy, academia and language education.

Jonathan Benthall (Royal Anthropological Institute), *Continuities and Departures in the Study of Muslim-Led Charity*

Abstract: This paper reflects on shifting debates in the study of Muslim-led charity, drawing on over three decades of scholarship and recent contributions to the anthropology of humanitarianism. While contemporary researchers increasingly emphasize the uniqueness of Islamic giving, I argue for a more comparative and historically grounded approach. Claims that Islamic charitable principles—particularly zakat and the Qur'anic notion of *ḥaqq ma'lūm*—represent a qualitatively superior moral tradition risk reinforcing binaries that obscure shared ethical impulses across religious and secular humanitarianisms. Equally, critiques that portray Islamic voluntarism as distorted by state regulation overlook the practical necessity of accountability and organizational scale, especially in complex, industrialised societies. Ethnographic studies from Egypt, Palestine, and the UK reveal enduring tensions between religious motivations and professionalized humanitarian norms, yet these dynamics are far from unique to Muslim NGOs. A third emerging challenge concerns the blurring of boundaries between charity, politics, and armed struggle. Recent scholarship highlights forms of Muslim solidarity during conflicts in Bosnia and Syria that destabilize Euro-American distinctions between humanitarian and military action. While analytically productive, such framings risk unintended consequences—particularly in contexts already marked by suspicion toward Muslim-led aid. Situating these debates within the long arc of global geopolitics, including the legacy of the Soviet–Afghan war and the “War on Terror,” I underscore the importance of preserving a humanitarian space insulated, as far as possible, from political instrumentalization. Strengthening this ring-fencing principle is vital for fostering equitable recognition of Muslim-led charities within the global humanitarian landscape.

Bio: Jonathan Benthall is Director Emeritus, Royal Anthropological Institute. His publications include “The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World” (with Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan, 2003, new paperback edition, 2009), “Disasters, Relief and the Media” (2003, new edition, 2010), “Returning to Religion: Why a Secular Age is Haunted by Faith” (2008); *Islamic Charities and Islamic Humanism in Troubled Times* (2016); and review articles for “The Times Literary Supplement”. He was previously Director of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1974–2000), Founding Editor of *Anthropology Today*, Chair of the International NGO Training and Research Centre, Oxford (INTRAC), and an Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology, University College London. He was engaged as an adviser to the Islamic Charities Project (formerly Montreux Initiative), sponsored by the Swiss Federal

Department of Foreign Affairs (2005–2013), and has been engaged since 2006 by various legal teams as an expert on Islamic charities.

Panel 16| Knowledge production and creative methods as a mode of contestation

Chair: Dr Angelo Martins Jr (University of Birmingham)

Dr Francesca Guarino (Independent Researcher), *That which we don't speak: affective extraction, migrant victimhood and radical accountability in Palermo*

Abstract: Cutting across critical border and migration studies, this paper advances the concept of 'affective extraction' to explore how the essentialisation of racialised migrants into manageable categories – victim, criminal, resisting – operates as the instrumental premise for multiple affective responses, which become foundational to later value extractions (Lancione 2023; Danewid 2023). I first discuss 'affective extraction' as working through the de-subjectification of racialised migrants and de-historicised public framings of border politics (Danewid 2017), operating differently across the political spectrum. I then draw on ethnographic material collected across 2022-2023 in Palermo, a 'solidarity city' located on a main EU external border, to explore 1) how abstract images of migrants' victimhood are sustained across the city's cultural events, in the near-complete absence of racialised migrants, extracting self-absolution and legitimacy for the economic apparatus built on migration management and solidarity; 2) the counternarratives emerging within racialised migrants' own accounts, seldom publicly staged, which expand the de-historicised moment of border crossing to a 'life before' and a 'life afterwards', complexifying histories of 'forced migration'. Finally, drawing on personal experience during and after fieldwork, I address spaces of critical solidarity and knowledge production as potentially productive despite their entanglement within the racial capitalist system they seek to dismantle. As within these spaces self-reflexivity about contradictory internal praxis - despite professed commitments to decolonisation - is systematically overlooked, I envision 'radical accountability' as a collective, active engagement with the privilege-based compromises we make daily.

Bio: I am an independent scholar working on borders, race and Southern European geographies (PhD, University of Sheffield, May 2025). I am currently working on publications from my doctoral thesis – my first paper came out in January 2026 - and guest lecturing in Turin within the Critical Migration Studies course (MA).

Professor Heidi Armbruster (University of Southampton) and Liz Hingley (University of Southampton | University of Bristol), *Experimental Methods as Sanctuary: Insights from creative and experimental research in refugee contexts*

Abstract: This paper examines how experimental and creative research methods can act as forms of sanctuary-making in the study of migration. Rooted in feminist ethics of care, the approach reframes research encounters as spaces in which participants' safety, dignity, and agency are prioritized - mirroring the relational commitments of sanctuary practices themselves. Drawing on multimodal techniques such as creative walking, digital tools, sensory and participatory arts workshops, the paper demonstrates how such methods open up generative care practices and relationalities while troubling the epistemic and ethical pitfalls of extractive research. We argue that these experimental approaches do not merely document sanctuary but have the potential to enact it: they create and curate temporary zones of reciprocity, collaboration and co-presence that allow participants to narrate, reshape, and reimagine their experiences on their own terms. The paper thus positions creative methodologies as both analytical tools and as caring interventions that resonate with the ethos of sanctuary as an experiential inter-relational practice in the shadow of the politicized sphere of asylum. These issues of ethical-political care, creative experimentation and research will be explored on the basis of two distinct collaborative projects. Firstly, a creative walking project with asylum seekers in an English national park and secondly, workshops and exhibitions with the Portland Global Friendship



Group and men housed on the Bibby Stockholm Barge, designated temporary accommodation for those in the asylum system.

Bios: **Heidi Armbruster** is an anthropologist based at the University of Southampton. She specializes in migration issues in the German-speaking context and has developed comparative research on refugee reception and grassroots solidarities in Germany and the UK. **Liz Hingley** is an artist and anthropologist. She is the Honorary Migration Mobilities Artist at the University of Bristol and a doctoral student on the Leverhulme Interdisciplinary Studies Programme at the University of Southampton. Liz has authored five books and founded The SIM Project in 2017- a collective mobile archive recently exhibited at V&A, London.

Professor Mikkel Rytter (Aarhus University), *Writing in the cracks of the refugee regime: Experiments with poetry and temporariness in a Danish context*

Abstract: In February 2019, the Danish government adopted a so-called “paradigm shift” in the national refugee policy. As a result, refugee protection became temporary, and the previous ambition of “integration” was replaced by a political agenda of “repatriation”. In 2020–2021 approximately 1,200 Syrians had their protection status reassessed. Many had their refugee status revoked and were asked to leave the country. The new approach has increased the insecurity and existential uncertainty in refugee networks all over Denmark. In collaboration with DFUNK (Danish Refugee Youth), I arranged two workshops in the spring 2025 where ten young people from Syria, Somalia, and Afghanistan met and, under the guidance of two experienced authors, experimented with writing poetry about “temporariness” and their situation as refugees in general. In this paper, discuss the methodological and epistemological potentials of writing poetry. The young writer’s poems not only provide a deeper understanding of what it means to live with a temporary protection status, but also become a tactical way to write in the cracks of the current refugee regime and appeal to the broader Danish public for recognition and solidarity.

Bio: Mikkel Rytter is Professor, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University.

Dr Ryan Lutz (Independent Researcher), *Decoloniality & Local Policy: Reimagining integration through migrant led knowledge production*

Abstract: This paper employs decoloniality as both theory and praxis to examine how co-produced research with migrant communities can meaningfully inform local policymaking on integration in Bristol, UK. Drawing on collaborative and empirical fieldwork conducted during a doctoral project, this paper traces the tensions between migrant led knowledge production and the structural constraints shaping local governance—particularly austerity, risk averse institutional cultures, and the broader rise of far-right political sentiment. The study demonstrates how co-production creates space for migrants to theorise integration on their own terms, generating pluriversal imaginaries that challenge dominant, nationally driven narratives about what integration is and how it should be governed. While these alternative framings encounter significant barriers when translated into policy practice, their introduction disrupts prevailing policy assumptions and reframes what policymakers understand their remit—and their problems—to be. The paper maps how lived experiences of the hostile environment foreground policy priorities that diverge sharply from those identified by local officials, yet remain within their capacity to address. By showing how migrant generated insights can reorient local integration strategies, using Bristol City Council as a case study, the paper offers a practical template for embedding decolonial knowledge production into policymaking. It argues for a reflexive approach that cultivates more inclusive, justice-oriented forms of local governance.

Bio: Ryan Lutz recently completed his PhD in Social Policy at the University of Bristol’s School for Policy Studies. Previously Ryan was Assistant Manager of Research and Strategy at the Kennedy Centre in

Washington DC and received his master's in public administration from the University of Southern California.

Panel 17| Care against the border: resistance, solidarity and belonging in the UK care economy

Chair: Pip McKnight (University of Birmingham)

Discussant: Professor Kathryn Cassidy (University of Northumbria) is professor and head of the human geography research group in the School of Geography and Natural Sciences at Northumbria University.

Across the UK, migration governance increasingly operates through everyday institutions, including healthcare and social care systems. From immigration charging regimes and data sharing in the NHS to visa restrictions and precarious labour conditions in the care sector, bordering practices shape both the delivery of care and the lives of those who provide and receive it. At the same time, care remains a vital site in which solidarity, resistance and alternative forms of belonging are forged.

This panel explores how bordering is enacted and contested across diverse sites of care in contemporary Britain. Bringing together research on migrant care workers, community health encounters and clinical practice, the panel examines how racialised migrants and healthcare professionals navigate the intersecting pressures of migration control, austerity and labour precarity.

The papers highlight how care infrastructures simultaneously reproduce inequality and open space for resistance. Migrant care workers sustain the UK's ageing population while building mutual aid networks and diasporic solidarities; community health encounters reveal how racialised mothers grapple with medical authority, disability and slow structural harms; and healthcare professionals negotiate ethical tensions as they challenge anti-migrant hostility and enact practices of advocacy and radical compassion.

Taken together, the panel positions care as a critical terrain of migration governance and political struggle. It foregrounds how everyday acts of solidarity, refusal and collective support within care systems expose the contradictions of hostile environment policies and illuminate alternative possibilities for belonging and collective life.

Professor Kathryn Cassidy (University of Northumbria), *From Refusal to Unbordering: Bordered Women, Maternity Care, and Practices of Everyday Abolition within Reproductive Violence*

Abstract: Drawing on participant observation within migrant justice coalitions in the North East of England alongside secondary data from policy documents, parliamentary sources, and third-sector reports, this paper argues that bordered women's refusal of early National Health Service (NHS) antenatal care constitutes more than an agential response to the violent conditions created by the UK's hostile environment. It proposes that reading for refusal in maternity care opens analytical pathways toward unbordering: the dismantling not only of specific border controls but of the exclusionary logics, ideologies, and power relations that sustain them. The paper situates bordered women's disengagement from state maternity services within a framework that connects the politics of refusal to the everyday abolitionist possibilities of unbordering. Where the NHS charging regime produces conditions in which refusal becomes both rational and necessary, the paper traces how this refusal is generative: opening pathways toward care-ful community spaces, affiliative action with selected campaign organisations, and the building of capacities for self-advocacy that operate according to logics of solidarity rather than deservingness. These everyday practices constitute what Lamble calls everyday abolition: the prefigurative work of building alternatives in the present that make unbordered futures possible, and what Gilmore understands as the construction of freedom as a place from the materials and relations at hand. The paper insists that attention to bordered women's refusal of state care directs the scholarly gaze not only toward state violence but toward the abolitionist possibilities that refusal makes thinkable and liveable. Bordered women's communities of

care are, in this reading, infrastructures of feeling that sustain the consciousness-foundations necessary for more fundamental challenges to border and reproductive violence.

Bio: Professor Kathryn Cassidy is professor and head of the human geography research group in the School of Geography and Natural Sciences at Northumbria University.

Mariam Malik (University of Southampton), *'Reading for refusal' - how debility, bordering and race structure child health/ development in Britain and what healthcare workers fail/refuse to see*

Abstract: Concerns about uptake of the MMR vaccine are long-standing, and efforts to address them have largely been unsuccessful. The UK has recently lost its 'measles elimination' status from the World Health Organization following outbreaks in North London (Hall, 2026; Stout, 2026). In this paper, I revisit the once-asserted issue of the MMR vaccine and autism being associated (DeStefano and Shimabukuro, 2019). Although this link has been thoroughly discredited, rumours continue to circulate within communities (Jama et al., 2018). I adopt 'reading for refusal' as a methodological commitment alongside a (Black) radical feminist praxis to approach ongoing vaccine hesitancy surrounding the MMR vaccine in inner-city London (Hall, 2026; Cassidy, 2023). I argue that dominant biomedical framings of hesitancy deflect attention from systems of racial capitalism that maim and disable, while the social model of disability has often failed to incorporate material and economic analysis (Chapman, 2023; Adler-Bolton and Vierkant, 2022; Puar, 2017). This gap leaves communities to interpret disability and risk at the intersection of institutional healthcare, racism, and Britain's hostile immigration regime (Pinter and Leon, 2025). Drawing on reflections from my work as a children's therapist in the NHS in North London since 2022, and as a doctoral researcher studying racialised migrant mothers with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), I consider encounters with poor, migrantised mothers seeking to understand their children's disabilities, including autism, and what they perceive as rising prevalence in their communities (Anderson, 2025; Duale and Gele, 2024). In these encounters, mothers act as ethnographers, deliberating whether to vaccinate their children or expressing regret for doing so. I reflect on the role of community-based healthcare workers in addressing conditions of 'slow harm' and their implications for health and development (Hodzic, 2016), as part of a praxis of solidarity and a radical public health response.

Bio: Mariam Malik is a human geography PhD researcher at the University of Southampton. She lives, organizes, and works in London, where she has worked in the NHS since 2018. Mariam is interested in and curious about how healthcare can be practiced in more liberatory ways.

Pip McKnight, *'I'm not the police': Midwives as agents of resistance to the hostile environment*

Abstract: The word midwife derives from the Old English mid wif, meaning 'with woman', a philosophy that continues to underpin the profession today. Midwives are trained to develop partnerships with women and birthing people, acting as advocates alongside their clinical role in facilitating safe births. Yet this 'with woman' relationship is increasingly challenged by systemic pressures. Bordering processes such as immigration surveillance, eligibility checks and charging regimes, combined with increasingly hostile political and popular narratives about migration, undermine the provision of equitable maternity care and contribute to poorer outcomes for migrantised and racialised populations. This paper explores how midwives navigate and resist these dynamics within their everyday practice. Drawing on interviews with 20 midwives working across a range of maternity care settings, the paper examines how practitioners respond to rigid institutional systems, immigration-related policies and discriminatory narratives that shape the context of care. It highlights the different forms of resistance midwives deploy in their day-to-day roles as they seek to uphold their professional commitments to advocacy and relational care. Using Cultural Safety (Ramsden, 1997) as an analytical framework, the paper explores how midwives interpret and enact their professional role in ways that challenge the constraints imposed by hostile environment policies. Cultural Safety foregrounds the

need for healthcare practitioners to recognise power imbalances, institutional discrimination and the ongoing effects of colonialism in healthcare encounters. Through this lens, the paper considers how midwives attempt to mitigate systemic harms experienced by migrantised and racialised birthing people, and reflects on the potential of Cultural Safety as an ethical framework for resisting exclusionary practices within maternity care.

Bio: Pip McKnight is a Research and Impact Fellow in the School of Social Policy, PhD candidate and midwifery educator. A registered midwife, Pip's research interests in forced migration, gender and reproductive health inequalities are informed by a clinical background in providing maternity care and advocacy for pregnant asylum seekers.

Jessica Potter (Doctor, Activist), *The Clinical Killjoy: Radical compassion as a technology of resistance within the NHS*

Abstract: Compassion has increasingly featured within health policy as a necessary virtue; important for patient safety; in service of social justice and potentially transformative. Compassion is variably defined as listening or awareness, a sense of care or empathy and taking action to alleviate suffering. Compassion arises, as a recent World Health Organisation publication on the subject claims, from "a universal experience of shared humanity" or as Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern hospice movement, famously said, "You matter because you are you." Yet, within the UK National Health Service (NHS), this universalist narrative is undermined by the "Hostile Environment," which utilises "emotional distancing" as a technology of control to facilitate detachment from racialised 'others' and suppress clinical solidarity (Potter & Meier, 2024). In these circumstances, rather than trigger the desired affective "soothing system" as Paul Gilbert (2009) describes, compassion can be perceived as threat. To counter this, I propose a radical praxis of compassion that moves beyond harmonious institutional rhetoric and embraces Ahmed's (2004) "politics of discomfort" - supporting healthcare workers to adopt the role of "feminist killjoy", willfully interrupting the carceral flow of internal borders. By treating compassion as a performative, disruptive act of "re-belonging," practitioners can "unstick" dehumanizing labels of "illegality" enforced by health surveillance. Such radical compassion constitutes a decolonial counter-practice: an intentional collapsing of the distances mandated by the carceral state to transform the clinical encounter into a site of sanctuary and systemic unmaking.

Bio: Jessica Potter is a doctor, academic and activist. Her research in critical public health explores how policy and power shape people's experiences of accessing healthcare. Alongside her clinical practice as a respiratory and tuberculosis specialist, she advocates for the right to health for all with the #PatientsNotPassports campaign.

Panel 18| Solidarity and Governance in Refugee Sponsorship: Reconfiguring Responsibility, Belonging and Integration

Chair: Dr Natasha Nicholls (University of Birmingham)

Discussant: Olivia Petie (University of Birmingham)

In a context where migration governance is increasingly shaped by restrictive border regimes, hostile political discourse and the erosion of international protection frameworks, refugee sponsorship has emerged as a prominent policy innovation across Europe and internationally. Framed as a model of civic participation in refugee protection, sponsorship enables citizens, community groups and civil society organisations to play a direct role in supporting refugees. Yet sponsorship also raises critical questions about how responsibility, solidarity and belonging are negotiated within contemporary migration regimes.

This panel examines refugee sponsorship in the UK as a site where governance, public attitudes and everyday encounters intersect. Drawing on empirical research across the UK's three sponsorship schemes (Community Sponsorship, Homes for Ukraine and Communities for Afghans) the panel explores how sponsorship redistributes responsibility between the state and civil society, reshapes public imaginaries of refuge and deservingness, and reconfigures everyday encounters between refugees and receiving communities.

Taken together, the papers show how refugee sponsorship operates as a form of governance, a social practice and a moral discourse. They explore how hybrid public–private partnerships mobilise civic actors in refugee reception, how public understandings of sponsorship reflect hierarchies of belonging and racialised notions of deservingness, and how everyday contact between volunteers and refugees can challenge exclusionary narratives. The panel also considers how these interactions shape refugees' opportunities to develop the capabilities needed to flourish. By examining sponsorship across these interconnected dimensions, the panel highlights both the possibilities and tensions of community-led approaches to refugee protection in an era of increasingly contested migration governance.

Dr Gabriella D'Avino (University of Birmingham), *Networked Humanitarian Public–Private Partnerships: Governing Responsibility and Risk in UK Refugee Sponsorship*

Abstract: Refugee sponsorship has emerged as a prominent innovation in humanitarian governance, yet there is still limited research examining how its institutional design redistributes responsibility, risk and accountability. This paper conceptualises sponsorship as a networked humanitarian public–private partnership (PPP), a hybrid arrangement through which the state orchestrates the involvement of civil society, community groups and households to deliver refugee admission and integration. Integrating PPP governance, network governance and Actor–Network Theory, it develops a multi-scalar framework capturing contractual, relational and material dimensions of sponsorship. Drawing on 28 qualitative interviews with policymakers, NGOs, local authorities and volunteers, the paper compares three UK schemes: Community Sponsorship, Homes for Ukraine and Communities for Afghans, as distinct PPP configurations. Variations in network design generate divergent patterns of coordination, oversight and cost-sharing. Across schemes, participatory humanitarianism frequently transfers operational and emotional labour to civic actors, raising questions about sustainability and equity in hybrid welfare governance.

Bio: Gabriella D'Avino is a migration researcher specialising in refugee resettlement, community sponsorship and complementary pathways, exploring how governance arrangements and social networks shape refugee integration and access to support.

Dr Natasha Nicholls, *Conditional solidarities and hierarchies of welcome: public attitudes towards refugee sponsorship in the UK*

Abstract: Since its introduction in 2016, the UK's Community Sponsorship (CS) scheme has been promoted as a model of civic engagement in refugee resettlement, highlighting the role of local communities in supporting refugee reception and integration. While previous studies have examined the experiences of sponsors and refugees, less attention has been paid to public perceptions of sponsorship and how these are shaped by race, geopolitics and belonging. Drawing on thirty semi-structured interviews with members of the UK public, this paper explores how sponsorship is understood among individuals with and without exposure to diversity, with half of the participants from ethnically diverse areas and half from less diverse regions. The analysis is informed by theories of hierarchies of deservingness and conditional hospitality and engages with scholarship on how racialisation shapes the politics of refuge and belonging. The findings reveal variations in opinion. Some participants expressed hostility towards refugee reception, while others showed selective solidarities, favouring Ukrainians as more "deserving" than other groups. At the same time, several respondents articulated more inclusive visions of sponsorship as an infrastructure for community-building and mutual benefit. These narratives illustrate how racialised imaginaries and conditional hospitality structure public engagement with sponsorship. The paper argues that refugee sponsorship is not only a technical policy tool but also a site where solidarities, exclusions and boundaries of belonging are negotiated. It highlights both the potential and the limits of sponsorship as a way of fostering inclusive communities within wider struggles over racial justice and equality in migration governance.

Bio: Natasha Nicholls is a migration researcher and Honorary Research Fellow whose work focuses on community and volunteer involvement in refugee sponsorship, as well as complementary pathways and migrants' experiences of navigating healthcare systems in the UK.

Dr Marisol Reyes-Soto (University of Birmingham), *'They are lovely people just like us', the impact of Community Sponsorship Schemes in diverse and non-diverse communities in the UK.*

Abstract: Since 2016, the UK has expanded community-led resettlement initiatives, including Community Sponsorship, Homes for Ukraine, and Communities for Afghans, which now constitute the country's principal resettlement schemes and rely heavily on the active engagement of local communities. While these programmes are often justified as fostering social connections between refugees and host communities, limited research has examined the forms of contact they generate and how these interactions shape cross-group relations. Drawing on intergroup contact theory, which posits that interpersonal interactions between majority (ingroup) and minority (outgroup) members can foster mutual understanding and improve intergroup relations, this paper examines how contact operates within community-based resettlement contexts. The analysis is based on qualitative data from interviews with 21 sponsored refugees, 15 volunteers, 17 private and public service providers and 63 members of local communities who did not have direct contact with refugees. The study identifies eight sub-types of direct and indirect contact emerging through sponsorship arrangements, varying in structure, intensity, and purpose. These interactions occur through multiple channels during both the pre-arrival and arrival phases of the resettlement process. By analysing these interactions across different actors, the paper demonstrates how diverse contact dynamics develop within the sponsorship framework and how they shape relationships between members of the host society and sponsored refugees. The findings contribute to debates on intergroup contact by highlighting the complexity of contact forms generated through community-led resettlement and their implications for refugee inclusion and community relations.

Bio: Marisol Reyes Soto is a political scientist and migration researcher specialising in refugee empowerment, community-led protection and civil society engagement, with extensive research on community sponsorship across the UK and Europe.

Professor Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham), *Reimagining Integration: Refugee Sponsorship as Capability Development*

Abstract: Refugee sponsorship has gained increasing prominence in recent years as a potential durable solution to displacement, offering more comprehensive integration support than other resettlement pathways (D'Avino 2024). Phillimore (2024) argues that mainstream refugee integration policy focuses too narrowly on functional outcomes, such as employment, language acquisition, and health, centring on self-sufficiency rather than on what it means for refugees to flourish and lead a “good life.” To address this gap, she advocates for a capabilities approach, which foregrounds the freedoms, opportunities, and resources individuals need to develop as human beings and exercise meaningful choice. Drawing on the refugee integration capability framework, this paper examines how refugee sponsorship, both as a policy and practice, supports the development of refugees’ capabilities. We analyse data from 48 interviews with policymakers, NGO representatives, volunteers, hosts, and refugees involved in the UK’s three sponsorship programmes, using the integration capabilities framework as an analytical lens. We explore the extent to which sponsorship in practice, through the actions of volunteers and hosts, and as experienced by refugees, addresses unfreedoms and facilitates resource access. Our findings indicate that sponsorship frequently enhances refugees’ capabilities related to bodily integrity, health, communication, care, and play. However, structural constraints limit the development of capabilities associated with work, long-term planning, and aspects of affiliation. We argue that to enable the full range of integration capabilities, sponsorship policy must ensure early access to secure legal status and family reunion for all sponsored refugees, alongside stronger measures to promote access to meaningful employment.

Bio: Professor Jenny Phillimore is Professor of Migration and Superdiversity at the University of Birmingham.

Panel 19| Citizenship Regimes and Racial Injustice

Chair: Professor Ipek Demir (University of Leeds)

Discussant: Dr Gaja Maestri (Aston University) is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Aston University (Birmingham). Her research explores racial housing segregation and pro-migrant collective action through qualitative methods. She is the Principal Investigator of the ESRC project 'The Peripheralisation of Asylum Accommodation' and currently serves as Assistant Editor for the journal *Citizenship Studies*.

The UK has recently introduced new measures that limit the acquisition of citizenship for migrants coming to the UK, most notably through the 'earned settlement scheme' and the 'good character' requirement. These new policies do not represent a departure from a racialised regime but rather a continuation of discriminatory practices of the past and exemplified by the Windrush scandal. Thus, the boundaries of citizenship serve as an instrument of 'enclosure' through new policy pathways, strengthening racialised borders.

The panel examines the imaginary and actuality of citizenship in the UK and the differential contours of citizenship that can be bestowed, limited or denied through the implementation of varied yet interconnected immigration/citizenship policies and norms governing democratic participation. It explores how policies restricting citizenship amplify longstanding intersecting racial, socioeconomic and gender inequalities.

The panel brings together research across contexts: Windrush scandal; British Overseas Territories citizens, the 'good character' requirement and, through raciolinguistics, how language limits access to citizenship as both a legal status and democratic participation. It shows how citizenship (and settlement) is a site of exclusion but also a struggle for different articulations of rights and belonging in a 'new' policy context that draws on longstanding racial anxieties, colonial amnesia and racialised logics.

Dr Kalwinder Sandhu (Coventry University), *"...they can change their mind about anything": Temporality, Citizenship, Belonging and the Windrush Scandal*

Abstract: Global attention was drawn to the social injustice of the Windrush Scandal. People who despite living in the UK for decades as British citizens, were categorised as "illegal immigrants". Little scholarship attention is paid to temporality regarding loss of citizenship after living as a British citizen. This article focuses on the temporal nature of citizenship and belonging. With a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 participants who directly experienced the Windrush Scandal. Four findings emerge. Firstly, the victims did not perceive the scandal as a single one-off experience but rather a cocktail mix of everyday bordering, experienced since arriving to the UK as children. Secondly, everyday life became precarious, changing behaviours of victims. Thirdly, victims were blamed by their families and friends as well as the state. Finally, despite being granted their British citizenship, victims fear for their future security.

Bio: Kalwinder Sandhu is a Research Fellow at the centre for Peace and Security, at Coventry University. Her research interests include migration and gender-based violence. Her recent published work has focussed on the victims' lived experiences of the Windrush Scandal.

Dr Eve Hayes de Kalaf (School of Advanced Study, University of London) *Citizenship Regimes, Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Building the Case for Reparative Justice across the British Overseas Territories*

Abstract: Historically shaped by colonial occupation, the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, plantation labour and genocide, many of Britain's former "Crown Colonies" are today coming to terms with centuries of collective intergenerational trauma and the long-term impact of economic, political and environmental instability. Against this backdrop, British Overseas Territories (OTs) occupy a complex and often overlooked position. Although many are self-governing, the UK continues to retain control over their foreign affairs, defence and nationality laws. In 2022, British Overseas Territories Citizens (BOTCs) were afforded the right to live and work in the UK yet still hold a status classifying them as something other than "British". This paper builds on the findings of a recent exploratory visit to the OT of Bermuda in March 2026. It will also seek to further unpack the concept of the 'statelessness-like experience' (Hayes de Kalaf, 2025, Hayes de Kalaf & Slaven, 2026) which I developed following my work on the three-year AHRC-funded project "The Windrush Scandal in a Transnational and Commonwealth Context". Inspired too by discussions raised at the "Citizenship in Ruins" conference (Brinham & Canzutti, King's College, 2026) earlier this year, this paper will examine the legacies of citizenship regimes within and beyond Britain's OTs together with growing global demands for Britain to formally acknowledge and repair the historical harms of the enforcement of 'imagined' colonial borders and racialised citizenship(s). Ultimately, I will ask whether former British colonies will ever be in a position to make a collective case for reparatory justice to acknowledge and address continuing epistemic colonial violence.

Bio: Eve Hayes de Kalaf is Lecturer at the Institute of Historical Research, School of Advanced Study. Her book 'Legal Identity, Race and Belonging in the Dominican Republic' was published with a Foreword by the Pulitzer Prize winner Junot Díaz. She recently joined the editorial board of the journal *Citizenship Studies* as Assistant Editor.

Dr Kamran Khan (University of Birmingham) *How much language is enough?*

Abstract: In this paper, I examine the role of English and multilingualism within two spheres: language requirements for immigration and settlement as well democratic participation. On the one hand, English language requirements through testing have become more stringent for immigrants and adjacent segments of the population such as partners of immigrants seeking settlement. This is in large part a crafting of the nation within a monolingual, English dominant ideology. On the other, the electoral success of Hannah Spencer for the Green Party in the UK as well as Zohran Mamdani in the US has been predicated on a multilingual appeal to drive up democratic participation. In both their cases, they were heavily criticised and in the case of Spencer, accused of 'sectarianism.' In both spheres, there are raciolinguistic implications for how the nation should work and how democracy should function through the ideological lenses of how language and languages function in contemporary society. I consider the implications of this and how this connects to the wider treatment of those racialised as multilingual.

Bio: Kamran Khan is the director of the Mosaic research into multilingualism at the University of Birmingham. His research interests include citizenship, multilingualism and security and he is Assistant Editor, *Citizenship Studies*.

Dr Jasbir Singh, Professor Leah Bassel (Coventry University), and Professor Giorgia Doná (University of East London), *Never a Citizen: racial injustice and the refugee naturalisation ban*

Abstract: Since February 2025, the Home Office 'good character requirement' guidance denies citizenship to refugees deemed to have entered the UK 'illegally'. Building on research exploring

migrants' experiences of becoming UK citizens (Bassel, Monforte and Khan 2018; 2021), this paper focuses on the expansion of non-citizenship into uncharted areas – i.e. recognised refugees entering the country through unauthorised routes. This 'good character' guidance will affect an estimated 71,000 refugees (The Guardian 2025), and migrants more broadly. It represents a new pathway for racial injustice, as it occurs not at the state's border (Jones, Gunaratnam et al. 2017) but at its core. The paper examines how such denial affects racial inequalities first established under the British Empire (El-Enany 2018). As with the Windrush scandal, policies restricting citizenship amplify longstanding intersecting racial, socioeconomic and gender inequalities, continuing the hostile environment logic the Windrush scandal exemplified, and as such, of colonialism and empire. Together with ongoing measures which normalise reduced rights to settlement and citizenship, communities of colour are excluded and kept in precarity (Mort 2023). The broader signal is that refugees and all People of Colour can never be 'one of us' – echoing far right sentiment (Yeo 2025). We present preliminary findings from our ongoing research on how the denial of citizenship reinforces racial inequalities and intersects with gender, class and other factors, and the responses by 'never-citizens' and their allies to assert citizenship and belonging.

Bios: **Leah Bassel** is Professor of Politics and International Studies, and co-Chief Editor Citizenship Studies; **Jasber Singh** is Assistant Professor of Participatory Practice, both at Coventry University. **Giorgia Doná** is Professor of Forced Migration, co-director of the Centre for Migration, Refugees and Belonging at the University of East London, Trustee - Stuart Hall Foundation.

Panel 20| Migration governance, settlement and return

Chair: Professor Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham)

Professor Adrian Favell and Dr Kheira Arrouche (University College Cork), *African Mobility and the Reactive Turn in the UK–Ireland Migration Regime*

Abstract: Ireland has entered a new era of migration governance marked by sweeping reforms to asylum, visa, and citizenship regimes. Although framed by the government as administrative “modernisation” and risk management, these reforms reflect a broader shift from a protection-oriented framework toward deterrence and migration control. This paper examines how these developments intersect with the geopolitics of the UK–Ireland migration regime to reshape African mobility to Ireland. I argue that Ireland is undergoing a reactive turn in migration governance, driven in part by the intensification of deterrence policies in the United Kingdom as well as the EU. Drawing on qualitative research with African migrants in Ireland, the paper explores how this shift produces racialised hierarchies of mobility and increasingly fragmented pathways to settlement. Migrants and asylum seekers navigate a complex migration regime shaped by the interaction of UK deterrence strategies, Irish policy adjustments, and European migration frameworks, resulting in experiences of legal precarity and conditional belonging. By framing Ireland’s reactive technocracy against the UK’s spectacular punishment, the paper demonstrates how border governance is being effectively offshored, consigning African applicants to a waiting room of history. Ultimately, this paper illustrates how border spillover governance reshapes the social foundations of integration in an age of growing authoritarianism.

Bio: **Adrian Favell** is Professor of Social and Political Theory at University College Cork and the founding director of the Radical Humanities Laboratory. He is the author of *Philosophies of Integration* (1998), *Eurostars and Eurocities* (2008), *Before and After Superflat* (2012), *Immigration, Integration and Mobility: Collected Essays* (2015), and *The Integration Nation* (2022). Web: www.adrianfavell.com **Kheira Arrouche** is a Postdoctoral Researcher at University College Cork’s Radical Humanities Laboratory and a Visiting Scholar at the University of Leeds. She works on one of the sub-projects of an ERC-funded project, MIGMOBS - The Orders and Borders of Global Inequality: Migration and Mobilities in Late Capitalism, investigating African mobilities to Ireland, focusing on Algerian, Somali, Nigerian, and South African migrants. She is the author of the Ethnic and Racial Studies paper *Afterlives of decolonisation: racialisation of West and Central African migrants in contemporary Algeria*.

Professor Pía Riggirozzi and Dr Natalia Cintra (University of Southampton), *Return Without Protection: Securitisation, Mass Return, and the Erosion of Durable Solutions in Central America*

Abstract: Seventy-five years after the Refugee Convention, return—whether voluntary, involuntary, or forced— has become one of the most consequential yet least critically governed dimensions of refugee protection. While durable solutions are normatively anchored in voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement, contemporary migration governance increasingly relies on adverse return as a de facto policy tool. This paper argues that the normalisation of coerced and induced return exposes ethical and institutional tensions within the international protection regime, undermining the

principles of voluntariness, safety, and rights restitution that underpin refugee protection. Focusing on Central America, we examine how collapsing migration routes, intensified securitisation, shrinking humanitarian space, and restrictive asylum policies have transformed return from an exceptional outcome into a structural feature of regional migration governance. Intensified border controls and externalised enforcement—particularly linked to US migration policy—have sharply reduced northbound mobility while accelerating deportations, pre-emptive ‘self-deportations’, and enforced immobility. These dynamics unfold amid rising forcibly displaced people across Latin America and the Caribbean driven by violence, climate shocks, and economic precarity. We show that return rarely aligns with the normative assumptions of voluntary repatriation or meaningful rights restoration. Instead, migrants are compelled back to contexts marked by institutional fragility, limited reintegration capacity, and humanitarian retrenchment. Drawing on mixed-methods research—including national data, fieldwork, surveys and interviews—we demonstrate how weakened governance infrastructures produce fragmented, exclusionary, and short-lived reintegration pathways. Return thus operates less as a durable solution than as a mechanism of containment, risking the erosion of the refugee regime’s ethical foundations.

Bios: **Pía Riggirozzi** is Professor of Global Politics at the University of Southampton, UK. Her research examines the political economy of development, human rights and migration governance, with a particular focus on gendered inequalities and forced migration in Latin America. She is the author of *Displacement, human rights, and sexual and reproductive health: conceptualizing gender protection gaps in Latin America* (with Natalia Cintra and David Owen, 2023) and has published extensively in journals such as the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *International Migration Review*, *Migration Studies*, and *International Affairs*. **Dr Natalia Cintra** is British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the Politics and International Relations Department at the University of Southampton, with the project ‘Racial Politics of Forced Displacement in Latin America’, and Co-Investigator of the ESRC-UKRI funded project ‘Mapping the Humanitarian Visa Policies in Brazil’. She is Co-Director of the Centre for Political Ethnography, also at the University of Southampton.

Dr Chiara Berneri (Open University) and Dr Gabriella D’Avino (University of Birmingham), *From Temporary Protection to Durable Solutions? The Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Asylum–Regularisation Nexus in the UK*

Abstract: The UK’s Homes for Ukraine (H4U) sponsorship scheme, introduced in March 2022, has been widely presented as an innovative humanitarian response to mass displacement, enabling more than 160,000 Ukrainians to access safety, employment, welfare and education in the UK. Yet the scheme also illustrates emerging tensions within contemporary protection regimes, where selective admission pathways coexist with increasingly restrictive asylum policies. Compared with other forcibly displaced groups, Ukrainian beneficiaries have accessed a comparatively privileged route to protection, raising important questions about fairness, hierarchy and the fragmentation of protection systems. This paper situates H4U within the asylum–regularisation nexus, examining how temporary humanitarian admission interacts with immigration law to shape migrants’ longer-term legal trajectories. While the scheme provides immediate access to protection and socio-economic rights, its time-limited design initially granted three years of leave and was later extended through the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme announced in 2025. Despite this extension, uncertainty remains regarding pathways to permanent status. The absence of clear routes to settlement risks generating forms of legal precarity and potential irregularisation.

Drawing on legal and policy analysis, the paper examines the structural barriers within UK immigration law that limit transitions to permanent status and situates these dynamics within broader European debates on temporary protection. It argues that reliance on exceptional and time-limited schemes may expand access to protection while simultaneously institutionalising differentiated rights and hierarchies of deservingness within humanitarian governance.

Bios: **Chiara Berneri** is a Lecturer in Law at The Open University. Her research focuses on EU law, human rights, and immigration and refugee law. She holds degrees from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, the University of Edinburgh, and City St George's, and has published widely on migration and refugee protection. **Gabriella D'Avino** is an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow at The Open University and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham. Her research examines refugee sponsorship, complementary pathways and protection governance. She uses socio-legal and mixed methods and has advised governments and NGOs on refugee sponsorship and migration policy.

Dr Esra Kaytaz (Coventry University), *Temporal Governance of Protection in the UK*

Abstract: Drawing on a comparative research project on temporary protection in the UK, Denmark, Germany and Norway, this article analyses how refugee protection has become more temporary in the UK. Expanding on literature on the temporal governance of asylum in the UK, policies of deterrence and securitisation of migration, this article demonstrates how temporal governance of refugee protection in the UK is a punitive means of othering refugees who have arrived through 'unauthorised' channels. Based on a small number of interviews with stakeholders and extensive policy analysis, the article identifies three ways which temporariness has permeated refugee protection in the UK over the past two decades. First, mechanisms such as safe return reviews and the introduction of refugee leave have rendered refugee protection probationary. Second, practices such as the now scrapped differentiated status under the Nationality and Borders Act and the recently announced 'core protection' created categories of temporary protection. Third, bespoke nationality-based schemes for Afghans, Ukrainians, and Hong Kongers impose conditionality, and thus temporariness, on protection by embedding it within immigration schemes outside the asylum system. The article concludes that underlying logic of temporal governance in the UK is notable in its emphasis on 'how' claimants have arrived over 'why' they have left or prospects of return. This logic highlights the extent of the policies departure from the original intent of temporary protection mechanisms to fragmenting refugee protection to reflect categories of deservingness.

Bio: Esra S. Kaytaz is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Peace and Security at Coventry University. Her research to date has focused on immigration detention, migrant journeys, belonging among Afghan refugees in the UK and most recently a project on temporary protection in Europe.

Panel 21| Politics of migration and belonging

Chair: Dr Angelo Martins Jr (University of Birmingham)

Dr Abida Younas (University of Warwick), *Border Regimes and the Affective Limits of Asylum: Refugee Literature in an Age of Deterrence*

Abstract: This paper examines how contemporary refugee literature reveals the affective limits of international asylum regimes in an era defined by deterrence, externalisation, and intensified border enforcement. Although international legal frameworks formally guarantee protection, states increasingly rely on mechanisms such as detention, travel bans, offshore processing, and bureaucratic delay to regulate mobility while maintaining the appearance of compliance with humanitarian norms. These practices generate conditions of legal precarity that are not only juridical but also deeply affective, producing experiences of waiting, suspension, anxiety, and temporal dislocation. Bringing literary analysis into dialogue with international asylum law, migration policy, and human rights documentation, this paper argues that refugee literature functions as a critical archive of displacement. Literary narratives capture experiential and emotional dimensions of migration governance that remain largely absent from legal and humanitarian discourse. The analysis focuses on *No Land to Light On* by Yara Zgheib and *The Haunting of Hajji Hotak* by Jamil Jan Kochai, two works that foreground how contemporary border regimes extend beyond territorial boundaries into the temporal and affective lives of displaced subjects. In *No Land to Light On*, immigration restrictions and bureaucratic delay fracture intimate life, transforming legal procedure into an embodied experience of prolonged suspension. In contrast, *The Haunting of Hajji Hotak* deploys haunting and narrative fragmentation to trace the afterlives of war, surveillance, and imperial violence that shape refugee existence. Read together, these texts demonstrate how refugee literature registers the emotional and temporal consequences of deterrence-based governance, illuminating the limits of asylum law and challenging dominant frameworks through which migration and protection are understood.

Bio: **Abida Younas** is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Warwick, UK, an Associate Fellow at the University of Essex, and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Osnabrück, Germany. Her research focuses on contemporary postcolonial conditions in South Asia and the Middle East and their impact on literature. She has published widely in leading international peer-reviewed journals and delivered invited talks at conferences across Pakistan, the UK, Europe, and the USA.

Zoe Bantleman (Barrister and Legal Director, University of Oxford | JUSTICE) and Alex Papasotiriou (Barrister, Garden Court Chambers), *Enemy of the People: Public interest and other modern authoritarian fictions*

Abstract: In Henrik Ibsen's 1882 play, *An Enemy of the People*, the protagonist utters, "The most dangerous enemy of the truth and freedom amongst us is the compact majority—yes, the damned, compact, liberal majority" after facing ostracisation for revealing the town's municipal baths, the source of its wealth, were contaminated with industrial waste. Public interest is elided with corrupting self-interest. The paper addresses the modern authoritarian phenomenon of subverting democratic ideals and eroding collective human rights, by invoking national interest, conceived as the interest of nationals, with populist propaganda taken as public opinion. In particular, it examines the regressive turn represented by the Council of Europe's Chişinău process. In an age of socioeconomic precarity, threats to the national interest are invoked to support calls for the renegotiation of human rights, under the guise of democratic legitimacy and necessity. The living instrument doctrine is inverted, to encourage the diminution and reinterpretation of rights to address the challenges of migration. The declaratory act becomes a defense mechanism for protecting fragile state egos and sovereignty, by displacing and deflecting blame onto first, the foreigner, and then onto fictional 'activist' judges, the



infamous “Enemies of the People”. The response, intended to immunise the state from the hostile foreign body, reveals itself as auto-immune for it fails to respect the integrity, authority and independence of the very institutions and frameworks necessary to safeguard a pluralistic society from electoral autocracy.

Bio: **Zoe Bantleman** is a barrister and Legal Director of JUSTICE, the erstwhile Legal Director of the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association (ILPA), and an editor of the Journal of Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law, who is writing her DPhil at the University of Oxford. **Alex Papatirou** is a barrister at Garden Court Chambers, whose practice involves complex advisory work, drafting and appearing before courts and tribunals in all matters of UK immigration and nationality law. He is a convenor of ILPA’s Courts and Tribunals Working Group.

Dr Özlem Ögtem-Young (University of Birmingham), *The Shape of Belonging: Experiences of Unaccompanied Young Migrants Seeking Asylum in England*

Abstract: Based on the monograph, *The Shape of Belonging*, this paper presents a novel theoretical and empirical understanding of the belonging of unaccompanied young people seeking asylum in Birmingham, England. Drawing on rich qualitative accounts, it examines how unaccompanied young people reconfigure belonging amid the precariousness of legal status as they navigate the intersecting challenges of displacement, the asylum system, and resettlement processes. Using an innovative analytical framework informed by Assemblage Theory, the paper highlights the dynamic nature, constituents, and shifting workings of belonging under conditions of precarity. Moving beyond dominant binaries, it conceptualises belonging as both virtual and actual, anchored in possibility, potentiality, and becoming, while tracing the troubled, paradoxical, and yet tenacious forms of belonging produced within the constrained realities of the UK asylum regime. The paper offers new theoretical and conceptual insights into the lived complexity and instability of belonging among unaccompanied young people, advancing an understanding of belonging that captures its fluidity, tensions, and continuous remaking within contexts of forced migration.

Bio: Özlem Ögtem-Young is a sociologist and qualitative researcher specialising in migration, belonging, poverty, and inequality. She is a Research and Teaching Fellow in the Department of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology at the University of Birmingham.

Dr Lisa Goodson (University of Birmingham), Professor Gabriella Elgenius (University of Gothenburg), Professor Christian Falge (Hochschule Bochum), and Professor Simon Pemberton (Keele University), *Emotional Citizenship and the Limits of Integration: Belonging Across Welfare Regimes in Superdiverse Cities*

Abstract: Integration policies are typically evaluated through material indicators such as employment, housing and access to services. While these measures capture important dimensions of inclusion, they overlook the emotional conditions through which migrants experience recognition, safety and belonging in everyday urban life. This paper introduces the concept of ‘emotional citizenship’ to examine how institutional and spatial contexts shape migrants’ emotional experiences of inclusion and exclusion in superdiverse cities. Drawing on secondary analysis of qualitative and participatory data from the EMPOWER project, the paper explores the emotional geographies of migrant women living in deprived urban neighbourhoods across three welfare regimes: the United Kingdom (liberal), Germany (corporatist) and Sweden (universalist). The analysis examines how women’s experiences of safety, recognition and belonging are shaped through encounters with welfare institutions, urban governance structures and everyday public spaces. The findings suggest that emotional citizenship is patterned by institutional design and policy culture. While welfare regimes distribute material resources differently, they also structure the emotional landscapes of integration through service

encounters, bureaucratic recognition and the governance of urban space. Across the three contexts, migrant women describe varying experiences of emotional safety, institutional recognition and community belonging, revealing how integration is lived not only through access to resources but also through the emotional conditions of everyday life. By linking emotional geographies to welfare regime analysis, the paper argues that integration frameworks must move beyond material indicators to consider the institutional production of emotional inclusion and exclusion. Emotional citizenship therefore offers a new analytical lens for understanding how migrants experience belonging in superdiverse urban contexts.

Bios: **Lisa Goodson** is Associate Professor at IRIS, University of Birmingham, UK. **Gabriella Elgenius** is Professor at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. **Christian Falge** is Professor at Hochschule Bochum, Germany. **Simon Pemberton** is Professor at Keele University, UK.

Panel 22| Hostile environments, displacement and resistance

Chair: Professor Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham)

Dr Tamlyn Monson (University of Birmingham | Coventry University) and Professor Susanne Wessendorf (Coventry University), *Inclusive Narratives, Unequal Realities: Diversity, Marginality and the Hostile Environment in East London*

Abstract: This paper explores how everyday encounters in East London are shaped by the tension between locally celebrated narratives of diversity and restrictive national approaches to immigration control. Drawing on ethnographic research in a neighbourhood with a long history of immigration, it shows how public spaces, markets, and community organisations enable practices of conviviality, cooperation, and coexistence among residents from diverse backgrounds. The local authority and institutions actively advance inclusive and ‘demigrantised’ representations of the area, framing all residents as equally belonging and part of the community. However, these affirmative narratives often obscure the lived experiences of many recent arrivals, particularly those with insecure legal status or limited access to welfare, whose everyday lives are shaped by punitive national bordering regimes. Legal precarity, language barriers, and limited institutional knowledge restrict access to key resources and constrain participation in community life. At the same time, longer-established residents frequently remain unaware of these structural inequalities. When newcomers do not align with the unspoken behavioural norms operating within charities, community hubs, or service-providing organisations, encounters with well-meaning staff can shift from welcoming to interactions that leave individuals feeling scrutinised, marginalised, or morally judged. The paper suggests that such moments of friction expose the political limits of celebratory local narratives of diversity. While inclusive representations seek to flatten difference and promote cohesion, unequal conditions produced through national immigration policy and local organisational practices continue to shape everyday encounters. Focusing on these dynamics demonstrates how bordering is enacted not only through formal state mechanisms, but also through routine interactions in urban settings.

Bio: **Tamlyn Monson** is a visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Peace and Security, Coventry University, and the Intellectual Disabilities Research Institute, University of Birmingham. Her work examines how people navigate unequal social and institutional settings, with much of her research addressing migration-related conflict, governance, and everyday inclusion. **Susanne Wessendorf** is Professor of Social Anthropology at Coventry University’s Centre for Peace and Security. Her work focuses on understanding new forms of social inclusion and exclusion in contexts of immigration-related diversity.

Dr Ibtissam Al-Farah (Independent Researcher), *Hostile Environments and Conditional Belonging: A Critical Realist Capability Perspective*

Abstract: This paper argues that the UK Hostile Environment works as capability governance. It shapes what people seeking asylum and refugees can actually do and be, not only what they are entitled to on paper. Using the capability approach alongside a critical realist lens, I explore how legal precarity and administrative delay limit the translation of rights into real possibilities. In this framing, belonging is not simply granted or denied. It is made conditional through everyday systems that organise work, welfare, housing, mobility and access to services. I distinguish between what people experience day to day, what institutions do in practice, and the deeper logic that organises the regime. The day-to-day is marked by uncertainty, waiting and constrained choice. The practical machinery includes right-to-work restrictions, welfare conditionality, housing checks, data sharing, and routine suspicion.



Underneath lies a logic of deterrence and conditional inclusion, where protection can coexist with designed insecurity. The paper is informed by working with and for people seeking asylum and refugees through community-engaged and participatory approaches, while keeping the argument focused on governance rather than individual cases. I use the idea of capability rationing to describe how access to security and participation is unequally allocated through policy and bureaucracy, while still being presented as a fair process. The paper offers a way to analyse hostile environments without leaning on crisis language. It shows how UK migration governance actively shapes the horizon of possible lives.

Bio: Ibtissam H. Al-Farah (PhD) is a UK-based policy specialist and researcher. Her work examines how UK migration governance shapes belonging, agency and wellbeing, drawing on the capability approach and critical realism. She works closely with people seeking asylum and refugees through community-engaged and participatory research.

Dr Amy Cortvriend (Loughborough University), *Everyday resistance in the lives of mothers seeking safety*

Abstract: Mothers seeking asylum in the UK occupy one of the most structurally vulnerable positions in contemporary British society, subjected to intersecting regimes of immigration control, gendered power relations, and hostile public discourse that together produce profound conditions of harm. Despite these conditions, women do not simply endure, they resist. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, this paper centres the experiences of mothers seeking safety to demonstrate the agency, creativity, and relational practices through which they contest the power relations that shape their lives. The paper builds on everyday resistance theory to propose the concept of ‘relational maternal resistance’, arguing that for these women, resistance is not a discrete political act, but a praxis woven into daily life when caring for children and through the quiet solidarities forged within informal networks. The paper finds that mothers' relationships with their children functioned as both the motivation and a resource for resistant practices, centring the importance of relationality in everyday resistance.

Bio: Amy Cortvriend is a lecturer in criminology at the Department of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy at Loughborough University. Her work sits within border zemiology and recent work focuses on gender and resistance.

Dr Jayanthi Lingham (University of Sheffield, with non-presenting co-author Professor Majella Kilkey), *Centring the right to care in a care-less regime*

Abstract: This paper contributes to understandings of how social reproduction – the activities of life-making and maintaining – is done by racialised migrant populations in the UK, in the face of care-less state and capitalist infrastructures that erode their capacities to survive. Insights come from research participants with histories shaped by European colonial plunder, who came to the UK from the global South - majority world - under different migration regimes. Complicating meanings of ‘location’ in care and social reproduction scholarship, we centre the perspectives of people physically situated in the global North, within an austerity-drained welfare state and a deeply hostile bordering regime but undertaking practices of social reproduction informed by individual and collective histories in the global South, and lives now lived across north/south binaries. Participants’ interpretations and practices of care challenge the meanings imposed by late-stage capitalist policy frameworks. Our findings locate ‘good care’ historically; beyond the narrow confines of UK social care policy; and within broader social relations. Migrant communities continue their practices of care from different locations, and earlier times, today. Household and community care and social reproductive relations do not exist

as separate spheres but overlap, entwined with one another. ‘Good care’ means socially reproducing globally separated families and communities and entails grappling against immigration policies that erode migrants’ lives and rights to care. Foregrounding these expansive understandings of care and practices of social reproduction, we consider how they may represent a refusal, by migrants, to accede to the violent and racialised organisation of life under capitalism.

Bio: Dr Jayanthi Lingham is a Research Associate in the Centre for Care at the University of Sheffield, working on a study ‘Borders & Care’, that examines the care needs and experiences of older migrants in Sheffield, UK, and those in care relations with them.

Panel 23 | Care and crisis in the asylum regime

Chair: Dr Natasha Nicholls (University of Birmingham)

Dr Catherine Harris (UCL, with non-presenting co-authors Claire Cameron, Naomi Lin and Michelle Heys), *Living in a State of Crisis: The Temporalities of Precarity for Migrant Mothers with Restricted Access to Public Funds*

Abstract: This paper examines how migrant mothers with varied immigration statuses- some with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), others with limited or newly acquired recourse- experience everyday life as an ongoing state of crisis. Drawing on six months of embedded ethnographic participant observation while volunteering within a London-based family support charity, the paper conceptualises crisis not as an exceptional event but as a chronic condition produced through overlapping exclusions. Ethnographic fieldnotes from daily interactions within the charity reveal how families navigate persistent instability, including food insecurity, hotel placements without kitchen facilities, and inappropriate or unsafe local authority housing- even for those who technically have recourse to public funds. Bureaucratic barriers- such as repeated Universal Credit claim closures, digitally mediated welfare systems, and banks' non-recognition of e-Visa documentation- further entrench precarity. These structural constraints generate a temporality of chronic crisis that shapes mothering practices, emotional wellbeing and access to essential resources. At the same time, the charity functions as a collective space of care where mothers share information, resources and strategies for navigating exclusionary systems. By foregrounding the everyday textures of managing crisis across differing legal entitlements, the paper contributes to debates on temporalities of precarity, migration governance and the social reproduction of marginalised families.

Bio: Catherine Harris is a Senior Research Fellow at the UCL Social Research Institute and member of the Thomas Coram Research Unit. Her research focuses on marginalised urban communities, children and families, using qualitative, participatory and creative research methods.

Dr Virginia Signorini (University of Milan), *The Social Worker's Body: Embodied Practice and Myoptic Care in Asylum Systems*

Abstract: Regimes of care in asylum systems risk reproducing moral control on migrant bodies through biopolitical governance and institutional violence; asylum practitioners must navigate myopticon's fractured accountability. This paper positions the social worker's body as an active site of knowledge that can both reproduce and subvert oppressive care regimes, showing how embodied practice opens epistemological and political pathways for anti-oppressive and emancipatory social work. Building on theoretical insights in anti-oppressive and embodied social work practice, I analyse how practitioners' embodied knowing - through somatic awareness, visceral responses and affective experience - generates critical knowledge about bordering logics, institutional contradictions and structural violence. The practitioner's body becomes both a site where care regimes' moral control is perceived and a locus of resistance where alternatives emerge. Empirically, the article draws on over a decade of fieldwork with women working in the Italian refugee system as caseworkers, social workers, and cultural mediators, alongside autoethnographic fragments from my own practice. These narratives demonstrate how embodied reflexivity - a hug, a held breath, a silence - (re)produces situated knowledge that exposes violence embedded in "conflicted care" mandates. For lives constrained by violence and structural oppression, the body becomes a critical site where normally unrepresented and unheard experiences are registered and become subversive through micro-counteractions. Centring practitioners' embodied knowing is thus an ethical and political necessity: the body as epistemological site enables what institutional discourse silences to surface, making "feeling better" not only therapeutic but politically significant (Ahmed 2004) - a modest yet meaningful act of resistance.

Bio: Virginia Signorini holds a PhD in Sociology and is a research fellow at the University of Milan. Her research examines international migration, asylum systems and embodied practices in social work.



She has extensive experience as a reception and procedures expert, trainer and consultant for European agencies and human rights organisations.

Dr Gabriella D'Avino (University of Birmingham), Professor Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham), and Professor Sin Yi Cheung (University of Cardiff) *Refugee Integration in Scholarship: Conceptual Ambiguity, Geographic Gaps and Systematic, AI-Assisted Scoping Review*

This paper presents findings from a systematic global scoping review examining how refugee integration has been conceptualised and studied across academic scholarship. The study addresses two interrelated challenges in the field: persistent conceptual ambiguity and structural unevenness in knowledge production.

The review analyses how key terms, including *integration*, *assimilation*, *acculturation*, *belonging* and *inclusion*, are defined, theorised and operationalised across disciplines, regions and methodological traditions. Building on a pilot study that revealed substantial terminological inconsistencies and strong geographic concentration of research, the full review conducts large-scale full-text analysis to map the conceptual architectures shaping contemporary understandings of integration.

The analysis demonstrates that integration remains the dominant organising concept within the literature but is frequently loosely defined and used interchangeably with related terms. Knowledge production is heavily concentrated in the Global North, particularly Europe, North America and Australia, while other regions remain comparatively underrepresented. Empirical research most commonly focuses on social networks, employment, health and housing, while areas such as safety, leisure and citizenship receive significantly less attention.

The paper also contributes methodologically by evaluating the use of AI-assisted qualitative analysis tools alongside manual coding in large-scale literature reviews. While AI-assisted tools enable efficient scaling of coding processes, the study shows that they cannot substitute for interpretive analysis when addressing conceptual nuance or critical framings.

By exposing conceptual inconsistencies and structural inequalities in the field, the paper provides a reflexive and methodologically transparent foundation for future research on refugee integration.

Bio: Gabriella D'Avino is a migration researcher specialising in refugee resettlement, community sponsorship and complementary pathways, exploring how governance arrangements and social networks shape refugee integration and access to support.

Dr Aubrey Grant (Community Sponsorship Hub and University of Massachusetts- Boston), *Networks of Support: Community Sponsorship and Civil Society Mobilisation in Restrictive Migration Regimes*

Abstract: In recent years, restrictive migration governance has intensified across many liberal democracies, reshaping systems of protection and producing new forms of legal precarity for migrants and refugees. In the United States, the suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), alongside expanded immigration enforcement and detention practices, have created significant gaps in formal protection infrastructures. At the same time, these developments have prompted new forms of civic mobilisation.

This paper examines how community sponsorship networks operate as informal infrastructures of support under restrictive migration governance. Drawing on mixed-methods research, including survey data, interviews with sponsors, and programmatic evidence from community sponsorship initiatives, it analyses how sponsor networks mobilize resources, advocacy, and care in contexts where state protection systems are weakened or contested.

Two empirical cases illustrate these dynamics. First, the paper explores how sponsor groups mobilized during USRAP suspension, providing integration support and sustaining complementary pathways for

forced migrant reception outside traditional resettlement pathways. Second, it examines community responses in Minnesota following targeted immigration enforcement and detention actions, where sponsorship networks rapidly organized legal support, advocacy, and material assistance for affected individuals and families.

The analysis argues that community sponsorship networks function not only as complementary resettlement actors but also as forms of civic infrastructure capable of responding to restrictive migration governance. In doing so, the paper contributes to debates on migration governance, civil society mobilisation, and the politics of belonging by highlighting how grassroots networks reshape the distribution of responsibility for refugee protection.

Bio: Aubrey Grant, Ph.D., M.P.P., is a founder of the Community Sponsorship Hub, where she leads research, evaluation, and learning across national sponsorship initiatives. She is also an instructor in public policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her research focuses on refugee resettlement, community sponsorship, and civil society engagement in migration governance.

Panel 24| Alter-geopolitics and the micro-politics of border justice

Chair: Dr Rachel Ayrton (University of Birmingham)

David Stark (University of Birmingham), *Addressing authoritarian populism in the Second City*

Abstract: Following the Brexit referendum, the UK has become a key site in the global drift towards authoritarian populism. This paper considers Birmingham, its second city, as exemplar of a narrative of national decline, tracing how austerity, municipal collapse, and long standing histories of racialisation have converged with the mainstreaming of far right politics to produce new forms of precarity in a conjuncture characterised as “not yet fascism.” Against a backdrop of poverty, Islamophobia, intensified nationalism, calls for mass “remigration,” and public service cuts, Birmingham has been framed as symptomatic of national decline. This narrative legitimises displays of territorial nationalism and the street level harassment of racialised residents, exemplified by the emergence of “flagging” and by vigilante protests targeting migratised communities under the guise of “protecting the children.” I explore how these localised forms of intimidation intersect with broader shifts in migration governance, including the erosion of settlement and asylum protections, the externalisation of enforcement, and the expansion of market fundamentalist frameworks. The paper foregrounds Birmingham’s countervailing traditions of solidarity, mutual aid, and collective self defence. It documents how residents are mobilising across difference to resist far right incursions, challenge racialised crisis narratives, and build alternative infrastructures of care and belonging. By situating Birmingham within global patterns of displacement, authoritarian drift, and racialised bordering, the paper argues for analytical approaches that move beyond framings of decline to centre agency, solidarity mutual aid, and the everyday labour of resisting exclusion. It contributes to reimagining the possibilities of building communities of protection in a time of disaster nationalism.

Bio: David is a Research Fellow focusing on immigration policy, child poverty, and welfare. His work combines political-sociological analysis with practical advocacy, focusing on authoritarian populism, racialised bordering, and precarity within the 'hostile environment' of contemporary immigration policy discourse. He has a particular interest in solidarity, mutual aid, and community self-defence.

Professor Kathryn Cassidy and Dr Maria Dubrova (Northumbria University), *Intimate Alter-Geopolitics: Reimagining Bordering, Belonging and Securitisation through Displacement from Ukraine*

Abstract: Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, millions of people have been displaced across Europe. Drawing on empirical research conducted in Poland, Romania, and the UK between 2023 and 2025, this paper examines how intimate and geopolitical life are always already entangled, exploring the strategies people employ to preserve and protect intimate life across scales; from immediate responses protecting loved ones to long-term transnational initiatives safeguarding wider circles of belonging. Situating the analysis within conceptual frameworks of intimacy-geopolitics (Pain and Staeheli, 2014) and alter-geopolitics (Koopman, 2011), the paper argues that displacement and war render viscerally visible how intimate practices of care constitute alter-geopolitical acts: building alternative securities through relational connection rather than state protection, and generating new collective political subjectivities and possibilities. These practices do not simply supplement state debordering measures but exceed and contest them, forging forms of belonging and security that operate according to fundamentally different logics than those governing official temporary protection schemes. Drawing on Ruth Wilson Gilmore's abolitionist geography and Sarah Lamb's concept of everyday abolition, the paper reads these intimate alter-geopolitical practices as provisional experiments in reimagining borders and belonging; gestures towards futures of mobility rooted in mutual care rather than racialised hierarchies of deservingness and protection. In doing so,

it reveals how the intimate labour of displaced people and host communities together constitutes a distinct and generative form of alter-geopolitical praxis oriented towards securing lives with dignity and justice across difference.

Bios: **Professor Kathryn Cassidy** is professor and head of the human geography research group in the School of Geography and Natural Sciences at Northumbria University. **Dr. Maria Dubrova** is a lecturer in the School of Geography and Natural Sciences at Northumbria University.

Dr Marco Perolini (Independent Researcher), *Reimagining Borders and Rights: Migrant Activism and the Politics of Border Justice*

Abstract: Amid intensifying border regimes, rising authoritarian politics and the erosion of international protection frameworks, migration has become a central terrain of political contestation. Yet migrants are not merely objects of governance or humanitarian concern; they are also political actors who actively challenge borders and reimagine the meaning of rights, belonging and mobility. Drawing on the book *Migrant Activism and Human Rights* and empirical research with migrant activists in Germany, this paper examines how migrant-led movements reinterpret human rights and freedom of movement in struggles against border regimes. The analysis focuses on activist practices and discourses emerging in campaigns for regularisation, anti-deportation struggles and solidarity networks. The paper argues that migrant activism advances alternative imaginaries of mobility and rights that exceed the limits of state-centred human rights frameworks. Rather than appealing solely to existing legal protections, activists mobilise human rights as a political language to contest bordering practices and articulate broader claims to border and racial justice. In doing so, they reframe belonging beyond citizenship and challenge the territorial logic of the nation-state. Conceptually, the paper develops a multiscalar perspective on human rights that links local struggles with cross-movement solidarities and global critiques of border regimes. By foregrounding migrant political agency, the paper contributes to debates on how borders, belonging and rights can be reimagined in ways that open up more just futures of mobility.

Bio: Dr Marco Perolini is an independent scholar, and human rights researcher and policy specialist. He has worked extensively on issues related to migrants' rights, freedom of movement, and the impact of European border regimes. He has just published *Migration and Mobile Rights* a book focusing on the contribution of migrant-led movements to constructing human rights from below. As part of his work with Amnesty International, he has contributed to research reports, policy analysis, and advocacy efforts especially in the areas of civic space and gender justice.

Panel 25| Labour migration, belonging and transnational futures

Chair: Dr Marie Godin (Leicester University | University of Oxford)

Professor Liangni Sally Liu and Lin Yin (Nanchang University), *Western high-level talent expats in contemporary China: The displacement of their sense of belonging and "home"*

Abstract: China is usually considered as a major immigrant-sending country in the Global South. While this phenomenon continues, it should be acknowledged that along with China's rapid economic and social development, the country has emerged as an immigrant-receiving country since the beginning of the 21st century. For the Chinese government, international talent attraction has become a key development strategy in China in order to further leverage the modernity of the country. The paper focuses on those high-level talent expats from the Western developed countries who hold the R visa and are with urgently needed skills. Based on in-depth interviews conducted with 19 professional

expats with R visa, the paper particularly investigates their everyday life experience, sense of belonging and conceptualisation of “home”. The research found that there is a displacement between the enjoyment of the metropolitan lifestyle among those expats and their sense of belonging and “home”. What underpins this displacement are the intangible hurdles for cultural integration into the society, discomfort with the Chinese work ethics that are often driven by political ideology of the autocratic regime, and deep-rooted Euro-centralism idea. The research also found that their sense of belonging is aligned well with their conceptualisation of home. This scenario is largely in line with the claim that home for migrants might usefully be viewed less as a fixed and static object than as a dynamic process with ongoing and mediated interactions between self, others, places, societies and political realities.

Bio: Dr. Liangni Sally Liu is currently a Professor (tenured) in the School of Public Policy and Administration, Nanchang University, China. Her primary research interests include transnational migration, Chinese overseas, immigration policy in China, and ethnic relations. Lin Yin is a PhD candidate in the School of Public Policy and Administration, Nanchang University.

Douglas MacLean (University of Birmingham), *Opening the Black Box of Bilateral Policy Systems: Labour Migration Governance Along South-South Corridors*

Abstract:

Low-skilled migrant workers navigate the policy systems of both source and destination countries, yet relevant research and policy analysis predominantly examine these systems separately. This country-level focus obscures how policies, institutions and actors interrelate across migration corridors, potentially causing interventions in one country to produce consequences elsewhere, intended or otherwise. This paper argues for conceptualising a bilateral migration corridor as an interconnected policy system. Drawing on systems thinking and complexity theory, it develops a corridor-level framework for analysing the interrelationships between regulations, institutions, stakeholders and the power dynamics among them. Such an approach can reveal systemic features invisible to national-level analyses, including those that contribute to exploitation, abuse and other harms low-skilled migrant workers may experience. These insights can lead to more effective interventions for addressing worker well-being. The argument is developed through a qualitative case study of the Philippines-Qatar migration corridor, drawing on policy and other publicly available documents, alongside stakeholder interviews. The case involves two Global South countries with well-developed migration governance systems and a relatively large shared worker population. The research also contributes to scholarship on South–South migration corridors, which remain relatively underexamined. By opening the ‘black box’ of bilateral migration governance, the paper shifts analysis from source- and destination-country policy silos towards the corridor as a single policy system featuring distinct, yet interrelated components. It demonstrates the value of this perspective for understanding policy interdependencies and for designing interventions that better anticipate their consequences across migration corridors within the GCC, Southeast Asia and beyond.

Bio: Douglas MacLean is a PhD candidate at the School of Social Policy and Society, University of Birmingham. A lawyer and legal scholar by training, he is the founder of Justice Without Borders.

Dr Luisa Conti (Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences), *Welcoming Skilled Workers? Between Labour Shortages and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Rural Thuringia*

Abstract: This paper presents findings from the project WORTplus (Weltoffene Region Thüringens), which addresses skilled labour shortages in Thuringia by strengthening local strategies for the long-term retention of international workers. It focuses on a regional context marked by a clear contradiction: employers and institutions increasingly depend on migrant labour, while anti-

immigrant sentiment remains strong and the far right enjoys significant electoral support. The paper draws on interviews with international students working in the region, interviews with participants qualified through the previous project WORT as Beauftragte für weltoffene Organisationen (officers promoting organisational openness and inclusion) and stakeholder interviews conducted at the start of the WORTplus project. Based on these interviews, the paper identifies key challenges that shape whether international workers stay, leave, or imagine a future in the region. The findings highlight practical barriers to retention and point to strategies that may improve retention, arguing that a welcoming culture operates at multiple levels and must be actively organised, politically supported, and socially sustained. The case of WORTplus contributes to debates on uneven geographies of belonging, local migration governance, and the tensions between economic necessity and exclusionary politics.

Bio: Luisa Conti is a researcher at Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences. Her work focuses on migration, interculturality, diversity and discrimination, and organisational development. Her recent publications include work on participatory migration research, an approach she also draws on in WORTplus to examine regional responses to international migration in Thuringia.

Panel 26| Bordering, immigration enforcement and social (in)justice

Chair: Professor Irina Kuznetsova (University of Birmingham)

Dr Deena Dajani (International Institute for Environment and Development), *Drought in Displacement: uneven waterscapes and fragmented bordering in Mafraq, Jordan*

Abstract: Research and policy have focussed on drought as a [complex] driver of displacement, but there is comparatively less focus on how drought is experienced by forced migrants in arrival neighbourhoods. At the same time, theorisations of the internal border have attended to its multiplication and dispersal in the urban, emerging variously through institutions (policing, asylum bureaucracies, places of healthcare and education), symbolic and discursive constructions, and their social and cultural manifestations. This literature, drawing largely on the ‘work’ borders do in cities in the minority world, focuses, firstly, on the ways the border produces the migrant as ‘other’, and secondly, on how it tracks their bodies into increasingly everyday places and intimate spaces. This paper brings those two, currently separate, literatures on ‘drought displacement’ and the internal border together, and expands understandings of ‘border-work’ from understudied geographies. It draws on semi-structured qualitative interviews and a survey conducted in a low-income, drought-stressed, migrant-hosting neighbourhood in Mafraq, Jordan, to map the internal borders’ interactions with drought. It proposes that beyond emerging ‘through’ the urban (to track migrant bodies), the internal border is also doing ‘work’ in urban space: in this case, through multiplying flows of urban water in contexts of drought, so that it flows more reliably to some households rather than others within a single neighbourhood. The ‘work’ the border is doing here is described as fragmentation (of shared resources, and shared space). By extending analysis of drought into arrival neighbourhoods, the internal borders’ work in producing drought as an uneven everyday experience becomes more visible.

Bio: Dr Deena Dajani is a Senior Researcher at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Her research explores the lived experiences of forced migrants in cities and the intersection of migration governance with everyday urban space and infrastructures.

Aké Achi (Black Europeans), *Racialised European Diaspora: The EU's DEI Blind Spot, Brexit and Social Diplomacy concept*

Abstract: Recent EU anti racism initiatives foreground equality, inclusion, and “unity in diversity,” yet persistent questions remain about whose experiences are legible within EU policy—and whose are rendered peripheral. The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020–2025) and the subsequent strategy (2026–2030) have strengthened commitments to enforcement, partnership-building, and an “external” anti-racism dimension through diplomacy and the European External Action Service (EEAS). However, the diaspora, particularly in the UK, remains weakly integrated into these frameworks, despite facing distinct forms of legal and institutional precarity.

Evidence indicates both scale and disproportionality: studies commissioned by the EU Delegation in the UK estimate that around 800,000 EU nationals in the UK belong to ethnic minority groups; The Independent Monitoring Authority’s survey report that 20% of EU/EEA EFTA citizens experience difficulties accessing their rights, with 37% of those affected from ethnic minority backgrounds. Subsequent studies commissioned by the EU Delegation indicate that ethnic minority citizens face significant challenges in navigating the EU Settlement Scheme, both in obtaining and utilising their status. As a result, they may find themselves without formal migration status, raising concerns about a potential repeat of the ‘ Windrush Scandal.

These dynamics raise pressing scholarly questions about the EU’s commitment to inclusion and the territorial limits of its equality governance, the interaction between EU/UK anti-racism and migration

regimes, and the lived-experience-led mechanisms, such as Black Europeans' Social Diplomacy concept, for addressing the EU/UK equality blind spots.

Bio: Aké Achi is the CEO of Black Europeans and Migrants At Work and a recipient of the Human Trafficking Foundation Anti-Slavery Day Award. He established the European Minority Ethnic Citizens (EUROMEC) to bring racialised EU citizens together, which led to the EUROMEC Monitoring Network, in collaboration with the EU Delegation.

Professor Irina Kuznetsova (University of Birmingham), *Forced Immobilities and "Inconvenient People" in an Age of Growing Authoritarianism: Evidence from Occupied Ukraine*

Abstract: In conditions of war, occupation and displacement, people find themselves outside of the norm, visibility and protection. This is highly relevant to the experiences of people from parts of eastern Ukraine who have lived through the war and occupation, fled, or lived in-between since 2014. Introducing the term 'inconvenient people', we explore experiences of those who are involuntarily excluded from political decisions made regarding their neighbourhood or communities because of prejudices or the lack of language and knowledge to recognise their experiences and people who voluntarily choose to be invisible whether because of perceived prejudices and stigma, the willingness not to cause others stress or exhaustion.

'Inconvenient people' often felt trapped by both physical and symbolic borders. By exploring the traumatic responses to life under war, occupation and displacement from spatial, atmospheric and necropolitical perspectives, we discuss the intersectional experiences of fear caused by shelling, street violence, and the necessity of making decisions to flee. We argue that the understanding of the vulnerabilities of displaced populations caused by war, persecution, torture under conditions of authoritarian practices before their actual departure is crucial. See further: Kuznetsova, I & Mikheieva, O. (2025) 'Bordering and Mobilities in Ukraine: Inconvenient People in the Time of War', Routledge.

Bio: Irina Kuznetsova is Professor of Social Geography and Eurasian Studies at the University of Birmingham. Her research examines displacement, (im)mobility, authoritarianism, and feminist geopolitics. She co-authored an open access book 'Bordering and Mobilities in Ukraine: Inconvenient People at the time of war' and is a co-lead of Ukraine Policy Network in the UK.

Roundtable | Doing research in a hostile environment: Pathways to self-care and change

Scholars working on migration and human rights often deal with sensitive and emotionally demanding material whilst operating in an increasingly hostile and polarised context, which can take a significant toll on researcher wellbeing. Following the self-reflexive turn in forced migration studies, scholars are increasingly reflecting on the affective dimension of their work. Common themes include vicarious trauma, as well as feelings of helplessness, distress, and guilt. Elsewhere, a growing body of literature from across the social sciences is exploring how exposure to traumatic material can impact researcher wellbeing, and how protective practices may mitigate these harms. However, empirical evidence concerning the impact of conducting emotionally demanding research in a forced migration context remains limited. In response to this knowledge gap, this roundtable is aimed at PGRs looking to gain insights into navigating the emotional demands of conducting research relating to migration and human rights in a hostile environment. Through a reflective panel discussion with scholars who are experienced in conducting such research, this session aims to explore the effects of sensitive work on researchers whilst also facilitating space for discussion regarding how PGRs can mitigate the impact of potentially distressing research experiences on their wellbeing. The panel Q&A will be followed by a short activity, which will enable delegates to connect and share experiences and learning with peers.

Chair: Olivia Petie

Panel Speakers:

Dr Victorie Knox (Refugee Law Initiative, University of London) is a Lecturer in Refugee Studies at the University of London, where she has taught the Researching Refugee module on MA Refugee Protection & Forced Migration for over a decade. She has conducted research on displacement related to organised crime and corruption in the Americas since 2012, in academic and professional capacities, and is an expert on research ethics.

Professor Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham) is Professor of Migration and Superdiversity at the University of Birmingham and founding director of IRIS.

Dr Melanie Griffiths (University of Birmingham) is an Associate Professor in Human Geography at the University of Birmingham. She has spent nearly twenty years working on immigration and asylum issues and has led a number of migration-related projects, including on identity disputes in the asylum system; immigration detention and removal; asylum appeal processes; and the voice of children in parental deportation decisions. She has written a number of publications on a range of migration topics, including judicial processes; gender and masculinity; family life; time; uncertainty; and emotions. She is currently finishing a longitudinal study of mixed-citizenship families involving a member with precarious immigration status.

Workshop 1| Opening the Black Box: Authoritarianism and the Making of Migration

Migration studies have increasingly adopted critical and reflexive perspectives on the ethnonationalist and exclusionary logics that shape migration governance. Recent 'reflexive turn' in migration research approaches 'migration' is not a neutral or self-evident phenomenon but a socially and politically constructed process produced through discourses, governance practices and institutional categorizations.

However, much of this research has primarily focused on Northern destination countries. Authoritarian contexts, by contrast, are often oversimplified as immobile spaces or portrayed merely as regions of origin for 'migration' to the 'West'. Such general assumptions often rely on the conventional binary between 'authoritarian' and 'democratic' regimes, which implicitly perpetuates the distinction between 'non-civilized South/East' and 'civilized North'.

The proposed workshop questions such binary and oversimplifying perspectives to the 'migration-authoritarianism' nexus. Paying attention to exclusionary practices and hierarchical categorizations around 'migration' both in the 'North' and in the 'South'/'East', workshop speakers propose to complicate the analytical lens and to move beyond regime-type binaries, which reproduce uneven geographies of knowledge production about global mobility. Approaching authoritarianism as a practice of (state) brutalization and deprivation of rights, workshop speakers propose to examine how different configurations of state violence, discourses and institutional practices shape mobility and belonging across diverse political contexts.

At the same time, conducting research on migration governance and practices of moving in the authoritarian settings presents significant challenges. Limited access to reliable data, restrictions on academic freedom, and risks for researchers and participants can constrain empirical inquiry. Political repression, surveillance and censorship may also shape the production of knowledge itself, making it difficult to critically analyze migration governance and the experiences of affected populations. Our workshop addresses these challenges by examining how authoritarian forms of governance across the globe co-shape the discursive and institutional making of migration, citizenship and flight. Through empirical and theoretical contributions from diverse regional contexts, including Russia, Hungary, Myanmar, China and other countries and highlighting the forthcoming special issue, the workshop aims to broaden the geographical and conceptual scope of migration studies and foster a more nuanced understanding of how migration governance operates under authoritarian conditions.

Chair: Professor Anna Amelina (Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany)

Speakers:

- Tetiana Havlin (Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany)
- Professor Irina Kuznetsova (University of Birmingham)
- Paula Wallmeyer (University of Luxembourg)
- Dr Vera Messing (Central European University)

Workshop 2| Beyond Academic Borders: Knowledge Production in Times of Crisis

Migration remains one of the most politically charged issues of our time, central to the rising far-right and the expansion of authoritarian politics across the West. In this context of polarization and crisis, this workshop invites participants to critically interrogate the politics of knowledge production around migration, asking: who produces knowledge, for whom, and with what effects? We move beyond traditional academic boundaries to explore collaborative and participatory approaches that engage communities, activists, and practitioners outside the academy. Our workshop speakers reflect this, coming from academia and civil society.

In the first part of the workshop, we will consider different practices of knowledge co-production and the relationships and power dynamics underpinning them. The role of people with 'lived experience' will be explored, and their emergence as 'valuable subjects' (to NGOs, institutions, researchers, and communities themselves) critically interrogated. Drawing on our own research, including a collaborative project with the UK's Association for Visitors to Immigration Detention, we will discuss the limits to this role in terms of who is represented and what power those represented hold. How do the political economies of the migration sector and migration research shape whose lived experiences are 'valued' or not? How do gender, race, class, and criminalisation inform whose experiences are foregrounded and whose are silenced? In our discussion, we consider how scholar-activists can interrupt and invert these processes through working ethically with migrant communities and civil society, moving away from extractive practices, and toward equitable and reflexive research. Ultimately, our interest is in how this research can foster knowledge that resists exclusionary narratives and contributes to social justice.

In the latter part of the workshop, participants will be invited to think about concrete practices and methodologies that help us do so. We will introduce the GRAMNet Equity Toolkit, which was developed as a living, open-access resource to provide practical strategies for institutions, researchers and educators to embed reflexivity, accountability and community values into knowledge production. Designed in collaboration with community partners and structured around three pillars - collaboration, budgeting, and advocacy - it equips communities to negotiate fair terms and shape research agendas according to their priorities. By interrogating the legacies of extractive research, it advances a model of knowledge production that crosses academic boundaries to support collective struggles for justice, rights, and dignity in times of crisis.

The workshop itself follows the toolkit's principles by encouraging participants to share their own experiences of knowledge production in a series of guided activities and discussion points. Throughout the workshop, we will consider how our positionalities — across lived experience, academia, and advocacy — shape both our access to and our critique of the migration industry. In doing so, we ask how we might approach co-production not as an inclusive methodology, but as a liberatory practice that reclaims knowledge and power from institutions back to communities.

Chair: Kirstin Sonne (University of Edinburgh)

Speakers:

- Dr Cetta Mainwaring (University of Edinburgh)
- Dr Teresa Piacentini (University of Glasgow)
- Gee Manoharan (Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees)
- Bryony Nisbet (University of Edinburgh)

Workshop 3| Doing Ethnography in Convulsive Times: Patchwork Ethnography and Co-produced Knowledge in Migration Research

Ethnographic research has traditionally relied on long-term immersion, sustained presence in the field, and stable relationships with research participants. However, migration scholars increasingly conduct fieldwork in contexts marked by disruption, uncertainty, and rapid change. Intensifying border regimes, shifting migration policies, political crises, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have reshaped the conditions under which ethnographic knowledge is produced. These transformations raise important methodological and ethical questions for researchers working with migrant communities.

This workshop brings together interdisciplinary scholars to reflect on how ethnography can be practiced under such conditions. Focusing on the concept of patchwork ethnography, the session explores how fragmented, intermittent, and adaptive forms of engagement can still generate meaningful and rigorous insights. Rather than relying solely on prolonged immersion, patchwork ethnography (Günel and Watanabe, 2023) acknowledges that contemporary research often unfolds through shorter visits, remote interactions, digital communication, and collaborative exchanges that together form a “patchwork” of field encounters. For many migration researchers, particularly those navigating institutional constraints, mobility restrictions, and the precarity affecting both researchers and participants, such approaches have become an important methodological strategy.

At the same time, these shifting research practices invite renewed attention to the co-production of knowledge. Ethnographic research in migration studies frequently depends on close collaboration with migrants, community organisers, activists, and local intermediaries who shape research access, interpretation, and dissemination. In contexts where sustained field presence is limited, these relationships become even more central. Co-production therefore moves beyond a methodological aspiration to become a practical necessity, raising questions about authorship, representation, reciprocity, and responsibility in ethnographic work.

Through short presentations and facilitated discussion, speakers will share reflections from fieldwork conducted in diverse migration contexts. The workshop will examine how researchers have navigated fragmented field access while building collaborative relationships with participants and community partners.

Key questions guiding the discussion include:

- how can patchwork ethnography enable meaningful engagement with migrant communities when long-term immersion is difficult or impossible?
- what ways does patchwork fieldwork reshape relationships between researchers and participants, and what does this mean for the co-production of knowledge?
- How can researchers ensure ethical reciprocity and accountability when field encounters are intermittent or mediated through digital communication?
- What kinds of insights emerge from collaborative and co-produced ethnographic practices in migration research?
- How might these methodological adaptations reshape how ethnography is taught, practiced, and evaluated within migration studies?

By bringing together scholars across disciplines including anthropology, sociology, geography, and migration studies, the workshop aims to create a reflective and interactive space for discussing methodological experimentation in challenging research environments. Rather than framing patchwork ethnography as a compromise, the session considers how it can open new possibilities for collaborative, co-produced forms of knowledge that better reflect the complex and uneven realities

of migration today. Audience participation will form a central component of the workshop, inviting attendees to share their own experiences of adapting ethnographic practice in turbulent contexts

Chair: Dr Andrea Verdasco (University College London)

Speakers:

- Dr Maggie Neil (Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford)
- Dr Lucy Leon (COMPAS, University of Oxford)
- Dr Sabina Barone (University College London)
- Dr Andrea Verdasco (University College London)

Workshop 4| The irregular migration industry and lived experiences of Vietnamese migrants to the UK

Against the backdrop of rising anti-migrant politics, increasing restrictions on migration and hyper-visualisation of the 'border spectacle', one cohort has largely stayed under the radar: recent Vietnamese migrants. After the horror of the Essex-39 tragedy in 2019 (when 39 people died in the back of a lorry attempting to cross into the UK), accounts of Vietnamese migrant lives have been few and far between.

This panel presents and discusses the findings of Dr Seb Rumsby's three-year research project on irregular Vietnamese migration to, and in, the UK. Informed by ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with members of this difficult-to-access group, Seb not only portrays the lived experiences of precarious migrants but also contextualises them within the transnational political economies of both origin and destination countries. This provides a distinctive lens with which to contribute to wider issues such as 'cultures of migration', irregular migration infrastructures, migrant entrepreneurs, precarious labour exploitation, and the everyday politics of navigating 'hostile environment'.

Format: Seb will first outline his main findings, then three other experts of Vietnamese migration will discuss his work in relation to their own research and/or practitioner experiences, before opening up the discussion to audience questions.

Chair: Dr Seb Rumsby, University of Birmingham

Speakers:

- Dr Tamsin Barber (Oxford Brookes)
- Dr Julien Le Hoang (EHESS)
- Dr Chung Pham (West Yorkshire Polices and Locate International)
- Dr Seb Rumsby (University of Birmingham)

Workshop 5 | The Complexity of Participatory Research in Migration Studies: Practical, Ethical and Institutional Challenges

Over the last decade global North migration scholars started criticising established epistemological practices, which silence the voices of racialised and other marginalised people on the move, and which exacerbate power inequalities between ‘us’ (i.e., white knowing subjects) and ‘them’ (i.e., non-white objects of knowledge). Researchers have called out the oft-unquestioned relationship between migration studies and colonialism (Mayblin and Turner 2020), and denounced how migration research still frequently aligns with the policy agendas of the wealthiest countries of the world (Fiddian-Qasmieh 2020). For example, within migration research, migrants are recurrently treated as objects of governance, hence indirectly supporting their dehumanisation (Collins 2022). Migration – and, therefore, migrants too – are also commonly represented as a ‘problem’ that disrupts the social cohesion of national communities and that needs to be governed or reduced (Anderson 2019). Finally, citational practices have been found to favour Western canon and scholars, often discarding the scientific contributions of non-Western scholars as ‘pre-theory’ (Fiddian-Quasmiyeh 2020).

In response to these problems, and to a wider call to decolonise the social sciences (Bhambra et al. 2020), critical migration scholars have turned to innovative and creative methodologies that can help challenge epistemic violence by foregrounding marginalised voices as knowledge producers (Bashi 2023, Collins 2022). One key aspect of participatory methodologies is to promote research with, for, and by (rather than on) non-Western individuals, communities, and scholars through their active involvement in academic research (Jeffery et al. 2019, Khan 2020). Although participatory research methods have attracted increasing attention in migration studies, they are also still fraught with questions, e.g. about asymmetrical power relations, extractivism, and data ownership (Raghuram and Sondhi 2026).

This workshop aims to delve into the complexity of participatory methodologies in migration research. It is inspired by the ESRC-funded project “The Peripheralisation of Asylum Accommodation” (PAA), which employs participatory methods to investigate current developments in asylum accommodation in England and how different stakeholders (including migrant people, support organisations, and local authorities) experience, negotiate and contest asylum housing policies. By bringing into conversation the PAA team with community organisers and scholars involved in participatory research, the workshop aims to critically and collectively reflect on the complex practicalities of conducting participatory research, its processes, benefits and limitations, as well as ethical challenges and the current obstacles posed by Higher Education institutions.

Chair: Dr Gaja Maestri (Aston University)

Speakers:

- Dr Rémy Twahirwa (Aston University)
- Miriam Tansia (The Voices Network, British Red Cross)
- Anne Collins (The Voices Network, British Red Cross, Yorkshire Network)
- Dickson Chikwizo (The Voices Network, British Red Cross, Leicester Network)
- Professor Vicki Squire (University of Warwick)
- Sarah Taal (Community Interest Research Centre)