



PhD Conference 2025

REIMAGINING MIGRATION: DECOLONISATION AND IDENTITY ACROSS TIME AND SPACE



9:10-9:30	Registration Main Lobby, The Wave	
9:30-9:40	Welcome MRG Conference Team, Lecture Theatre 4	
9:40-11:10	Decoloniality Session A Chaired by Dr Patrícia Nabuco Martuscelli Lecture Theatre 4	Temporalities and Geographies Session A Chaired by Dr Lucy Mayblin Workroom 3
11:10-11:30	Coffee Break Main Lobby	
11:30-13:00	Embodiment Session Chaired by Professor Ryan Powell Lecture Theatre 4	Temporalities and Geographies Session B Chaired by Dr Nabeela Ahmed Workroom 3
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break and Poster Display Main Lobby	
14:00-15:30	Decoloniality Session B Chaired by Dr Yasmina El Chami Lecture Theatre 4	Methods and Ethics Session Chaired by Dr Aneta Piekut Workroom 3
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break Main Lobby	
16:00-17:00	Annual Lecture by Professor Jenny Phillimore Chaired by Dr Patrícia Nabuco Martuscelli Lecture Theatre 4	
17:00-17:30	Drinks Reception Main Lobby	



Reimagining Migration: Decolonisation and Identity Across Time and Space

The 2025 Migration Research Group Postgraduate Conference brings together an international cohort of PhD students to critically engage with migration beyond restrictive colonial paradigms. This one-day event creates a platform for emerging scholars to present innovative theoretical approaches that center the lived experiences of migrants while confronting the power structures that condition mobility.

Taking place at a critical juncture when migration research is increasingly reckoning with its own role in reproducing problematic knowledge hierarchies, the conference showcases work that approaches migration not merely as a phenomenon to be documented but as a generative site for theoretical innovation. Presentations will explore how people navigate increasingly hostile border regimes through everyday practices, how researchers can engage with migrant experiences ethically, and how colonial legacies persist in contemporary migration governance while highlighting potential alternative arrangements.

The conference is structured around four interconnected themes:

- 1. Embodiment and emotionality across the life course Examining how migration is experienced through bodies and emotions through the life course.
- 2. Methods and ethics Interrogating methodological innovations, questions of reflexivity and epistemic justice.
- 3. Decolonisation in theory and practice Challenging Eurocentric frameworks and developing alternative approaches to migration research.
- 4. Temporalities and geographies Exploring how migration reconfigures relationships to time and space.

These themes reflect the multidimensional nature of migration experiences, where embodied realities intersect with methodological, decolonial, temporal and spatial considerations. By bringing together presentations across these themes, the conference creates opportunities for productive dialogue that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. Each thematic session will be chaired by a leading academic from a range of departments within the University.

The day will conclude with the MRG Annual Lecture with Professor Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham) on "Encounters with kindness: everyday and extraordinary kind interventions in the lives of forced migrant survivors of sexual and gender based violence". This keynote examines how acts of care emerge within systems of institutional neglect, offering crucial insights into support mechanisms for vulnerable migrants.

This gathering of emerging migration scholars represents a collective effort to develop more nuanced understandings of contemporary migration while working toward futures where movement is not defined by violence and exclusion.





Professor

Jenny



Phillimore

Professor Phillimore is Professor of Migration and Superdiversity, Honorary Doctor and Visiting Professor at the University of Gothenburg. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, a Commissioner on the Commission on the Integration of Refugees and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She was Founding Director of IRiS and a member of the UK's REF. She co-authored the UK's Indicators of Integration for Refugees and has advised governments in five continents on refugee integration. Phillimore is a Social Policy Analyst specialising in integration policy but working and publishing across multiple disciplines. She has run several large-scale international mixed methods projects. She has published over 30 articles on refugees and integration. She led the RJ funded SEREDA project and is currently in receipt of a Leverhulme Major Fellowship for which she is writing a book on violence harm and refugee integration. Research interests include access to social welfare in superdiverse areas with a particular focus on refugees, migrants and gender (articles Critical Social Policy, Journal of Refugee Studies, BMJ International, Ethnic and Racial Studies and Urban Studies).



Migration Research

Decoloniality Session A

Sabeena Khatoon, University of Hyderabad South Asia, with its unique patterns of forced migration, showcases phenomena distinct from historical refugee influxes, characterized by the emergence of new subaltern groups comprising protracted refugees and stateless individuals. Colonial binaries of "civilized" versus "savage" have transformed into contemporary narratives of "who belongs" and "who does not," influencing the treatment of displaced populations in the region. This evolution underscores the interplay of colonial legacies with modern challenges, necessitating a critical rethinking of migration, peace, and conflict in the South Asian context. This study introduces post-post-colonialism, a theoretical framework that transcends traditional postcolonial approaches, which often focus on binary dynamics between colonizers and colonized. It critiques the limitations of postcolonial studies in analyzing refugee crises, arguing that applying this framework to new subaltern groups-refugees and stateless populations—is inadequate and imposes outdated binaries. Instead, post-post-colonialism offers a more nuanced lens to understand their struggles in South Asia. The framework examines how historical legacies and evolving power dynamics perpetuate exclusion and marginalization by investigating the colonial traces in contemporary policies and practices of both 'origin' and 'host' countries of refugees and stateless in the region. These constructs sustain legal, social, and economic barriers, hindering refugees and stateless individuals from accessing basic rights, justice, and avenues for peace and conflict resolution. This research offers significant insights into understanding forced migration, statelessness, and refugee issues within South Asia's complex sociopolitical landscape with the post-postcolonial lens.

Aaron Nartey, University of Toronto This paper explores the complex role of faith systems in the lives of Black Canadian immigrant youth as they navigate the challenges of acculturation, identity formation, and integration into a new society. Defining faith systems as structured sets of religious and spiritual beliefs, values, and practices that guide individuals and communities in understanding their place in the world and their relationship to the transcendent, this study draws on Mazama's (2002) Afrocentric framework. Mazama argues that spirituality is integral to the Afrocentric project, challenging Eurocentric interpretations of faith and centering African contributions, values, and identity. This perspective is particularly relevant for immigrant youth as they negotiate their heritage culture with the dominant culture of their new home. This lens illuminates how faith influences belonging, shapes meaning-making, and provides a sense of continuity with their cultural origins for people of African descent across diverse belief systems. Utilizing qualitative data from semistructured interviews conducted in Ontario, Canada, between 2023 and 2024 (Berg & Lune, 2017), this research explores how faith intersects with the lived experiences of Black immigrant youth as they grapple with questions of identity, belonging, and cultural adaptation. Findings reveal that faith-based communities, especially churches and mosques, function as crucial spaces for holistic development, offering not only spiritual guidance but also vital social networks, intergenerational connections, and a sense of extended family in a new and often unfamiliar environment. The study further demonstrates how engagement with faith fosters the development of hybrid identities, blending their heritage culture with their Canadian experiences. This process cultivates resilience in the face of acculturative stress, discrimination, and other challenges unique to the immigrant experience. Critically, for some participants, the confluence of faith, culture, and community cultivates a critical racial consciousness that empowers them to confront and navigate socio-historical challenges, including anti-Black racism and the specific challenges faced by Black immigrants in Canada.

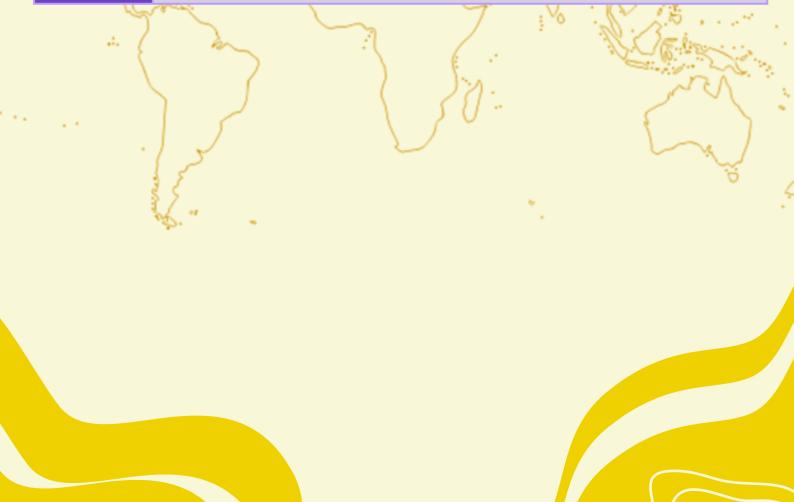


Decoloniality Session A

Patricia Ncube, University of Portsmouth This presentation critically examines the ethical and methodological considerations involved in researching the labour, resilience, and resistance of Zimbabwean migrant women in the UK. Drawing from decolonial feminist ethics (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012), the study challenges traditional research hierarchies by centering the voices and knowledge systems of women navigating intersecting oppressions rooted in global structures of neoliberalism, patriarchy, and neocolonialism.

Reflecting on a year of preparation focused on ethics, reflexivity, and positionality, this paper explores how these principles shape the co-creation of knowledge with participants. Grounded in the work of Black feminist and decolonial scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the study interrogates the researcher's role as both insider and outsider, employing reflexivity not as a performative exercise (Pillow, 2003; Ahmed, 2004) but as an evolving practice of accountability to participants and the broader research context. This reflexive approach is complemented by participatory strategies, including an advisory board of Zimbabwean migrant women, to ensure ethical rigor and the disruption of epistemic violence (Fricker, 2007).

Through the integration of decolonial methodologies, this research foregrounds the lived experiences of Zimbabwean migrant women, interrogating their encounters with deskilling, precarious work, and structural exclusion while emphasizing their strategies of resistance and resilience. The study advocates for a reimagined ethics of research that privileges marginal voices as essential contributors to knowledge production, ultimately contributing to the decolonization of migration studies and the empowerment of marginalized communities.





Decoloniality Session B

Sara Marilungo, Sapienza University of Rome

The proposed contribution conceptualizes contemporary migration through the lens of decolonial and postcolonial studies. Starting from a genealogical analysis of colonial modernity, it is possible to consider how the fixation of borders as a territorial boundary shaped the vision of the world as compartmentalized in fixed national state forms. This went hand in hand with the construction of not so secure and fixed global lines that defined the space of colonial conquest. The aim of this analysis is to understand how this territorial fixity has defined the representation of border as "line in the sand" and how this has consequently been overcome through what has been defined as the "processual turn" in border studies, engendering a de-essentialization of borders as an instrument produced by socio-political processes of confinement that take place within society, instead of an immutable natural limit. My point is that most of these critical studies – like other social sciences – have been characterized by a socalled "colonial aphasia" resulting in the concealment of the colonial genealogy of border regimes that today seem to act in a vacuum. On the contrary, assuming contemporary migration as rooted in a (post)colonial condition defines the European border regime as a rearticulation of colonial devices that sustain racial hierarchies and stratify mobility. This approach allows to reimagine migration studies, understanding that what is labelled "migration" today - namely illegalised mobility from the so-called "global south" to the so-called "global north" – is linked to the historical racialization of mobility. Understanding the enduring coloniality of the European border regime foregrounds the transformative potential of migrant resistance as a site of political and epistemic innovation.

Amelia (Millie) Hind, University of Sheffield Hochschild (2001), drawing on Parreñas, developed the concept of the global care chain (GCC) to analyse the process through which women in global North countries contract migrant women to fill the 'care deficit' in their homes. In this presentation, resulting from part of the literature review for my doctoral project, I review critiques that have arisen around the concept of the GCC, particularly from decolonial perspectives. A uni-directional representation of care work migration that focuses on the role of women fails to account for alternative trajectories into care work, while reinforcing the naturalisation of care work as women's work. The concept also ignores the role of ongoing and historical colonial practices of extraction in global configurations of care.

To continue, I then consider two reconfigurations of the GCC which, I argue push us to recognise the many trajectories into care work migration and to interrogate gendered and racialised assumptions about care, in line with decolonial interpretations. Firstly, Raghuram's (2012) 'local genealogies of care' recognise diverse practices of care and locate them within different cultural, historical contexts, challenging the privileging of Western understandings of care. I then highlight Esguerra Muelle's (2021) concept of 'transnational care plots' (tramas transnacionales de cuidado) which considers different levels of oppression and hierarchies which interthread within the experiences of care migration. This interpretation allows for the inclusion of differing temporalities, colonial structures and narratives, which is key to appreciating the agency of the diverse actors within care work migration.



Decoloniality Session B

Kwazinkosi Sibanda, University of South Africa/ IMISCOE PhD Academy 2023 The study focuses on migrant women entrepreneurship in Southern Africa where the policy framework is restrictive for mobility and entrepreneurship of African women dating back to the colonial epoch. The women were confined to the native reserves where they performed productive and reproductive duties while man were recruited by the mines and other industries. Botswana's policy welcomes Europeans and Asians as foreign investors while African immigrants are contained by the regulatory environment. The Zimbabwean Migrant Women who constitute the largest number of female immigrants are the most unwelcome bodies on the move. Both traditional ethnography and digital ethnography were utilised to study the lived experiences of Zimbabwean migrant women in the greater Gaborone region of Botswana before and after the Covid 19 Pandemic. The bordering strategy of Botswana exemplified what Martina Tazzioli described as 'choking without killing.'This involved the use of policy to contain the entrepreneurial activities of Zimbabwean immigrants in the informal sector. The study deploys Tendayi Achiume's concept of migration as decolonisation to analyse the strategies employed by Zimbabwean Migrant Women Entrepreneurs to contest Botswana's internal borders in their informal business. Contesting the bordering technology of the state enable the women to assert their legitimacy as right bearing individuals who exploit economic opportunities for the benefit of their families and communities.

Charly Eden,
The
University of
Sheffield

Within the interdisciplinary field of Migration studies, there is much interest in the challenges faced by individual migrants (Campos-Delgado, 2018; Hall, 2021; Rogaly, 2020). Nevertheless, the political lives of young 'migrant' women have yet to be fully explored. In this study, the aim is to shift the focus to the strength, adaptability and capabilities of young migrant women (YMW) as essential civic contributors to the city. Moving the spotlight from suffering to input, from generalised to individual, will demand the move beyond conceptions of 'the migrant' as one generalised category, pushing for renewed recognition of those with migration experiences as a diverse group of politically active citizens. Within the field of activism, more visible protest forms of activism have received much attention, whilst everyday quiet activism has received comparatively little attention (Bobel, 2007; Bratich & Brush, 2011; Hackney, 2013; Martin et al., 2007; Pottinger, 2016). Using a mixed methods participatory approach, based in the North of England, this research project will investigate the openings provided by these gaps. This study will explore how and why young migrant women become politically engaged in the city, how everyday, quiet activism plays a role in the contributions young migrant women make to the city, and how reimaginations of the city are formed through these contributions. This research will sit at the intersection of migration studies, gender and the city and co-production methods, thus contributing to several bodies of scholarly work.





Xinyi Zhu, University of Sheffield Chinese women students who have studied in the UK and returned to China after graduation are known as haigui women. They often achieve upward mobility through international education but experience tension in negotiating between traditional gender norms and emerging individualism when they return to China. Whilst these struggles and possibilities are commonly shared and discussed among haigui women in Chinese society, there remains a lack of academic literature exploring women's stories at an individual level. This thesis seeks to address these gaps using a gendered lens. It critically investigates three life stages of haigui women: 1) pre-departure: motivations for studying abroad; 2) studying abroad: identities shaping overseas; 3) return migration: experiences of becoming haigui. Semi-structure and in-depth interviews will be conducted in the project, to understand haigui women's subjectivity and agency in navigating and resisting existing gendered structures upon their return. This exploration incorporates diaspora theory, return migration, and intersectionality as conceptual lenses, through which to understand haigui women's lived experiences and how they articulate various forms of self-choice, individualism and negotiation upon returning home. Overall, this project aims to shed light on the experiences of haigui women upon their return, as their lives intersect with the neo-traditional Chinese cultural context and transnational mobile experiences.

Jessi Kume, Université Paris 8 This paper contributes to the emerging field of critical studies on temporality in the context of human mobility and borders. Spatial arrangements inherently possess a temporal dimension, with time functioning as an object, a resource, and a target of power. A vast body of literature across criminology, sociology, zemiology, anthropology, and related fields has analyzed and documented borders as mechanisms that produce violence. The violence is not confined to geographical borders, but it permeates and is reproduced into the everyday lives of migrants. The study raises critical questions about how temporality is implicated in and interacts with border violence, particularly in terms of time being expropriated as a resource. The analysis explores the issue of temporal violence in its most tangible and visible effects during border crossings, where it intersects with pushbacks, police violence and evictions arguing that time becomes a mechanism of mobility control aimed at slowing people down. The temporal violence culminates with the ultimate expression of stealing time: deaths at borders. The paper further seeks to investigate the issue of temporality once the border is crossed by addressing the impact of temporal uncertainty in the lives of migrants, particularly as they navigate chronic waiting, bureaucracy, and threat of deportability. The research relies on ethnographic and participatory methodologies so that the primary resources are the lived experience of the people on the move. The aim is to make these voices and narratives central to the academic debate engaged in borders and migration. By doing so, the paper seeks to offer an understanding of how temporality is both an instrument to and effect of border violence.





Temporalities and Geographies Session A

Said
Zaneen,
University of
Sheffield

I will present my PhD research that aims to understand the evolution process of the urban refugee camps in the Gaza Strip. In my research, I employ Critical Realism to underpin my methodological and theoretical approach to unpack the mutual relationship between the social-spatial dynamics and the prolonged provision of humanitarian aid. The research is concerned with understanding camps' assemblage at the formation stage and the relationship with the emergent socio-spatial structures to present the formation and causation stories in the studied camps. I borrowed from Giorgio Agamben to theorise the refugee subject as a "homo-sacer" and the "state of exception" that triggered the Palestinian refugee crises. In addition, I analysed the notion of "city-like" camps to underpin the findings of the work of contemporary scholars such as Michelle Agier and Romola Sanyal. I used mixed qualitative methods, including documentary review, field observation, and semi-structured interviews during my fieldwork between 2021 and 2022 in the Gaza Strip, comparing the two camps, Deir Al Balah and Jabalia.

In my presentation, I will highlight the findings, which suggest direct links between the current shape of the camp space, the living conditions, and the formation of the camps that were placed under a juridico-political state of exception and stuck in a temporary-permanent situation for decades. I will present several social and spatial features that influenced the current urban spectacle and social relations. Finally, I will discuss how the findings are helpful for further research and policy discussions for humanitarian organisations and actors intervening in managing refugee camps in a prolonged displacement context.

Muhammad Sharif, Peoples' Friendship University, Moscow Since the start of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), spanning from Kashgar, Xinjiang in China to Gwadar district in Pakistan, numerous political challenges have emerged, including the Baloch insurgency, separatist, military operation, check-posts, and claims of forced migration in Gwadar. This study explored the socio-political dynamics of Balochistan and demographic shifts in Gwadar district using a time-series analysis from 2008-24, content analysis of official reports, surveys, census, and interviews with 25 stakeholders, including think tanks, Baloch historians, and political leaders. In theoretical underpinning, Structural Violence and Migration Theory, and findings unfolded significant state-led interventions through military operations, army check-posts, checking identity in the entry of Gwadar district to ensure CPEC's implementation, with extensive military deployments in Gwadar, the coastal belt, for the security of Chinese, engineers, labours, and Pakistani stakeholders. These measures, result shows, have disrupted native Baloch communities, exacerbating and artificial issues such as water scarcity, restricted employment for locals, enforced disappearances, and the fencing of Gwadar. The resulting socio-political and economic insecurities have, however, forced many Baloch to leave, leading to profound drastic demographic changes. Military crackdown, surveillance, Resources and privileges have been disproportionately allocated to non-Baloch individuals, state-backed external migrators, and foreign workers, reflecting neo-colonial practices that deepen the struggles of the Baloch population. This study highlighted the tensions between these initiatives, and the socio-political rights of native Baloch in Gwadar, which is leading demographic change, offering insights into the complex interplay of security, migration, colonial policies and practices under CPEC.



Zhuo Pang, University of Shoffield While migration scholars widely acknowledge the importance of arrival locations for integration, most studies focus on political atmosphere or social networks, overlooking how arrival is mediated by physical-spatial infrastructures—particularly the ordinary, everyday spaces migrant newcomers encounter. Drawing from my background in urban design, this presentation offers both theoretical and methodological contributions to understanding migrants' embodied spatial practices in their new urban environment. Theoretically, I construct a framework bridging three concepts: spatial capital, urban apprenticeship, and arrival infrastructure to examine migrants' early settlement experiences. Spatial capital conceptualises space as a resource convertible to other forms of capital, directly linking to socio-spatial integration. Urban apprenticeship explores how migrants develop urban know-how through embodied engagement with urban spacesfrom learning to navigate public transport to finding comfort in new neighbourhoods. Both concepts relate to newcomers' agency in navigating urban spaces. Combining these with arrival infrastructure allows an infrastructural perspective examining the built environment's affordances, as opportunities and constraints vary across different urban spaces and contexts.

Methodologically, while most studies on arrival spaces and migrants' spatial practices rely on ethnographic methods, this study innovatively adopts mixed methods using qualitative GIS, integrating quantitative mapping with ethnographic approaches through an iterative, reflexive process to capture both spatial patterns and lived experiences.

This research has implications for urban planning and design: exploring migrants' spatial expertise can reveal issues of accessibility, segregation and exclusion - aspects often taken for granted by long-term residents and practitioners.

Charley Howman, University of Sussex The scale and duration of forced displacement has grown rapidly across the 21st century. Becoming the norm rather than the exception, the magnitude and severity of urban protracted displacement underscores the urgency of understanding how displaced populations navigate urban space over time to survive. In the absence of durable solutions or sustainable forms of state or external support, how displaced peoples support themselves to meet their own needs over time in exile is overlooked. While social support and solidarity networks have always been part of society's daily navigation for survival, the everyday lived experiences and activities of urban displaced communities have been under-recognised and under-theorised, particularly in neighbouring countries of first asylum, where the majority of displaced people reside.

Through the case of displaced Syrians in Lebanon, the paper explores the role(s), importance, functioning and constitution of social support mechanisms in aiding the survival of those living in urban protracted displacement. Drawing on qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and participant observation with displaced Syrians over 2023-2024 it explores the roles of identity in forming and maintaining such support mechanisms; of kinship and non-kinship, nationality, age, gender, class and faith, alongside spatial and temporal, public and private dimensions. The presentation will therefore centre on the navigation of situations of urban protracted displacement, utilisation of identity-based support to meet needs, as well as dynamics of exclusion and inclusion, to share emerging theorisations of the social conditions aiding urban protracted displacement survival and who may be being left behind.



Saada Rosalie Kalakech, Poitiers University and Saint Joseph University

Although refugee management in Lebanon has been extensively studied, the lasting influence of colonial legacies on migration policies remains critically understudied, despite their significant role in shaping contemporary governance. This paper addresses this gap by comparing two refugee groups in Lebanon: Armenians after World War I under the French Mandate and Palestinians after 1948 in the post-independence context. It explores how the population management strategies introduced during the Mandate were reappropriated by the Lebanese state, revealing both continuities and ruptures. Adopting a multidisciplinary and comparative approach, this study draws on qualitative and quantitative data from sources such as the Nubar Library, French Mandate archives, and the Oriental Library archives, along with interviews with experts on refugee management. The paper argues that Lebanon, shaped by its French Mandate legacy, has used immigration as a "social closure" mechanism (Brubaker 1992) to define its population, shape national identity, and advance geopolitical interests. Under the French Mandate, the integration of Armenians was designed to reinforce the perception of Lebanon as a predominantly Christian state closely aligned with Western powers. In contrast, post-independence policies toward Palestinians illustrate how colonial frameworks were adapted to address shifting national priorities, with changing political circumstances and temporal developments influencing the implementation of these

Lebanon's case study exemplifies the 'postcolonial paradox' (Sadiq and Tsourapas 2021), the challenge of building a modern nation-state with weak institutions, navigating territorial sovereignty, and establishing exclusive citizenship norms, all while confronting the legacies of colonial governance.

Palwasha
Amanullah,
University of
Sheffield

This article explores the bordering practices at different tiers of politicised everyday life in Quetta - the central hub near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and one of the most violent cities in the world. The aim is to map entanglements with borders, both physical and symbolic, to describe tentative and often precarious processes of remaking the urban from below. As part of an ongoing praxis, the research explores the rhythms of everyday life for a small segment of the population, statistically the largest ethnic Hazara refugee settlement hosted in Pakistan. It reveals the negotiated nature of place-making and belonging, manifested by the city's socio-spatial fragmentation, conflict incidents, and the geopolitical underpinnings of Pakistan's approach to temporarily managing migrants in the absence of national legislation. The article presents an alternative reading of bordering practices in conflicts, shifting from the fixed and persistent military apparatuses to examine who governs and who maintains the borders. It perceives everyday aesthetics as a source and sight that emphasises the primacy of desires over power. Since the 2023-2024 deportation drive has targeted over a million undocumented Afghans, the borders of the Hazara community have meaningfully securitised an otherwise exclusionary belonging of invisible identities. The approach does not pursue a singular academic cursus. A theoretical juxtaposition led by Bakhtin's aesthetics, Deleuze's desire and Lefebvre's 'Right to the City' challenges simple reductive approaches for understanding temporal assemblages. Employing decolonial strategies, it seeks to recognise bordering as non-linear, or better, an 'otherwise' possibility of life emerging within the city. What rationalities lie behind border-making to ensure security for undocumented individuals amidst conflicts, yet maintaining non-recognition of citizenship as a tool for governance?



Embodiment Session

Reihaneh Rahmatjou, University of Warwick

Professional and academic migration is often conceptualized as a voluntary act, but for many Iranian immigrants, the reality is one of soft coercion—a subtle yet powerful form of displacement shaped by political exclusion, economic marginalization, and social alienation. In this context, emigration from Iran becomes a response to systemic pressures rather than a clear-cut choice. Iranian immigrants are often made to feel like outsiders in their own homeland since their political, ideological, or religious beliefs subjects them to a state of non-belonging in their home country.

Not only the contradictions between past and present and the cultural differences between home and host countries but also the tension of feeling unwanted in one's homeland create a complex sense of displacement and nonbelonging for Iranian immigrants. This sense of displacement, also referred to as internal exile in the literature, follows Iranian immigrants throughout their migration trajectories.

By rethinking emigration from Iran through the lens of soft coercion, this paper examines the experiences of Iranian immigrants of [non-] belonging and its complexities in their host country. Drawing on life history narratives, this research offers new insights into the emotional and existential dimensions of pre- and post-migration displacement, contributing to critical discussions on identity and belonging in the migration experience.

This paper presents findings from my research about practices of care-giving and receiving between asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) and staff in reception centres in Italy. The research contributes to shifting the narrative about reception centres as exclusively places of oppression (Acocella and Turchi 2020, Bello 2021, Kivijärvi and Myllylä 2022, Schultz and Kaytaz 2021) showing the multi-faceted relationships that can be built inside of them. The research is qualitative including interviews and observation and it is developed within care ethics and practice theory (Gilligan 2003, Kittay 2002, Tronto 2010).

Giulia Bisogni, Edge Hill University To show the complexity of such relationships, I choose the specific example of the dynamics of caring interaction between non-ethnic Italian staff and ASRs, which are understudied in the Italian context. The former, embody pair insider knowledge (Valenta 2012, Khosravi, 2009) and emotional engagement (Tessitore et al., 2023) with a demanding and, at times, biased (Iglehart and Becerra, 2007) attitude towards ASRs. Therefore, I argue, that non-ethnic Italian staff stand in a liminal emotional and social space in their work. They embody migration desires fulfilled (Carling and Collins, 2017) and, simultaneously, the impossibility of that same fulfilment given the changes occurred through the years in migration management at national level.

Their demand for discipline and lower tolerance for ASRs demands show a 'coloniality of being' (Chandler, 2022, Maldonado-Torres, 2007) which reproduces mainstream power dynamics (Borrelli, 2020) as symptom of the tension between their outsider/insider social identities (Goffman, 1986). Such investigation opens avenue to understand how generational and social differences influence the interactions between migrants.



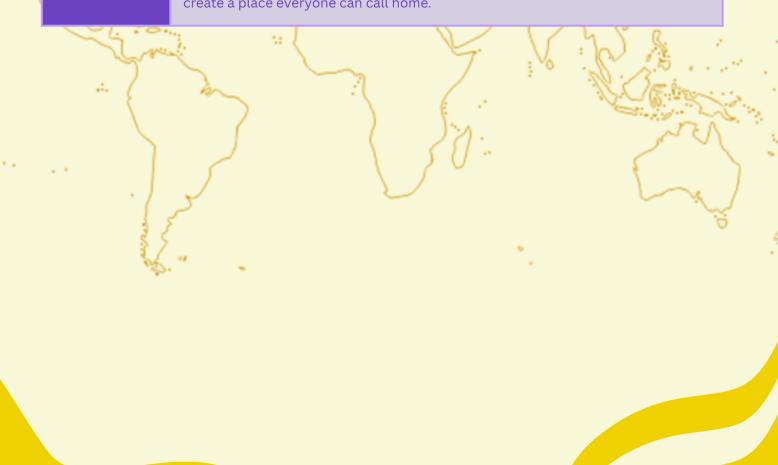
Migration Research

Group

Embodiment Session

Catriona
Brice, City St
George's
University of
London

Born in China but raised in Britain by two White British parents, my story is one of many who have lost their biological roots as a result of international adoption. Growing up in a predominantly white environment I have often thought of myself as white, forgetting that the world still initially views me as Chinese. This double bind has provoked feelings of shame, ambivalence and unease within me and other adoptees who have struggled with looking Chinese but not feeling Chinese inside. This presentation will explore the geographies of belonging as it positions international adoption as a form of migration, which is rarely included in this body of literature. By drawing on transracial adoptee research and theory that can be used to contextualise lived experiences my presentation hopes to shed light on the British - Chinese adoptee community who often face complex questions surrounding their identity, belonging and cultural heritage. For someone like myself, who is seeking a closer connection with their Chinese roots it will also explore questions such as; What does it take to bridge the gap between lived experience and a heritage that I feel disconnected from? How do I navigate the complexities of reclaiming a culture that feels both familiar and foreign? What role does the adoptee community and education play in this journey of personal exploration? I hope that by delivering this presentation, I can contribute to and continue discussions that centre themes of identity and belonging, striving to create a place everyone can call home.





Methods and **Ethics Session**

Camilla Palestra, Goldsmiths, **University of** London

On April 18, 2015, one of the deadliest shipwrecks in the Mediterranean occurred in the Sicilian Channel. Only twenty-eight people survived. Between seven hundred to more than a thousand people are presumed dead. Four years later, in 2019, the wreck was displayed at the Venice Biennale as Barca Nostra (Our Boat), "a collective monument and memorial to contemporary migration" by the Swiss artist Christoph Büchel. Following its presentation in Venice as a work of art, the boat enters a storm of discourse in relation to the cultural politics of commemoration, later becoming a not-yet memorial at the docks of Augusta, Sicily, where it has remained since 2021. Departing from the geopolitical discourse surrounding the Mediterranean and European migration policies, entwined with the alienation and commodification of the art world, my research originates from my encounters/events with the boat, intended as a diffractive figuration that can neither be disappeared nor represented in its singularity. Working from and through diffraction as a methodological practice to map relations and possible interpretations, I am drawn to places and people I encountered, speculative storying, memories, and sounds diffracted through the boat. Turning away from the forensic offer of witnessing and shifting from a process of anaesthetics to the affective relations, Boat: A Diffractive Field re-turns to the boat, proposing to withness otherwise, in a way that is respectful of the entanglement of encounters and other materials while remaining attentive to the questions of how entanglement works here, for whom and to whom, to echo Christina Sharpe's inquiry.

Nam Huh, Loughborou University

This presentation explores the intersection of migration, decolonial thinking, and identity through contemporary documentary films addressing East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) migrant experiences in the UK. Focusing on the underrepresented narratives of ESEA communities in Northern England, the talk examines how emerging documentary formats-such as VR, interactive media, and found footage -transform the representation of diasporic identities. Using examples such as In 1875 We Met at the Docks of Liverpool (2021) by Yarli Allison and Tea and Sugarcane (2023) by Anti-Cool, the presentation analyses how these films challenge traditional forms of storytelling, offering alternative ways of engaging with migrant histories and collective memory.

Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, and Maurice Halbwachs, this presentation addresses key questions: How do digital technologies reshape the portrayal of migration and identity? In what ways can documentaries act as decolonial tools to disrupt dominant narratives and foster epistemic justice? The discussion also considers the ethical dimensions of representing migrant lives, particularly the tension between voyeurism and agency in visual storytelling. This presentation contributes to the Migration Research Group's 2025 conference theme by reimagining migration through the lens of innovative media practices. It foregrounds the importance of amplifying minority voices within cultural production, offering a decolonial perspective on the evolving relationship between technology, migration, and identity in the post-internet era in the UK.



Methods and Ethics Session

In 2019, Pia Klemp, a captain and human rights activist, was accused by Italian authorities of assisting illegal immigration, as her ship barricaded vessels trying to prevent refugees from reaching Italian shores. Some considered Klemp a "hero," while others saw her as a criminal, as evidenced by the court case against her. Although the incident has been discussed in the context of refugee crisis, I believe there is still room for reflection on this case, which could also trigger a debate on the ethics of refugee recognition.

Irmak Kepenek, Galatasaray University The widely accepted ethical framework of refugee recognition is built on the concept of "hospitality" introduced by Kant, that prioritizes the prosperity of host countries' inhabitants over foreigners. Conversely, Levinas's "ethics of otherness" and Derrida's "deconstructive justice" discuss the possibility of an ethical approach, foregrounding "Other" instead of "Self". This ethical relationship entails a responsibility to selflessly welcome and recognize Other. This infinite duty inevitably poses a challenge against legal duties.

The purpose of this paper is to explore whether Klemp's case exemplifies different views on the ethics of refugee recognition. To answer this, I will first briefly explain the ethical foundation of the current legal framework as manifested in the Italian authorities' response to Klemp. I will then outline relevant principles of ethics of otherness and deconstructive justice that criticizes the prevailing approach of 'hospitality'. Finally, I will analyze Klemp's act from the perspectives of ethics of otherness and deconstructive justice. In doing so, I attempt to explore their possible implementation and potential contribution in the field of refugee recognition ethics.



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