

# Migration Research Group Annual Report 2024/25

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## About MRG

The [Migration Research Group](#) (MRG) - an interdisciplinary network embedded in the Faculty of Social Sciences - exists to create a cross-disciplinary environment for migration and mobility research at the University of Sheffield (TUoS). It is currently led by three co-directors from different departments (Dr Aneta Piekut (Sheffield Methods Institute), Dr Lucy Mayblin (Sociological Studies) and Dr Patricia Nabuco Martuscelli (Politics and International Relations) with support from a MA student intern (Beth Dixon). The MRG has a membership of over 100 academics from across the social sciences and humanities at TUoS and beyond (395, in total). MRG is a home to the intra-Faculty Centre for Doctoral Training “[New Horizons in Borders and Bordering](#)”.

Through its different activities and network approach, the MRG has contributed to creating a collaborative and inclusive research culture open to any staff or student and aiming to construct, with its members, a diverse and inclusive environment to discuss migration and mobility at the Faculty of Social Science as part of the [One University pillar](#). The different spaces and activities to think together allow the MRG to contribute to the [Research pillar](#) by proposing innovative and interdisciplinary research of excellence, grant applications and public engagement and impact opportunities beyond the University environment. The MRG has been consolidating an inclusive and supportive space for PGRs students, another essential part of the Research pillar at TUoS.

## Budget

In the 2024/25 academic year, the MRG received a budget from the Faculty of Social Sciences, totalling £5,000 for the year. We spent 42% of our funding on knowledge exchange, seminars, panel debates, and other events, 35% on PGR training and development activities, such as workshops and the PGR conference, 11% on MRG community building and networking, and 11% on reputational building and profile enhancement (annual lecture).

## 2024/25 in review

### *Events, Knowledge Exchange and Community Building*

**MRG seminar series and events.** In 2024/2025, we have been building our international profile with a range of events proposed and organised by the MRG members. Additionally, for our seminar/webinar series, international speakers have been proactively reaching out to present in Sheffield (e.g, from Australia, China, Brazil, India, USA, and Europe) indicating international recognition of the MRG work. We organised events in various formats: webinars (5), in-person seminars (14), half-day symposiums or forums (5), full-day community study days (3), films screenings with discussions (3), workshops or work-in-progress labs/writing retreats (5), and networking events (3). For a complete list of the MRG events, please see [here](#).

### *Photos of the MRG Community Study Day, 28 April 2025*



**Knowledge Exchange events with the Community.** We have been recognised by the local community as a trustworthy partner for regular knowledge exchange activities. Our events co-organised with community partners included:

- October 2024 - **Understanding the 2024 race riots** panel debate with academics, local and national stakeholders, i.e., [Sheffield City of Sanctuary](#) and

[Migrant Voice](#) (66 participants).

- November 2024 - **Community Study Day (1)** with [VVIDY](#) (Voice of Voiceless Immigration Detainees Yorkshire) and [SYMAAG](#) (South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group), (100 participants).
- February 2025 - [Right to Remain](#) + [SYMAAG](#) workshop: Thinking with our communities – detention and beyond (70 participants).
- April 2025 - **Community Study Day (2)** on asylum housing with Sheffield City of Sanctuary, [NACCOM](#) and [ASSIST](#) (50 participants).

### **MRG Conference and Annual Lecture.**

- 2025 MRG PGR Migration Conference, 20 June: "Reimagining Migration: Decolonisation and identity across time and space". The 2025 MRG PGR annual Conference was the 5th of its kind, but for the 3rd in a row since the post-pandemic reinvigoration of the network. Those who attended presented work from a variety of disciplines, including Sociology, Geography and Planning, Film Studies and Law, with some travelling from as far away as Turkey, Russia, and Italy to attend the event.
- 2025 MRG Annual Lecture, 20 June, Professor Jenny Phillimore, University of Birmingham, "Encounters with kindness: everyday and extraordinary kind interventions in the lives of forced migrant survivors of sexual and gender based violence".

### *Photos of MRG Conference and Annual Lecture, 20 June 2025*



### *Impact*

MRG members have contributed actively to impactful research that aims to support decision-makers and other stakeholders. As a continuation of this work, conversations started this year to collectively recognise the research of MRG members, creating a

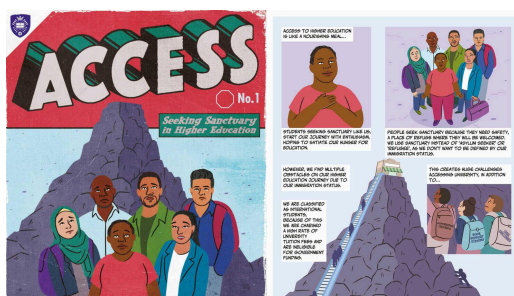
potential impact case study on migration and borders for the next REF circle. We highlight the following impact activities:

- December 2024: [Submission of evidence to the Migration Advisory Committee about the minimum income requirement \(MIR\) Parliament Enquiry](#) (Jonathan Collison, and Patricia Nabuco Martuscelli and Gemma Manning (University of Huddersfield).
- MRG members conducted Impactful research with implications on the UK and internationally - e.g., [New research reveals billions made by companies involved in UK border security](#), [MRG co-director, together with Brazilian researchers, organises a National Forum on Humanitarian Visas in Brazil](#).
- Lucy Mayblin ran two workshops with national NGOs on understanding and contesting borders and bordering in the autumn and spring. This was funded through the ESRC-funded Channel crossings project.
- Colleagues contributed to popular blogs and podcasts: Open Democracy [“Government hands private firms £3bn in bid to ‘stop the boats’”](#) (article and [podcast interview](#)), [“Beyond Trafficking & Slavery”](#), [The Conversation](#), and [Border Criminologies](#).

## Content Building for Reputational Purposes

The MRG has contributed to developing different resources and strengthening the University's reputation as an excellent place for migration and mobility research:

- **Comics and videos** (with the themes of Access, Welcome and Protection) from the ‘Seeking Sanctuary in Higher Education’, a project funded by the University of Sheffield’s One University initiative, led by Dr Rebecca Murray (PI) and Dr Patrícia Nabuco Martuscelli (CI), were published on the MRG Webpage. The videos were also published on the University Player and promoted on social media. You can see them [here](#).



- All 4 episodes of the **Living in Sheffield Podcast**, co-hosted by Patricia Nabuco Martuscelli and journalist Livia Barreira, are available on the University Player and can be accessed [here](#).

Our bi-weekly newsletter is sent out to 394 member recipients (an increase from 194 in June 2024). Together with our social media presence and our YouTube Channel, the MRG continues to contribute positively to the reputation of the University.

### *Teaching*

As part of the mission of excellence in research-led teaching, the MRG Book Review Series published critical book reviews on migration and mobility produced by students from the module POL244 Migration and World Politics led by Dr Patrícia Nabuco Martuscelli. The full explanation of this initiative and the critical book reviews can be accessed [here](#).

Drawing on her HEIF-funded Migrant youth leadership collaboration with Stand & Be Counted Theatre, Dr Hannah Lewis has built research-led praxis in teaching SCS2005 “Understanding race & migration” using arts-based techniques and activities to build classroom community and inclusion; and has designed a seminar utilising the Stand & Be Counted online interactive game “Have Your Passports Ready”. Hannah was also successful in securing a SPR Learning Enhancement Fund grant with PhD student Macole Lannaman who has guest taught on SCS2005 to support the creation of a resource on somatic education techniques in HE.

### *Growth, Funding Applications and Publishing*

**University of York/ ESRC Centre “Vulnerability and policing futures”** (link [here](#)) - Hannah Lewis is involved in public/volunteer partnerships with policing in coastal borders and modern slavery. Previous networks and connections across White Rose universities enabled by MRG have contributed significantly to this collaboration with colleagues at York and Leeds.

Thanks to MRG membership facilitating collaboration across universities and NGOs (Liverpool, Leeds, & two NGOs) Hannah Lewis received an **SCS Strategic Research Fund** to support 'lived experience' discussion groups to shape the topics and questions to commission chapters for a new edited volume on 'Disrupting the modern slavery agenda'.

The MRG co-director, Patricia Nabuco Martuscelli, applied and received a grant from the **ESRC UK-Brazil Global Talent** to develop the project Mapping Humanitarian Visa

Policies in Brazil in partnership with Brazilian colleagues in Brazil and the UK, who presented seminars at the MRG in the past year. The interdisciplinary research environment and the MRG support were essential for this grant application.

**Access - Welcome - Protection': developing a shared vision of sanctuary in higher education.** Rebecca Murray. This knowledge exchange project is working across South Yorkshire (UK) and Ontario (Canada) to collaborate on the production of a resource designed to support universities to ensure that people with precarious immigration status can:

1. Access their institutions on accredited programmes of study;
2. Welcome and orientate them to ensure full participation in university life and;
3. Protect and minimise any potential harm during the course of their studies.

The project seeks to address the barriers and issues experienced in higher education by creating a **"Sanctuary Template"** – a comprehensive framework that universities can adopt to foster an environment of support, safety, and inclusivity for all students, regardless of their background or immigration status. This collaborative initiative involves young people from South Yorkshire (UK) and Ontario (Canada), alongside academics, advocates, and organisations. Together, we are co-creating the Sanctuary Template and planning its implementation across universities in both countries. The project emphasises decolonial approaches to both sharing existing and producing new knowledge - to ensure that the voices of those directly impacted are at the heart of the process.

MRG's Co-Director Aneta Piekut secured funding from the **University UREC Fund** (£660) to run [a workshop on ethics of studying anti-immigration and far-right groups](#). We invited researchers from the ESRC funded project "Everyday transnationalism of the far right: an interdisciplinary study of Polish immigrants' participation in far-right groups in Britain" (ESRC, ES/W010151/1) to learn from their recent experience. We are in the process of developing an original resource summarising learning from the workshop, which will be published at the UREC website as an official University resource. The workshop finalised with a film screening and Q&A: "That Boy: a conversation about hate and healing", and Sheffield colleagues had a privilege to watch the emotional conversation between Toby Gorniak MBE, a former Roma teenage refugee who fled Poland after enduring violence from neo-Nazi skinheads, with Mirek Grzelak, a former neo-Nazi.

This year, we had to leave the IMISCOE European network of migration studies institutions due to a lack of funds, but in response we have sought to build bilateral relationships with individual research centres. We are in the process of developing a **Partnership Development Fund** application to strengthen international collaborations

with CEDPLAR (UFMG, Brazil), the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana, and the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw (Poland).

**Supporting PhD students' Publications.** MRG successfully supported the forthcoming publication by PhD student member Nikola Lero of the journal article "Critical Analysis of Homing and Bordering – Towards the Migrant Struggle for Ontological Security" in *Territory, Politics, Governance* (Q1-ranked in the field). The work also connects MRG members to the wider research of the Eur-Asian Border Lab, which is coordinating this publication, demonstrating our mission to strengthen interdisciplinary and transnational collaboration and mentorship among our doctoral scholars.

**MRG Internship.** We applied and were successful in securing an intern as part of the University Internship Programme. Beth Dixon, our intern, provided us with support with the migration from X to [BlueSky](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and the updates of the MRG webpage.

## The MRG-PhD network

### *Report from co-leads: Chandima Arambepola and Beth Porter*

The MRG-PhD network was established with the aim of fostering a greater sense of community, specifically amongst PGR researchers, as well as creating essential opportunities for professional development through PGR-led activities and events. To support these activities, in January 2024, we successfully secured funding from the White Rose DTP Interdisciplinary Student-Led Network Fund.

In this academic year, we continued our networking events including hosting a welcome event to reconnect with fellow PhD students and discuss potential activities to be organised. Following on from the success of the writing retreats we organised in the previous academic year, we organised three more writing retreats this year (in November, March and February). Using the Pomodoro method, we offer PhD students a structured schedule for the day and a supportive environment to focus on specific pieces of writing. More importantly, these full-day retreats have become a central means of connecting with others and have become a useful space to share the frustrations and the emotionally taxing aspects of 'doing' migration research. Given the value of these activities and the peer support we gain/provide through such activities, we hope to continue the writing retreats in the future as well as host informal networking events.

## Testimonials

The MRG received the following testimonials recognising our work this year:

*"I cannot thank you enough for everything you did for FIF (Community Study Day in November 2024), your talk was fantastic, all the logistics and support you gave us were just amazing. We are really grateful and VVIDY thanks you a lot - I'm especially grateful and so happy that we are able to work together. Thank you for your support. We really appreciate it and would love to support and work together in the future. It was a great day". (VVIDY, Community Partner).*

*"I'm massively impressed by all the incredible work you've done in the MRG this year (again). It's such a brilliant space that you've all created and I know it's work that isn't always valued in the way it should be". (Dr Joe Turner, University of York).*

*"The Migration Research Group at the University of Sheffield has added great value to the field of Migration Studies through various projects and events. I always look forward to all events organised by MRG which brings forth very timely dialogues and debates on the global experiences of migrants. These events are always extremely insightful and help me to add new perspectives to my own research". (PhD Student from India).*