

LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY



UCL

UCL MIGRATION RESEARCH UNIT (MRU)  
STUDENT CONFERENCE - 3rd June 2016

# Moving Beyond Borders - Comparative Perspectives on Refuge

REFUGEES  
WELCOME

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Maurice Wren  
(Executive Director,  
Refugee Council)

UCL, PEARSON BUILDING, GOWER STREET, LONDON WC1E 6BT

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## Welcome

Dear guests - welcome to the annual **Migration Research Unit Student Conference**. We are delighted to have you all here today for what promises to be a thought provoking conference, drawing on new research and insights that may illuminate our understandings of refuge and borders.

In particular this conference seeks to explore European responses to the Syrian 'refugee crisis'. States have drifted between hostility and hospitality, pulled apart by the varying demands of domestic and regional politics and the inconsistent perception of refugees within the media and among the public. In this complex setting reflection is essential. Examining the ways in which refugees have been received both in the past and 'beyond Europe' should provide a way out of this malaise, offering us essential insights into the nature of refuge, reception and integration on a global scale. Through such a discussion can we begin to open up a number of questions: how can we better understand the representational discourses that characterise asylum processes and forced migration? What role do non-state actors play in receiving and integrating forced migrants, and how does this contrast with the role of states? How can we produce more effective measures for receiving, recognizing and integrating refugees? How do refugees negotiate, challenge and construct the discourses and processes surrounding refuge and asylum? What methods can we as researchers develop to better understanding the complex processes of refuge in Europe and beyond? This conference invites a broad discussion of these topic through four compelling panel discussions.

We would like to thank all the members of the MRU Student Conference Team for all of their help in organising this conference, the range of excellent speakers who will be sharing their research with us, and Maurice Wren - our keynote speaker. Also a special thanks must go to Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Claire Dwyer for all of their patience and support in helping us to organise this exciting, explorative conference, and for all those in attendance.

**Your 2016 MRU Student Conference Organisers**

## Conference Programme

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9.00 - 9.30	Registration of Participants and Attendees and Coffee
9.30 - 9.35	Welcome
9.35 - 10.00	<b>Keynote speech: Maurice Wren</b>
10.00 - 11.00	<b>Panel I: Voices and Images in Representational Discourses</b>
11.00 - 11.15	Coffee Break
11.15 - 12.45	<b>Panel II: Alternative Approaches to Reception</b>
12.45 - 13.45	Lunch Break
13.45 - 14.45	<b>Panel III: Health and Generation in Integration</b>
14.45 - 16.15	<b>Panel IV: Navigating Space and Time through Refugee Agency</b>
16.15 - 16.30	Coffee Break
16.30 - 17.30	<b>Methodology Discussion Round</b>
17.30 - 18.00	<b>Endnote</b>
18.00	Wine Reception

## About the Migration Research Unit (MRU)

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The Migration Research Unit is a critical nexus for research on migration across UCL and includes as members researchers from the department of geography and from across the social sciences and humanities at UCL. MRU members' ongoing research contributes to key debates pertaining to diasporas and transnationalism, asylum and refugees, national and international migration policies, theorising movement and (im)mobilities, development and migration, and measuring and mapping migration. The MRU was established by Professor John Salt in 1988, and currently brings together academics whose research also directly informs their teaching and supervision of research students, including students taking the MSc in Global Migration. The MRU hosts an annual student conference, and regularly organises seminars and conferences to engage with and advance understandings of experiences and processes of and responses to different forms of migration. The MRU is co-directed by Professor John Salt, Dr Claire Dwyer and Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh.

## Keynote Address: Maurice Wren

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Maurice Wren joined the Refugee Council as Chief Executive in March 2013, having previously been the Director of Asylum Aid (2002 – 2013). Prior to Asylum Aid, Maurice held senior positions in the homelessness field at Shelter and the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT). Maurice was a co-founder of the Independent Asylum Commission (2007-09) and of Detention Forum (2009-present). He is presently co-Chair of the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum at the

Home Office and Chair of the Refugee Week Steering Group. Maurice is a Trustee of Migrant Voice; Every Casualty Worldwide; and the European Network on Statelessness; and was recently appointed a Patron of Action Foundation.

## PANEL I: Voices and Images in Representational Discourses

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### Annabelle Wilmott: Securitizing the Migrant Crisis through Photographs? Visual Representations of Refugees in UK Online Media

*Annabelle is currently a MSc candidate in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies at LSE. She also holds a BA in Political Science-International Relations, Communication and International Studies from Saint Louis University Madrid.*

Annabelle's paper aims to examine the extent to which the Copenhagen School's concept of securitisation explains how Syrian refugees are visually constructed in British mainstream newspapers. To do this, it deploys a visual quantitative content analysis on photographs one week before, and one week after two major 2015 events affecting public opinion concerning the refugee crisis. In particular, it aims to uncover the media frames surrounding the images of refugees; focusing on whether refugees are portrayed as threats, victims or if they are instead 'humanised' by such processes.

### Leonie Harsch: Giving Refugees a Voice? UNHCR's 'Refugee Storytelling' Project

*Leonie currently pursues Arabic studies, deepening her engagement with Islam, gender, and migration in the Near East at the Institut Français du Proche Orient in Beirut, Lebanon.*

This paper examines the UNHCR's Storytelling Project, which aims to include 'refugee voices' in the discussion about displacement. By analysing the project's framework and the structure of produced videos, this paper reveals the ways in which UNHCR frames such 'voices' around discourses of resilience and reconstruction. As such, this paper reveals the complicated contexts in which discursive representations take place, and the challenges involved in representing refugees.

## PANEL II: Alternative Approaches to Reception

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**Gayle Munro:** The non-governmental response to the 2015/2016 mass migration of peoples: a crisis of refuge and a crisis of identity

*Gayle holds a PhD in Migration Studies and a MA in Politics, Security & Integration from UCL and currently works on social exclusion issues at The Salvation Army in London.*

This paper focusses on how the non-governmental sector, in its service delivery to refugees and vulnerable migrants, is increasingly driven and funded by governmental financial support and contracts. In the UK context, such a dovetailing of statutory and non-statutory support has resulted in a “crisis of identity” of the voluntary sector, which faces the challenge of balancing the expectations of services between those in need of support and the contractual demands of government-funded services.

**Gisella Calcagno:** From emergency, through reception, to integration: architecture for refugees. An Italian point of view

*Gisella is an architect. She graduated from the University of Florence in 2013, with a thesis on reception centres for asylum seekers, and is currently collaborating with ABITA Research Centre.*

Transitional and arrival societies require new flexible skills, like the capability of adapting their spaces to fit changing circumstances: cities need to be more resilient. The understanding of the ‘refugee crisis’ as an urban phenomenon should be considered as an opportunity for innovation. Calcagno’s work focuses on the Italian reception system, analysing the spatial phenomenon of transitional refugee lives through a focus on the underlying role of buildings and urban spaces in either enhancing or decreasing the likelihood of effective social integration.



## PANEL II: Alternative Approaches to Reception

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**Greta Tommesani: Theatre projects for refugees and asylum seekers: positive impacts on social integration and psychological well-being**

*Greta is an affiliate student at UCL from the University of Milan, Italy, studying International Development. Her research interests include the impact of economic and social inclusion on development and participatory approaches in project evaluation and design.*

This paper explores how grass roots theatre projects for refugees and asylum seekers can be considered spaces for their social integration with positive impacts on their psychological well-being. The theatre workshops can be considered as non-judgemental spaces to practice the English language, build social networks and foster cultural understanding. They serve to renegotiate identities and relationships in an 'anti-structural' space and help refugees and asylum seekers regain confidence through corporeal improvisation, and express complex emotions through storytelling.

## PANEL III: Health and Generation in Integration

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**Valentina Migliarini: Intelligibility, Agency and the Education of Raced and Disabled Asylum-Seeking Children in Rome**

*Valentina is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Education in the University of Roma Tre. Her research focusses on the educational and social inclusion of raced and dis/abled child asylum seekers and refugees in the city of Rome.*

This paper examines issues within existing Italian education policies and practices for dis/abled asylum seeking and refugee children, to make sense of the politics of daily life inside schools and the network of social services for forced migrants, and to pay renewed attention to the notion of social integration. Migliarini explores how asylum-seeking and refugee students can be rendered as subjects both outside of the educational institution and their own studenthood. Her research is grounded in constructivist theory and supported by qualitative data from interviews with asylum seeking children and professionals working in the refugee services sector.

**Amal Almanswori: Issues in access to professional support for migrants affected by mental distress**

*Amal arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker in 2002. She holds an MA in Mental Health Studies from University of Bradford, a PGC in Housing Law and Domestic Violence from Westminster University, and a Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Hyphonotherapy.*

This paper concerns the issue of mental distress experienced by the 1.5 generation of British Pakistanis, and by the current generation of migrants, including refugees. In particular, it focuses on the barriers that they face in seeking support, such as the lack of language and communication skills, gendered cultural and religious obligations and racism, providing a set of practical recommendations for the identification and remediation of mental distress in the target community.

## PANEL IV: Navigating Space and Time through Refugee Agency

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**Josephine Ramseyer** and **Elizabeth Hoyler**: Memories of the past, visions of the future: Iraqi and Syrian refugee response to living in asylum in Jordan

*Elizabeth and Josephine are seniors at Duke University. Josephine specialises in refugee studies, research and advocacy. Elizabeth is completing a degree in Economics and Global Health. They both have extensive experience working with NGOs in different parts of the world.*

Using qualitative data collected from two years' worth of research in Jordan, this paper examines the ways in which Syrian and Iraqi refugees negotiate the circumstances of their reception in the host country. Ramseyer and Hoyler discuss the respective realities of Iraqi asylum-seekers and Syrian refugees within Jordan, and how those realities are articulated as semi-permanent. The paper highlights the common response of the Iraqi and Syrian refugees to displacement: a dependency on memories of the past or expectations for the future to negotiate the realities of life in asylum.

**Sibel Karadağ**: Human Mobilities and Borders

*Sibel is studying her PhD in Political and Social Science at Koc University. She also holds an MSc in European Social Policy from LSE and an MA in European Studies from Sabanci University in Istanbul.*

Borders are unique spaces of political contestation. Sibel's work seeks to criticise theoretical perspectives on migration that foreground sovereign control, emphasising instead literature that explores the autonomous nature of migrant 'acts' that in fact defies the sovereign power of the state. Considering the simultaneous increase in European external border controls and border crossings on both the Greek and Bulgarian borders, Sibel's work aims to analyze how European border control policies and their implementation in two different countries are performed together with the resistance and new struggles of border crossers.

## PANEL IV: Navigating Space and Time through Refugee Agency

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**Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Hannah-Sophie Wahle**: Reception in transition – the case of refugees in Calais

*Paula is a postgraduate student of EU politics at LSE. She holds a BA in Political Science and Law from the University of Muenster, specialising in German and international asylum law. Hannah-Sophie is a postgraduate student of Comparative Politics at LSE. She completed a BA in Political Science and History at the City University of New York. Both are currently researching the refugee situation in the Calais Camp.*

This paper will draw on the Refugee Rights Data Project, the first comprehensive data collection about the camp in Calais. The collected data includes information about inhabitants, their backgrounds, fears and aspirations as well as hygiene conditions and human rights violations by authorities in Calais. The project's findings will be analysed in relation to a number of strategies that deal with this situation from a government perspective. It addresses the precarious, outside-of-the-law nature of the situation, resulting in reception conditions that are below minimum UN humanitarian standards. The paper will then discuss how the structural circumstances of reception in Calais interact with the agency of the refugees.

## Discussion Round - Research and Methodology

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**Marta Welander, Musashi Fujimura, Hannah-Sophie Wahle:** The Refugee Rights Data Project

*Marta is the founder of the Refugee Rights Data Project. She was previously Deputy Director of the Democratic Progress Institute, an international human rights and peacebuilding organisation. Marta holds an MA in Human Rights & Democratic Governance from the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights, as well as an MA in International Relations from King's College London. Musashi is a MA candidate in Education and International Development at Institute of Education, University College London. He joined the Refugee Rights Data Project as a volunteer coordinator and also conducted the research study in the Calais camp as a student researcher.*

The Refugee Rights Data Project (RRDP) is a non-profit effort established in late 2015. The organisation aims to fill the data gaps relating to refugees and displaced people in Europe by conducting its own independent field research. RRDP hopes that its research findings will encourage influencers and policymakers to identify specific problem areas and work towards formulating a sustainable response to this ongoing humanitarian crisis. The project is run entirely by volunteers from a range of sectors, united by a common goal of defending the rights of some of the world's most vulnerable individuals. Importantly, it is independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion.

RRDP's first research study was conducted in the informal camp in Calais in February 2016. A group of 20 academic researchers surveyed over 870 respondents, which amounts to about 15% of the camp's total residents. The results are published in a report entitled "The Long wait: Filling data gaps relating to refugees and displaced people in the Calais camp", launched in April 2016. The report contains data relating to the camp's demographic composition, living conditions, potential human rights violations occurring among residents, and their future plans and aspirations.

**MRU Student Conference Organisers**

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For comments and feedback please contact:  
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