



## Annual Conference Migration and Mobilities Research Network

# Moving Between Belonging - The Absurdity of Settlement

17 June 2022, 9.30 - 4.45 pm

**Location:** Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus, Edinburgh EH14 1DJ

**Registration link:** <https://bit.ly/3NvoxsM>

Human displacement, especially when forced, is a catalyst for crises both systemic and personal. Among the many things which may be lost along the journey of a displaced person, one of the first is often a sense of belonging. Between fading memories of the home place, the uncertainty of transit, and an obscure alloy of hope and trepidation for the future, displaced people often have little to moor themselves to along the way. At each stop along the journey, hope is resurrected, new challenges are faced, new ties are formed, and new dreams are born. But alas these ties are often broken, and the dreams buried. On to the next stop. On to the next 'home.' At each stage of this Sisyphean cycle of temporality, they are met with the assurance that they are now safe, on their way to successful resettlement. Yet, what so often awaits them? Only more of the same. This state of perpetual liminality, of being endlessly 'in-between,' is characterized by a loss of belonging and corrosion of identity. Sustained physically by an institutional biopolitics of survival which all too often neglects the psychological and social dimensions of human thriving, displaced people are confronted with spectres of the absurd: boredom, labyrinths of bureaucracy, and an absence of the cultural, religious, and personal signifiers which once gave meaning to the passage of the days.

How can displaced people maintain or discover new experiences of belonging in displacement? How are displaced people counteracting the 'absurdity of settlement' and cultivating a sense of belonging in displacement today? How can states, international legislative bodies, and organizations active in rendering services to displaced people contribute to and facilitate this process? What role can research and academia serve in meeting these challenges?

We invite academics and practitioners alike to come together and explore questions such as these, in an effort to develop a better understanding of the factors at play at each stage of displacement. More broadly we seek to explore belonging narratives beyond the realm of displacement to include other forms of migration and human mobilities. The conference is intended to facilitate discussion and dialogue on the key issues, and therefore will operate according to an open floor policy. We hope to see you on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June to share your expertise and to broaden the horizon of academic inquiry in the fields of migration and human mobility.

9:30 - 9:50	Registration/Coffee	
9:50 - 10:00	Welcome	Dr Kiril Sharapov
<b>Refugee Movement</b>		
10:00 - 10:20	What 'work' does precarity do? Understanding the stigmatisation and commodification of asylum seekers in temporary housing.	Dr Gavin Maclean
10:20 - 10:40	Documentary: 'I'm still here!' Investigating the use of temporary housing for asylum seekers in Glasgow.	Dr Gavin Maclean
10:40 - 11:00	Disability, COVID19 and Displacement in Ukraine	Dr Kiril Sharapov
11:00 - 11:20	Socioeconomic impact of Covid-19 on Syrian Refugees	Dr Fawad Khaleel/ Dr Alija Avdukic
11:20 - 12:00	Question and Answers Session	
12:00 - 12:30	<b>Coffee/Tea/Networking</b>	
<b>Searching Concepts</b>		
12:30 - 1:00	Marching with Little Amal: Revisiting integration and its divergent forms.	Dr Dan Fisher/ Dr Hyab Yohannes
1:00 - 1:30	"It's not all hospitality": white supremacy and humanitarian discourses in Lampedusa	Dr Francesca Soliman
1:30 - 2:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Performing Mobilities</b>		
2:30 - 2:50	Thru-hiking as pilgrimage? Thinking with new materialism and mobilities. Performative mobilities	Dr Phiona Stanley
2:50 - 3:10	Of Nets and Networks: Rhythm, Ritual, and Play in Migrant Community Cultures of Care.'	Kyle Schwartz
3:10 - 3:30	Question and Answers Session	
<b>Documentary</b>		
3:30 - 4:30	Erik & The Iban: The Ethics of an Encounter: Documentary Screening and Discussion	Dan Childs and Michelle Cullen (joining online)
4:30 - 4:45	Closing Comments	Dr Kiril Sharapov

### Presenters Bio

Dr Gavin Maclean	My research interests lie in the overlap between sociology and cultural studies with a focus on work, culture and care. I am particularly interested in the relationship between culture and economy; processes of commodification or 'value conflicts' in work and organisation; bureaucracy in society and culture; and work within digital, cultural or public sector contexts. Currently I am researching the relationship between 'nature', culture and economy, focusing on the link between plants and future forms of work and society. My research is influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and feminist thought more widely.
Dr Kiril Sharapov	I am Associate Professor of Applied Social Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University and Associate Director at the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science. In my research capacity, I am also affiliated with the Centre for Policy Studies at Central European University (Hungary). I research in the field of forced migration and, in particular, human trafficking. Recently, I have been working with disability activists in Ukraine to explore the impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities in Ukraine.
Dr Fawad Khaleel	Accounting numbers and financial figures are not isolated from the flow of history, and they often perpetuate the reality. My research has focused on the philosophy of critical accounting as an ontological authority to explore the epistemology of social, political and economic practices within societal and institutional context. I am a Victorian explorer of contemporary socio-economic inefficiencies. Whether in literary criticism or for scientific investigation, my focus is on analytical epistemology. I'm good at taking things apart.
Dr Alija Avdukic	Dr Avdukic's research includes the theoretical construction of moral/political economy as a guiding theory for finance. Building on the earlier contributions in the post-colonial period made by scholars from the sub-continent, Dr Avdukic aims to systemise political economy as the defining framework for the moral or social economy. He also develops the discourse around social and developmentalist failure of charitable and financial sectors in relation to the expressed ideals of Islamic moral economy.
Dr Hyab Yohannes	Hyab is a researcher with a Ph.D. in the Realities of Eritrean Refugees in a Carceral Age from the University of Glasgow, where he currently works as a research associate. He has extensive research experience in undertaking fieldwork, interviews, critical evaluation and interpretation, computer-based data analysis and evaluation. Moreover, he possesses strong decolonial and critical thinking skills and brings unique experience and perspective to migration-related policy development and implementation. He is interested in theorising the challenges forced migrants face and the biopolitical b/ordering that led to their challenges and contributing towards a positive change.
Dr Dan Fisher	Dan Fisher is a Geographer with an interest in borders, asylum law and refugee integration. He is currently working on a project titled "Scotland's 'New Scots' Strategy: Towards an international exemplar of best practice in refugee integration", which has been funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Prior to joining the University of Glasgow, Dan was employed at the James Hutton Institute, where he conducted research on the challenges of implementing sustainable (and socially inclusive) Green Infrastructure in the United Kingdom. He has also worked at the University of Exeter, where he researched asylum appeal proceedings in Europe
Dr Francesca Soliman	Francesca joined Edinburgh Napier University as lecturer in criminology in 2021, shortly after submitting her PhD thesis at the University of Edinburgh. Francesca's research examines social harms linked to processes of borderization, with a particular focus on the impact of border performance on remote island communities at the external margins of the European Union. Francesca's work seeks to further develop the emerging discipline of zemiology as a tool to analyse the wider impact of border policies, but also to advance critical approaches towards states' roles in constructing and addressing social problems more in general.
Dr Phiona Stanley	My research is on how people engage in 'intercultural' settings in the broadest sense: heterogeneous assemblages of humans, non-humans, and artefacts. This includes research on working abroad, intercultural education, and tourism, particularly outdoors sport/leisure/mobilities. My theoretical paradigm is critical, which is to say that I'm particularly focused on how power relations operate in these spaces. I'm also very interested in innovative ways of doing, writing, and teaching qualitative research methods, including narrative storytelling and evocative and creative writing within academic texts.
Kyle Schwartz	Kyle Schwartz is a PhD candidate at Edinburgh Napier University. In 2017 he completed his Masters of Public Health in the field of disaster management. His research areas include disaster risk reduction, protracted displacement, and refugee studies, with a focus on forced displacement resulting from complex humanitarian crises.

Dan Childs	Dan Childs is a self-taught filmmaker and video producer based in London. After graduating with a Biology degree, Dan discovered a love for filmmaking when he took part in a local film challenge and the resultant animation was screened as part of the Brighton Fringe Festival. Realising that filmmaking allowed him to combine many of his interests such as photography, science, storytelling, and music in one medium. His short film collaboration 'Reynaldo' about a conservation project in the Peruvian Amazon won the United Nations Forests Film Contest along with other international festival awards.
Michelle Cullen	Michelle currently spends time between London and Thailand, and loves to travel. She loves storytelling, photography and wildlife and when not working as a Television Production Manager in London you can find her on a tropical island. Erik and The Iban is her first film. Michelle first met the Iban during a trip to the jungle whilst volunteering for a wildlife sanctuary...and from there the film idea evolved.

## Abstracts

### Dr Gavin Maclean - What 'work' does precarity do? Understanding the stigmatisation and commodification of asylum seekers in temporary housing.

Media coverage and public policy over the past 20 years portrays asylum seekers as a burden and a burden that has to be shared across the country. Through policy choices over this time originating in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, asylum accommodation operates through a 'dispersal' policy where destitute asylum seekers who require accommodation are offered it on a 'no choice' basis and relocated across the country. The key argument of this paper is that, rather than a burden, outsourcing necessarily makes asylum a source of potential profit. These policies dislocate asylum seekers temporarily and spatially and work to place them in a prolonged state of precariousness. Furthermore, the 'anti-asylum common-sense' which dominates news and political coverage of the plays a direct role in inducing members of the public to work for the system as unpaid labourers. This too gives consent to current practices of managing asylum and the organisational processes that maintain the precarity of those seeking asylum.

### Dr Gavin Maclean - Documentary: 'I'm still here!' Investigating the use of temporary housing for asylum seekers in Glasgow.

*I'm Still Here* offers a powerful insight into the lived realities of men, women and children placed in temporary accommodation in Glasgow during the pandemic. The 18 minute documentary is based on video and photo diaries shared by people living in temporary accommodation and highlights the insecurity of their lives. Around 350 asylum seekers were moved from their settled flats into various hotels in the city centre following the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020 in what was said to be an attempt to curb the spread of the virus.

The film is part of an Edinburgh Napier University, ESRC funded research project, *'Investigating the Use of Temporary Housing for Asylum Seekers During Covid'*. The research found that participants faced unsafe conditions, mobility restrictions and a lack of communication from service providers. From hotels, hostels and a mother and baby unit, participants in the project and in the film tell of the stress and hardships they have faced as well as their personal efforts to stay strong, bravely sharing their experiences in the hope that their stories can affect audiences and create change.

### Dr Kiril Sharapov - Disability, COVID19 and Displacement in Ukraine

As of January 2021, about 2.7 million persons in Ukraine were officially registered as having a disability. The Ukrainian Government policies in relation to the economic and social wellbeing of people with disabilities (PWDs) could be, at best, described as inadequate in their scope, reach and funding; or, at worst, as a failure of acknowledgment and response (Rose 2011) - the necropolitical abandonment of the country's most vulnerable individual and communities (Mbembe 2019, Povinelli 2011). COVID-19 exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities with devastating consequences for Ukraine's most vulnerable groups: PWDs and, particularly, internally displaced PWDs. This paper presents the outcomes of the project which evaluated the impact of the pandemic on Ukrainian PWDs, with a particular focus on internally displaced PWDs. Funded by GCRF and AHRC, the project was conducted in March 2021- July 2022, and is the first ever participatory community-based research project in Ukraine focussing on disability.

By relying on rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre 1992, Lyon 2020) as both a conceptual framework and a methodological approach, the paper will present the rich data drawn from the interviews conducted by the project's community-based researchers, and from written diaries and video-testimonies self-recorded by PWDs affected by internal displacement in Ukraine. In doing so, the paper will relay a mosaic of views and opinions of PWDs on the temporal and spatial 'cacophony' of closures and lockdowns, isolation and abandonment, death and sickness on the one hand, and of resilience and 'getting by', dedication and commitment, daily adaptations and creativity on the other hand.

### Dr Fawad Khaleel and Dr Alija Avdukic - Socioeconomic impact of Covid-19 on Syrian Refugees

The UK government's deadline for the resettlement of Syrian refugees was set for May 2020. However, the impact of Covid-19 control measures on the process of resettlement and its effects on the lives of Syrian refugees is currently unknown. The research project will therefore provide a unique perspective capturing Syrian refugees socio-economic and cultural precarity on their settlement journeys before, during and after the Covid-19 outbreak.

More specifically, this project we examine: how the everyday life of Syrian refugees in Scotland is reconfigured after the COVID-19 outbreak, and, by doing so, (b) investigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural, political and financial integration of Syrian refugees in Scotland.

By researching with members of Syrian refugee communities, the project will explore the coexistence of multiple, different, yet rhythmic worlds, which are being radically altered by the pandemic. To achieve this aim, the project will rely on a combination of qualitative methods, including timeline drawing, audio-narrated solicited diaries, and photovoice - as key elements in exploring the complexity of everyday life.

### Dr Dan Fisher & Dr Hyab Yohannes - Marching with Little Amal: Revisiting integration and its divergent forms.

*Marching with Little Amal: Revisiting integration and its divergent forms.*

Although the concept of integration is subject to significant critical deconstruction, it is still predominantly measured and understood in terms of (un)successful outcomes from the perspective of host societies. Integration is also a malleable concept which can be transposed to various contexts and purposes. Such purposes can include the establishment of the rights for refugees, but also the legitimisations of violent practices more akin to assimilationism. In this paper we make sense of integration's instability by attending to the politics of meaning-making that occur when integration is transposed between contexts and takes on different forms. To accomplish this aim, we revisit two existing forms of integration - integration in policymaking and integration in law - and we identify restorative integration as an alternative form. We focus on how each form leads to different understandings of who should act, where integration takes place, who controls knowledge and legitimacy, and the actions that constitute the performance of integration. By placing these three forms of integration in productive tension with one another we (i) locate the assumptions and blockages that hinder integration practice, (ii) determine means of approaching integration as an open-ended process and, (iii) consider how integration can be reimagined outwith the confines of neo-colonial orderings

**Dr Francesca Soliman - "It's not all hospitality": white supremacy and humanitarian discourses in Lampedusa.**

The paper draws on some of the findings from an ethnographic study on the impact of borderisation on the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, a key point of entry for "irregular" migrants crossing the southern external border of the European Union. Once on the island, migrants can be held for months at a time while awaiting either repatriation or a transfer to the mainland, which often creates tension and resentment in the local community. This manifests in residents' open hostility towards those identified as North African migrants, who are commonly labelled as criminal and ungrateful. Those identified as sub-Saharan Africans, however, are universally considered as in need of help and protection. This racialised hierarchy of victimhood may appear to overturn colourism, as sympathy is reserved to those whose skin appears to be darker; however, it exposes a persisting victim-saviour dynamic which reproduces colonial racial stratification and rationalises the exclusionary logic of the border, exposing the white supremacist foundations of dominant humanitarian and hospitality-based discourse at the Southern border.

**Dr Phiona Stanley- Thru-hiking as pilgrimage? Thinking with new materialism and mobilities. Performative mobilities**

This paper considers hiking mobilities and whether an extended thru-hike (an end-to-end hike of a long trail, such as the Appalachian Trail) can be considered a secular form of pilgrimage. I draw on two data sources: published long-trail hiking memoirs and an autoethnographic account of preparing to thru-hike the 275-kilometre Tahoe Rim Trail in August 2022. The data is theorised with reference to literature on modern and ancient pilgrimages, and I inductively propose a hiking-as-pilgrimage framework based on Frank Fahey's (2002) definition of (Christian) pilgrimage, comprising: faith, penance, solitude, silence, ritual, offering, celebration, and perseverance. Faith and celebration, I propose, may include reverence for a secular almost-animism, in which the divine appears in/as nature itself. To theorise penance, offering, and perseverance, I employ a mobilities paradigm (Urry, 2007) that considers tangible and intangible affordances. These are understood within the human- and more-than human- assemblages of new materialisms (e.g. Bennett, 2010; Manning, 2013). This is to say that the relative difficulty of the undertaking and the stepping outside of oneself –the training; the pushing through– are ontologically integral to the notion of pilgrimage, whose definition is necessarily relative and contingent. Thus, the question of whether a thru-hike is a pilgrimage can be answered only with more complexity: it depends.

**Kyle Schwartz - Of Nets and Networks: Rhythm, Ritual, and Play in Migrant Community Cultures of Care.'**

Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork in one of Nepal's oldest Tibetan refugee camps, this presentation explores the importance of social rhythms of ritual and play in the constitution of resilient migrant communities. The presentation begins with a discussion of the importance of strong and frequently renewed internal social ties to refugee and migrant resilience both in the context of disaster and in everyday life. Case studies on group ritual practice, football, and mobile gaming in the camp will incorporate theoretical insights from Henri Lefebvre, Peter Sloterdijk, and Byung-Chul Han, to propose a rhythmanalytical perspective on how such practices might impact community solidarity in times of hardship.

**Dan Childs and Michelle Cullen - Erik & The Iban**

The Iban tribe of the island of Borneo, once known for being fearsome head-hunters, have a unique and rich culture with ancient traditions.

Dr Erik Jensen had dreamed of an encounter with the Iban tribe after seeing a faded sepia picture in an old geography book as a school boy in England. It was in 1959 when, at the age of 26, he boarded an ocean liner in the port of London bound for South East Asia. He had set out to do research into Iban culture and Religion and ended up staying for seven years, learning their language and forming a special bond, eventually becoming known as Tuan Ragum, "the Lord with a beard". It was during this time that an uprising threatened to destabilise the region and Erik volunteered to travel to the remote and hostile Lemanak river to set up an innovative and much needed development scheme which would have a lasting impact on the lives of the Iban in that area and far beyond.

Join this session to watch a 40-minute documentary film, directed by Dan Childs and produced by Michelle Cullen, to follow Erik as he returns to the jungles of Borneo fifty years later to find out about the legacy of his work, and to discover how the Iban are faring in the twenty first century. Is it possible for the unique culture that he came to love so well to be preserved in times of such rapid global change?

The screening will be followed by a Q&A session with Michelle and Dan to discuss both the practical issues around the making of documentaries and more challenging reflections on our positionality as researchers in the context of research encounters where the Western concepts of 'research' and 'development' are deployed.

Watch the trailer here: <https://vimeo.com/257985348>