

# Beyond 'Fake News': Challenges and Opportunities in UK Migration Research

LIDC Migration Leadership Team  
Global Migration Conversation  
London, 5 November 2018



*Source: Imperial War Museum, London*

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## Introduction: The Global Migration Conversations

The London event held on 5 November 2018 was the fifth in a series of Global Migration Conversations that are being organised in 2018 and 2019 in locations including Nairobi, Delhi, Barcelona, Thessaloniki, New York, Beirut, Glasgow and Brussels by the London International Development Centre Migration Leadership Team (LIDC-MLT). This team has been formed to develop a shared strategy for supporting migration and displacement related research by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The Global Migration Conversations adopt an inclusive, consultative approach to assessing the scope, achievements and challenges of the existing portfolio of migration research to identify strategic opportunities and priorities for further research and to highlight best practice in impact.

The observations provided in this report do not seek to be exhaustive, but rather to identify some key themes which will feed into a broader 'global' migration research agenda. The full outputs of this process will be published later in 2019. This report aims to stimulate ongoing discussions among participants and to feed into future Migration Conversations. Reports from the other conversations can be found on the project website.<sup>1</sup>

The London Migration Conversation brought together 36 researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, representatives of migrant and refugee associations and arts organisations working in the field of migration around London and the UK, to identify: priority areas for migration research; pathways to impact that have been, or are likely to be, promising; and platforms for communication and collaboration that could help to bridge research, policy, practice and public engagement in the future. The event took place under Chatham House rules. As such, all references are generalised.

## Beyond Crisis

A key, overarching concern of participants at the London conversation was that the association of migration with 'crisis' and securitisation discourses has become extremely widespread in UK and European discussions of migration. This has been to such an extent that this language has infiltrated academic spaces and funding priorities. This means that there is now a lack of focus on other and new forms of migration, including climate change-induced migration and migration across the life course. It is also important to note that more people move as economic migrants as compared to refugees, while for others, motives are mixed, as identified in the ESRC-funded MedMig project.<sup>2</sup>

*'Immigration isn't just about disaster; it's about opportunity'*

- Migration researcher

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<sup>1</sup> See: [www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt](http://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt)

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.medmig.info/>

The ESRC and AHRC were identified as being among funders that have put out thematically framed calls according to this ‘crisis’ mentality in a way that some participants felt was unhelpful and stifled academic freedom to pursue alternative approaches to the study of migration. While participants were keen to recognise the very real suffering of many migrants across the forced-voluntary spectrum, there is, some articulated, a risk of pathologising migration as something ‘bad’ in a way that feeds into policy agendas that seek primarily to control or ‘manage’ or ‘discipline’ migration. This has wider impacts on society.

Equally, however, the ESRC and AHRC have supported work which unsettles and considers the impact of the ‘crisis’ discourse. In a recently published ESRC-funded study, scholars identified a new typology of ways in which the European anti-smuggling regime seeks to discipline and police not only those who move, for example, but also humanitarian organisations and individuals who mobilise on behalf of the rights of migrants.<sup>3</sup> Another research project funded by the AHRC has sought to monitor and critically assess media and literary narratives around trafficking and modern slavery.<sup>4</sup> The researchers observed in a study of some 80,000 media stories that often terminology around trafficking and slavery are blurred in a way that fosters a crisis mentality, instils fear and propagates inaccurate gendered assumptions.

*‘Academics can have a kind of watchdog role in the current context of fake news and hostile environment towards migrants. We can raise our hand and the little authority we have and say, “hey, that’s not factually accurate!”’*

- Migration researcher

It is important to document and challenge the way stories are told, participants agreed, and to weigh this against other evidence. Another facet of this ‘watchdog’ role of academia is to keep issues that are frequently side-lined, *in* the news. This is the case of statelessness, for example. Why, one participant questioned, when statelessness affects millions of people globally is hardly anyone talking about it? There is one NGO in Europe working on statelessness and thousands working on refugees, yet they stressed: ‘this is an ongoing crisis’. As part of efforts to show the enduring protection needs of stateless people, the NGO has created a range of creative outputs including a comic and videos.

There was widespread agreement that it was important not to lose sight of both the scale and scope of global migration and refugee flows and become overly Euro-centric. Most forced displacement happens in the global south (see reports from the Delhi and Nairobi conversations) and there is a need to also decentre the debate and associated resources away from Europe towards southern responses to migration and south-to-south migration. The new GCRF South-to-South Inequality and Development Hub<sup>5</sup> was hailed as a good example of funders facilitating academics’ engagement in this process of ‘de-centering’

<sup>3</sup> See:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=policig+humantiarianism&oq=policig+humantiarianism&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l2.2175j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9783319782133>

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.odi.org/projects/2925-south-south-migration-inequality-and-development-hub>

knowledge production. This issue of de-centering knowledge production on migration from the centre of power to the periphery is a topic that has repeatedly come up in the global migration conversations (see e.g. Delhi report)<sup>6</sup>.

Another award-winning ESRC funded project mentioned as an example of best practice by one London conversation attendee sought to analyse European data on migrants' deaths in the Mediterranean. This study used original methods of forensic oceanography<sup>7</sup> to map these data against satellite images which challenged official government statistics. Their research supports the case that the number of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean over the course of the so-called European refugee crisis has been under-estimated and poorly documented. This research is among a range of projects that have proposed, as part of their findings, the revision of data collection methods by governments.

A relatively recent dynamic identified by one participant was that where academics are entering the public debate in this watchdog function, they can become the target of hate or vitriol from anti-migrant groups. This is an area to watch going forwards since it has implications for academic safety and freedom.

## Hope and Opportunity

*'It's important to talk about hope. We need to talk about success stories too, friendships. It's not all sadness!'*

- Migrant participant

Linked to the need to move beyond crisis thinking was a rich discussion surrounding the importance of hope and opportunity in migration studies. It was widely felt that many of the more positive aspects of migration including for arts, business and entrepreneurship were being side-lined by a funding agenda that is reactive and primarily concerned with humanitarian emergencies and securitised responses to forced migration. A bias was identified in the Migration Conversations as a whole towards the phenomenon of forced displacement at the expense of other forms of mobility and migration. This is something that the MLT team is committed to remedy and explore further with the research councils going forwards, while equally not diminishing the importance of funding high quality research on effective humanitarian responses to displacement.

While, as one participant pointed out, the USA has a strong focus on the aspirations of migrations and youth, in the UK these topics are more peripheral. One example of where these questions have been successfully coupled with a more nuanced analysis of mixed migration flows is the ESRC-funded Becoming Adult project.<sup>8</sup> This project has studied the dreams and wellbeing outcomes of 100 unaccompanied youth in Europe. By way of impact,

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt/outputs/file133830.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.visibleproject.org/blog/project/forensic-oceanography-various-locations-in-europe-and-northern-africa/>

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://becomingadult.net/>

the project has created a range of mixed media to share this message of hope with a wider audience. These include a video that was shown at the event entitled *Dear Habib*. The organisation PositiveNegatives which made the animation is leading the way in communicating research findings to the general public for educational purposes.

Meanwhile, participants pointed out that countless artistic outputs have been created in Europe in response to migration and refugee movements in recent years (e.g. from the Good Chance Theatre in Calais, Platforma Arts and the London based collective Stories and Supper). Scholars and policy makers could do more to draw on these in their research, seeing existing art as a source of data for analysis as well as a means of ‘impact’ (see discussion at Thessaloniki event for more on the multiple roles of the arts in migration studies)<sup>9</sup>. Who, one participant questioned, is storing and analysing artistic outputs from, for example, the Calais Jungle camp? There is a need to preserve such materials for further study in the future and to digitalise certain art forms. But, as was stressed multiple times, it is hard to secure funding for archiving activities in the UK and abroad.

Some participants discussed how different genres of storytelling can serve to open up different spaces of hope and elicit new narratives, including through comedy videos. As one art therapist at the event commented, ‘our work is about hoping and coping’. Similarly, a participant explained how they sought to mobilise hope as part of an exhibition about the Partition of India in the 1940s, the largest mass movement of people in recent history. Their work is an example of the importance archiving and curating artistic materials related to migration for the purpose of not just further study, but also memorialisation.

Another key theme that was repeated during the London conversation (which is related to the discussion of urban transformation as well as hope and opportunity), is that of youth. There was a consensus that research needs to better capture the energy of young people and learn to speak their language. How can we enfranchise young people as participants in our research? If we exclude youth from studies of migration, we risk falling into several traps, it was pointed out.

Artistic methods as well as culturally situated knowledge and language here are key. We also have to listen to how different generations respond to migration policies differently. As one participant explained: ‘there is a sense in many mainstream policy responses to migration that if you tell a young person migration is dangerous, they will not come. But if you translate this into a situation of economic insecurity and unemployment, that danger becomes an adventure’. Another participant explained, ‘we seem to understand that an 18-year-old British person will embrace the danger of going travelling and jumping out of an aeroplane for mobility kicks, but apply this same danger logic to youth in the global south and they are seen as irrational!’ There is a need for more psychological research into questions of risk and resilience around migration: cultures of adventure and also play.

*‘Even though we are working at the border and in situations of violence, play is possible and important.’*

– Arts-based practitioner

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt/outputs/file136798.pdf>

## Public Opinion and Anti-Migrant Sentiment

Various UK-based think tanks were lauded for their work in trying to plug thematic knowledge gaps in relation to public opinion on migration and displacement in Britain and for their critical engagement with cultures of hostility as well as hospitality. Among those identified were British Future. Participants were nevertheless in disagreement about the role of academics in seeking to understand anti-migrant sentiment. A growing body of research is exploring the humanitarian motives of volunteers and actors and the impact of humanitarian assistance on recipients; but there has been less of a focus on anti-migrant sentiment and behaviour and how it affects migrant and other communities. One positive case study identified in this regard concerned an ESRC-funded project which explored the impact of the UK's so-called 'hostile environment' policy towards migrants on social trust in a borough of London.<sup>10</sup>

*'To study racism is not the same as endorsing it. It's nice to engage with hospitality but we also cannot ignore the hostility.'*

-Migration researcher

As was raised at the Migration Conversation in Barcelona, there is a need for more longitudinal, resource-intensive research to understand how public opinion towards migration changes over space and time and what factors influence these changes.<sup>11</sup> How, in other words, does 'impact' happen in the sphere of public opinion? And what is the relationship between public opinion and policy in relation to migration? The ongoing work of academics in disciplines such as politics, sociology and psychology was identified as key to exploring these issues.

*'Sometimes we can be too hard on ourselves about impact, it's also about a broader cultural shift.'*

- Migration scholar

## Race and Class: Mapping Urban Transformation

One participant suggested that while it's not controversial to get funding to research topics of race and class in the global south, in the UK, because of the political context, it can be seen as fuelling anti-migrant sentiment to even touch on these issues and their intersection with social transformation or change.

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Go-Home-Politics-Immigration-Controversies/dp/1526113228>

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt/outputs/file136797.pdf>



One way of exploring questions of social transformation across urban and rural locations is through the use of maps. A positive case study example given in this regard concerns an exhibition collaboration between a UK-based research project on the Horn of Africa and the Royal Geographical Society.<sup>12</sup> Another research project is collaborating with the Maritime Museum in Greenwich which has a large collection of maps useful for studying changing geographies over space and time. It is important that we do not lose our connection to maps, commented one participant, for even in this digital age they are ‘the primary language of migration’.

In the context of contemporary phenomena such as statelessness and Brexit, as well as historical phenomena such as Partition, maps and visual data help us to recall and explore shifting geographies of scale. Identity needs to be seen through an historical lens, for places move as well as people. One ESRC-funded project mentioned as innovative in this regard is exploring how the process of Brexit and UK’s future departure from the European Union impacts on the identities of children and families with dual EU and British nationality.<sup>13</sup> At the global level, more research is needed on how statelessness affects shifting experiences of space and place and can at once fuel and be fuelled by migration.

Meanwhile, anti-trafficking measures in the UK, it was noted, have contributed to deconstructing the boundary between foreign and native children. Along with migration and mobility come important questions pertaining to urban transformation, ecology, class and (social) mobility. And with these, questions of cultural and linguistic translation and transformation not just across ethnic lines but class and gender lines. Work by Nira-Yuval Davis on intersectional belonging was identified as important in this regard, as was research on super-diversity emerging from the University of Birmingham. In turn, interesting work on urban transformation and migration is coming from universities outside of London. Among artist participants too, it was felt there is a need to de-centre storytelling away from London to reach out to communities in cities such as Bradford and Coventry.

The reality, several participants pointed out, is that most migration scholars in the UK are still white and middle class and they bring this bias into their work. Participants discussed the related issue of copyright and ownership: who is *paid* for research and for deciding which kind of stories are valuable.

*‘Impact is an act of metaphorical violence...researchers are increasingly seen as empire builders trying to build their profiles.’*

– Migration researcher

To do effective research, it is necessary to have a diverse population of researchers because, as one participant articulated it, ‘as researchers we need to speak the right language to the right audience and be able to engage in acts of cultural movement and translation’. We also need resources to forge trust and longer term working relationships (again, a key theme at past events).

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/newsevents/events/calendar/the-unknown-city/>

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://eurochildren.info>



There is a link between questions of class and migration, explained one participant, citing work by Bridget Anderson. What about issues of forced *immobility* and social immobility in the fragmented geography of the British Isles? We need, they stressed, anthropologists to enter mixed communities in interdisciplinary teams. Here, it was proposed, we can learn from the work of Paulo Freire and cultures of community organising in the U.S.A which have adopted participatory community-based approaches to research and social change.

There is an important historical aspect to this linkage between class, ethnic background and forced migration. One participant cited in this regard the Highland Clearances when in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries thousands of individuals from the Scottish Highlands were removed to North America and Australia. Similarly, while there is currently a renewed interest in the Irish border as a result of Brexit, most people, it was felt, are unaware of Ireland's history of conflict and psychological and physical displacement. To understand such issues and how they play out in class and religious struggles today, and, moreover, how they shape different cultures of welcoming new migrants, we need to de-centre the debate from London and out towards the rest of the British Isles: Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Food was identified as a useful object of study for cutting across some of these structural fissures and opening spaces for stories to be told including, crucially, across the generations. Yet there is also a risk of fetishising food as a cultural good, argued one participant, without considering the link between the food industry and mass migrant exploitation. These reflections again recalled a discussion at the Delhi conversation about counter-point: that while we are doing research here and now there is always something else happening 'over there' transforming it at the periphery.

*'States and communities are not fixed, they move around too, though migration studies tend to focus on the person.'*

-Migration researcher

## Historical Perspectives

The importance of historical scholarship was reiterated several times during the London conversation. Several examples were given of positive collaboration between museums, academics and universities working well to present new knowledge for new audiences, for example in the context of 100-year anniversary of first world war armistice in 2018. One London museum was able to collaborate with a range of actors to create a new exhibition on the role of troops from British colonies in shaping British experiences of peace and conflict; this is a little explored topic in migration but yet one for which there are rich archives. The museum successfully toured the exhibition to a range of ethnically diverse, intergenerational audiences beyond London including in Luton, Hackney and Manchester. The result was a range of interesting conversations that raised questions of history and identity. The curator explained, 'some audiences showed pride in involvement, some were angry at the exploitation and others were curious'.

Again, discussions on the role of research and community participation as a way of ‘holding stories’ and the value of *plurality* – that is, being able to elicit and work with ‘multiple narratives’ – mirrored previous migration conversations in Delhi and Nairobi. Funders need to be aware of the costs of ‘holding this space’, including making resources available for events, office space and archiving for non-academic collaborators such as artists (see past reports on the call for more opportunities to incubate non-academic collaborative labour including through paid University visiting artist schemes and by costing/making exhibition or office spaces available as part of research proposals).<sup>14</sup>

Questions of memorialising events that define communities were also raised in the context of the museum on India’s Partition as well as in relation to the UK’s Migration Museum (see above). There was a strong sense of urgency to gather testimonies on certain historical experiences before the last generation of survivors passes away.

Where historical accounts are contested or politics are still unfolding in the present day, several participants noted that art allows you to tell stories that are difficult to tell with just words, or to present simultaneously a range of contested narratives. For some stories to be told, there is a need to wait until healing can begin, for example as in the case of the recently-established Partition museum in Amritsar.

*‘We need to be able to hold and elicit that range of responses, challenging people or tell stories now through objects and audio – this is the value of academic/museum partnerships [...]at the heart of keeping museums relevant today’.*

- Museum curator

## Questions of Authenticity

A range of methodological opportunities and challenges in relation to migration research were raised during the London conversation. Several participants pointed out that we are operating in a climate of intellectual and epistemological cynicism where questions of truth and authenticity are constant and our work is at risk of being labelled ‘fake news’. In what has been called this ‘post-truth age’, it is important to defend the rigor and reliability of data.

Several academic participants lamented that time pressure affected proper assessment of their work, advocating that we should take more time to evaluate a research project after it is finished, questioning for example what went wrong and went right? What can we learn and can we continue the partnership?

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/lidc-mlt/outputs/file136798.pdf>

The media can be hostile but also a good check on the rigour of academic work. Working with media carries a range of challenges and opportunities: when does our research become news and how can media institutions support academics to disseminate knowledge quickly and effectively? A positive case study was raised on issue by a participant commenting how guidelines on media reporting on migration in Italy (the Carte di Roma Code of Conduct)<sup>15</sup>, have helped to foster trust and collaboration between scholars, migrants and journalists.

Several participants had used comics as a way of challenging ideas of truth and fiction in their work and delivering key messages simply and to a wide audience.

## What are Data? Quantitative Data and Archives

A key question that resurfaced during the event, as it has previously, is what *are* data. It was clear at the event that data for the purpose of migration research can be a vast array of things, from a plate of food, an object in a museum, an archive of 15 million typed BBC transcripts, 2,000 recorded interviews, 3,000 sketches from refugee camps, a map and so on. Participants discussed the value of dialogue between quantitative and qualitative researchers. One participant with a maths background spoke of the importance of visualising numerical data while another engineer spoke to the need to ‘translate’ equations through working in multi-disciplinary teams. There are clear differences in how different communities make sense of numbers and how data are collected, interpreted and shared. Some participants suggested that more reflexivity was needed in quantitative research in this regard.

As with other thematic disciplines, in migration studies there is often a gap between qualitative and quantitative research approaches. As identified above, qualitative research can help to identify holes in quantitative data collection. In refugee camps, for example, one participant explained that the whole bureaucracy of data collection is structured in ways that reify certain narratives. Art in this context can allow us to tell other stories which in turn help shape the debate on what kind of data are collected in the first place. The Migration and Society centre COMPAS<sup>16</sup> at the University of Oxford, co-funded by the ESRC, was identified as an important space for mixed methods migration research and for fostering

*‘What data are collected and authenticated are significant for the stories told...bureaucracies create certain types of data and knowledge. We need art to tell other stories.*

– Migration scholar

collaboration across qualitative and quantitative researchers.

Art plays a role in generating data, one participant argued, but numbers ultimately determine migration policy for most governments and INGOs. So again, they argued, we need to ‘talk their language’ through acts of cross-disciplinary translation and interpretation.

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Guidelines-English.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/>

The resettlement of refugees is driven by numbers, for example. One participant cited the importance of conducting a census in the Calais Jungle camp to campaign for the resettlement of refugee children in the UK. 'There were loads of excellent art interventions but to speak the language of the government we had to *count* people.' This was not easy, the participant explained, especially because of the symbolic violence involved in categorising certain groups, for example by ethnic group, or children aged under or over 18.

There are, participants agreed, massive problems with European data collection on migration, especially in relation to children and youth and undocumented migration. As one participant put it, 'it's like a joke...how many undocumented migrants are there...it's like some migrants, they are called *undocumented* for a reason!' So, what of those migrants who resist being counted or otherwise documented by researchers and/or the state? There are, someone pointed out – in the context of increased data sharing between immigration control and certain UK service sectors (such as public health and academia itself)<sup>17</sup> – certain risks to being 'counted' and participating in research. In this context, is there an argument for *not* pursuing certain types of knowledge gap? What are the ethical consequences of collecting and disseminating certain type of knowledge e.g. on irregular migrant smuggling routes?

One international organisation spoke of how, after consultation with a range of stakeholders, they had moved away from quantitative approach to research and integrated more participatory approaches into their work. The numbers in their data collection are now matched by a more nuanced picture of resettlement in the UK and of the different experiences of different ethnic and gender groups.

## Working with the Private Sector

Finally, the London discussion raised questions of how governments or academic institutions might help migration researchers access private sources of data held by businesses and also foster dialogue with them in terms of making their research findings useful as well as identifying new topics going forwards.

It is not always feasible for an academic or NGO to broker such deals; where data are private there are different protocols to, for example, approaching government. Approaching private companies for the purpose of research can, in the words of one participant, be a 'minefield' – morally as well as pragmatically.

One influential research project cited in this regard concerns an ESRC-funded project which worked in collaboration with contractors to access new data on the UK's immigration detention and removal centres. Another example of collaboration cited was an AHRC/ESRC project working with IKEA on the issue of refugee shelter.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, one participant explained how their business school is working with fashion retailers on corporate social responsibility on the basis of an ESRC anti-trafficking research grant. Nevertheless, while it

<sup>17</sup> On this topic, see the results of ESRC-funded project 'Policing Humanitarianism': <https://www.bloomsburyprofessional.com/uk/policing-humanitarianism-9781509922994/>

<sup>18</sup> See: <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FP005004%2F1>

was positive to have participants represented at the London conversation from business schools, their private sector partners were notably absent at this migration conversation, as they have been at previous ones.

The question of collaborations with the private sector pose challenges both old and new for research councils; these are challenges that the Migration Leadership Team is committed to consider carefully in its proposals and other outputs from the migration conversations going forwards.

*'If you're not going to with others then you'll never be part of something bigger than collaborate yourselves'*

– Migration researcher

## Conclusion

This report explored a number of thematic priority areas that were identified and debated during the London migration conversation. Chief among these have been the importance of critically engaging with dominant associations of migration with states of insecurity and 'crisis' and shedding more light on issues which have been side-lined from policy and intellectual debates. These include: the relationship between migration and entrepreneurship, the impact of migration on host communities, statelessness and South-to-South migration. Moreover, we have seen that while some issues were rendered 'hyper visible' in UK migration studies, such as the European refugee 'crisis' and modern slavery, some thematic gaps include the following: questions of race, class and migration and shifting geographies in urban areas. The next migration conversation will take place in Glasgow in January 2019.

## Appendix: Event Programme

### Programme

#### **8.45-9.15: Registration and Coffee**

#### **9.15-9.45: Introducing the Global Migration Conversations (GMCs)**

This introductory session will set the scene and explain the aims and purpose of the GMCs and how they fit together.

#### **9.45-11.00: Panel Discussion 1: Beyond ‘Comms’: Art in Migration Research, Policy and Practice**

This panel discussion will focus on the role of the arts in relation to mobility and migration. Panellists will discuss how art relates to different aspects of the research process, from serving as a source of data, a method of eliciting data, a reflective practice and as a means of communicating research findings to different audiences including through the use of images and social media. Panellists will introduce themselves and speak for five minutes each about their own research. The chair will then pose a series of questions and facilitate a discussion. Topics will include:

- i) How can we bridge the divide between arts and social sciences and when is this *not* desirable/necessary?
- ii) When is art data?
- iii) What is the role of art across the research cycle, from agenda setting to dissemination?
- iv) How can we reach different audiences and stakeholders with different types of ‘evidence’ about migration, ranging from cultural bodies to the public, politicians and financial institutions?

An interactive Q&A will follow the discussion.

#### **11.00-12.00: Salon discussion: Creating a Collaborative Agenda for Migration Research**

This salon seeks to map innovative practices in migration research with a specific focus on effective partnerships and collaboration. Participants will split into 3 pre-determined groups based on their geographical working areas to discuss the following 3 topics for 15 minutes each. In the last 15 minutes, the convener of each group (one of the four of the MLT team) will present findings (5 minutes each).

- 1. What are the gaps in current migration research in the region and how could these be addressed?
- 2. What does good impact look like (give examples)?
- 3. What makes a good partnership and how can we navigate power relations in partnerships in migration research?

#### **12.00-12.45: Lunch**

#### **12.45 - 14.00: Workshops Round 1**

These interactive workshops are an opportunity for participants to experiment and learn from new approaches to research. Participants will be invited to think critically and differently in relation to their work on migration. This includes, how they understand and

interact with 'data' and the question of 'impact'. Participants are invited to participate in 1 out of the following possible 2 interactive workshops:

**(i) Art, Performance and the Public**

In this workshop, participants will engage with and respond to a range of visual and physical material and consider the role of museums and history in the production, archiving and dissemination of knowledge. Academics will speak of their experiences working with museums as part of research projects and museum creators will discuss best practice in terms of collaborative working with academics. Participants will consider how artistic methods can be used as a source of data as well as dissemination in research. Participants will be asked to reflect on their own experiences of migration and (possibly) create their own works of art.

**ii) Power and Participation**

Participants will be invited to question power dynamics in research contexts and what can be done to make participatory research more collaborative and emancipatory and to avoid the 'tyranny of participation'. In this workshop, individuals who have experience of migration will discuss their experiences of being involved in research with the ESRC and AHRC – what worked, and what didn't. An NGO representative and academic collaborator will discuss the ethical and political challenges of their engagement in research, especially as they relate to issues around data sharing in collaboration with government and academic bodies.

**14.00-14.15: Break**

**14.15-15.30: Workshops Round 2**

**iv) Working Collaboratively in Precarious Situations**

In this workshop, participants will discuss the practical operational and ethical challenges and opportunities of working in precarious conditions including in conflict situations and climate-changed affected contexts. What are the similarities/differences facing different displaced populations, such as disaster versus conflict-induced IDPs? Academics will discuss their experiences of conducting research in conflict affected regions and with hard to research stateless and IDP populations. We will also discuss the challenges and opportunities of multi-sited comparative research. Participants will be asked to think of some guidelines for mobility-related research in precarious contexts.

**iii) Storytelling**

This workshop will look at telling stories in research through the example of comics and innovative journalism. Facilitators will give examples and discuss their experiences of working collaboratively to create stories based on research and question: to what extent are stories co-produced? Participants will be encouraged to think about storytelling from different perspectives and for different audiences. Participants will discuss the opportunities or challenges especially of communicating academic research. How do we tell stories in a way that avoids the trap of the 'good versus bad migrant' such as asylum seeker versus foreign national detainee?

**15.30-15.45: Break**



### **15.45-17.00: Beyond ‘Impact for Impact’s Sake’ – How Can Migration Research Best Speak to Policy and Practice (...and When is it Right to Go Rogue?)**

This panel will explore how scholarship can speak to and most importantly, dialogue with policy and practice across all stages of research and under what circumstances and conditions collaboration is more (or less) desirable. Panellists will introduce themselves and speak for five minutes each about their own research. The chair will then pose a series of questions to facilitate discussion regarding best practice in collaboration and impact. Topics will include:

- (i) What is best practice in terms of impact?
- (ii) How do we define meaningful impact?
- (iii) How do we apply the learnings from today in practice to the academic landscape of the UK and further afield?
- (iv) Under what circumstances is migration research right to ‘go rogue’ and ignore policy or forgo certain types of ‘impact’?
- (v) Is it possible for knowledge to be co-produced? If so, in what contexts and what are the symbolic and material implications of co-production?
- (vi) What are the challenges of opportunities of working in partnership across academic institutions and with NGOs, arts, legal and other organisations locally, regionally and at the international and interdisciplinary level? Are there specific challenges at different stages e.g. during agenda setting, data collection, analysis and dissemination?

An interactive Q&A will follow the discussion.

### **17.00-17.30: Moving Forwards: Next steps**

A summary of the day’s events and information regarding dissemination of workshop findings and the evolution of the MLT network going forwards.

### **17.30 – 18.30: Drinks reception**

### **19.00 -21.00: Dinner**