

Europe and the World Centre International Conference
'RESPONSES TO THE REFUGEE CHALLENGE'
Thursday 27 April 2017 1.30- 5 pm,
Rendall Building Seminar Room 11 (University of Liverpool campus)

The influx of refugees from the war-torn Middle Eastern countries poses a significant challenge to all European countries. The aim of this international conference is to explore responses to this challenge by experts in migration and asylum policies from Germany, the UK and the Balkans. Against the backdrop of what is perceived as 'refugee crisis', the speakers focus on the following themes: the role emotions of compassion, but also fear which leads to xenophobia with reference to Germany; the desperate plight of women and children along the 'Balkan route' who are in need of legal aid and psychosocial and health services, and the reception of refugees in the UK where asylum applicants are produced as clandestine economic migrants.

Programme:

Prof. Annette Jünemann

Emotions matter: German reactions to the 'refugee crisis' between PEGIDA and welcome culture

Chancellor Merkel's contested decision to open the borders in September 2015 stands for the general conviction that Europe – and Germany – have a moral obligation to share the burden of accommodating refugees. However, anti-migrant parties and movements are gaining increasing support among the German electorate. Therefore, Germany's current migration policy seems to be torn between xenophobic PEGIDA on the one hand and a pro-refugee welcome culture on the other. Against this backdrop prof. Jünemann explores the impact of *emotions* on German reactions to the "refugee crisis". While volunteers in support of refugees were driven by feelings of compassion, motivating them to offer help, many other people felt fear, motivating them to harshly reject the admission of refugees. What distinguishes the first from the second group seems to be the capability to identify and empathise with the refugees. Since the emotion of fear is at the very core of xenophobia, to counteract xenophobic attitudes it's necessary to better understand the interplay between fear and the ability to empathize. Under which conditions can empathy develop and ideally function as an antidote against xenophobia?

Prof. Dr. Annette Jünemann, teaches International Relations at Helmut Schmidt University University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg, Germany. Among her recent publications are *Euro-Mediterranean Relations after the Arab Spring: Persistence in Times of Change* (with Jakob Horst and Delf Rothe, Routledge, 2014) and *Fortress Europe? Challenges and Failures of Migration and Asylum Policies* (VS-Springer, forthcoming).

Dr. Selma Porobić

'Experiences of refugees along the Balkan route'

Migration through the Balkans is being driven in part by the desperation of close to 60.000 refugees stuck in Greece, most of whom are living in substandard living conditions of squalid and isolated camps. EU member states promise to relocate all of them is working slowly and only around 2,500 refugees have been resettled to other countries – encouraging many of the rest to smuggle themselves northwards instead. The Western Balkans route has been a passageway into the EU since 2012, when Schengen visa restrictions were relaxed for five Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. After a limited time of relatively free passage, officials from the countries along the route announced the complete closure of it, meaning that only those with valid visas could pass the borders. Since the closure of the Balkans refugees are being subjected to uncertain waiting, isolation and everyday suffering in the improvised reception conditions across the Balkans, lacking access to basic living conditions and human rights, deprived of free legal aid and access to asylum. Experiences of these refugees coming from Syria, Iraq

and Afghanistan mainly, and especially the plight of women traveling with children and families, are little known outside the region. Dr. Porobic discusses the situation of current refugees in the Western Balkans with a specific focus on women and children and their need to access proper legal aid, housing but also psychosocial and health services.

Dr. Selma Porobić is a forced migration researcher, director of former UNHCR's Centre for Refugee and IDP studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo and Assistant Professor at International University of Sarajevo. She has over ten years of experience working with forced migrants from and in the Western Balkans region, Scandinavian and other EU countries. Dr. Porobić has just completed the implementation of a two-year-long regional cross-country project funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (RRPP/Fribourg University, 2014-2016), that investigated the psychological well-being and psychosocial services provision to female forced migrants in transitional settings of Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo. Her latest book (with Brad Blitz) titled 'Forced Migration, Gender and Wellbeing: The Long-Term Effects of Displacement on Women' is forthcoming (Edward Elgar) and she has also produced documentary films on internally displaced women with Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex university.

Dr. Lucy Mayblin

The British response to the refugee challenge: A long proud tradition of limiting access to the right to asylum

Successive UK governments have been keen to suggest that the country has a long and proud tradition of offering refugees protection from persecution. In this talk Dr Mayblin interrogates this claim in light of the realities of (a) the colonial exclusions insisted upon in the 1951 convention negotiations, (b) the UK's treatment of asylum seekers over recent decades, and (c) its response to the crisis of refugee reception facing the wider European continent from 2015 onwards. I explore how asylum applicants are produced as clandestine economic migrants and how these policies are not something new, but are rather historically consistent.

Dr. Lucy Mayblin is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick. She is a political sociologist with a particular interest in practices and processes of asylum policy making. Her current project, funded by an ESRC Future Research Leaders grant 2015-2018, focuses on the economic rights of asylum seekers in the UK. Her book 'Asylum After Empire' is published in March 2017 with Rowman and Littlefield International.