



Hawke EU Centre  
for Mobilities, Migrations and  
Cultural Transformations



## HAWKE EU CENTRE FOR MOBILITIES, MIGRATIONS & CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

### Hawke EU Centre Migration Summit: Global Tipping Points and the Role of Research (1-2 November 2016)

#### Summit Summary

The world currently finds itself at a time of great global challenges and uncertainty. Huge numbers of people are on the move, with 65 million displaced people around the world. The Hawke EU Centre for Mobilities, Migration and Cultural Transformations' European Union and Asia Pacific Migration Summit explored these issues. **Global Tipping Points and the Role of Research** brought together world-leading experts in the field of migration studies, including academics, policy analysts, activists and political leaders. The two-day summit consisted of four keynote addresses and three roundtable discussions.

**'We refugees': Hardening and Softening of Borders of Everyday Life** was the summit's first keynote address presented by Professor Alison Phipps. Phipps is a Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies at the University of Glasgow and is the co-convenor of the Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNET). She is also the 2016 European Thinker in Residence for the Hawke EU Centre for Mobilities, Migration and Cultural Transformations.

Professor Phipps remarked in her keynote that what the world is experiencing is not unprecedented. Her message that we've been here before and that here we are again highlighted the insufficient global response to the situation. Her experience as a linguist and anthropologist acted as a lens in which to view the state of migration from a European, Australian and international perspective. She acknowledged that we are all border guards now. People working in health care, education, housing, employment and banking have to act and report on immigration status. She herself is an academic border guard, a reflection of the hardening of borders of everyday life. The engaging keynote brought together performance and poetry and explored the relationship between refugee integration, migration and the arts.

The summit was well timed as it began the day after Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced plans to deny access to any person who arrived to Australia

by boat after 2013. This fed well into the second keynote address from Professor Gillian Triggs entitled **Breaking the Policy Deadlock: Investigating Rights-based Responses to Flight by Sea**. Professor Triggs is currently the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission with a five-year appointment to her term.

Professor Triggs' presentation was primarily focussed on the new report released by the Australian Human Rights Commission called *Pathways to Protection: A Human Rights-Based Response to the Flight of Asylum Seekers by Sea*. This report builds on the work in *The Forgotten Children* report released last year and explores innovative ways that Australia can meet its international obligations while also maintaining border security. It aims to break the policy deadlock, particularly in regard to offshore processing on Manus Island and Nauru. Professor Triggs highlighted that the *Pathways to Protection* report is trying to find a rights-based alternative to third country processing than Nauru and Papua New Guinea. It aims to increase public discussion about alternatives, explore human rights law responses and propose pathways to protection that work collaboratively with our regional neighbours.

Dr Jeff Crisp is a Research Associate at the Refugee Study Centre at Oxford University. As well as that, he has held senior positions at UNHCR, Refugees International and the Global Commission on International Migration. He presented the third keynote of the summit titled **Crisis? What Crisis? Refugees, Asylum and Migration in Global Perspective**.

Dr Crisp's presentation gave a snapshot of key developments relating to refugees, asylum seekers and migration in the last few years. Through this process he questioned the notion that what the world is currently experiencing is an 'unprecedented crisis'. He broke down the UNHRC's figure of 65 million displaced people that is often touted by the media. In doing so he reaffirmed Professor Phipps' position and disputed the suggestion that what we are currently experiencing is actually an *unprecedented* global refugee crisis. He also raised criticisms with the current international response, including a lack of investment in humanitarian aid. As well as this, he pointed out that refugees are increasingly being used as tradable commodities. Dr Crisp did, however, also offer some cause for hope. Primarily this included the idea that countries like Canada setting a good example in the international community, planned follow-ups for the UN refugee summits and the ever-evolving refugee paradigm.

Professor Pal Ahluwalia is the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation at the University of Portsmouth. He presented the fourth and final keynote of the summit, which was entitled, **Bearing Witness: Forced Migration in the Age of**

**Globalisation.** Professor Ahluwalia raised questions around how one can bear witness to the atrocities of the world and investigating the role scholarship can play.

Professor Ahluwalia brought up the idea of critical migration studies, which juggles acknowledging the tragedy of the situation on one hand, while investigating the communities challenged by the influx on the other. He used an example of forensic oceanography as a way to illustrate this idea further. He discussed the use of remote sensing and mapping technologies in forensic oceanography as a means to document deaths and human rights violations of migrants in the maritime borders of Europe. This work supports the struggle for migrants' rights as carried out by activist and advocacy groups, with the increase militarisation of borders leading people to take more extreme or perilous routes. Professor Ahluwalia also suggested the need to explore the implications of Brexit on globalisation, as the idea of Europe as it was originally imagined has been shaken. He also expressed the need for a new paradigm for refugees and migration and more effective ways to deal with what is causing people to migrate or seek refuge.

Three roundtable discussions throughout the summit offered guests the opportunity to debate the issues raised by the lectures. These were focussed on the role of research in anticipating the global migration crisis, multi-dimensional approaches to asylum seeker and refugee integration and research for evidence-based policy on new migrants. Overall the summit presented a space for complex discussion on issues surrounding the role of research and its increasing importance in addressing concerns surrounding refugees around the world... but as always there is still a lot of work to be done.