



Workshop on Social Theory and Migration: Dialogues on Critical Realism and Migration Research

Thursday 28 April 2011, 09:30–17:30
Wolfson College, Linton Road, Oxford OX2 6UD

Rationale

The analytical categories of structure and agency have a prominent place in the research on migration processes, the settlement of people and their social incorporation into host societies. There are two dominant theoretical perspectives where the structure-agency impasse has so far been addressed. The first, and most frequently adopted, is Giddens' notion of structuration; while it is beguiling, it has arguably failed to offer any significant advances for migration theory. The second, critical realism, appears to offer a useful analytical tool for a more sophisticated analysis of structure and agency in migration processes. Nevertheless, attempts at incorporating critical realism into migration studies remain fragmented and its utility is contested.

The International Migration Institute invites scholars to a one-day workshop to start new conversations about social theory and migration studies. This workshop aims to provide a platform for dialogue on how to theoretically and methodologically apply a critical realism perspective in empirical studies of migration processes. The sessions will explore the foundations of critical realism; reflect on how it can be applied to migration research; and ask what is distinctive about critical realist approaches to migration research compared to the much more common positivist and relativist studies that dominate the field.

Workshop organisation

In order to ensure intensive and creative discussion, the workshop will consist of three sessions, each of which will have one paper addressing the theme of the session. These papers will be briefly presented by the authors. These will be followed by responses from two discussants, who will highlight key points, present critiques and raise further issues, and then open discussion. Papers will be circulated to participants in advance. All participants are asked to read these papers before the workshop and be prepared to contribute to the dialogue.

Registration

The places for this workshop are limited. If you would like to join us for this event, please reserve a place by contacting: agnieszka.kubal@qeh.ox.ac.uk & maria.villares@qeh.ox.ac.uk. Lunch and tea/coffee will be provided. Unfortunately we cannot offer any support for travel or accommodation for this workshop. We are grateful to the Oxford Martin School for contributing funds to make this event possible.

Programme for the day

09:00	Coffee
09:15–09:30	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Oliver Bakewell (International Migration Institute, University of Oxford)</p>
09:30–11:00	<p>Critical Realism and Post-Positivist Social Science</p> <p>Justin Cruickshank (Sociology Group, POLSIS University of Birmingham)</p> <p>The Positive and the Negative: Assessing the Move from Positivism to Constructionist and Realist Forms of Post-Positivist Research in the Social Sciences</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Carter, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Warwick • Robin Cohen, Director of the International Migration Institute and Professor of Development Studies, University of Oxford <p>Chair: tbc</p>
11:00–11:30	Coffee
11:30–13:00	<p>Critical Realism in Migration Research</p> <p>Ewa Morawska (Department of Sociology, University of Essex)</p> <p>Studying International Migration in the Long(er) and Short(er) Durée: Contesting Some and Reconciling Other Disagreements Between the Structuration and Morphogenetic Approaches</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda Mc Dowell, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford • Claudia Schneider, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge <p>Chair: tbc</p>
13:00–14:00	Lunch
14:00–15:30	<p>Critical Realist Methodologies for Migration Research</p> <p>Theodoros Iosifides (Department of Geography, University of the Aegean)</p> <p>A Generic Conceptual Model for Conducting Realist Qualitative Research: Examples from Migration Studies</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cindy Horst, Senior Researcher, PRIO (The Peace Research Institute Oslo) • Agnieszka Kubal, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford <p>Chair: tbc</p>
15:30 – 16:00	Tea
16:00–17:30	<p>Directions for Dialogue and Future Research: Round Table Discussion</p> <p>Chair: Oliver Bakewell (International Migration Institute, University of Oxford)</p>