



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Social and
Political Science



European Association of Social Anthropologists
Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux



Improvisations, Srinagar, October 2024, Photo by Pascale Schild

APeCS Conference 2025, University of Edinburgh, 2-3 June 2025

Future-Making in Times of Conflict, Violence and Insecurity

Conference organisers/ APeCS convenors (apecs_convenors@easaonline.org):
Livnat Konopny-Decleve, University of Edinburgh, and Pascale Schild, University of Bern
[APeCS Network](#)

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Timetable and Overview

Day 1, 2nd June	CMB, Seminar1	CMB, Seminar2	CMB, VLR (hybrid)	CMB, 3.15 (hybrid)	50 George Square, Room G.04
9 – 10.30am	Panel 9 (1/3): Future-Making OPEN	Panel 4 (1/3): Youth as the Future	Panel 2 (1/2): A Question of Complicity	Panel 3 (1/2): The Future of Peacebuilding	
Coffee break	CMB Foyer				
11am – 12.30pm	<i>Welcome</i> and Keynote by Tobias Kelly				
Conference Lunch	CMB Foyer				
2 – 3.30pm	Panel 1 (1/2): Vigilant Futures	Workshop: Stories that Reconnect	Panel 2 (2/2): A Question of Complicity	Panel 3 (2/2): The Future of Peacebuilding	
Coffee break	CMB Foyer				
4 – 5.30pm		Panel 4 (2/3): Youth as the Future	Panel 1 (2/2): Vigilant Futures	Panel 7: Theorizing Futures With Mbembe	
Break					
6 – 7.30pm					Film/ Roundtable
					Refreshments (tba)

Day 2, 3rd June	Seminar1	Seminar2	VLR (hybrid)	5.11 (hybrid)	
9 – 10.30am	Panel 5 (1/2): Future-Making Under Occupation	Panel 4 (3/3): Youth as the Future	Panel 9 (2/3): Future-Making OPEN	Panel 8: Digital Technologies	
Coffee break	CMB Foyer				
11am – 12.30pm	Panel 5 (2/2): Future-Making Under Occupation	Panel 6: Dystopian Vision	Panel 9 (3/3): Future-Making OPEN		
End of Conference					

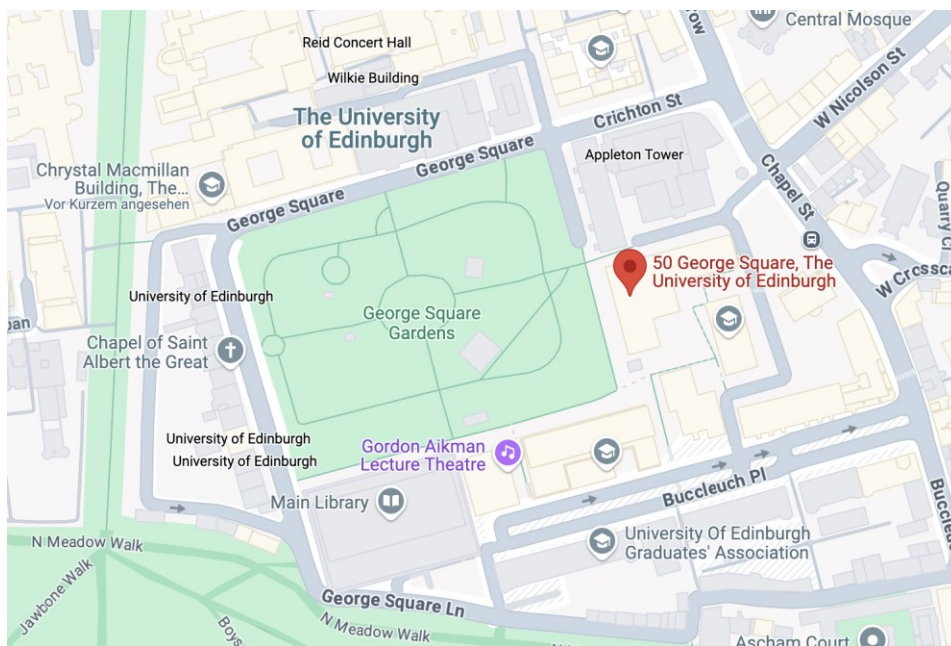
Conference venue and rooms

All **panels**, the **workshop** and the **keynote**, as well as all coffee breaks and the conference lunch, will take place at the School of Social and Political Science (SSPS), University of Edinburgh, in the Chrystal Macmillan Building (CMB) at 15a George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD, UK.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/eW75FHMnsVgbj8Hb7>



The **Film/Roundtable** will take place in the Screening Room G.04, 50 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JU, UK



Conference Theme

Future-making is an embodied social, cultural and political practice (Appadurai 2013). Anchored in the present, futures are the ground for struggles and debates. In contemporary contexts of violent conflict, powerful actors use narratives of security, peace and development to justify politics of the future that often not only shatter the future hopes of others but are also realized at the expense of the freedom, security and fundamental rights of less powerful actors (Hage 2016; Willow 2020). While insecurity and violence limit the possibilities of a peaceful and just future for all, they also inspire refusal and resistance, enabling marginalized and oppressed people and groups to imagine and invent new forms of belonging and living together beyond the political order of the nation-state and its violent boundaries. It is this paradoxical entanglement of “fearful anticipation” (Das 2007, 98) and hopeful striving for something new and largely unknown that makes conditions of conflict and violence an important ethnographic source to explore how alternative politics of the future emerge in the present and from positions and places of marginality and relative powerlessness.

In social movements, political activism and everyday life, people and groups engage in “prefigurative politics” (Graeber 2009) in a variety of ways. By linking present practices to imagined and desired futures, these politics provide laboratories for future-making that turn oppressive conditions into transformative processes. This ongoing work of planting and growing alternatives takes place in the margins and cracks of the colonial, capitalist and heteropatriarchal social and political order of our times.

The conference explores diverse and contested forms of future-making in times of conflict, violence and insecurity. It includes nine panels, a keynote speech, a film screening and a creative workshop on topics such as:

- Future-making “from below”, including grassroot, NGO and other civil society initiatives that engage in re-making, re-imagining and re-enacting futures from marginalized and oppressed positions and places.
- Exclusionary and violent future-making practices and their contestation.
- Prefigurative politics and other ways of practicing and embodying desired futures in political activism and everyday life.
- Creating and nurturing radical hopes in times of conflict and violence.
- Everyday practices of peace and building bridges across social and political divides and lines of conflict and (radical) disagreement.
- Power relations and the ways gender, race, class, ethnicity etc. shape practices, politics and possibilities of future-making.
- Possibilities for and practices of a future/prefigurative anthropology of peace, conflict and security.
- Temporalities and spaces of future-making.

Welcome

Livnat Konopny-Decleve, Co-Convenor APeCS Network

Magnus Course, Professor and Head of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh

Keynote

Human Right, Torture and Impunity: The Pasts and Futures of Justice

Tobias Kelly, University of Edinburgh

This talk examines two apparently very different responses to justice in the wake of torture. The first focuses on the work of rebuilding individual and collective lives and is primarily future orientated. The second focuses on ending impunity through criminal accountability, and thereby seemingly righting the wrongs of the past. In general, the first approach has dominated the closer you get to survivors of torture, and the second approach has dominated the closer you get to UN human rights offices in Geneva or New York. This is not to say that there is not considerable overlap between the two sets of people and approaches. Many survivors of torture have also played significant roles in the UN human rights system and there are also survivors for whom ending impunity is an immediate ambition, but they are also relatively rare. The talk therefore asks two questions: First, how is it that ending impunity through criminal punishment has become one of the dominant human rights responses to torture? And second, to what extent *does it matter* if such an approach appears very different from the immediate thoughts and demands of survivors of torture and those closest to them? The paper is based on reflections on over twenty years of research and collaboration with survivors, activists and community groups.

Chair: Pascale Schild, Co-Convenor APeCS Network

Film/Roundtable

The Rose of Ioannina by Na'ama Landau, Livnat Konopny-Decleve and Adi Liraz.

The film screening will be followed by a roundtable discussion with:

Amalia Sa'ar, University of Haifa

Magnus Course, University of Edinburgh

Jasmina Husanovic Pehar, University of Edinburgh

Livnat Konopny Decleve, University of Edinburgh

The film is based on a British Academy international fellowship research delving into attempts of Jewish left-wing activists to imagine alternative decolonial political structures in Israel/Palestine. It focuses on conversations and fieldwork with Adi Liraz, a Jewish performance artist and a member of one of the research's partners. Adi's family lived in Ioannina (Greece) for centuries, and she wishes to live there in the future. While walking and talking in the historic city of Ioannina the film traces the intermeshing of Adi's family history with her political vision.

Workshop

Stories that Reconnect – Nurturing Connection and Hope Amid Conflict, Violence and Insecurity

Ilaria Olimpico, Artist and Social Arts Facilitator, Italy

Lotte Segal, University of Edinburgh

The workshop explores the potential of deep listening as a tool for nurturing connection and hope in times of conflict, violence, and insecurity. This workshop offers an introduction to StR (Stories that Reconnect) through the experience of "storylistening". It is based on the premise that there is a need to "stay with" and honour the pain, to allow the future to emerge. Participants will be engaged using different channels of expression, to connect deeply with themes of care and grief.

Panel 1: Vigilant Futures

Ana Ivasiuc, University College Dublin

Erol Saglam, UCL and Istanbul Medeniyet University

Vita Peacock, King's College London

Vigilante formations draw on different articulations of temporality to justify their security practices and ethico-political orientations. Visions of a lost and idealised past, a decaying present, or endangered futures feed their perception of the necessity to 'take things in their own hands' both socio-politically and physically. Glorious pasts where social orders corresponded more snugly to such groups' visions, or simply a past time imagined, perceived, or experienced as a safer and morally stable world affect the perception of present insecurities. Similarly, competing visions of the future—to be avoided or to be actively constructed against perceived threats—prompt vigilante groups towards action and are used to legitimise civilian-led surveillance as well as extrajudicial violence.

As responses to practices of vigilantism and the discourses that legitimise them, other actors may also enact practices that play on or produce various visions of the future to challenge the morality-security outlooks of vigilantes. Future-making practices are contested, negotiated, often ambivalent, and always political.

Our panel aims at critically interrogating the temporalities of vigilante discourses, seeking to connect various timelines—be they real, mythical, or grounded in a subjunctive mode of wishful thinking—invoked across vigilante practices. We welcome papers addressing one or more of the following questions:

How do vigilante groups negotiate and produce desirable versions of a future to be defended/constructed?

How do different temporalities enmesh in discourses and practices of vigilantism and their political reverberations?

How are violent or conflictual future-making practices contested by different actors?

What do vigilante futurities tell us about the temporalities of safety, security, and statecraft?

How do different temporalities affect practices and politics of resistance to vigilantism?

SESSION 1

Where There Is Power, There Is Resistance... and Re-Existence:

Decolonial Reading of Resistance as Re-existence in Eastern European Borderlands

Julija Kekstaite, Ghent University, Belgium, & Sienos Grupė, Lithuania

This paper explores grassroots activism in response to border and racial violence and in Lithuania's borderlands. Based on three years of ethnographic fieldwork with Sienos Grupė—a group aiding illegalized migrants during the Lithuania-Belarus border crisis—I trace the shift from humanitarian efforts toward a more ambivalent political engagement on the margins of the state. Activists' pluriversal modes of engagement are articulated through a mixed language ranging from the re-appropriation and re-articulation of nationalist tropes such as “for (diverse) Lithuania” and “patriotism” to no-border rhetoric. While resistance is often expected to conform to predetermined and homogeneous forms in antithesis to power, this study examines how the coexistence of such mixed language within the same group is not contradictory but rather complementary. It highlights the multiple, intertwined and multilayered temporalities and subjectivities of group members within the specific epistemic location of Eastern Europe, which lacks a long tradition of migrant solidarity networks. By situating resistance relationally and historically within the broader context of geopolitical tensions and polycrisis, this paper moves beyond a “what we are against” understanding of resistance toward a decolonial stance of re-existence, posing the question: “How can we be in the world?” characterized by messiness and constant becoming.

The Long Breath: Contesting Silicon Valley Vigilantism

Vita Peacock, King's College London, UK

This paper explores a temporality of resistance to vigilantism among German privacy advocates, condensed by the German idiom *lange Atem* (literally, the long breath). Sidestepping the conventional image of the vigilante, the mythologies shared by Silicon Valley entrepreneurs exhibit temporal features of vigilantism. In particular this includes: the concept of a glorious past, the necessity for an immediacy of action, and existential fears about the future. In contrast, German privacy advocates maintain the importance of staying power (*lange Atem*). This entails not only making consistent political demands over long timeframes, but critically, orchestrating rituals that are repeated over weeks, months, and years. The fact of repetition binds members together in anticipation. The paradox that they offer the anthropology of future-making in times of economic conflict, is how ritual repetition allows for novelty and experimentation, while the hyped technologies emanating from Silicon Valley offer only more entrenched visions of the same.

Temporality of Far-Right Vigilantism in the West Bank and Leftist Counter-Activism

Livnat Konopny-Decleve, The University of Edinburgh, UK

Since Israel occupied the West Bank (WB) during the 1967 war, these territories and population were neither annexed nor returned, and the army was left as the sovereign power. Backed by the army, Jewish far-right vigilants work to assert Jewish claims on all the land, bring about full Jewish sovereignty, and eradicate any Palestinian hope for independence. Based on activism and fieldwork in the West Bank, the talk will point to evolving far-right vigilantes' efforts to ethnic cleanse the West Bank. The talk will explore both the temporal imaginaries these far-right actions stem from, as well as the temporal imaginaries of counter left-wing Jewish activism. I claim that the ontopological logic (Derrida 2006), that is the ontological values linked to space, temporality, body, and identity perceptions in the settler colonial regime, limits the possibility of strong acts of radical-left solidarity with the Palestinian struggle

SESSION 2

Anatomy of Cow Vigilantism in North India:

A Case of Politicising Gangsterism

Aditya Pratap Singh, Indian Institute of Science Education & Research, India

This paper aims to study the rise of autonomous cow vigilante groups in North India, which ensure patrolling of highways and claim to prevent cattle smuggling which often lead to violence against minorities. Interviews conducted are used in the paper to uncover why cow vigilantism cannot be understood only as an extension of anti-cow slaughter movement in India; rather, money extorted from cattle owners has also emerged as a crucial factor behind the functioning of vigilante groups. It elaborates on the agrarian crisis in the region leading to the rise of cattle breeding, explaining the active presence of such groups, and also investigates the anatomy of a vigilante group. This paper recommends that decentralised Hindutva in India has moved beyond its formal institutional structure and has found independent stakeholders for the project. This also marks a turn towards gangsterism in Hindu majoritarianism.

It Can Happen Here 2.0:

White Power, MAGA, and the Rising Threat of Violence in the U.S

Alex Hinton, Rutgers University, USA (online)

Drawing on years of research on U.S. political culture and Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement, this paper examines the logics of the MAGA movement, how its future-oriented messaging is rhetorically packaged and driven, and how the movement poses a variety of threats to democracy and stability in the U.S., ranging from soft authoritarianism and white power

extremism to violence against groups like undocumented immigrants and the transgender community - both of whom are reviled and demonized in MAGA rhetoric. In doing so, the paper reconsiders the author's book, *It Can Happen Here: White Power and the Rising Threat of Genocide in the US* (NYU Press, 2021), which was centered on Trump's first term. There are important continuities between Trump 1.0 and Trump 2.0, but the threat is now greater and following a very clear plan to erode traditional checks and balances, expand executive power, and undertake related initiatives detailed in documents like "Project 2025."

State Security and Community Watch Vigilantism in North Western Nigeria

Mubarak Tukur, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University Katsina, Nigeria (online)

Recent studies have revealed the significance of reviving the use of local vigilante in maintaining the present and future of peace and security in the conflict zone of Northwestern Nigeria. This was as a result of the outbreak and persistent of banditry, killings and kidnapping for ransomed, killings and incessant rape of kidnapped women by the terrorist bandits. They also engaged in the destruction and burning of farmlands and terrorizing most local village dwellers and local communities. It is against this background that the paper will examine the different temporalities of the vigilante practices and their political reverberations in competing visions of their future by legitimizing extrajudicial killings of civilian suspects known as *informants*) as well the terrorist bandits (*Kidnappers*) backed by states Assembly Laws.

Panel 2: A Question of Complicity: Ethical and Emotional Challenges in Ethnographic Research Amid Violent Conflict

Nir Gazit, Rupin Academic College

Amalia Saar, University of Haifa

Erella Grassiani, University of Amsterdam

Conducting ethnography in situations of violent conflict and war inevitably exposes researchers to extreme situations. Ethnographers might be working closely with members of warring factions, vigilante groups, and paramilitary organizations and can experience struggles with conflicting obligations: the imperative to empathize with their research participants and the commitment to stand with the oppressed and denounce racism and hate—both fundamental principles of anthropological research. Such fieldwork conditions present distinct emotional and moral challenges.

By the same token, agents of violence and civilian witnesses of violent deeds may also experience a dissonance between complicity and loyalty versus morality and justice in ways that may influence their participation in the research and the moral stance of the researcher. This is especially salient in contexts in which military forces and/or militias are intensively engaged with rival militants and civilian populations and the boundaries between the field of war and field of study often blur.

This panel invites ethnographers to share experiences and dilemmas encountered during their fieldwork, whether emotional, ethical, or both. Discussion topics may include experiences of fear and personal danger, researchers' spontaneous reactions to these situations, and how these responses influenced their research trajectories. We are especially interested in feelings of guilt, shame, or contempt that both researchers and informants may face and we welcome reflections on dilemmas of complicity, from immediate tactical decisions—whether to inform authorities or warn potential victims of pending violence—to broader questions of moral and political positioning.

By addressing these challenging aspects of fieldwork, we aim to examine how socializing with and potentially developing understanding, friendliness, or even partial identification with violent groups affects researchers morally and politically. When are we ourselves complicit and is it avoidable at all?

SESSION 1

Discussant: Erella Grassiani

Dark Ethics: Methodological Precarity and Fieldwork with the Far Right

Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Northeastern University

Reflexively considering the ethics of fieldwork with far-right communities, I ask a pressing methodological question: In this increasing time of political violence, how might anthropologists, who

do in-person fieldwork, avoid unethical frameworks while also bracing against methodological (and even personal) precarity? While ethnography always brings with it ethical considerations, working with those Agnieszka Pasieka called “the unlikeable others” brings with it different challenges, restrictions, and collaborations that play out in interactions with interlocutors even after fieldwork is complete, especially when they “read what we write.” Taking my cue from Sherry Ortner’s “dark anthropology” and extending Lene Faust and Simone Pfeifer’s “dark ethnography,” I suggest that dark ethics provides a resistant framework for research with far-right populations. Tactical but not covert, dark ethics resists assumptions about the moral figure, acknowledging the subjective postures of anthropologists and interlocutors, while interrogating the epistemic regime conditions that complicate data gathering and feasible public scholarship.

Limited Immersion: Ethnography of Mothers of Martyrs in Kashmir

Khalid Hassan, Central University of Kashmir

The post-1990s armed resistance in Kashmir against the Indian state was suppressed by the Indian state by adopting coercive methods. Women are the worst sufferers in the conflict zone of Kashmir, and the violence they face leads to the formation of multiple Kashmiri women subjectivities. For instance, the youth killed by the Indian military forces are called ‘Shaheed’ (martyr), and their mothers attain the new subjectivity of ‘mothers of martyrs’ within the nationalist and religious discourse. This paper uses the ethnographic method to trace the journey of these women from being ordinary homemakers to the sanctified position in the discourse of the resistance movement against India. Ideally, one expects a complete immersion, which would be the ethical approach to understanding the narratives of these women survivors in the context of their everyday lives. But the experience of the violence by these women survivors and my own identity as an ‘insider’ male member of the community brought its ethical concerns. Additionally, constant state surveillance on both ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ posed limitations to enquiring what is perceived as ‘sensitive’ questions in the contemporary Kashmir context. As ethnographers, we are responsible for not harming research participants already experiencing emotional and material dispossession. Therefore, I argue that the ethnography of the ‘mothers of martyrs’ in the conflict zone of Kashmir requires limited and uneven immersion.

Reflexive Ethnography in Conflict and Crisis: Ethical Encounters Before and During Covid 19 in Assam, India

Bipasha Rosy Lakra, Jesus and Mary College University of Delhi (online)

This study departs from conventional North-East Indian, tribal studies by examining the protracted political conflict between the Bodo community of Assam and migrant indigenous/Adivasi populations originating from Central India. The Adivasis' demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Assam, mirroring their counterparts' recognition in other regions, is fiercely contested by Bodos. The research employed a qualitative, ethnographic method and approach to examine the Adivasi-Bodo conflict in Assam. Recognizing the nuanced socio-political dimensions of the case, the study utilized a multi-faceted methodology. This paper seeks to highlight contextual understanding, supplemented by solid ethnographic data from an ongoing conflict zone. The unique aspect of this paper highlights reflexive ethnography that entails the researcher's own ethnic disposition in the conflict zone. Consequently, it delves into complex exercise of digital ethnography during the times of Covid 19. Therefore, churning lived experiences, subjective realities of the conflict and socio-cultural configuration distinct in India. Thereby focusing on a nuanced understanding of self-trauma and past constitutional injustices, requiring careful psychological preparation to facilitate their participation.

An Experience to Be Lived with Gratitude: Navigating Research and Resilience in Times of Conflict

Mercy Kipgen, University of Delhi

How does one continue working as a researcher when their people are in pain? How does one pursue gratitude amid loss? This essay navigates the life and experiences of a scholar—myself—who, at the very outset of her research journey, found herself caught in the whirlwind of ethnic conflict between the Kuki and Meitei communities in northeast India, communities that have historically coexisted. The events of 2023 transformed her role from just a researcher to someone directly involved in the realities of displacement and survival. The conflict became a personal, lived experience, redefining the very purpose of her research.

Through digital ethnography and autoethnographic reflection, it analyzes how displaced Kuki individuals use smartphones and online platforms to reconstruct belonging, document their experiences, and preserve memory. Through testimonies of resilience and gratitude from the affected women, the author discovered the strength to carry on. The study was carried out while serving as the Education Secretary of the Kuki Students' Organisation, Delhi & NCR, and as a spokesperson for the Kuki Women's Forum, both of which played critical roles in community support and mobilization during the crisis.

SESSION 2

Discomfort, Empathy, and Ambition: Emotions During Fieldwork with Ex-Combatants of the Colombian Armed Conflict

Irene Piedrahita-Arcila, University of Glasgow

This paper examines the ethical and emotional challenges of conducting fieldwork with ex-combatants of the Colombian armed conflict. Over six months, I employed ethnographic and oral history methods to explore how former fighters narrate their experiences of violence. While this research offered valuable insights, it also elicited discomfort, empathy, and ambition—emotions that raise ethical and methodological dilemmas.

How do researchers navigate encounters with those labeled as perpetrators? How do complicity and empathy arise in fieldwork? How can researchers balance the ambition to gather information with the responsibility to safeguard both themselves and their participants? How should fear be navigated in a political transition marked by persistent violence? These are some of the key questions this paper seeks to address.

To explore these issues, I will present ethnographic vignettes from my fieldwork, combined with reflections on political violence research. By engaging with these complexities, I contribute to broader discussions on the moral and political dimensions of ethnography in violent contexts.

When the aggressor is/feels vulnerable: Ethical dilemmas of doing ethnography with Jews living along the Gaza border

Amalia Sa'ar, University of Haifa

This talk draws on ethnographic research with Jewish communities along the Gaza border conducted before the current war as part of a broader project on vernacular (in)securities among frontier communities in Israel/Palestine. Findings revealed a complex picture: residents experienced deep insecurity and trauma following years of near-daily missile attacks from Gaza, while simultaneously displaying resilience bolstered by strong community cohesion and the patriotism of those who see themselves as the state's gatekeepers.

Palestinians living an earshot away behind a formidable barrier were regarded with mixed feelings—as both menacing enemies and pitiful captives of a fundamentalist regime. However, except for a minority of peace-oriented activists, most Israeli border residents did not consider Israel responsible for Palestinians' plight. The prevailing political sentiment expected the Israeli state to crush Hamas, viewing Palestinian civilian casualties as an inevitable and justified price for ensuring their safety. Israelis' preoccupation with their own trauma and vulnerability was paired with a notable reluctance to acknowledge the suffering of their Palestinian neighbors.

After the October 7th Hamas attack on Israeli border communities and Israel's subsequent devastating war on Gaza, this initial ethical position intensified. Israelis, profoundly shocked by the attack, became further entrenched in demanding recognition for their trauma while resisting considerations of Israel's accountability or acknowledgment of Palestinian suffering. This has resulted in extreme polarization both within and outside Israel. Domestically, the political discourse (reinforced by popular and state policing) frames any recognition of injustice to Palestinians as treason. Internationally, widespread pro-Palestinian sentiment among the intellectual left often leaves little room to consider Israelis' vulnerability, while state institutions frequently characterize pro-Palestinian positions as antisemitism requiring punishment.

This talk addresses some of the ethical dilemmas of conducting ethnographic research with Israelis on the Gaza border under these extreme conditions. After presenting these communities' post-war political climate and mapping the predominantly Zionist research currently underway, I will examine several interconnected questions: What are the ethical implications of ethnographic work with those viewed as aligned with the aggressor in the Gaza conflict, but who perceive themselves as its primary victims? Can an ethnographer opposed to Israel's war on Gaza maintain genuine empathy with her research subjects? What potential contributions might such research offer?

Ethical and Methodological Complexities of Studying Military and Violence in a Militarized Society during Wartime

Nir Gazit, Ruppin Academic Center

Erella Grassiani, University of Amsterdam

Studying military conflict presents significant methodological and ethical challenges, which are compounded in a militarized society. This paper explores these issues through the perspective of two Israeli researchers examining the Israeli military's actions and public responses during the Gaza War. The October 7, 2023, Hamas attack and the subsequent Israeli military response have thrust both Israeli and Palestinian societies into a devastating cycle of violence. As Israeli civilians and scholars, we are deeply affected by the realities of war, which influence both our personal lives and academic work. In this context, we confront a series of ethical and methodological dilemmas. These include balancing social solidarity with critical analysis, navigating the tensions between academic objectivity and ideological positioning, and translating personal reactions to the crisis into scholarly research. Drawing on our experiences, we reflect on the role of Israeli academia during the war, offering insights into how the political climate within the university and the researcher's status may influence research and publication. We examine the contrasting ways in which the academic community and society at large tolerate sympathetic portrayals of underprivileged research subjects, while critical depictions of soldiers and the military may be viewed as illegitimate academic conduct. Finally, we

explore the ethical and practical challenges of studying military atrocities and death in the midst of an ongoing war, considering the moral and methodological dilemmas this brings to the fore.

Panel 3: The Future of Peacebuilding

Michel Thill, swisspeace/University of Basel

Kim Schumann, University of Cologne

Pascale Schild, University of Bern

War and authoritarianism hold increasing sway over local and global politics. As military approaches have gained ground in debates about conflict resolution and peace, the future of peacebuilding as a non-violent and inclusive means of achieving social justice is being called into question. In this panel, we seek to explore the limits, contradictions and possibilities of peacebuilding under the current conditions of political violence, occupation and state repression of civil society groups. We aim to examine the approaches to peace and conflict resolution that have dominated local, national and global peacebuilding interventions in recent years, and the ways in which they shape local and global peace and conflict processes around the world.

We invite papers that explore the blurred boundaries between civil society, the state, the military, armed resistance groups and rebel governments, the resulting tensions and contestations, and how these categories and concepts shape understandings and practices of peace in both top-down interventions and grassroots initiatives. We encourage participants—researchers, practitioners and activists—to address the need to localise and decolonise peacebuilding, to critically examine the limitations of dominant approaches and/or to explore alternative forms of knowledge and agency in contexts of violent conflict.

Questions to be discussed in the panel include:

How do tensions and contradictions between civil and military approaches to peacebuilding manifest themselves in global, national and local public discourses and practices? What is new, what is old, and what can we learn for the future?

How is peacebuilding a violent project or has become so? How can it be disentangled from colonial legacies and respond to the needs and future aspirations of those living with conflict, violence and insecurity? How can peacebuilding be reimagined to counter authoritarian and violent approaches to peace? How can inclusive peace be achieved as a means to social justice?

SESSION 1

‘Security is everyone’s business’: Police reform and the end of the state

Michel Thill, swisspeace/University of Basel

Along with the 1990s rise of peacebuilding, police reform has become a central pillar in war to peace transitions (Furuzawa 2022). While its shortcomings in policy and practice have been well

documented (Sedra 2018), scholarship has arguably paid less attention to the real-world effects its underpinning neoliberal rationalities have had on its beneficiaries and their ways of thinking and doing. Drawing on David Garland's (2001) work on social control, this paper traces one such logic and its effects in the DR Congo. It illustrates how the country's police reform slogan, 'security is everyone's business', became entangled with existing security practices, subverted the state-society boundary and disrupted Congo's social order. In light of continued security sector interventions, and inspired by calls to decolonize security studies and criminology (Adamson 2020; Agozino 2003), the paper concludes with a critical reflection on the future of peacebuilding.

'Eyes wide shut': How militarized peace-building led to b/ordering of space and invisibilization of violence in South Waziristan, Pakistan

Faryal Khan, University of Bonn

Peace-building interventions in conflict-affected regions are often framed as pathways to stability and long-term development. However, when these interventions are militarized, they do not merely rebuild; they reorganize power, control spaces, and silence alternative narratives. This paper examines the case of South Waziristan, Pakistan, where the Pakistan Army's militarized peace-building has shaped post-conflict governance through three key processes: the externalization of threats that justify the b/ordering of space, the reconstruction of infrastructure along militaristic lines that reinforce state authority, and the invisibilization of violence through the suppression of dissent and erasure of structural harm. Drawing on qualitative field research and critical peace studies literature, this paper argues that militarized peace-building does not resolve conflict; rather, it reorders violence in ways that entrench military dominance and perpetuate cycles of exclusion. This study contributes to debates on the future of peacebuilding by highlighting how security-first approaches sustain instability rather than achieving meaningful reconciliation.

Peacebuilding, Harms Against Nature, and Re-imagining Transitional Justice

Lauren Dempster, Queen's University Belfast

Rachel Killean, University of Sydney

Conflict and repression are often intertwined with harms against Nature. This reality is reflected in the growth of environmental peacebuilding, a body of scholarship and practice that seeks to embed environmental sustainability and collaborative natural resource management into peacebuilding initiatives. However, the starting point for this paper is that mechanisms designed to deliver justice in the context of peacebuilding ('transitional justice') both overlook these harms and facilitate further

violence against Nature, for example by prioritising economic growth over environmental protection. We propose that these harms are not inevitable but are instead driven by dominant global ideologies, such as neoliberalism, that can – and must – be challenged. The paper argues that by re-imagining transitional justice as forward-looking, ecologically conscious and transformative, there is potential for the field to play a meaningful role in protecting Nature, complementing broader environmental peacebuilding initiatives and laying the groundwork for a more sustainable and peaceful future.

SESSION 2

Violence for Peace: Authoritarian Justifications of Human Rights Abuses in Central America

Sarah Bishop, City University of New York (online)

In response to a March 2022 spree of gang homicides, Salvadoran president Nayib Bukele initiated a thirty-day emergency “State of Exception.” Under this emergency state, arbitrary arrests are rampant, and individuals are subject to widespread human rights abuses in prison while many constitutional rights remain suspended. El Salvador now has the highest per capita incarceration rate in the world, yet Bukele remains the most popular president in Latin America. Other world leaders have praised and attempted to replicate his millennial authoritarianism. This paper will demonstrate how Bukele rhetorically justifies violence in the name of “peace,” and show the regional implications of the Bukele model in Central America and beyond.

Decolonising Reintegration: Centring Former Armed Combatants’ Understanding of the Imperatives of Everyday Life

Eugenie Huibonhoa, SOAS University of London

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) is a cornerstone of UN-led peacebuilding, yet its long-term effectiveness remains contested. This research critiques DDR through a postcolonial lens, arguing that its universal templates impose Western-centric visions of peace that maintain norms that produce conflict by obscuring combatants’ agency and the needs of communities. By examining reintegration as a lived experience rather than a programmatic outcome, this study explores how rank-and-file combatants negotiate their post-conflict futures beyond DDR’s rigid frameworks. Through case studies of Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Nepal, and Namibia, this research reveals that combatants’ motivations and responses to reintegration are shaped by a logic of militancy that is rooted in historical imaginaries and survival imperatives. The study further examines how Taliban militants reframe their reintegration through narratives of freedom and duty, sustaining militant logics into everyday life.

By centering combatant subjectivity and local reintegration practices, this research challenges dominant peacebuilding assumptions and argues for a pluralised, context-specific approach to reintegration. Ultimately, it calls for a decolonised peacebuilding paradigm that recognises reintegration as a negotiated process of future-making at the community level, rather than as a top-down intervention.

Warmonger, Warrior, or Wannabe Hippy: Addressing perceptions of combat veteran participation in peacebuilding (online)

Charles Warner, University of Leuven

This paper presentation progresses from two interrelated questions for researchers in peace(building). First, how do you perceive and account for “former combatants” in thinking through dynamic/antagonistic participants-in-peace? Second, how do a veteran’s fellow combatants or peace activists in (post)conflict societies perceive combat veterans as potential partners in peacebuilding? In asking about these optics, greater acknowledgement is opened of the national and local discourse occurring – or not – around combat veterans engaging in practices of peace. For as I argue, ignoring (the potential of) veterans as partners in grounding future peacebuilding undermines effective engagement with state-sanctioned militarization/securitization of peace. In presenting this argument, I first move through key aspects of ethnographic fieldwork alongside combat veterans in Southeast Europe. Building from narratives encountered in the field, I examine what “inclusive” peacebuilding might have to mean and the socio-political forces active in performing/perceiving such inclusivity.

Panel 4: Youth as the Future: Imagining, Practicing and Constructing Futures in Insecure Times

Elena Miltiadis, Roskilde University

Mette Fog Olwig, Roskilde University

‘Youth’ frequently emerges as a temporal category, defined by an individual’s age and expressed as a social time of liminality (Cole & Durham, 2008; Dalsgard, 2014). Youth also tend to be associated to the future (Cole & Durham, 2008), both because ‘youth’ is seen as embodying the future (whether of a nation, or the world at large), as well as because youth engage with futural temporal orientations in their daily lives, increasingly facing conflict, violence, risk, uncertainty, and insecurity (c.f., Bryant & Knight, 2019; Cole & Durham, 2008).

We welcome contributions that explore the intersections between youth and future-making in uncertain times both in the way youth experience, imagine, and practice the future, as well as in the ways ‘youth’ – as a social category – is framed through its future-oriented temporality. Acknowledging the cultural, geographical, and temporal variations in how ‘youth’ is defined, perceived, and experienced, we do not offer a fixed definition of the term. Moreover, while youth participate in global communities, the practices and possibilities of ‘youth’ vary across local and cultural contexts (Walker, 2020).

A focus on youth provides unique perspectives on practices of future-making in contexts of conflict, violence, and insecurity and of social change. These encompass but are not limited to: the relationship between ‘youth’, youths, and politics in the ways youth engage in future-oriented political action as well as in the making of ‘youth’ as a powerful political symbol; future-making in digital spaces; the affective dimension of future-making, especially in contexts of conflict and uncertainty; how youth imagine and practice the future when faced with conflicts, violences, and insecurities; and how youths’ futures and their perception of them is shaped by structural forces, such as colonial legacies, geopolitical inequalities, authoritarian politics, intergenerational power relations and neoliberal economies.

SESSION 1 – Global Youth Perspectives on Future-Making

Practicing the future against perception: Young Syrian men in Jordan and the mist of stagnated crisis

Nina Grønlykke Møllerup, University of Copenhagen

Birgitte Stampe Holst, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

This paper explores how young Syrian men in Jordan perceived and practiced the future after they were displaced by war and during a time when they believed they would not be able to return to Syria as the Assad regime was still in place (2021-23). We introduce the notion of the ‘future as mist’ to conceptualise the future in a context of stagnated crisis, a seemingly unchangeable situation marked by extreme material, social and rights-related precarity. We argue that in such situations the ways youths practice the future do not always correspond with the ways they perceive the future. Our interlocutors attempted to act towards futures that were better than the present even though the paths to those futures remained shrouded in mist, that is imperceptible. We discern three ways in which young Syrian men practiced futures they perceived as unattainable; by resorting to principles, by manoeuvring and by scrambling.

(Un)wanted Futures: young people participating in (far)right politics in post-estallido Santiago

Elena Miltiadis, Roskilde University

In 2019-2020, Chile experienced widespread social unrest, an event referred to as Estallido Social. Led by high school and university students, the protests challenged the country’s societal, economic, and political structures, demanding significant changes, including a new constitution. However, young people involved in (far)right parties and groups, experienced this as an unwanted future, as they opposed the modalities and principles of the movements involved in the estallido social. When the first constitutional draft was rejected in a national referendum, these same young people found themselves actively engaging with and reimagining the country’s future, as (far)right parties secured a majority in the second constitutional process. My ethnographic research took place in the months preceding the second constitutional referendum, which took place in December 2023. In this paper, I examine how young people involved in (far)right parties and groups navigated and responded to both desired and undesired futures in a changing political landscape.

Ever changing, never Changing: Turkish Cypriot youth perceptions of change/Change in an unrecognised state

Lily Gibbs, University of Kent

Frequently, young Turkish Cypriots describe life in the unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as ever changing, but never Changing. Based on ethnographic doctoral research, this paper explores Turkish Cypriot youth’s perceptions of change/Change by interrogating paradoxical claims

that Northern Cyprus has not Changed in fifty years, but has changed beyond recognition as the place in which they spent their childhoods. The paper adopts a conjunctural lens to differentiate between ‘change’ and ‘Change’ in terms of direction and history, articulating youth experiences in a post-conflict context of entrenched non-recognition, economic insecurity, and political uncertainty. This distinction reframes their belief in constant change without Change, and thus sheds light on the precarity, practices, and processes that underpin Turkish Cypriot youth imaginations of their futures, whether within or beyond the island.

It Takes a “Global Village:” Can Youth Use Global Imaginaries to Create Secure Futures?

Mette Fog Olwig, Roskilde University

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new type of cohorts of youth that are brought together from different countries by donor funding. Through training sessions, workshops and conferences they are encouraged to work together to craft secure futures in times of conflict, violence and insecurity. Through networking, joint events and global Social Media performances the youths become part of what could be called “global villages.” These villages are global, yet exclusive, creating small tight-knit communities of global thinking and imaginaries. This paper discusses key questions raised by these ventures: Can global imaginaries unite youth through a common language, in-person platforms and virtual spaces? Can this generate new forms of solidarity while also supporting youths seeking individual gain? And might it result in new forms of (in)security because access to the global is gated, and thereby dependent upon e.g. individuals’ luck, effort, entrepreneurial spirit and privilege?

Digital Trickery and the Temporal Politics of Future-Making in Abidjan

Boris Koenig, FNRS/UCLouvain

In Abidjan, young men engaged in digital trickery are reshaping temporal expectations and economic opportunities. Considered locally a *génération pressée* (rushed generation), they bypass gerontocratic timelines and forge alternative paths to social adulthood. Rather than merely resisting existing structures, they set new urban rhythms and life standards, contrasting with previous generations while shaping younger urbanites’ aspirations. While African youth are often framed within *waithood*—a prolonged transition to adulthood due to financial precarity—this paper suggests that young digital tricksters bypass waiting periods. Their volatile yet rapid access to wealth enables many to attain social status independently, perform the valorized provider role, and reshape generational hierarchies. Based on a longitudinal ethnographic study of *brouteurs* (young men engaging in online scamming) since 2012, this paper argues that these youth drive generational change, shaping alternative pathways

to social adulthood and spreading new temporal imperatives that redefine how Abidjanese youth construct their futures.

SESSION 2 – Youth Constructions of Imaginable Futures in Hostile Environments

Childhoods and Futures at the End of the World: Multispecies Justice Across Generations

Sophia Georgescu, University of Sterling

As biodiversity loss accelerates in Scotland, children and young people experience shifting multispecies relations while navigating uncertain futures, eco-anxiety, and intergenerational inequities (Hickman et al., 2021, Nxumalo, 2020, Daly, 2023). While ‘youth’ are sometimes recognized in political decision-making, children remain underrepresented (Tisdall, 2015). This doctoral study explores how children co-construct futures within multispecies communities through environmental action, activism, and participation in biodiversity response-making (Celermajer et al., 2021, Wright et al., 2024, Reid, 2024).

Using arts-based, inter-generational, and place-responsive methods (Mannion, 2012, Peach and Haynes, 2023), this study explores children’s meaning-making, decision-making and relations of care and (in)justice across ages and species. With children as co-researchers, participatory mini-deliberations and multispecies ethnographies reveal how they engage in future-making amid ecological uncertainty and loss. Emergent findings support intergenerational equity, multispecies justice, and children’s geographies during climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

Future Forecasts by Youth: Fatalistic and Fantastic

Tirza van Bruggen, Roskilde University

In the future, Denmark is plagued by floods and storms, damaging the environment and economy, and its democracy is threatened by political apathy and disinformation. At the same time, Tanzania is constructing infrastructure, while people leverage the employment opportunities brought by digital technology, enhancing the economy. These forecasts were obtained through essays written by and interviews with university students in Denmark and Tanzania, investigating how contemporary youth imagine the future, and where these imaginaries come from. The findings challenge the popularized perception that youth today constitute a ‘global generation’ concerned about whether they have a future at all. Rather, this paper argues that futures imagined by youth today are highly diverse, and both ‘fatalistic’ and ‘fantastic’. What gives them shape are local and global challenges and insecurities, sociocultural and political structures as well as youth’s related ideas about what constitutes ‘development’, and their frequent and border-crossing use of social media.

The Funnel Era of Chinese Film Youth: Social Change, Insecurity and Future Imagination

Taojiazi Hu, University of Edinburgh

With the advent of the “Internet +” policy, film youth cultivated by higher education have a strong sense of insecurity—the current Chinese film industry is unable to provide good jobs. As an anthropologist, I believe that the focus needs to be on why contemporary Chinese society has failed to create a sense of job security for youth. Based on a year of field research at the Beijing Film Academy, this study found that Chinese society currently presents a “funnel-shaped structure”, with highly educated youth in the middle layer, unable to move up or move down. Using the film industry as a magnifying glass, this study explores the impact of social structural transformation on the future of youth and their perception of the future under a specific policy context, providing a new empirical perspective on how youth construct future imaginaries in an era of uncertainty and conflict.

Making friends and making future amid volatility

Chandreyee Goswami, University of Edinburgh

This paper examines the interrelation between youth, friendship, and future-making. Based on my doctoral fieldwork among the university students in Northeast India, a region marked by ethnic conflicts and militarisation, I argue that friendships are key for young people, particularly women students, to anticipate about post-university lives. In this anticipation, friends reinforce the desirability of acquiring government jobs in future as they are perceived to offer stability. Middle-class youth aspire for public sector jobs in India as they provide job security and enable social mobility. In this context, I argue that this emphasis on government jobs among university students in Northeast India is not just about middle-class aspiration of achieving job security. The desire for stability is also shaped by living in a context of crisis, as it provides a semblance of normality; to anticipate a stable future amid economic and political precarity.

SESSION 3 – Schools, Education, and Future-Making

Resistance, Restitution, and Caring Better: The Use of Indigenous Knowledge in Elementary Wellness Programming

Regan S. Gee, Case Western Reserve University

This paper analyzes data from an ongoing CBPR (community-based participatory research) study at an Indigenous-serving school in the Southwest United States. Using interview data from conversations with Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, this paper argues that all individuals seek to interpret the

past and produce the future through their wellness work with students by incorporating Indigenous knowledge into their programming. Indigenous knowledge is used to resist and repair from historical and present settler-colonial realities, while also manifesting more hopeful futures for students through cultural empowerment and education. Staff positionality impacts their temporal interpretations, with non-Native staff focusing on restitution and Native staff emphasizing cultural resurgence. However, this paper also argues that the primary utility of Indigenous knowledge for staff is located within the present, rather than the past or future, as they draw on cultural understanding to ‘care better’ through deepened relationality and the avoidance of spiritual harm in the day-to-day.

Taming the Peril Planet: Youths’ Imagined Futures and Preparation in Times of Climate Variability

Conrad John Masabo, Roskilde University (online)

Climate change ‘presents perhaps the most profound challenge ever to have confronted human social, political, and economic systems’ (UNSC 2021). To the youth, it is more challenging to imagine a future in the world of climate variability as they will significantly be impacted by it, potentially causing disruptions to their lives and making the earth a less habitable planet. Notwithstanding such challenges, youths are also looked at to provide the solution by using their power to influence policy changes and drive solutions through activism and informed decision-making. Reconciling these two is both difficult but also urgent. Drawing some insights from field work in schools in Tanzania and Denmark, the paper analyses how high school students in these countries, think, imagine and take up this dual challenge as they prepare for their future in the complicated world of climate variability.

‘Experience wins!’: negotiating carbon dependency and environmental responsibility in Norwegian folk high school study trip programming

Jamie Glisson, University of Edinburgh

Thanks to Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and her Skolstrejk för klimatet (School Strike for Climate), Scandinavian youth are often perceived as being concerned with environmental care and climate justice. Drawing upon fifteen months of ethnographic research at a folk high school in southeastern Norway, I interrogate this stereotype by assessing how tensions between consumer habits, carbon use, and environmental degradation emerged in the school’s international study trips programming. By examining how privileged youth living in Norway’s welfare state viewed the role of Norway’s oil industry in perpetuating the climate crisis, I ask how wealth, values, and state education coalesce in ways that problematize and illuminate perceptions of Norway’s present, and future, climate

responsibilities. In so doing, I broaden the discussion to consider how higher education reveals similar tensions between climate justice and carbon dependency for students encountering shifting environmental, social, and political futures during a time of rapid change.

An ‘integrated’ future? Exploring young people’s experiences of integrated education in post-conflict Northern Ireland

Jessica Hadden, Queens University Belfast

Integrated schools emerged as a response to NI’s divided education system, with the goal of empowering young people as agents of social change. While this aspiration is sector-wide, the two different models – grant-maintained and transformed – face unique challenges when fulfilling their reconciliation objectives. In the context of a renewed policy drive to develop integrated education, it is important to consider how these school types influence young people’s ability to lead future change. Deploying intercultural education as a conceptual lens, this study examines young people’s experiences in both models through qualitative methods. The findings revealed that grant-maintained students were cognisant of how integrated education plays a role in healing past divisions, positioning them as active drivers of reconciliation, while the experiences of their transformed counterparts highlighted the challenges faced when transitioning to integration. Additionally, the findings illuminated the dual challenge now facing integrated schools: addressing intergroup divisions in an increasingly multicultural society, while also confronting the rise of online misogyny.

Panel 5: Future-Making Under Occupation: Exploring Temporalities of Political Violence and Resistance in Everyday Life

Bushra Punjabi, Independent Researcher

Pascale Schild, University of Bern

How do people imagine time and the future under occupation? How are conditions of occupation entangled with temporalities, shaping how time is experienced and used to remake everyday life? Understanding future-making as social and political practices, this panel aims to explore everyday life in and under occupation from the diverse perspectives of occupied people and their occupiers, as well as those who are complicit and implicated in the conditions of occupation in various ways. Occupiers, including state and military institutions and their transnational allies, use temporal narratives and practices to erase memories and normalize occupations. Occupation imposes an “eternal present” marked by instability and uncertainty, undermining the ability of occupied populations to imagine safe and just futures. Moreover, bureaucratic delays and emergency laws that allow for illegal detentions, curfews, house raids, enforced disappearances, communication blackouts, checkpoints and widespread surveillance impose a rigid temporal regime that disrupts and fractures everyday life.

In response, occupied communities maintain counter-narratives of time, reclaiming past, present and future through practices that resist and navigate the instabilities and uncertainties of occupation. These practices, marked by vigilance, anticipation and radical hope, allow occupied people to cope with the constant threat of violence.

This panel invites papers that explore the temporalities of occupation and resistance in different contexts around the world. We seek to understand how occupied communities endure and imagine alternative futures despite ongoing attempts to reshape their realities. While occupiers seek to colonise lives through time, occupied people create alternative temporal practices rooted in hope, resistance and the struggle for a future free from occupation and violence. We encourage submissions that explore how occupation reshapes socio-political and symbolic practices and meanings of time, and how everyday resistance fosters resilience and the possibility for making futures beyond occupation.

SESSION 1

The Calendar as Battlefield: Symbolic Violence and the Politics of Erasure in Kashmir

Bushra Punjabi, Early Career Researcher

The politics of Kashmir is embedded with symbolic contestations, where domination is exerted not only through military occupation and legal apparatuses, but also through the subtler, insidious workings of symbolic violence. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic domination, this

paper traces how the state manipulates collective memory, affect, and temporality—remaking the very conditions through which people in Kashmir remember, mourn, and belong. The calendar, often seen as a mundane bureaucratic tool, becomes a critical site through which power is asserted and legitimacy claimed.

A central focus is the erasure of **13 July—Martyrs’ Day**, once an official public holiday commemorating the killing of 31 Kashmiris in 1931 who rose against tyrannical Dogra rule. Its removal from state calendars following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 reflects more than a bureaucratic adjustment—it marks a calculated effort to sever Kashmiri political memory from its historical roots and impose a state-sanctioned identity. This act is compounded by the forced reopening of markets, schools, and public offices on that day, signaling the state’s determination to dismantle local practices of remembrance and enforce a facade of normalcy.

The suppression of commemorative rituals, the silencing of grief, and the restructuring of public time are revealed not as neutral administrative decisions, but as deeply affective forms of dispossession. The targeted removal of Martyrs’ Day functions as a means of disorienting historical consciousness and disrupting collective belonging. Yet, despite these efforts, counter-memories persist—circulating through whispered stories, digital tributes, and quiet refusals to forget.

By reading the calendar as a battlefield, the paper reveals how symbolic violence operates as a central technique of governance, shaping dissent, identity, and subjectivity in contemporary Kashmir.

A timeless occupation against a process of self-determination: The case study of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

Kaiser Khan, Independent Researcher

This paper explores the idea of a ‘timeless occupation’ against an ongoing movement for self-determination in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir. The apparent divine character of the Pakistani state in Kashmir and the infinite longevity that it claims on such basis often comes into clash with the local/Kashmiri understanding of history, time and resistance. This paper examines the aforementioned understanding around a learned materialist experience of time that challenges the idealistic narrative of ‘divine thus timeless’. The indigenous narrative of resistance in Kashmir rests on a historical belief gathered over centuries that authenticates the success of local resistance movements against former foreign powers who claimed eternity. This paper relies on the political developments of past five years where an ongoing resistance movement in Kashmir has successfully punctured the occupation’s narrative & reclaimed the pace and space needed for self-determination.

Lessons from Ukraine: Examining the Policy Implications of Open Source Evidence and Documentation During Violent Conflicts

Magdalene Karalis, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London

My paper examines how Open Source Investigations (OSI), primarily observed in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, have demonstrated both transformative potential and notable vulnerabilities in documenting life under occupation. Rapid technological evolution continues to deepen and complicate the connections and links between information gathering, intelligence and kinetic warfare. Civilians now in possession of a mobile phone are often seen, in the politics of today's war, as walking sensors. Using a mixture of fieldwork, relevant literature, semi-structured interviews, open-source investigations and social media analysis, this paper outlines the precedents Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine set for civilians documenting military aggression and day to day life in occupied territories. It further analyzes the preservation and admissibility of this digital evidence from social media and the differing perspectives between the military, journalistic, legal and academic fields on how to best honour the wishes of occupied people while still prioritizing their safety.

SESSION 2

Waiting for Godot in Israel-Palestine: From Futility Towards a Radical Openness About the Future

Ioana Popescu, University of Edinburgh

This paper explores the relevance of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by examining Ilan Ronen's 1984 and 2018 bilingual productions of the play. *Waiting for Godot* seems to mirror what has been happening in the region, as generations of Palestinians and Israelis have been constantly waiting for a mutually agreed solution that could end the violent conflict, only to be left disappointed. Countless years of dehumanisation, violence, and failed peace agreements have convinced many that there is no solution to their predicament. Yet, people in the region are still hoping for the violent conflict to end. This paper argues that Ronen's productions of *Waiting for Godot* facilitate people's radical openness about the future by providing a mediated discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and by problematising the process of (re)humanisation.

Art in/and war: Imagining a shared future through art?

Rony Ohad, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Patrick Wolfe (2006) asserts that “territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element,” emphasising the role of spatiality and public space in settler-colonial projects. Based on this foundation, this paper researches settler-colonialism through culture, focusing on the reformation and creation of FeelBeit, a Palestinian-Israeli cultural institution in Jerusalem. Alongside the city’s conservative cultural sites, Jerusalem is famous for its festivals and site-specific performances. In 2019 a well-established West-Jerusalemite festival, opened a club named FeelBeit (a wordplay of Arabic, English, and Hebrew meaning “inside the home” or “feel at home”). Today, FeelBeit is an autonomous cultural institution in Jerusalem, which envisions a pluralistic space that nurtures a Palestinian-Israeli liberal community.

Following a year-long ethnographic research, this paper asks: What are the characteristics of a shared artistic space and what role does it play in a context of settler-colonialism? (How) can Palestinians and Israelis create and contain common artistic language?

Panel 6: Dystopian Vision of Authoritarian Rulers Across South Asia and Growing Contestation by the People With Their Utopian Visions of Society

Arati Kade, University of Amsterdam

Nidhish K. Sundar, University of Amsterdam

This panel intends to explore the inner dynamics of power contestation behind the rise of exploitative and dystopian future-making practices and contestations in South Asia. This dystopian future-making is deeply rooted in exploitation, systematically reducing certain sections of people to second-class citizens and eventually worthless human beings. This form of future-building operates both globally and nationally. The Global South is framed as inherently inferior through cultural and civilizational narratives. This exploitative future-building renders these nations dependent on the Global North. They are relegated to roles as sources of cheap labour, raw materials, worthless human beings who need saving and care, or markets for low-cost consumption, reinforcing global hierarchies. Global elites often join hands with local elites to socially and materially subjugate local masses, consolidating power and wealth through systemic exclusion and exploitation. Nationally, these dynamics mirror similar patterns of social exclusion and cultural othering, entrenching social and material inequality and oppression within marginalized communities, while shaping futures that prioritize elite interests over the well-being of the majority. However, these dystopian visions of society are powerfully contested by the people, who bring forth radical, utopian visions of social transformation based on the principles of liberty, justice, and equality. Marginalized communities have long resisted these exploitative systems through cultural, literary, political, and social movements. While these movements are not free from contradictions, they provide powerful alternatives to the exclusionary and exploitative narratives imposed by authoritarian regimes. With the rise of neoliberalism, the dynamics of both dystopian visions and the resistance to them have grown increasingly complex. Resistance efforts are often appropriated or co-opted by elites, creating new challenges for those envisioning alternative futures. This panel invites papers that explore the role of neoliberal political economy and socio-cultural hegemonies in facilitating the rise of authoritarian regimes with their dystopian politics of the future. At the same time, it encourages papers that examine how people subjected to these dystopian politics express their resistance through counter-utopian future-making, as well as papers that explore the potential, contradictions and challenges of these counter-utopian politics of the future in South Asia.

The Ten Point Agenda of MKKM: A Phule-Ambedkarite Counterpublics against Brahmanical Hegemony

Vinod Arya, Central University of Punjab

Rashmi Katara, Central University of Punjab

Mulnivasi Karmachari Kalyan Mahasangh (MKKM) an offshoot wing of the Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF), is actively engaging & mobilizing employees from the politically redefined category of 'Mulnivasi' comprising Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), & converted Minorities – as counterpublics. The objective of this mobilization is to initiate a nationwide democratic and constitutional movement against the neoliberal political economy that sustains Brahmanical hegemony in India.

The "Ten Point Agenda" of MKKM emerges from the synthesis of theoretical knowledge and grassroot experiences, integrating both "book view" and "field view" to construct a democratic critical majority in opposition to the theological Brahmanical majority & its hybridized ideological strategies.

This research paper seeks to analyze and evaluate the content, procedural framework, and strategic interventions of MKKM within the broader context of counterpublic resistance. The paper particularly examines MKKM's advocacy for constitutional reforms and policy measures, including amendments to reservation provisions, abolition of the creamy layer criteria for OBCs, enactment of legislation to ensure representation of SC, ST, and OBCs in public appointments, promotions, deputations, lateral entries, and contractual appointment, ensuring proportional representation of SC, ST, OBCs in all Councils of Ministers at both state and national levels, immediate filling of backlog vacancies for SC, ST, and OBCs in government positions, and establishment of an All India Judicial Service under Article 312 of the Indian Constitution.

By critically engaging with these objectives, this study seeks to assess MKKM's role in advancing democratic representation and nation building through Phule-Ambedkarite ideology challenging the systemic inequalities entrenched in the Indian polity.

A Marriage of State's love: Autocracy in a Private Space.

Vaishali Katke, Kuvempu University

The Athenians named their new government 'democracy', or demokratia in Greek, which combines demos "the people" and kratos "the power." So, democracy is 'people's power' but specifically demos in the sense of 'all citizens,' and kratos in the sense of 'the capacity to do things.' It meant that citizens as a collectivity, rather than a tyrant or a small gang of aristocrats, ought to rule their own state: the people were the most legitimate public authority. The state where people were morally and intellectually capable of governing themselves. They were fallible, but competent to pursue public

interests in a rational manner. Steven Pinker, the cognitive scientist contrasted liberal democracies with the regimes based on demonizing, utopian ideologies, concluding that: ‘democracies are vastly less murderous than alternative forms of government. And modern writers, pinned their hopes on ‘liberal democracy’ that favored conditions: popular sovereignty, rule of law, voting rights, human rights, free speech, equal opportunity, separation of powers, distributive justice (J. Ober, 2016). Amidst the background of whole political discourses of what is meant by democracy? In whole of the momentum, in a parallel universe, we meet largest democracy that disrupts peace within the communities, ends harmony of ages in a controversial food-systems behavior and intrudes marriages, making it liable to state interferences. Marriages are intimate and private affairs, where priorities are placed upon deep, personal connection and kept largely secluded from public scrutiny, focusing on their union, dreams, and future together. This interfere of the state largely puts the earlier legislations into jeopardy or disrupts legal passage for usage in grave times for young citizens, and pressurizes the young adults into opting for the legal battle that continues to haunt their very existence. The paper examines the system of state interference into the marriage process; endangering the social assimilation of the communities, and secular alternatives of the society; understands the survival mechanisms drawn by the couples; Lastly, looks into the organizations and civil societies that supports the marginal communities and inter-faith couples in securing their lives and fighting cases to protect the newly-weds, and protecting the law in favor of social justice and right to privacy.

Dialectical Images in Debashish Chakrabarty’s Poster-Art During the July Revolution in Bangladesh

Parvez Alam, University of Amsterdam

There is no alternative (TINA), the slogan associated with Margaret Thatcher and neoliberalism also played a pivotal role in providing legitimacy to Sheikh Hasina’s despotic regime in Bangladesh. TINA also represents the ideology that Mark Fisher called “Capitalist Realism”, as it gestures towards the reification of capitalist logic in contemporary cultural imagination (Capitalist Realism 1-2). Capitalist realism also has the characteristics of what Walter Benjamin called phantasmagoria, which are “delusional expression of collective utopian fantasies” (Pensky, “Method and Time” 184). Such a phantasmagoric dimension of capitalist realism had become evident in the political and cultural representations in and about Bangladesh during Hasina’s era. In contrast, the non-linear utopian imagination captured in Debashis Chakraborti’s poster-art had a great impact on the July revolution 2024 that toppled Hasina. In this paper, I will argue that many of these posters can be read as what Walter Benjamin called "dialectical image", which are non-linear historical images capable of stopping the wheel of phantasmagoric realism.

Neoliberalism, Middle Castes and Rise of Hindu Nationalism in India

Arati Kade, University of Amsterdam

This paper examines Hindutva as a dystopian future-making project that sustains upper-caste, capitalist dominance in India by strategically exploiting caste consciousness, gender hierarchies, and religious othering. Hindutva is not just an ideological project; it operates within a neoliberal framework that aligns with global elites while reinforcing local caste and gender oppressions. A key focus of this paper is the role and place of middle castes (historically categorized as Shudras within the varna system) in the Hindutva project under the neoliberal order. By analyzing the changing political economy of caste, the paper explores how middle castes—often aligning with upper-caste elites while also resisting their dominance—are mobilized within Hindutva’s ideological apparatus to serve both their own caste interests and the broader Hindutva agenda.

By embedding caste identity politics into its strategy, Hindutva mobilizes regional inter-caste conflicts to expand its influence, ensuring the subjugation of marginalized communities while consolidating upper-caste power. A key aspect of this dystopian project is the regulation of women’s bodies and sexuality, where narratives like ‘love jihad’ reinforce caste-patriarchal control while diverting economic anxieties toward religious minorities. Hindutva also draws from colonial Orientalist narratives, framing Hinduism as superior and Islam as an existential threat, producing a form of “cultural racism” that legitimizes exclusion in the name of modernity.

Despite its dominance, Hindutva faces resistance from Dalit-Bahujan movements and Ambedkarite critiques, which challenge its casteist foundations. However, these resistances face new challenges under neoliberalism, which co-opts identity-based struggles. This paper explores the contradictions of Hindutva’s politics and the counter-utopian possibilities that emerge from marginalized struggles against caste-capitalist oppression.

Dalit communist party workers and their anti-Hindutva politics in Kerala, India.

Nidhish K Sundar, University of Amsterdam

The political resolution passed by the 23rd Party Congress of the Communist Party of India (India) described ways to combat the rise of Hindutva forces in the country. One of points states that ‘...Hindutva and its multifarious communal outfits have to be conducted in a sustained manner in political, ideological, cultural and social spheres. Concrete steps must be undertaken to strengthen this struggle against Hindutva communal agenda.’ (23rd congress political resolution, pp.74,). It was based on this initiative that the local-level leadership of the communist party, along with their Dalit communist party workers, actively engaged in multiple Hindu religious festivals in the region to counter the rise of Hindutva organisations. This paper will look into these anti-Hindutva activities of

Dalit communist party workers in a village in Kerala, India. In the paper, I will discuss three cases. In the first case, I will discuss how a Dalit sub-caste uses its annual religious feast to counter Hindutva forces organizing similar forms of feast across the village. The second case will examine how Dalit communist party supporters are actively involved in organising 'Ayyapan vilakku' (Festival for lord Ayyappa) and feast to counter Hindutva organizations. The third case will look into the growth of 'family' temples across the houses of Dalits in the village and how these families actively engage in communist party programs in the village. Through these cases, this paper will evaluate whether the communist party of India (Marxist) succeeded in combatting the rise of Hindutva in the region.

Panel 7: Theorizing Futures With Mbembe

Miguel Díaz-Barriga, University of Richmond

Margaret Dorsey, University of Richmond

Analiese Richard, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (online)

This panel interrogates two poles of Achille Mbembe's scholarship: that which invites us to think about utopic futures and that which theorizes necropower. More specifically, as the conference invites, this panel will use Mbembe as a threshold to explore "future making from below" as well as dissect the social forces steering the world to "the brink of destruction." Mbembe's notion of necropower can illuminate how social actors understand and engage social turmoil, both collectively and individually. Our panel explores how understandings of necropower, as the state's right to exclude and kill, are articulated and challenged in both everyday life and collective organizing. In particular, we examine belonging in relation to Mbembe's notions of necropower and a border-free world. How can we—through applying Mbembe's notions of home, freedom, and utopia—engage the broader public and articulate the variety of collective responses to the world's multiple crises? In other words, what are the possibilities and limitations of Mbembe's work for understanding and imagining alternative futures?

Rasquache Futurism and Necropower in Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*

Miguel Díaz-Barriga (University of Richmond, USA),

Alex Rivera's science fiction movie, *Sleep Dealer* (2007), portends a future in which the U.S. seals its border with Mexico and fulfills its dream of "Mexican labor without the Mexican" through robotically based cyber-labor. Through cyber surveillance and drones, the U.S. and multinational companies protect their global interests, such as water, through drone attacks that are nationally televised. *Sleep Dealer* tells the story of a young Mexican-American drone pilot who through his cyber surveillance of Mexicans begins to question his complicity in destroying homes and killing civilians. According to commentators, the movie presents a *rqsquache* (slapdash aesthetic) of a future in which masses of people live in poverty without access to basic resources and services. In this paper, I explore this cult classic movie through the lens of Mbembe's concept of necropower while placing science fiction, as a genre, in conversation with Mbembes's emphasis on utopic thinking and hopes for open borders.

The Illusion of Inclusion: B/ordering Practices in Refugee Support Systems

Sonia Sadowska

The emergence and transformation of the European border regime have revealed that borders extend far beyond their physical demarcations on state maps. EU member states enact social policies and legal frameworks that, justified as a means of protection, effectively reinforce both external and *internal* borders within society (Fassin, 2011). These exclusionary politics of *b/ordering* (Van Houtum & Van Uden, 2021) serve as mechanisms of control over those deemed ‘unknown’ or ‘undesired’. Drawing on ethnographic research on local integration initiatives in Sicily, this study examines the construction of Otherness and the limits of refugee inclusion. Bound by bureaucratic structures within a nation-based global order, the observed project ultimately failed to support the most vulnerable subjects, further entrenching existing inequalities. Building on Achille Mbembe’s notion of utopia, I interpret the project’s ‘failure’ as a catalyst for imagining alternative forms of belonging and refugee support action.

Threading the U.S. Mexico Border as Necrocitizens

Margaret Dorsey, University of Richmond, USA

This paper explores necrocitizenship as a concept for understanding how necropower refracts everyday practices of citizenship on the U.S. Mexico border. As the U.S. intensifies militarization and surveillance, U.S. citizens who reside in the border region increasingly "thread" checkpoints, walls, and soldiers. Going for a drive becomes fraught as one checks their headlights before pulling out of their driveway to avoid being pulled over. And, given the diminished rights of citizens living in the border region, one wonders if they will be searched while crossing checkpoints well within the United States--up to 100 miles from the international boundary. Against this backdrop of refracted citizenship practices, U.S. border security forces push undocumented migrants into more remote areas where migrants face injury and death from exposure and dehydration. The everyday practices of threading are therefore an element of the exercise of necropower practiced against undocumented migrants on and around the border region. Necrocitizenship describes how citizens thread and are both subject to and implicated in the practices of necropower that cause migrant death. Will the future provide possibilities for reclaiming rights, unthreading citizenship and dismantling policies based on necropower?

Panel 8: Digital Technologies for Inclusivity and Peace: Exploring Possibilities for Preventing Online Hate Speech

Aysecan Terzioglu, Sabanci University

Irem Topcu, Sabanci University

Social media has become an indispensable part of many people's everyday life and social interactions. With its high-speed information flow, social media enables alternative conceptions of time and space, and plays an intricate role in people's definitions of their own identity, subjectivity, and sense of belonging. However, through boosting circulations of hate speech and discriminatory discourse, social media has a troubling side as well. Underlining various socio-economic and ideological differences and increasing the polarizations between the "us and them" as dynamic contrasting mechanisms, it exacerbates the existing political and social problems, tensions, and inequalities. The recent global issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee crises, and economic fluctuations, made the use of aggravating and hostile discourses more common, normalizing them among frequent users through mis/disinformation and hateful language. These discourses include symbolic violence with the potential of causing actual, physical violence through the online-offline continuum, thus demanding attention for non-discriminatory and democratic future-making practices.

This panel explores effective ways of targeting these discourses, through digital methods such as categorizing hate speech with the help of algorithms and artificial intelligence, in order to work towards having a more equalitarian, democratic, and inclusive digital sphere in the long run. How can digital technologies in general and social media, in particular, be used more towards solving political and social conflicts instead of aggravating them? What are the ways social media users, from individuals to NGOs, pursue inculcating peaceful dialogues and owning their (digital) space? This panel includes particular examples from the uses and studies of social media with the aim of peacebuilding, through eliminating offensive, discriminatory, and hateful speech.

Beyond the Echo Chamber: Peace Education as a Tool for Digital Coexistence

Dilara Özel, Glasgow University

Peace education encompasses human rights, empathy, communication skills, and conflict resolution, all of which facilitate this understanding and serve as a foundational framework for fostering an understanding of the 'Other.' The unfamiliar can evoke fear or discomfort, as it disrupts pre-existing cognitive schemas and reinforces stereotypes and inherited knowledge about 'Others' especially through digital platforms. Different AI tools (ie. Suno AI, Dollar Street) and social media platforms (ie. Instagram, Bluesky) provide powerful avenues for promoting peace education by

spreading messages of inclusivity, empathy, and understanding by fostering perspective-taking and nonviolent communication strategies. Peace education can leverage these platforms to share educational hashtags, peace-related stories, music, poetry, and interactive campaigns that encourage critical dialogue and foster engagement across diverse communities. Peace education can play a crucial role by teaching individuals how to use social media responsibly to promote positive narratives while actively countering misinformation, polarization, and hate speech in online spaces.

Developing AI Detection Against Online Hate Speech: The Project of *pari*

İrem Topçu, Sabancı University

With global reliance on digital technologies and social media usage amplifying every year, hostile and discriminatory discourse and practices in digital space similarly intensify. This challenges researchers who attempt to monitor the rapid content flow with unsustainable methods and human labor (HDV, 2025). Considering the issue, this paper presents the project outputs of the open-source AI detection and classification tool, *pari*, to assist future research and policymaking practices against online hate speech that targets vulnerable groups, such as ethnic or racial minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and refugees. Initiated by the Hrant Dink Foundation (HDF), Bogazici University, and Sabancı University in 2022, the project gathered the expertise of researchers from computer engineering, linguistics, and cultural studies disciplines with HDF's long-standing devotion and knowledge in non-discriminatory, democratic, and anti-violent future-making practices as an NGO.

Annotating Hate Speech in Turkey: Particular Challenges and Opportunities

Ayşecan Terzioğlu, Sabancı University

Hate speech in social media is rapidly increasing in global and Turkish social media, exacerbating already existing political and social problems. Addressing this concern, we examine the annotators' experiences of annotation in the projects on hate speech in Turkish mainstream and social media, conducted by the Hrant Dink Foundation, and several academics from Boğaziçi and Sabancı Universities. Our findings indicate that annotators' social and academic backgrounds, such as their ethnicity, gender and major, and how these backgrounds interact with the particular patterns of hate speech in Turkey play crucial roles in the annotation process. Annotating experience also changes the annotators too, in terms of their awareness of hate speech and use of social media in the Turkish context. Our research also sheds light on the methodological and theoretical limits and potentialities of human interactions with the AI and modeling processes on HS.

Open Panel 9: Future-Making in Times of Conflict, Violence and Insecurity

Livnat Konopny-Decleve, University of Edinburgh

Pascale Schild, University of Bern

Future-making is an embodied social, cultural and political practice (Appadurai 2013). Anchored in the present, futures are the ground for struggles and debates. In contemporary contexts of violent conflict, powerful actors use narratives of security, peace and development to justify politics of the future that often not only shatter the future hopes of others but are also realized at the expense of the freedom, security and fundamental rights of less powerful actors (Hage 2016; Willow 2020). While insecurity and violence limit the possibilities of a peaceful and just future for all, they also inspire refusal and resistance, enabling marginalized and oppressed people and groups to imagine and invent new forms of belonging and living together beyond the political order of the nation-state and its violent boundaries. It is this paradoxical entanglement of “fearful anticipation” (Das 2007, 98) and hopeful striving for something new and largely unknown that makes conditions of conflict and violence an important ethnographic source to explore how alternative politics of the future emerge in the present and from positions and places of marginality and relative powerlessness.

In social movements, political activism and everyday life, people and groups engage in “prefigurative politics” (Graeber 2009) in a variety of ways. By linking present practices to imagined and desired futures, these politics provide laboratories for future-making that turn oppressive conditions into transformative processes. This ongoing work of planting and growing alternatives takes place in the margins and cracks of the colonial, capitalist and heteropatriarchal social and political order of our times.

SESSION 1: Prefigurative Politics, Solidarity and Resistance I

Future-Making, Ecological Precarity, and Resistance in Kerala’s Fishing Communities

Vyshnavi Mattuvayil, University of Delhi

As Kerala’s fishing communities along the Malabar coast confront climate change, livelihood insecurity, and socio-political marginalization, the future hangs in the balance and is disputed. Ecological disturbances-erratic monsoons, erosion along the coast, and shortages of resources increase gendered risks, and fisherwomen are key protagonists in building resilience. This research puts into prominence the ways in which marginalized coastal peoples actively resist exclusionary future-making practices. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork among the Dheevera fishing communities, this work examines how the stakeholders experience development in everyday resistance, grassroots solidarity, and alternative economies. Relying on Appadurai’s (2013) reflection on future-making and Das’s

(2007) “fearful anticipation,” this research examines how fisherwomen act out radical hope through marine conservation and gendered mobilization. Using prefigurative politics (Graeber 2009), this research repositions them not as victims but as transformers of change. This research advances an anthropology of peace, conflict, and security by requiring policy-makers to heed the voices of fisherwomen in making coastal futures just, inclusive, and sustainable.

Certainty of slogans, uncertainty of the future: Doubt and commitment in Russian anti-war activism

Evgeniya Pakhomova, University of St Andrews

Since February 2022, Russian activists protesting the war in Ukraine from abroad made their demands clear through protest and social media slogans: ‘Hands off Ukraine’, ‘Putin to the Hague’, ‘Nothing about us without us’. These, however, often stood in stark contrast to how grassroots activists envisaged their actual capacity to enact change and concealed deep anxieties about not being able to do ‘enough’. Departing from the notion of prefigurative politics in the context of moral impossibility of living ‘as if already free’ (Graeber 2009), this paper examines what drives people to participate in a cause the success of which is regarded as doubtful. Two main factors are explored: formation of a collective identity in opposition to the imposed representational claims of the state and commitment to alleviation of the pain caused by injustice. Together, these factors empower the activists to act as a collective despite uncertainties about the future.

Military Drones and Friendship Diaries. Grassroots Solidarity in the Global East

Katarzyna Woźny, University of Warsaw

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has renewed global interest in the Global East, exposing its marginalization and persistent paternalistic narratives. While Müller’s (2018) concept of the Global East challenged Western-centric knowledge production, it overlooked Russia’s imperialist discourse and regional influence. This study explores how grassroots movements in the region implement prefigurative politics by modeling alternative forms of belonging and solidarity that challenge both hegemonic narratives. Drawing on early-stage research, I examine STUS Collective in Warsaw, a transnational network of activists from Ukraine, Belarus, and Poland. Initially focused on humanitarian aid, the group has evolved into a space for multilingual dialogue and inclusivity. Rather than constructing a unified identity, the collective fosters solidarity beyond nationalist and geopolitical frames, advocating for a common front against harmful systems in line with Sowa’s alter-universalism (2021). I argue that such practices transform a crisis into a site of radical hope and political agency.

Future-Making as Commoning the Infrastructures of Care: Plenums and Community Assemblies in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Jasmina Husanovic Pehar, University of Edinburgh

This paper explores how social movements and civil society groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina forge public languages of grief and hope and engage in the politics of social justice through prefigurative politics at the intersections of democracy and care, sociality and environment. The focus is on particular forms of radical/participatory democracy as they have emerged over the last two decades – collaborative platforms, plenums and community assemblies (zborovi) which resisted ethnic authoritarian neoliberalism across various sites. How to these embodied political, social and cultural practices engender new vocabularies and a language which communifies us against the regimes of governing insecurity through trauma and poverty that “delights in accumulation by dispossession and profits from ecocidal and genocidal practices” (McKittrick 2021, 74)? Through conceptual categories of infrastructure, time and energy, I analyse these struggles as productive future-making efforts beyond the extractivist, expropriating, contractual and antisocial logic of ethnocapitalism and against the “slow cancellation of future” (Berardi 2011, 13).

SESSION 2: Prefigurative Politics, Solidarity and Resistance II

Embodied Invisibility and (Im)Mobility: Strategic Resistance among Queer Women in Pakistan

Natasha Gilani, University of Toronto

In Pakistan’s volatile socio-political landscape, queer women confront systemic violence, patriarchal oppression, and pervasive religious conservatism. This study examines how these women employ “strategic invisibility” as a form of everyday resistance that not only ensures their survival but also prefigures alternative futures. Grounded in queer theory, postcolonial feminism, and intersectionality, the research reveals that covert practices—ranging from digital activism and coded communication to subtle acts of micro-resistance—create spaces for embodied agency and collective hope. By negotiating multiple intersecting identities (familial, professional, and religious), participants transform invisibility into an adaptive tactic that challenges dominant narratives of visibility and normalcy. Their strategies not only subvert oppressive structures but also forge new forms of belonging and future-making, offering a nuanced reimagining of resilience amid conflict and insecurity. This study contributes to the broader discourse on future-making from below, illustrating how marginalized communities harness everyday practices to envision and enact transformative social change.

No More, Not Yet: The Persistence of Desire and Resistance in Iran

Nazanin Shahbazi, University of Manchester (online)

The deaths of Mahsa Amini (2022) and Kianoosh Sanjari, alongside Parastoo Ahmadi's virtual concert (2024), expose the fractures within the Islamic Republic's symbolic order, where state violence and resistance are locked in a paradox of erasure and persistence. While the regime enforces its vision of the future through repression, these ruptures reveal how desire and defiance continuously exceed its grasp. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Deleuzian micropolitics, this paper explores how acts of refusal—whether through bodily resistance, mourning, or artistic expression—create alternative imaginaries that refuse closure. “No More” marks the rejection of the present order; “Not Yet” signals an unfinished struggle, where the persistence of desire keeps the possibility of the new alive. In this temporal gap, the politics of future-making emerge—not as utopian blueprints but as molecular transformations that reconfigure the present. By tracing these moments of rupture, this paper examines how resistance in Iran does not merely react to oppression but actively invents new forms of belonging, solidarity, and life beyond the state's violent horizon.

Marginalised by Automation: Social Status, Narratives of Uncertainty, and Coping Strategies of Human Taxi Drivers in Wuhan

Xinyi Wu, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

The rapid expansion of automated taxis (Baidu's Carrot Go) in Wuhan, China, has disrupted the livelihoods and social status of human taxi drivers, pushing them to the margins of an automation-driven future. This paper explores how these drivers perceive and experience this transition, articulating their fears, hopes, and frustrations in response to an increasingly uncertain future. It further examines their emotional and behavioural coping strategies in the face of automation-induced precarity.

Drawing on ongoing ethnographic research, in-depth interviews, and participant observation, this study engages with theories of future-making, technological displacement, and social identity to analyse how drivers navigate exclusionary visions of progress. Situating their experiences within broader discussions on marginalisation, insecurity, and contested futures, this paper contributes to critical debates on how less powerful actors make sense of, resist, or adapt to imposed futures. By centring taxi drivers' voices, this study offers insights into the lived realities of automation and its uneven social consequences.

Future(s) in Focus: Methodological Approaches to Analyzing Narratives in Documentary Films

Nilgün Yelpaze, University of Marburg

K. Andra Avram, University of Marburg (online)

In contexts of conflict, occupation, and repression, documentary cinema navigates the tension between historical trauma, struggles for justice, and aspirational world-making. To understand how these films construct narratives of imagined futures and to address methodological gaps in their analysis, we propose an analytical toolkit. This toolkit integrates documentary film studies, conflict studies, and the anthropology of the future, focusing on key analytical lenses such as story and resolution, narrative structure, and symbolic representation. Applying this to Kurdish documentary films, we explore how they envision alternative futures and highlight how documentary cinema can serve as a site of resistance, hope, and speculative imagination. Our methodological approach contributes to broader discussions on future-making in times of conflict, violence, and insecurity, emphasizing the future as a complex and contested phenomenon of social life.

SESSION 3: Memory, Reconciliation and Faith

Crafting Futures Through Memory and Return: Coffee and Panela Growers in Cajibío Rebuilding After Force Displacement

Laura Maria Lopera Realpe, Université de Montréal

This study, based on preliminary findings from a doctoral thesis, focuses on a group of coffee and sugarcane growers in Cajibío (Colombia). After experiencing forced displacement and multiple mobilizations, they have returned to their homeland — marked by massacres and violence — to rebuild their lives and redefine their identities.

Memory emerges as a key tool for reconstructing identity and redefining life after trauma. Through this process, the protagonists reframe their past, give it new meaning, and project themselves toward a better future through productive projects. Memory not only preserves experiences but also serves as a foundation for reinterpreting history and creating new opportunities in return territories.

This reconstruction process challenges the erasure of past conflicts and promotes an inclusive and active memory — one that not only remembers the past but also inspires a better future. This study offers a framework for understanding how memory shapes identity and future-making in conflict contexts.

Building peace from below: Assessing the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum's Peace Initiatives in Matabeleland and their acceptance in the shadow of Gukurahundi

Munyayiwashe Shumba, University of Warsaw (online)

The study examines the role of grassroots peace initiatives in promoting reconciliation and positive peace in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe, where the legacy of Gukurahundi remains a very sensitive and unresolved issue. Gukurahundi was a series of state-sponsored massacres and atrocities in the 1980s that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 20,000 civilians. The study focuses on the efforts of the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF) and assesses the effectiveness of community-based interventions, including local peace committees and community healing sessions, in addressing the historical trauma and promoting social cohesion. Given the government's unwillingness to openly address Gukurahundi, the study examines the extent to which these initiatives have been accepted and embraced by the affected communities. Using qualitative methods the study will highlight the successes and challenges of the ECLF approach and offers insights into the potential for bottom-up peacebuilding in contexts where state-led reconciliation efforts are lacking.

Molato Ga O Bole – An indigenous Critique of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Conceptual Framework of Reparations for Past Injustice

Keolebogile (Keo) Mbebe, University of Pretoria

South Africa's Interim Constitution of 1993 famously depicts itself as a "historic bridge" between the oppressive apartheid dispensation and a peaceful and democratic future South Africa. It identifies the practice of the African ethic of ubuntu, the implementation of reparation, and an attitude of understanding and as the key drivers of peace and unity in South Africa. The Interim Constitution was a critical theoretical background of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In my paper, I aim to argue that a fundamental failure of the TRC's interpretation of reparations for historical injustice lies in part in its misuse of ubuntu. Ubuntu's philosophical foundation prioritizes mutual recognition, care, and sharing within human relations, encapsulating the notion that ethical human existence is achieved through communal responsibility, not individual autonomy. By limiting the usefulness of ubuntu to interpersonal relationships, I posit, the TRC perpetuates and naturalizes the historical land dispossession of indigenous peoples. This limited approach undermines ubuntu's potential as a foundation for genuine decolonization, justice and peace. Only a comprehensive ubuntu application can serve as a true decolonizing foundation for a just future. Authentic ubuntu, I argue, demands justice beyond the interpersonal; it demands redress for collective dispossession. My critique makes use of the maxim of molato ga o bole; a Setswana maxim meaning "an offence never rots/expires". True ubuntu, under this paradigm, necessitates upholding ethical standards through

tangible actions that repair historical wrongs. This “ubuntu proper” sheds light on the limits of the pursuit of reparations in transitional justice discourses by underscoring the problems incurred when mis/appropriating local indigenous ethical concepts.

Helping Ukraine as a Practice of Future-Making along the Baltic Geopolitical Frontier

Beatrice Juskaite, University of Oxford

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the imperative to help Ukraine became a powerful social, affective, and political force in Lithuania. Initially driven by urgency, aid efforts have since become routinised. This paper ethnographically examines the continued commitment of helpers — those who produce trench candles and other aid materials for Ukraine — three years into the war. While their actions are framed as both a political virtue and a means of securing Lithuania’s sovereign future, I argue that their persistence is also shaped by faith in Ukraine’s success transforming it into a non-partisan, future-oriented project. This faith is not tied to a fixed vision of victory but to the belief that collective action, repeated over time, can bring it about. Through this lens, I explore how helping becomes a mode of future-making along the Baltic geopolitical frontier, with history, God, or predecessors perceived as the ultimate arbiters of action.