



Economic
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Research Council



Reporting Violence at the Border: Investigative journalism, activism and epistemic injustice in narratives on migration

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

Aston University and No Name Kitchen

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 15 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the Universities of Warwick, Birmingham, Nottingham, Aston Leicester, Loughborough, De Montfort and Nottingham Trent.

Aston University as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner *No Name Kitchen* to commence in October 2024.

Violence against refugees and migrants at EU borders, especially in the Balkans, is an increasingly well-documented practice (Isakjee et al 2020; Davies et al 2022; Augustova et al 2023). Despite violent ‘pushbacks’ at EU borders being described as a ‘routine element of border governance’ (OHCHR 2021), EU states deny that such illegal practices are taking place (Glouftsios 2023). In opposition to this ‘epistemic borderwork’ (Davies et al 2022), however, are an assortment of investigative journalists, activists, and humanitarian lawyers who are collecting data, recording testimony, and troubling the EU’s narrative that it is a liberal and humanitarian actor (e.g Forensic Architecture 2022; Lighthouse Reports 2022; Border Violence Monitoring Network 2023). By doing so, such organisations are working together to fight for ‘epistemic justice’ (Fricker 2007).

This PhD project - in partnership with the charity [No Name Kitchen](#) (NNK), a key actor in reporting border violence — examines how violence against refugees is investigated and reported by journalists, activists and lawyers, and what kinds of official responses and challenges they elicit from EU organisations. This project asks critical questions about what ‘counts’ as data within narratives about irregular migration. It situates current investigative journalism practices, activism, and legal challenges to border violence in a broader political context, and considers how the production of these narratives is circumscribed by the neoliberalisation of the media, access to data, witnesses, and whistleblowers.

The project will include periods of fieldwork in countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, as well a placement with the collaborating organisation, No Name Kitchen, who provide support for people on the move.

Candidates suited for this project would have an academic background in disciplines including geography, politics, sociology, migration studies or other relevant social sciences discipline, as well as a commitment to long-term fieldwork.

The project will be jointly supervised by Dr Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik (Centre for Migration and Forced Displacement, Aston) and Dr Thom Davies (School of Geography, University of Nottingham).

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#). Please upload an anonymised cover letter as part of the online application process. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: 5 March 2024. Interviews will be held (online) on 13 March 2024.

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit:

www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the research or the Centre for Migration and Forced Displacement prior to application can be directed to Dr Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik j.obradovic-wochnik@aston.ac.uk and Dr Thom Davies Thom.Davies1@nottingham.ac.uk . Please direct your correspondence to both.