MIGRATION, PERFORMANCE & POLICY

STUDY DAY: 26 NOVEMBER 2026

SCREENING BORDERWORK

1.45 - 3.05PM, CINEMA, SCHWARZMAN CENTRE

Three filmmakers screen work from a variety of migration-related projects, from collaborative documentaries and contemporary artwork to fictional pieces and film essays. Borderwork is interrogated from the perspective of daily life in refugee camps, immigration surveillance technologies, cross-border sports initiatives, and the search for displaced and departed loved ones. Following the screening of c.45minutes of short films and film extracts, Raphael, Oreet and Irene will discuss their work with Lola Martinez (Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS), each other, and the audience.



Refugee Stories: Voices from Kakuma

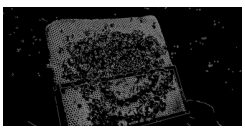
We often imagine refugee camps as lines of tents. But Kakuma, in north-western Kenya, home to nearly 300,000 people, is more like a city. Media coverage of refugees often focuses on the extreme and the exceptional, leaving the daily lives of most displaced people far less visible. Many do not live in the West, but in large camps such as Kakuma.

To explore what life in such a place looks like, and how it can be seen beyond familiar images, University of Oxford researchers and refugee filmmakers living in the camp drew on a survey of more than 1,000 households and selected five households from across Kakuma's economic spectrum. Refugee Stories: Voices from Kakuma follows these five households as they tell their stories in their own words. Together, these portraits reveal Kakuma as a complex social world full of different kinds of lives.

Living alone after his family was killed, Abdirizak sells cigarettes from his wheelchair. At this event we will only screen the story of Abdirizak.



Raphael Bradenbrink is a filmmaker, researcher, and DPhil candidate at the Oxford Department of International Development. His research explores the economic lives of refugees and the politics of refugee assistance. His work draws on qualitative, survey-based, and creative methodologies, including collaborative filmmaking, to understand the economic lives and agency of displaced communities. He is a co-creator of the Refugee Stories project, a large-scale research and multimedia initiative that brings together survey evidence and narrative approaches and co-author of the book Humanizing Data.



Edge Detection Algorhythm

Oreet Ashery, an artist in residence at Bees and Refugees farm in Kent, has collaboratively repurposed the Canny edge detection algorithm using footage of beekeeping filmed on location.

The Canny algorithm generates digital outlines that define on-screen objects and distinguish them from one another. It is commonly used for surveillance purposes as part of elaborate technological systems that control borders and immigration at all levels.

Here the reframing of the algorithm is made abstract and dynamic; recognition of

shapes is open to interpretation, edges are porous, humans and wildlife are able to remain obscure yet beaming with aliveness and vibration.

To quote from Bees and Refugees co-founder Ali Alzein: 'Bees don't recognise borders, neither do wind, soil, seeds or birds. What happens when technology build to divide, is reclaimed to reveal our entanglement? For refugees, for solidarity, for being together.

A short extract from the documentary Building a Chula at Bees and Refugees will be screened for further context.



Oreet Ashery is an award-winning interdisciplinary visual artist working between grassroot contexts to art and cultural programs. The work foregrounds biofiction, gender, and technologies of belonging. Ashery is currently an artist-in-residence at Bees and Refugees, an environmental and social justice beekeeping farm in Kent, where they are focused on practices of co-habitation under the collaborative umbrella called Beeing Together. Ashery is a professor of contemporary art at the University of Oxford.

Reel Borders: Crossing Lines, Border, and Olive Tree

Crossing Lines (2022). Directed by Margaret Gordon.
Autoethnographic documentary. 13 minutes
Synopsis: Northern Ireland in the late 1970s was an unpredictable, fearful landscape–a place where an elevated sense of vigilance and suspicion might keep you safe, but it also amplified fear and division between communities. In this environment, where communities rarely mixed, let alone talked to each other, a group of young women let their love of football do the talking. In 1979, they formed a football team that was both cross-border and cross-religion. While politicians and community leaders struggled to build bridges, these girls let the beautiful game create a world of friendship and acceptance: a world where they all belonged.

Border (2024). Directed by Elif Savar. 6 minutes
Fiction. Original title: Hudut
Synopsis: In Hatay, Turkey, a young Syrian woman searches for her brother, who went missing after the deadly earthquake in February 2023. However, like other Syrians displaced by the war, he has not been registered. With no evidence or information to go on, she decides to visit the cemetery for the unclaimed dead to mourn him.

Olive Tree (2023). Directed by Nora. 1 minute.
Film essay. Original title: Olivo.
Synopsis: "When I walk among my olive trees in Morocco, I feel at peace, enjoying the earth beneath my feet. But now, I can't cross the border (and I can't bring them here!)".



Irene Gutiérrez-Torres is an award-winning documentary filmmaker who holds a PhD in Media and Communication Studies from Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. Her research explores migration and bordering dynamics through participatory and collaborative filmmaking. She has led the participatory filmmaking sub-study of Reel Borders, a project funded by the European Research Council. As director and producer, her films have been screened at festivals and art venues such as the Berlinale, IDFA, BFI London Film Festival, Visions du Réel, and MoMA Documentary Fortnight.