



Zurich Human Geography Colloquium Program Spring Semester 2026

Dr Amy Horton, University College London, UK

Public lecture: Tue, 10 March, 4-5:15pm, Room Y25 – H79

Contesting social infrastructures:

Resistance to the 'speculative city' in London

Workshop: Wed, 11 March, 9-11am, Room Y25 – L40

*Please register for the workshop by March 5th via e-mail to
frances.brill@geo.uzh.ch*

Dr Oxana Ivanova-Chessex, Zurich University of Teacher Education &
Lalitha Chamakalayil (Dipl.-Psych.), University of Applied Sciences and Arts
Northwestern Switzerland

Public lecture: Tue, 28 April, 4-5:15pm, Room Y25 – H92

**"Then We Would No Longer Feel at Ease" – Negotiations in a Parent Café
in the context of Integration Dispositif**

Prof Gargi Bhattacharyya, University College London, UK

Public lecture: Tue 12 May, 4-5:15pm, Room Y25 – H92

'Racial capitalism': A framing for understanding our terrifying times?

Workshop: Wed, 13 May, 9-12pm, Y25 – L40

*Please register for the workshop by May 5th via e-mail to
reta.barfuss@geo.uzh.ch*

Prof (Em.) Oren Yiftachel, hon., UCL; Ben-Gurion University Beersheba;
senior researcher «A Land for All – two states, one homeland»

Public lecture: Tue 19 May, 4-5:15pm, Room Y25 – H92

**"The political geography of a never-ending conflict:
Israel/Palestine between apartheid and peace"**

Workshop: Wed, 20 May, 9-12pm, Y25 – L40

*Please register for the workshop by May 12th via e-mail to
hanna.hilbrandt@geo.uzh.ch*



Tue, 10 March 2026: **Dr Amy Horton**

Contesting social infrastructures: Resistance to the 'speculative city' in London

Facing fiscal crises and surging property values, many urban governments have become critically reliant on speculative real estate development. Redeveloping public land, they argue, provides homes and releases land value, helping to plug budgetary gaps arising from austerity and state restructuring.

This talk – based on work with Dr Joe Penny – critically examines these claims, drawing on research in Tottenham in London. Here, in the aftermath of an uprising triggered by police violence in 2011, authorities devised plans for a public-private redevelopment venture that was unprecedented in its scale. But despite its powerful backers, a diverse community coalition successfully resisted the plan.

We conceptualise the 'speculative city' as a mode of state financing and control, which is guided by a logic of racialised dispossession and premised on the remaking of social infrastructures for distinct urban populations. From the successful resistance in Tottenham, we reflect on the implications for contestation elsewhere.

Amy Horton: Working from a feminist geographical political economy perspective, my research focuses on care and housing. In particular, it examines financialisation and speculative property development by local government in the UK, and the ways in which they are challenged.



Tue, 28 April 2026: Dr Oxana Ivanova-Chessex & Lalitha Chamakalayil (Dipl.-Psych.)

"Then We Would No Longer Feel at Ease" – Negotiations in a Parent Café in the context of Integration Dispositif

Education is increasingly framed as a "magic formula" capable of improving individual life circumstances while contributing to broader societal progress (Jergus 2018). By neoliberally activating parents' responsibility for education – their responsabilisation (Vincent, 2017) – the promise of equal educational opportunities becomes linked to parental engagement.

For migrant parents, uncertainties associated with responsabilisation are compounded by potential interpellation as "hard-to-reach" or educationally indifferent.

We focus on migrant parents in educational efforts. Drawing on findings from our ongoing research project, we explore how parents position themselves in self-initiated educational efforts and how their engagement is embedded into power relations. Building on subjectivation theory (Butler, 1997a, 1997b) and incorporating a critical interrogation of the integration dispositif (Bojadžijev, 2018; Lingen-Ali & Mecheril, 2020), our presentation explores, how the educational endeavours of parents are possible and socially recognisable beyond hegemonic discourses and power relations.

We look at parental engagement in a neighborhood initiative, a parent café, looking at the negotiations concerning the use and organization of this space, particularly focusing on the language practices within the café. We elucidate what is at stake for differently positioned actors, depending on their social and discursive subject positions, when threatened by a potential co-optation through integrationist discourses.

Dr Oxana Ivanova-Chessex is a senior researcher at the Zurich University of Teacher Education. Her research focuses on education in the context of power relations and social inequalities, on school-family relations, and on teacher education attentive to power and difference, drawing on subjectivation theory, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies.

Lalitha Chamakalayil is a psychologist and senior researcher at the School of Social Work at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland at the institute for Studies in Children and Youth Services. In her teaching and research, she works on social inequalities, families in the context of power relations, biography research and on psychoanalysis and racism.



Tue, 12 May 2026: Prof Gargi Bhattacharyya

'Racial Capitalism': A Framing for Understanding Our Terrifying Times?

We seem to be living through an ongoing re-racialisation of global politics and economy. We are being forced to encounter what it means for the world when populations are rendered expendable or when the terms of humanness and human consideration appear to exclude some groups of people. The framework of racial capitalism can help us to see how and, occasionally, why such things can happen. It gives some clues about how, why and with what impact varieties of racialisation can be folded into projects of accumulation.

However, this moment – when economic policy, international politics and the terms of conduct on a global stage all feel very uncertain – calls for intellectual humility. Unfortunately, discussions of racial capitalism can adopt an overconfidence in the totalizing reach of this framing. As such, this lecture will be agnostic about whether racial capitalism is an apt framing for the horrors of our time. It is hoped, however, that consideration of some of the suggestions arising from discussions of racial capitalism might help us to find ways to understand the beast that is emerging.

Gargi Bhattacharyya writes and teaches on issues of inequality, social justice and state practices, and is the Director of University College London's Sarah Parker Remond Centre for the Study of Racism and Racialisation. Gargi's numerous publications include *Tales of Dark-Skinned Women: Race, Gender and Global Culture* (1998), *Crisis, Austerity and Everyday Life: Living In a Time of Diminishing Expectations* (2015), and *The Futures of Racial Capitalism* (2024).



Tue, 19 May 2026: Prof (Em.) Oren Yiftachel, hon.

**"The political geography of a never-ending conflict:
Israel/Palestine between apartheid and peace"**

The lecture will analyze the historical, political and legal geography of Israel/Palestine, as critical foundation to understanding the protracted conflict in the land. It will focus on colonial and national land regimes, settlement and digitalization as key factors in understanding the oppressive conditions leading to the October 7 attack and subsequent Gaza war, including its regional and global ripples. The lecture will draw on international comparative knowledge, as well as firsthand experience, to discuss possible scenarios of transforming conflict to reconciliation.

Oren Yiftachel is a professor of political geography and urban studies. He has published 11 books and over 100 articles; taught at 8 international universities; and was editor and board member in several leading journals. He is a co-founder and senior researcher in the Palestinian-Israeli peace movement "A Land for All – two states, one homeland".