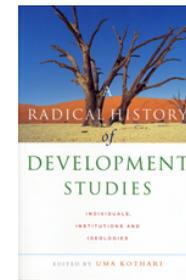




## Is the Water Safer than the Land? Public Representations of Syrian Refugees and the Power of a Warm Welcome

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**Abstract:** At present, news bulletins, television documentaries, newspaper articles, radio programmes and forms of social media are debating the ‘refugee crisis’. They depict the experiences of refugees, document their journeys and arrivals, inform us about the causes of migration, and examine the potential impact on the people and places they encounter. How does this unprecedented media coverage shape our understandings of refugees? How can we interpret and challenge the ideas and meanings that generate powerful, and often negative, connotations around terms such as ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’? This presentation begins by briefly examining the historical forms and the power of such representations before exploring how current images and texts of refugees reinforce global inequalities or alternatively, might forge new kinds of global alliances. I focus on how certain images can change our dispositions towards refugees, enabling us to recognise the power of a warm, face-to-face welcome in an overwhelmingly digital age. We are positioned at a critical moment, one replete with potential to shape future inter-generational and cross-cultural understanding. In this context, I conclude by foregrounding the politics and power of welcome, arguing that it can profoundly impact on a refugee’s perception of place and people, forging longer lasting affiliations and promising the development of a future sense of belonging.



**Uma Kothari** is Professor of Migration and Postcolonial Studies and Director of the Global Development Institute in the School of Environment, Education and Development at University of Manchester. Her research interests include international development and humanitarianism and migration, refugees and diasporas. Her research has involved a number of funded projects, most recently an Australian Research Council project on International Volunteering and Cosmopolitanism, and a Norwegian Research Council project on Perceptions of Climate Change and Migration. Her current research is on Visual Solidarity and Everyday Humanitarianism. She has published numerous articles. Her books include *Participation: the new tyranny?* (2001), *Development Theory and Practice: critical perspectives* (2001), and *A Radical History of Development Studies* (2005). She is currently writing a book on Time, Geography and Global Inequalities. She was recently made a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and conferred the Royal Geographical Society’s Busk Medal for her contributions to research in support of global development.

\*\*\*\*\* ALL WELCOME \*\*\*\*\*

**Date/Time:** Tuesday 15  
November 1:00pm – 3:00pm

**Location:** Parramatta South  
Campus EB.3.21

**RSVP:** 7 November 2016 ssap-  
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