

Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IHSS) Annual Report 2022-2023

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Director's Report



Much of my time as director of the IHSS is spent being a matchmaker and a midwife; fostering interdisciplinary research by connecting colleagues who have potential research synergies and helping them birth their projects.

This work is only possible because of the sustained support we receive from the Faculty's Vice-Principal, Frances Bowen, through her championing of collaborative research and the commitment of funding on which the IHSS depends. This year, that funding has supported the appointment of 21 new Fellows, 10 Global Professorial Fellows and eight Visiting Fellows as well as four research programmes, a Climate Emergency working group, a Forum on Decentering the Human, Mobile People programme for doctoral scholars, early career workshops, and large grant seed corn projects.

At a strategic level, we've been incredibly fortunate to be able to draw on the wisdom and experience of Adrian Armstrong, the Dean for Research, and Alex Nowosiad, Faculty Strategic Research Manager for HSS. At a day-to-day level, the Institute would not have functioned without the excellent administrative support of Jolanta Stanulionyte. As a team, our focus this year has been on rebuilding and strengthening those research connections which have inevitably been fractured by the pandemic, the effects of which have been longer and deeper than many of us expected. Increased online working in the post-Covid world has been a boon in terms of speed and efficiency, as well as allowing us to attend meetings in our pyjamas. But there are costs to our research communities of not routinely coming together in person, including in the loss of those vital serendipitous exchanges.

In this new working environment, we're having to work proactively to find ways to share knowledge and to connect; at the Institute this has included developing **IHSS research networks** so that colleagues can quickly and easily identify potential synergies as well as experimenting with different hybrid formats for **events** so that more colleagues from outside the UK can engage with our work.

At the same time as increasing access online, we've prioritised supporting more world-leading academics from the global south to visit Queen Mary in person through help with travel costs and daily expenses for Visiting Fellows from middle-income and low-income countries. The diversity of our Visiting Fellows and Global Fellows brings a wealth of different perspectives from around the world and deepens the exchange of ideas and knowledge at QM. The value of this diverse engagement was evident at the **IHSS Annual Symposium** at which the global and the local came together to address the London housing crises in the context of global capitalism. Organised by IHSS Fellows Jessie Sklair, Elsa Noterman and Archie Davies, the range of activities held across two days included a curated conversation between our guest speakers, **Professor Brenna Bhandar** and **Professor Raquel Rolnik**, an activists' workshop, teach-outs and a guided East End walk led by our Global Professorial Fellow **Professor Caroline Knowles**.

These diverse forums brought together academics, policy-makers and activists to share their different perspectives on a subject which affects us all. It was a prime example of what QM does best – mining differences in ideas, identities, approaches and formats to push the boundaries of knowledge and challenge received wisdoms.

It was a privilege to be able to support the symposium organisers and participants as they came together to create such a dynamic event, and I look forward to seeing the fruits of more IHSS matchings and hatchings in the year ahead."

Professor Kate Malleson Director of IHSS

The IHSS in Numbers



Management team





IHSS Annual Symposium 2023

In September, the IHSS hosted its annual symposium on London's Housing Crises and Global Capitalism.

We were delighted to welcome Raquel Rolnik (Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo) and Brenna Bhandar (Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia) as our guest speakers.

Three IHSS Fellows – Drs Jessie Sklair, Elsa Noterman and Archie Davies – organised five events drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives on housing struggles and dispossession in London, to explore how London's unique urban challenges are embedded within global circuits of capital, the changing dynamics of financialisation and enduring colonial and racial regimes of property. Our main event took the form of a conversation between Professor Rolnik and Professor Bhandar on the role of global capitalism in driving, deepening and expanding London's multiple housing crises.

The Symposium coincided with industrial action at QMUL, so on both days of the symposium we held lively and well attended teach-outs aimed primarily at graduate students and Early Career Researchers at which Raquel and Brenna explored important connections between their work, the local and global contexts of London's housing crises, and the issues of pay and precarity driving industrial action at QMUL. Focusing on the effects of global capitalism at the local level, IHSS Global Professorial Fellow Caroline Knowles led a popular walking tour on the 'New Architectures of Finance' which showed how local economies and residents have been increasingly displaced by high-end housing and a new night-time economy.

Lastly, Jacob Stringer, a PhD student in the School of Geography who works with London Renters Union, helped to plan and facilitate a workshop which brought together housing activists and scholars to discuss "Housing struggles in London: linking the global to the local." In addition to the formal events, there was a lot of opportunity for people to talk and share ideas informally, and we hope to be able to follow up on the connections made and the energy generated to develop more initiatives and activities in the future around a topic which is so important to us all; whether at local, national or international level.

Full details of the symposium can be found on the **IHSS website**.

Fellows

Our 21 Fellows form the heart of the IHSS. They are drawn from across **eight different Schools** in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science and they are engaging in a dazzling range of research topics from the **history of the meat industry** to the **economics of education**, the **study of 1966s Feminism** and much more.

We asked some of the Fellows to share a few highlights of the last year:



Dr Delfi I. Nieto-Isabel

For me, this has been a year of personal empowerment. Being an IHSS fellow has given me full agency to decide in which direction I would take my research, encouraging me to be as interdisciplinary as I wished to be and to think outside the box.

I've found a support network in unexpected places, and I've embarked on challenging initiatives that go across sometimes arbitrary time period boundaries. I can't wait to see the exciting fruits these new projects will bear over the next few years.



Dr Lucie Gadenne

I really enjoyed starting at QM and meeting my SEF and IHSS colleagues.

Highlights of the year include: preparing and teaching Environmental Economics, an UG course for which I won a teaching prize, publishing in the Journal of Public Economics and getting a paper accepted to the Review of Economic Studies, and being asked to serve on the Editorial Board of the American Economic Review and as the Scientific Chair of the 2023 International Institute of Public Finance Congress.



Dr Camille Terrier

For me, the highlight of this year has been the release of a policy report on the role played by student confidence in their choices of colleges.

The report, based on a two-years-long research project I carried out in France, attracted lots of attention from the media and policy makers, and is opening the door to practical reforms of university admissions in France and to interdisciplinary collaborations with sociologists to pin down the roots of the unequal access to higher education around the world.

As an IHSS member, the events I have enjoyed the most are the meetings with other fellows for the Institute Afternoon with Lunch, and the events organised by fellows such as the book launch by IHSS Fellow Dr Jane Freeland on Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968–2002 (Oxford University Press, 2022).



Dr Elsa Noterman

I've really valued getting to know my colleagues in Geography and IHSS, and the Queen Mary community more broadly this year.

I also published two articles this year – one in a key geography journal, and my first in a legal studies journal. I was also able to expand and deepen my scholarly networks as an invited participant to three international, interdisciplinary workshop series – the Critical Legal Geographies network (Cambridge), the Experimental Properties charrettes (Cambridge and Oxford), and a residency on Equality, Law and Social Justice (KCL).

Finally, receiving a Participatory Research Grant from the QMUL Centre for Public Engagement has allowed me to collaborate with a USbased housing movement to offer a series of workshops around the country on community reconsiderations and reimagining of housing as a public benefit.

Highlights from the Research Programmes and the Climate Emergency Working Group



Dr William Monteith **Re-thinking Work Research Programme Director**

This year the IHSS Re-thinking Work programme hosted Professor Cara Daggett (Virginia Tech) at a workshop exploring the ecological impact of modern work cultures.

Her intervention highlighted the ways in which the centrality of work - and associated threat of job loss - in modern society has served to keep energy cultures yoked to fossil fuel extractivism.

In other words, shifting our energy cultures will require a corresponding shift in the way we understand work, opening the door for more radical 'post-work' interventions, including working time reduction and universal basic income, which we will be exploring and critiquing in next year's programme.



Dr Giulia Carabelli **Environmental Futures Research Programme Director**

The Environmental Futures programme hosted four events with international academics and practitioners interested in plants and the making of the future.

Lectures and workshops addressed the roles of plant-human relationships in botanic gardens, apiculture, gender studies and outer space. Additionally, the programme organised a community building event on the Mile End campus to repot office plants as well as a summer reading group on plant agency.

Giulia Carabelli, the programme leader, co-curated an exhibition about the values of houseplants at The Garden Museum and contributed to their public engagement programme in the summer 2023.



Dr Mario Slugan **Global Epistemologies Research Programme Director**

In the academic year 2022-23 two talks 'Thinking (of) Plants: Indigenous Knowledge and Interspecies Collaboration' and 'Decolonizing Film Heritage: Lessons from Indigenous Archives in Australia and Aotearoa, New Zealand' and were held and a general call for funding organized which resulted in 13 applications and 3 awarded grants: 'The Ends of the Global' that proposed a critical rethinking of 'the global' culminating in a roundtable discussion, 'Cosmic celebrations of life' that investigates traditional celebrations amongst indigenous communities in Cotacachi, Ecuador and culminates in an exhibition of photographs and illustrations of these events by the members of the community and 'Of Mountains and Earthworms' that includes the first English translation of a Kondh Adivasi oral epic, and its showcasing as a part of an art installation in London to create a transnational poetic encounter between global Indigenous artists.



Dr Tibisay Morgandi **IHSS Climate Emergency Working Group Chair**

In its 2022-23 term, the IHSS Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG) delved deep into the vibrant tapestry of the climate emergency discourse.

The CEWG engaged in interdisciplinary insightful dialogues about the challenges and prospects of conveying the urgency of climate action to policymakers, the public at large, and local communities. "Communicating the Climate Emergency: From Knowledge to Action" event in October 2022 was an example of these dialogues. Please see the event summary on the CEWG webpage.

The group also embarked on a creative odyssey, crafting podcasts that explore pressing themes like the proliferation of climate litigation and the transformative role of AI in the fights against climate change.

The CEWG flagship event, taking place at the end of 2023, will navigate the intricate landscape of present-day challenges in the realm of the energy transition, charting a course through the complexities that lie at the heart of this transformative journey.



Research Networks

The first step in developing interdisciplinary collaboration is identifying colleagues with shared research interests. Without trawling through School and Research Centre websites, it can be surprisingly difficult to find where the research synergies lie across the University, the Faculty (and even within our own Schools!).

The aim of these **networks** is, therefore, to help colleagues find these synergies through lists of research interests. There is no particular organising feature to them; they simply represent areas where groups of colleagues, large or small, are working.

Some are very general, and some are quite specific. We hope that colleagues across QMUL will continue to add to them, disseminate them, and suggest new topics.

IHSS supports these research networks:

- Food and Hunger
- Race and Related Areas
- Time and Temporality
- Imagination
- Fashion, Costume and Textiles
- Gender and Related Areas

Global Professorial Fellows

Our ten **Global Professorial Fellows** (GPFs) are leading scholars from around the world appointed to Queen Mary for a period of three years. Based in one of the eight Schools, their role is to engage with colleagues across the Faculty to contribute to innovate interdisciplinary research.

Through their diverse interests, backgrounds and experiences they each bring with them exciting and cutting-edge work which enhances our research environment. Their formal activities have included giving lectures, running workshops and seminars, engaging in public outreach at festivals, openings and launches, giving radio interviews, participating in IHSS and Schools' Research programmes and working groups.

Equally important has been the Fellows' enthusiastic informal engagement with students and colleagues on shared research interests, possible future collaborations and serendipitous connections, as Professor Martin Puchner has highlighted:



I'm particularly looking forward to events this year on minor languages, including the sociolect called Rotwelsch. By sheer coincidence, Queen Mary will host the world expert on this extremely obscure language, which I have also written about, giving me the rare opportunity to converse on (and perhaps in?) this language."

Professor Martin Puchner

Some of our GPFs are completely new to QMUL and to the UK, others have longer local connections, such as Professor Philippa Levine now based in Austin, Texas who has described joining QMUL as 'a homecoming of sorts':



I was born on Bancroft Road in the days when there was a maternity unit there and I grew up in the East End until the age of nine and visited frequently thereafter as my grandmother lived there throughout her life.

Getting to know QMUL staff whose work focuses on the area, having the Tower Hamlets archives in such close proximity and just being in the area has been a wonderful bonus of the GPF scheme as well as generative for my research. I'm planning a book that looks at Jewish radicalism in East London (my own background!) and where better to plan such a project than QMUL?"

Professor Philippa Levine

In common with our Visiting Fellows, our GPFs have told us that the benefits of their connection with QMUL flow both ways. Professor Caroline Knowles has highlighted:



The range of Geography at QMUL, is inspiring. I'm learning new things about permafrost and climate change and agrarian labour regimes in the Punjab, as well as getting to know a group of colleagues with fascinating research projects."

Professor Caroline Knowles

It's also been inspiring to see QMUL through a visitor's eyes, as Professor Rukmini told us:



This was the first University I had ever been to which had an 18th century immigrant graveyard at its centre surrounded by modern stone and glass 21st buildings. Somehow, this was not depressing at all but a wonderfully grounded marker of continuity and change.

Perhaps it is this grounded mindset that has given QMUL the unusual courage not only to envisage cutting-edge advances in medicine, biology and engineering but also, for instance, to imagine interdisciplinary research on the scope of the human imagination itself in these troubled yet exciting years of a new millennium.

And finally, there was the fire-alarm which went off at all hours at Frances House where I was staying! When I observed people from so many nationalities, in such diverse clothing, of different ages and orientations, periodically dash out, gather in small huddles and start to engage in animated talk even though they had not necessarily set eyes on each other before, I realized that this was really DEI in action."

Professor Rukmini Bhaya Nair

Visiting Fellows

We were delighted to welcome eight Visiting Fellows this year.

They joined us for periods of up to four weeks and contributed to a wide range of activities both within the Institute and across the Faculty: giving guest lectures and seminars, attending research meetings, book launches, PhD supervisions, as well as mentoring early career researchers, chatting, drinking coffee and much more.

We asked the Fellows what they had most enjoyed about their visits and they told us about the stimulating scholarly environment at QMUL and the rich intellectual exchanges. For **Professor Ellen Ernst Kossek** from, Purdue University, a highlight of her visit included the chance to:



Share ideas on the future of work and flexibility with other thought leaders."

Professor Ellen Ernst Kossek

Professor James Steintrager from Columbia University valued being engaged with a vibrant scholarly community in which:



Everyone I met was eager to listen to, discuss, and reflect on the research that I presented and among 'everyone', I include academic staff from QMUL in my own and adjacent fields, fellow visiting scholars, postgraduate students, academic staff from other London universities, and members of the public."

Professor James Steintrager

Similarly, Professor Jessica Lichy highlighted the longer-term value of the connections she had made:



The insights and connections we formed will undoubtedly contribute to future research endeavours."

Professor Jessica Lichy

Both James and Jessica also stressed the value of the more informal exchanges and the 'lively conversations continued after each event, at official receptions, over dinner, or subsequent coffee meetups.'

Equally importantly, the Visiting Fellows talked about the unique location and culture of QM as James noted:



I loved being embedded in Mile End, so I could take a morning run on the towpath, wander Victoria Park, visit Hawksmoor churches, and simply soak up the ambience and diversity of non-tourist London."

Professor James Steintrager

While Jessica highlighted the opportunity:



To socialize and develop new collegial relationships by sharing a meal at a local pub, walking by the canal, or taking a feminist historical walk in this vibrant part of London."

Professor Jessica Lichy

Professor David Oppenheimer, the Director of the Berkeley Center on Comparative Equality and Anti-Discrimination Law was verging on the poetic in his praise of our campus:



I'll always cherish my month at QMUL, looking out at the canal and the blooming dogwoods as I wrote 20,000 words in four weeks. QMUL was my Walden Pond."

Professor David Oppenheimer

It's sometimes useful to see our surroundings through visitors' eyes to be reminded of its particular and unique loveliness!

Highlight Events

Research Cluster on Time and Temporalities Inaugural Event Wednesday, 28 June 2023

The Future of Plants: Beyond Earth

Thursday, 15 June 2023

IHSS and CLaSP Workshop – Development on Credit: Financialisation and its effects across the international development agenda

Tuesday, 13 June 2023

Book Panel – A World Without Hunger: Writing New Histories of Geography

Monday, 12 June 2023

Post-work Ecologies: From 'green jobs' to ecological idleness Thursday, 8 June 2023 – Friday, 9 June 2023

Conflict Residue: Living with the Remnants of War

Friday, 2 June 2023

Decolonising Indigenous Film Heritage: Lessons from Australia and Aotearoa

Wednesday, 19 April 2023

Enchanted Worlds and Human Meaning

Thursday, 30 March 2023

Biometrics, Border Tech, and Human Rights Wednesday, 25 January 2023

Book Launch: Feminist Transformations & Domestic Violence in Divided Berlin

Monday, 21 November 2022

Communicating the Climate Emergency: From Knowledge to Action

Thursday, 20 October 2022

Book Launch: Highly Discriminating: Why the City Isn't Fair and Diversity Doesn't Work

Thursday, 13 October 2022



Enchanted Worlds and Human Meaning, March 2023



Book Launch: Feminist Transformations & Domestic Violence in Divided Berlin, November 2022





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