

2025 UQ Social Science Postgraduate Conference Program and Abstracts



Crisis and Resilience: Social Environments in Transition



Date

Friday 28 November 2025

8:45am – 3:30pm

Venue

ViewPoint, Campbell Place (Building 33), UQ St Lucia

What this conference will explore

What methods do we use to address change itself? Who or what do we rely on in moments of disaster? How do we build resilience against future crises?

Under the theme Crisis and Resilience: Social Environments in Transition, we will explore critical, interdisciplinary engagement with the ways that individuals, communities, institutions, and environments experience, resist, and adapt to disruption across time and space.

From global pandemics and environmental collapse, to war, displacement, rising gendered violence and systemic injustice, crisis increasingly defines our world – and our work as researchers.

This conference provides a platform for postgraduate scholars to explore and collaborate on the social, political, cultural, and environmental dynamics of crisis and resilience through diverse methodological and theoretical approaches. Join us to reflect, connect, and imagine new responses to salient challenges in our time.

Schedule

8:45	Registration	
9:00	Welcome and Opening with the Organising Committee and Prof Lynda Cheshire	
9:20	Keynote Speech by Dr Helen Berents	
10:00	Panel 1: Protecting Ecologies	
	Sarah Thomson	Charismatic rivers: affect, aquatic agency, and the rights of nature
	Laura Hronec	Evaluating United States cultural heritage resource management under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act
	Victoria Gendle	The 'Who' of 'Community': The Impacts of Defining Community within Consultation Processes for Queensland Renewable Energy Developments
11:00	Break	
11:30	Panel 2: Discourse Around Crisis	
	Bhakti Nugroho	Indigenous Struggle in the Frontiers: A Literature Study on Conflict surrounding Indonesia's New Capital City
	Joseph Owens	What is leaving? Mobility as Refusal in North Africa
	Natalie Hēni Maihi	Strong enough to survive, too emotional to be objective: Resisting the academic disembodiment of resilience
	Chloe McGibbon	Coercive Control: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Policy
13:00	Lunch	
14:00	Panel 3: Future Sustainabilities	
	Jingyeong Song	Social Connectedness and Health among Refugees in Australia
	Pipin Prasetyono	State-led innovation in social policy: Understanding Indonesian government's commitment to a Matching Defined Contribution pension scheme
	Ngaire Dowse	Making Precarious Futures: Navigating Risk Governance and Fracking in Northern Australia
15:30	Drinks, Nibbles and Networking	

Keynote Speaker

Dr Helen Berents



Helen is a feminist scholar centrally concerned with both representations of young people in contexts of crises and conflict, and with engagements with the lived experience of violence-affected communities. Her research is interested in the interconnected areas of the presence and roles of young people in global politics; everyday experiences of conflict and peacebuilding; and local-global relations in peace and security governance, which are underpinned by strong methodological expertise in qualitative research with marginalised communities and in insecure environments.

Helen's work sits in international relations, particularly peace studies and critical security studies but is interdisciplinary in drawing from anthropology, feminist theory and sociology. Her work is motivated by a genuine belief in the importance of recognising the contributions and capacities of children and youth in navigating violence and building peace.

She is a Senior Lecturer with the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia, and was an Australian Research Council [DECRA Fellow](#) from 2020-2024. She is an editor at *Critical Studies on Security*, and currently a member of the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) International Research Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security (2023-2027), part of the Arab Reform Initiative's Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding in MENA, and member of the Global Coalition on YPS.

Her first book *Young People and Everyday Peace* was published in 2018, and she has co-edited three volumes: *Youth Leading Change: Emerging Sites of Knowledge in Peace and Conflict* with Katrina Leclerc and Erika Yague (2025), *Youth and Sustainable Peacebuilding* with Profs Siobhan McEvoy-Levy and Catherine Bolten (2024), and *Children, Childhoods, and Global Politics* with Prof J Marshall Beier (2023).

Panel 1: Ecologies in Transition

10:00 – 11:00

In this panel, we understand how ecologies – natural, social, and political – react to disaster, decay, and human intervention.

Sarah Thomson

Charismatic rivers: affect, aquatic agency, and the rights of nature

Rivers are vital. They support human sustenance, settlements, livelihoods, and security. In recent years they have also become the focus of juridical developments in environmental protection and management. Ecuador, Aotearoa (New Zealand), India, Colombia, Australia, and Bangladesh have each developed river protection laws informed by a global legal movement to recognise the ‘rights of nature.’ Despite these developments proliferating across geopolitical and socio-cultural milieux, there has been limited scholarship exploring why rivers, in particular, have emerged as the main beneficiaries of legal protection. In addressing this fundamental question, this paper is inspired by theoretical work on the concept of nonhuman charisma in biodiversity conservation.

Categorised as ethological, relational, and affective, the paper considers the role of aquatic charisma in the transcultural ethics of river protection. In doing so, it draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with two rivers subject to both intensifying ecological precarity and novel juridical developments. The Birrarung (Yarra River) is a regionally significant river located in Narm (Melbourne) in south-eastern Australia. The River Ganga is an expansive transboundary river traversing northern India and Bangladesh. These distinct but parallel case studies reveal insights into the intersections between human-river relationships, the legal developments by which they are increasingly formalised, and ultimately, the political agency of rivers themselves.

Victoria Gendle

The ‘Who’ of ‘Community’: The Impacts of Defining Community within Consultation Processes for Queensland Renewable Energy Developments

Australia's commitment to decarbonisation has positioned large-scale renewable energy developments as vital to addressing climate change. In Queensland, recent reforms have sought to elevate the voices and concerns of regional communities during the planning and development of renewable energy projects. Yet legislative ambiguity and entrenched approaches to community engagement continue to shape whose voices are heard and whose are marginalised.

This study investigates the construction of 'community' within discourse and how these constructions are operationalised within community engagement in Queensland renewable energy developments. It seeks to examine the interests and norms underpinning these constructions and whether they perpetuate or address existing social inequities. Using a qualitative case study of a Queensland wind farm development, this study combines socio-legal theory and critical discourse analysis to examine how 'community' is discursively constructed across legislation, non-statutory guidelines, and development-specific documentation.

Laura Hronec

Evaluating United States cultural heritage resource management under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In the United States, management of public cultural heritage (e.g., Chaco Canyon, Manhattan Project National Historical Park, La Cieneguilla petroglyphs) falls to several different public entities that have different regulatory objectives, can mobilize different powers and resources, and operate at different governmental scales. This paper explores the impact of federal level processes and, in doing so, focuses on the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) - one of the strongest pieces of federal level legislation for cultural heritage resource conservation.

The NHPA's Section 110 mandates all federal agencies must develop historic preservation programs, which include cultural heritage resources. This research will assess how US federal agencies comply with their Section 110 mandate amidst growing concerns of the impact that changing environmental conditions and expanding development will have on cultural heritage resources. In doing so, this paper asks how proactive cultural heritage resource management is interpreted by different federal agencies and the impact this has on coherence of federal policy. The results of this research will contribute to a broader evaluation of the effectiveness of law and policy in cultural heritage site protections.

Panel 2: Discourse Around Crisis

11:30 – 13:00

This panel investigates how we frame intervention, resistance, resilience and justice, during and after crisis.

Bhakti Nugroho

Indigenous Struggle in the Frontiers: A Literature Study on Conflict surrounding Indonesia's New Capital City

The establishment of the new capital city of Indonesia, Nusantara, which reflects an expanding accumulation process concealed in the state's agenda, continues a process of colonisation and makes the Indigenous land a frontier. A person in power often interprets a frontier as an unowned space, and controlling resources on the frontier becomes the subject of competing power. Conflict becomes a feature of the frontier, which is evident in Nusantara.

The will to accumulate drives minimal participation in a policy process and pushes violence and colonial tactics to succeed in the relocation of the capital city. Accumulation justifies dispossession and the violent policy process through a disciplinary mechanism that does not always rely on a material force. Effective power exercise will control the Indigenous community as a disciplined community who are in favour of Nusantara.

There are two possible options for Indigenous People in responding to Nusantara, which include a peaceful negotiation or total resistance. Each Indigenous group or individual might show a different approach to counter political-economic operations in their homeland. However, apart from the diverse approach or method of encounter, the motive of the Indigenous group is to survive from marginalisation led by the establishment of a new capital city.

Joseph Owens

What is leaving? Mobility as Refusal in North Africa

You decide to leave the country you were born in, because, frankly, you don't want to be a part of its politics. You refuse. Trump's America? No. Working for a barely liveable wage in Athens? Definitely not. The state actively targeting you and others in Sudan? I'm leaving.

Political leaving is all throughout the historical record. That is, physically getting up and going when you refuse to be governed. But with the advent of the modern state-system, with mobility controls and classifications in place, political leaving has been seemingly snuffed out on paper. Historians and political scientists stopped writing about it, and now we're forced to be understood as tourists, visitors, expats, refugees.

This research seeks to rescue an important political practice from the archives through a case study of Darfuri history and life-histories of those who have migrated from Sudan into neighbouring Egypt. How is political leaving understood by its practitioners? How do these practitioners negotiating mobility regimes which seemingly deny the express purpose of their leaving? What implications does this have for norms of individual and collective autonomy, sanctuary, solidarity, and care? Let's find out.

Natalie Hēni Maihi

Strong enough to survive, too emotional to be objective: Resisting the academic disembodiment of resilience

Normative conceptualisations of resilience emphasise ideas of survival and positivity in the face of crisis and adversity. The onus placed upon resilience burgeoned alongside the rise of neoliberalism, which diminished resilience to an individual character trait, severed from its wider socio-political context and stripped of its transformative capacity. To be resilient is to be trapped within an incessant cycle of adaptation to threats, risk and emergency, whilst simultaneously prohibited from resisting nor changing these structures and conditions. Within the confines of academia, resilience is an individual responsibility, a self-help ideology of success measured through employability, and an achievement blind to structural disadvantage and trauma. It is an ironic shift, given the ecological roots of resilience highlight the capacity to learn from the past to tend a better future.

This reflexive presentation will problematise the scholarly and pedagogical paradox of resilience: the academy reveres the strength of the survivor and their ability to overcome, so long as they remain palatable, productive and objective. To do so, Natalie will coalesce her experiences as a victim-survivor of domestic and sexual violence with the principles of abolition feminism, to

position resilience as an epistemic fantasy which renders emotion suspect and embodied knowledge as disposable. This reveals academic notions of resilience and the valorisation of objectivity as systemic emotional illiteracy, which erases the relationality and transformative capacity of research and teaching. She proposes that resilience cannot be found in the silence of repression, as it lives in the revolutionary space of radical imagination.

Chloe McGibbon

Coercive Control: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Policy

Queensland has joined many other jurisdictions in creating a standalone offence of coercive control in attempts to better protect victim-survivors and to promote changes to social attitudes that facilitate the perpetration of domestic and family violence (DFV). This research seeks to examine representations of gender and the attributions of responsibility within Queensland's coercive control and DFV policy network and explore how consistent these framings are with the broader knowledge base. A critical discourse analysis approach was used in this research to investigate the framing of victim-survivors and perpetrators within Queensland policy and to consider the broader implications of these constructions.

This study revealed that the use gendered language varies significantly based upon the victim-survivor and perpetrator status of those in reference. It found that whilst women are consistently identified as the predominant victims of DFV and coercive control, perpetrators are inconsistently gendered, despite longstanding evidence demonstrating men as the predominant perpetrators. A complementary theme was found within the attributions of responsibility, as victim-survivors and bystanders are framed as active participants in ending abuse, and perpetrators are positioned as passive actors in ending of abuse. Thus, despite the policies' acknowledgements that perpetrators are solely responsible for the perpetration of abuse, victims and bystanders are positioned as responsible for ending their abuse and managing their personal safety.

Panel 3: Future Sustainability

14:00 – 15:30

How to create effective policy in and after times of transition? This panel theme considers the strengths and failures of state-led initiatives to create sustainable futures.

Jinyeong Song

Social Connectedness and Health among Refugees in Australia

The health and well-being of refugees are significant global concerns; however, the specific types of social connectedness that most effectively promote positive outcomes during resettlement remain unclear. This study examines whether changes in social connectedness are associated with improved self-rated health outcomes among refugees throughout the resettlement process. Specifically, we investigate how different forms of social connectedness, such as social ties with family and neighbours, and participation in co-ethnic and other community activities, influence self-rated health over time, drawing on ten years of longitudinal data from the Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) study. A total of 3,042 Principal Applicants (PAs) participated, and we employ a longitudinal multilevel growth model to examine these associations.

Findings indicate that increases in family contact and interactions with neighbours over time are associated with positive health trajectories during the first ten years of resettlement. We also find that the role of social connectedness within the host society, particularly engagement with local neighbours may vary across refugee groups, highlighting the importance of recognising heterogeneity within refugee populations.

Pipin Prasetyono

State-led innovation in social policy: Understanding Indonesian government's commitment to a Matching Defined Contribution pension scheme

Pipin's research investigates the Indonesian government's commitment to adopting the Matching Defined Contribution (MDC) pension scheme, a policy innovation aimed at addressing the significant issue of low pension participation among informal workers. This research is grounded in the Unified Model of Government Innovation, which conceptualizes the adoption process as shaped by both internal determinants (motivation, obstacles, resources, and related policies) and external influences (policy diffusion mechanisms).

The findings highlight that the government's motivation to innovate is driven by the dual challenges of mitigating old-age poverty and managing the fiscal implications of an ageing population, with informal workers remaining largely unprotected by existing pension systems. However, the study identifies several barriers to successful MDC adoption, including limited fiscal space, interagency coordination challenges, low financial and pension literacy, and public mistrust due to past mismanagement of state-administered pension programs.

Ngaire Dowse

Making Precarious Futures: Navigating Risk Governance and Fracking in Northern Australia

Using Shannon Cram's analysis of the Hanford nuclear site, Ngaire draws comparisons to how fracking risks in the Beetaloo Basin, Northern Territory, are governed through logics of 'divisible governance,' which materialise in technical practices that fragment risk across temporal and jurisdictional boundaries. US Government framings of the clean-up of the Hanford site are rendered calculable and acceptable through 'risk thresholds.' Likewise, the NT Inquiry frames 'risk acceptability' using explicit targets and limits, so risks can be classed as low/medium/high and managed down to an 'acceptable level.' Cram's research reveals how such risk discourse obscures structural violence, translating historical dispossession and threats of environmental contamination into technical problems defined by exposure thresholds.

Building on this framework, Ngaire analyse how risk assessment processes in the Beetaloo construct, manage, and fragment environmental risks, allowing interested state and nonstate actors to superficially appear to protect the environment while deferring, averting, or eliminating their accountability for the consequences of extractivism. In the Beetaloo Basin, vulnerable communities have express concerns about irreversible damage to water systems, impacts of accelerated climate change, and the socio-cultural implications that may eventuate. Like the communities discussed by Cram,

the residents of the Beetaloo will inherit the aftermath of harm. They navigate 'slow emergencies' shaped by cumulative dispossession and environmental degradation, making decisions under conditions of enduring uncertainty. These decisions raise questions about whose uncertainty counts, which futures are protected, and how much harm is acceptable.