



## **Reframing community through mobility: an interdisciplinary perspective from the early modern to the present**

19 - 20 January 2026 – La Sapienza Università di Roma, Department of History, Anthropology, Religion, Arts, and Performing Arts



Sergio Villalba, *Caravan of Pilgrims on the way to Santiago de Compostela sculpture by Vicente Galbete Pamplona, Spain, 2018, photograph.*

The concept of community is crucial in social sciences and often provides an essential tool of analysis. As Peter Burke has underlined, “Community” is at once an indispensable term but also a dangerous one, whether we are practising history or sociology or simply living our everyday lives.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, community is often seen as a positive concept, rooted in ideas such as belonging and mutual support between people who share linguistic, religious, and/ or regional origins. Yet, this idea of community imposes cohesive identities on certain people, detracts from connections formed elsewhere, and imposes exclusionary boundaries on outsiders.

This workshop seeks to challenge this monolithic characteristic of community by scrutinising the element of mobility from the early modern to the present. By focusing on the people on the move from an interdisciplinary perspective, the aim is to reframe and broaden the idea of community. Shared space and place, alongside with long-term temporalities, are key elements in the traditional definition of community. However, what happens to the concept when people move through space and to new places, and different temporalities of travel are introduced? How are communities constantly formed, re-shaped, and maintained on the road and in new places? How does the experience of travelling together affect the way that people form connections? What are the connections between communities “on the move” and local ones? What systems of support and communication exist whilst on the move? While mobility has long been a traditional element of diaspora studies, this workshop seeks to expand the analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 5.



beyond diasporic communities to include also other categories of people on the move. We especially seek to examine ties and collaborations across linguistic, religious, or cultural boundaries to understand how experience, rather than provenance, affects community formation or fracture from the early modern period to the present. It is exactly from the early modern period that we start to witness a sharp increase in the speed of travel and communications that culminated in our hyperconnected societies and migrant crises deeply rooted in our past.

This workshop approaches the concepts of mobility and community from a historical perspective and with a broad temporal and geographical frame. However, we encourage contributions from cultural geography, anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines to forge an interdisciplinary dialogue centred on reframing the idea of community.

**Themes may include but are not limited to:**

- Forced mobility, migrations, diasporas
- Political, economic, religious, emotional, and imagined communities
- Seasonal mobility such as tourism or transhumance
- Types of mobile groups such as refugees, migrants, pilgrims, enslaved people, soldiers, tourists, professionals, performers etc.
- Spaces of mobility, infrastructures
- Modes of transport and mobile community formation
- Connections between short and long term mobilities, settled communities and transient ones

We especially encourage contributions from doctoral students, postdocs, and early career researchers. We look for engagement and dialogue with the theoretical aims and therefore we welcome works in progress rather than finished products.

**Workshop format**

To maximise discussion, the workshop will consist of pre-circulated papers of 2000-3000 words max; each panel will have two discussants and allocated time for Q&A. On the day of the workshop, each panellist will provide a short presentation (10 minutes max.) to leave as much time as possible for discussion and Q&A.

Depending on circumstances, the workshop may adopt a hybrid format for selected contributions.

**Languages:**

English and Italian



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## **Publication**

Selected contributions will be published in an edited volume (publisher TBD depending on the interdisciplinarity of the contributions).

## **Important dates and submission guidelines**

Please send your abstracts (max 200 words) and a short bio to Marina Inì (marina.inì@uniroma1.it) and Tamsin Prideaux (t.t.d.prideaux@hum.leidenuniv.nl) by 30 September. Selected contributions will be notified by 15 October.

Complete drafts will be submitted and circulated by 8 January.

## **Accommodation and travel**

We aim to provide funding for accommodation and travel expenses.

## **Activities**

TBD