Performing Cosmopolitanism: Activism, Asylum, and Caretaking in Reykjavík, Iceland

Student Presenter: Leora M. Sharma
Project Advisor: Dr. Elif Babül

This presentation, based on the presenter’s fieldwork in Reykjavík, Iceland from May-July 2016, brings ethnographic evidence into conversation with anthropological scholars on humanitarianism, activism, migration, and cosmopolitanism. This work traces Iceland’s involvement with the 1951 UNHCR Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the European Commission’s Dublin Regulation as, respectively, universalist and nationalist models for modern membership in a globally connected society. Specifically, this work examines the engagement of Laugarneskirkja (an Icelandic Lutheran church) with asylum-seekers as well as the activists and activisms of Andrými (the Icelandic chapter of No Borders International) as ways to understand a contemporary Icelandic interaction with displaced peoples as part of Iceland’s national cultural narrative.