Australian National University

Negotiating Belonging: Leadership, Resistance and Culture in an Age of Exclusion

22 September 2026

City of Glen Eira Theatrette
Glen Eira/Hawthorn Rds, Caulfield, Melbourne

The ANU Centre for European Studies and the Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants (ASPJ) warmly invite participation in the international conference *Negotiating Belonging: Leadership, Resistance and Culture in an Age of Exclusion*.

Contemporary societies around the world, including in Europe and Australia, are increasingly confronted with challenges related to radicalisation, xenophobia, antisemitism and exclusion. The intensification of these phenomena in recent years has demonstrated that what is required is not only institutional and governmental interventions but, above all, long-term educational and cultural strategies that foster dialogue, critical awareness, social understanding and cohesion. These tensions play out most acutely at the margins, in the spaces shaped by the experience of migration, displacement and social transformation, where communities negotiate belonging under conditions of uncertainty and change. It is also here that the most effective responses often emerge.

This conference focuses on cultural productions, institutions and various forms of mediated expression, together with the individuals who produce them or operate within and through them, as key sites of intersectional leadership, resistance and belonging. It also explores how institutions and cultural actors construct authority, build trust and respond to conditions of division and crisis.

One such example is Yiddish theatre, understood as a space for the performative construction and negotiation of collective identity. Operating within contexts of diaspora, migration and often intensified political pressure, Yiddish theatre functioned not only as artistic expression, but also as a social and cultural institution – as a medium for the transmission of memory, language and shared values, as well as a tool of symbolic resistance and community-building.

We invite contributions addressing a range of geographical and historical contexts, disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural productions as sites of resistance, dialogue or repair
- Cultural responses to political pressure and exclusionary environments
- Educational and cultural institutions in fostering (or failing to foster) social cohesion
- Media in identity formation
- Intergroup dialogue in polarised societies
- Memory, testimony and historical reckoning in reconciliation
- Yiddish theatre as a site of cultural leadership and community formation

CRICOS Provider #00120C

Please submit a title, a short abstract (approx. 250 words) and a bio (50 words) by **10 August** to kasia.williams@anu.edu.au

Attendance is also warmly welcome from those who do not wish to present. All with an interest in the conference themes are encouraged to join us as listeners and participants in discussion.

Registration is required for all participants, both presenters and those attending without presenting a paper. Please register at https://www.trybooking.com/DNWFQ

Organising committee,

Katarzyna Williams, ANU
Eva Hussain, ASPJ
Agata Dabrowska, University of Lodz

The conference is part of the Centre of Excellence Leadership Emerging from Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Gender in Australia and the EU, led by Dr Katarzyna Williams and supported by the European Union.

Australian National University Centre for European Studies

ASPJ Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

CRICOS Provider #00120C