Metaphors of flooding and “flows” are often applied to the phenomenon of migration itself, but one could also to talk about the “waves” and “tides” of humanitarian actors, “voluntourists”, and researchers (including anthropologists) now interested in migration and refugees (along with waves of funds for both research and humanitarian intervention). This resurgent interest in migration and displacement following the European “Refugee Crisis” of 2015-16 highlights the shifting (and fickle) nature of humanitarian and scholarly intervention alike, which both often operate on shared logics of urgency and crisis.

This talk will consider ways to de-exceptio nalize displacement conceptually and empirically, in order to work against dominant articulations of migration as “crisis”. I will reflect on whether key methods and orientations (empiricism, local engagement, and attention to sites of humanitarian encounter) might provide alternatives to the ahistorical, undisciplined, and objectifying logics of crisis as a driver of both humanitarianism and scholarship. Finally, drawing on my long-term research in Greece in the fields of asylum and humanitarian intervention (since 2005), I will consider what productive connections might be drawn across European and global souths in the study of citizenship, displacement, and refuge.