Recognising Refugees

Refugee Studies Centre Conference 2023

20–21 March 2023

Keble College, University of Oxford

CALL FOR PAPERS

Forty years ago, in 1982, the Refugee Studies Centre was founded at the University of Oxford. Its aim was to understand the causes, consequences, and responses to forced migration. Throughout its history, a common theme has been to explore and recognise the agency of refugees, viewing forcibly displaced people as social, economic, and political actors. Through its research, teaching, and outreach it has tried to include the perspectives, lived experiences, and voice of displaced people. The RSC is therefore delighted that the theme for its 40th Anniversary Conference is **Recognising Refugees**, held in association with the RefMig[1] project. This theme is intended to generate reflection on the processes and practices through which refugees and displaced people are formally and informally recognised by societies, institutions, and governments. It will explore, for instance, the processes through which they are officially identified; how these processes are shaped by politics, law and other social forces; the extent to which forced migrants recognise themselves as refugees and choose to seek formal recognition; the assumptions and understandings that lead to the misrecognition or non-recognition of refugees at local, national, and international level; and refugee leadership.

Themes and topics

We welcome papers and presentations that consider any of the following themes:

I. The Legal Recognition of Refugees

Formal legal and institutional recognition practices for refugees are framed as central to their access to protection and solutions. And yet, those practices vary greatly in terms of their accessibility, composition, accountability, and outcomes. Displaced people face a range of challenges to their recognition in a world of border control. Papers in this section may focus on: the processes and institutions that determine recognition; the barriers to and avoidance of legal recognition; changes in the implementation and interpretation of the Refugee Convention, regional and other refugee definitions and their impact upon recognition; the judicialization of asylum procedures and recognition practices and their implications; and variations in recognition practices and outcomes, including within and across regions and states.

II. Recognising Refugee Leaders

Refugees and displaced people play important leadership roles in many areas, including politics, community, and research. However, they also often face barriers to assuming formal leadership roles. This section welcomes papers that reflect on the challenges and opportunities for refugee leadership. Proposals may include a focus on: the role of refugee-led organisations; refugees as actors in world politics; refugees as producers of knowledge; and activism by people with lived experience of displacement.
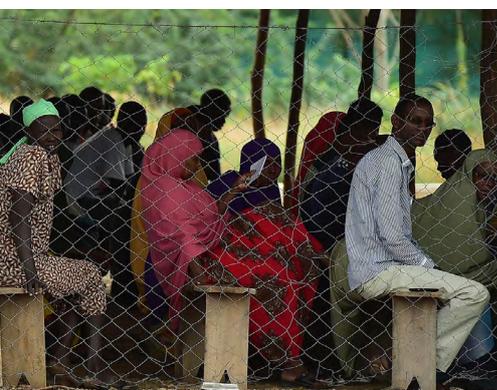
III. History, Politics and Ethics of Refugee Recognition

Refugee recognition needs to be seen in broader historical context, and in doing so gives rise to a series of empirical and ethical questions. Proposals may include a focus on changing social and political recognition of refugees and forced migrants over time; the history of the Refugee Studies Centre and other centres that aim to research or assist forced migrants; the history of political action by refugees to be recognised and promote change; the ethics of refugee recognition including the definition of people in need of protection; the challenges and barriers to recognising refugees as full members of societies they enter and return to; the attitudes of refugees to the "refugee" label; the political and social consequences of refugee recognition.

IV. Technologies of Recognition

Technology plays a growing role in refugee recognition, in terms of both inclusion and exclusion. Biometrics, surveillance technologies, cloud-based data sharing, and automated decision-making are among the technologies shaping migration and refugee governance. Proposals may include reflections on the benefits and dangers of the use of new technologies in accessing asylum and humanitarian assistance systems; the role of technology in identifying those seeking protection for the purpose of control and exclusion; the evasion and disruption of systems of control and exclusion; private-public sector partnerships; the ways in which asylum seekers and refugees use digital technologies to be recognised by states and societies.

Location

The conference will take place at **Keble College, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PG**.

This is primarily an in-person conference with events taking place at Keble College. However, to maximise participation we envisage some online panels and will facilitate online participation where possible.

Proposal submission

Paper proposals should consist of a title and 300 word abstract that specifies the research question, describes the approach used, and gives an indication of the conclusions. Paper presentations at the conference will generally be brief (c. 10 minutes) to allow as much discussion time as possible. Paper circulation in advance of the conference will be optional.

We also welcome panel proposals. Along with a panel abstract, title and themes, we ask that you provide the names and affiliations of each panellist as well as the title of their paper. We are open to different panel formats - including moderated discussion - and encourage panel submissions to specify the format for the panel.

Abstracts will be reviewed for suitability in terms of the conference themes.

We welcome submissions from researchers from any disciplinary perspective. The criteria for selection are originality, quality of research, and fit. We aim for a diverse conference, bringing together a global group of scholars at various career stages (both established and early-career scholars, including advanced PhD students).

There will be bursary funding available particularly to support scholars from refugee backgrounds and from the Global South.

To submit a proposal, please complete the online form: **https://forms.office.com/r/zWr8sAr5bN**

The deadline for proposal submissions is **20 November 2022**. For further information about the conference, please contact
rsc-conference@qeh.ox.ac.uk.

We are hoping to inform speakers of the acceptance of their proposals by early December.

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[1] For information on the RefMig (Refugees are Migrants) project see **https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/research/refmig**

Photo top: Keble College, Oxford. Credit: Keble College. Photos bottom: Refugees wait to be processed at a registration centre at Kakuma camp, Kenya. Credit: UNHCR/Anthony Karumba. Displaced persons from camps in Germany, Austria and Italy board an International Refugee Organisation chartered ship on their way to start a new life in the USA. Credit: UNHCR. Bahati Ghislain (Co-founder and Executive Director at Kintsugi) presents at the Refugee-Led Research Festival in Nairobi, May 2022. Credit: RLRH/RSC.