



# Beyond Crisis: Rethinking Refugee Studies

16 - 17 March 2017

Keble College, University of Oxford

## CALL FOR PAPERS



REFUGEE  
STUDIES  
CENTRE

The Refugee Studies Centre will host a major international conference in March 2017, thirty-five years after the RSC was founded. Its purpose will be to reflect on the role that Refugee Studies can play in the world. In the context of profound changes in the nature of forced displacement, this conference will assess what kinds of knowledge, evidence, and concepts are needed to understand and respond to contemporary challenges.

Over the past year, the so-called European refugee crisis has created unprecedented public interest in forced displacement, as well as a demand for research. Yet despite a series of policy-oriented conferences, there have been few spaces in which to reflect on the state of Refugee Studies and to explore the extent to which we have the academic tools necessary to think about and respond to a changing world.

Against this backdrop, this conference seeks to reinvigorate scholarly debate on ways in which we can conceive of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. By bringing together a range of reflective thinkers and their work, alongside policy-makers and practitioners, our hope is to develop a research agenda and scholarly community that can engage meaningfully with the long-term challenges of forced displacement.

We seek papers on any aspect of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, from any disciplinary

perspective, which can serve to stimulate engaging debate. The conference will aim to take the core concepts and ideas of Refugee Studies and critically reassess through inter-disciplinary dialogue. Some of the cutting-edge themes that papers might consider include:

### Vulnerability and Capacity

There is a growing focus on vulnerability in the context of protecting 'vulnerable migrants' who fall outside the refugee framework. Yet the concept of 'vulnerability' is rarely critically interrogated. It is often used as though synonymous with gender, age and disability. Distinctions between situational or embodied vulnerability are rarely considered. Furthermore, the capacities of forced migrants – and their own agency to support themselves and their communities – are too rarely considered.

### Commitment and Compliance

There is increasing non-compliance with basic refugee rights norms around the world. But what explains states' commitment and compliance with refugee norms? When and why do governments adhere to international legal obligations towards refugees or choose to violate them. How can we explain the apparent paradox of some non-signatory states to the 1951 Convention being among the most generous host countries around the world?

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## Transnationalism and Localisation

The existing refugee paradigm is built largely on an assumption of state-centrism. Despite the growing emergence of non-state actors including business, crisis-affected communities, and local and municipal actors, there is still an insistence on seeing assistance, protection and solutions through a predominantly state-centric lens. How can the boundaries of our thinking and our concepts change when we recognise globalisation, mobility, and transnationalism to be integral parts of contemporary forced displacement? How do they reconfigure our assumptions about space and place, and structure and agency?

## Autonomy and Assistance

Humanitarian assistance has become one of the central components of the refugee regime, both in acute and protracted situations. Yet both historically and now, 'top-down' assistance has been widely critiqued as adding to rather than reducing suffering. In its place, ideas relating to self reliance, self protection, participatory approaches, and human-centred design have tried to re-emphasise the importance of autonomy as an aspiration of the refugee regime – whether economic, social, or political. But how can we think about this changing balance and place it in critical perspective?

## Welcome and Deterrence

Across Europe and around the world, refugee-receiving countries have populations that are pushing for greater exclusion but also pockets of civil society mobilisation striving to create greater inclusion for refugees. Understanding the dynamics behind these socio-political movements towards inclusion and exclusion holds the key to opening up protection spaces for displaced populations, and yet they have generally been poorly understood in academia.

## Submissions

**Maximum length: 300 words**

**Deadline for submission: 5pm on 15 November 2016**

We are open to a variety of panel formats, including traditional academic paper panels, debates, and roundtables. We will also have an exhibition space, and welcome contributions including photography, art, and design.

Authors are invited to submit an abstract for individual paper proposals or a brief outline for panel proposals. Individual paper proposals should include the title of the paper and an abstract of up to 300 words. Panel proposals should include the title of the panel, an abstract for the panel theme, and details of all the authors and papers to be included.

Abstracts of up to 300 words can be submitted but academic papers are not required. Please submit proposals for individual presentations or full panels using our online form:

<http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/forms/beyond-crisis>

Please submit one application per proposal. For example, if you wish to submit a paper and also a panel discussion, this will require two separate submissions.

If you have any questions, please contact Susanna Power, Events & International Summer School Coordinator at [susanna.power@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:susanna.power@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

## Registration

For further details, please contact:  
[susanna.power@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:susanna.power@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

The conference has capacity for up to 200 participants. Full registration details will be available in the near future.



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