

Disrupting Theory, Unsettling Practice: Towards Transformative Forced Migration Scholarship and Policy

Veranstalter International Association for the Study of Forced Migration

Veranstaltungsort University of Ghana, Accra

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International Association for the Study of Forced Migrations Biannual Conference

THE CONTEXT

We are living in turbulent times within which the issue of forced migration and the subject of 'the refugee' have become deeply symbolic of broader processes of political, economic and social change. This is reflected in the politicization of migration by countries in both the Global North and South. Against this backdrop, scholars and advocates working with and for refugees and other forced migrants, as well as refugees themselves, are increasingly struggling to get their voices heard and to mobilise effectively. Whilst there are many initiatives globally these have struggled to become more than the sum of their parts. Moreover whilst the objective of decolonising forced migration research remains an important project, it faces significant new challenges, not least the unequal power relations associated with funding made available via the institutions of the Global North for research and practice in the Global South, much of which is orientated towards containment agendas. The current migration research landscape is heavily skewed towards the Global North where existing research is largely designed and led, and where governments and international organisations increasingly fund research to inform policy development. The Global North's interests shape dominant research themes, producing a disproportionate focus on South-North migration (SNM) and categories

of migrant defined in law and policy to make sense of - and increasingly contain - migration flows. Epistemic communities concerned with migration are largely produced and reproduced in and by the Global North: while ODA-recipient countries host a growing number of research centres, most researchers are trained in the Global North. The resulting echo chamber constrains the capacity of many of the poorest countries to analyse the migration issues that affect their communities without outside technical assistance and expertise. This requires us to ask ourselves challenging questions about the focus of our academic endeavours, the ways in which we work together and our engagement with those we want to influence, most notably policy makers, politicians and a wide range of publics.

The title of IASFM18 - 'Disrupting Theory, Unsettling Practice: Towards Transformative Forced Migration Scholarship and Policy' - represents an attempt to engage forced migration scholars and others directly in addressing these questions. The conference will be organised around a number of key underpinning principles which will shape the content of the programme, the nature of the contributions and a range of other activities taking place before and after the conference to ensure that IASFM18 is part of a process rather than a time-limited event:

- Key note and plenary sessions will include the voices and perspectives of scholars, policy makers, artists and displaced people working in the Global South;
- Space will be created within the programme for new and emerging scholars to be heard and for their work to be supported;
- Refugees and other displaced populations will be directly involved in the programme design and delivery as scholars, artists and people directly affected by the issues under discussion, including through activities that will be developed with local refugee communities in the period leading up, and beyond IASFM18; and
- The format of the conference will allow for a wide range of contributions to be fully included: creative and artistic representations, debates and discussions as well as more 'traditional' academic papers.

CONFERENCE FORMAT

The conference will run over three and a half days and will consist of four keynotes, three plenary discussions and thirty parallel sessions, providing an opportunity for a wide range of contribution and participants from different backgrounds and geographical contexts. Part of the conference programme will be organised and run by Liberian refugees living in the nearby Buduburam camp. A full conference programme will be available shortly.

CONFERENCE THEMES

The Organising Committee for IASFM18 invite contributions that address the cross-cutting themes of knowledge production, category construction and representation. Contributions should critically engage with dominant conceptualisations of forced migration/refugees as a 'problem' to be solved by global elites, instead developing approaches that fuse the critical and the creative and which integrate theoretical rigor and policy concerns with refugees' rich and complicated experiences. We are particularly interested in contributions that examine the dynamics of knowledge production in relation to issues of forced migration and concomitant methodological challenges including/reflecting relationships between researchers and the researched, between researchers from the Global South and North, and between researchers and policy-makers. Case studies/examples from the Global South of the ways in which scholars and practitioners from the Global South are able to shape research and policy agendas, are particularly welcome. Examples of topics that may be explored in relationship to the conference themes include:

- Representations of 'the refugee';
- The political economy and ethics of knowledge production in forced migration research;
- Innovative and inclusive methodologies in researching displacement and belonging;
- The legacy and implications of the Global Compact on Refugees;
- Regional responses to displacement in Africa;
- Refugee protection in countries that are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention;
- The protection of refugees in Europe;
- The relationship between forced migration and inequality;
- The relationship between development programs, refugee protection and removal;
- Protracted displacement;
- (Re)conceptualising internal displacement; and
- Forced migration and environmental change.

CONFERENCE FACILITIES AND SUPPORT

Visas

Ghana provides visa free access for all those travelling from other West African countries and a few countries outside West Africa, including Kenya and Singapore. Citizens of African Union countries (except Morocco) and many countries outside Africa are able to obtain a 30 day visa for Ghana upon arrival for a fee \$150. Further information about visas to Ghana can be found [here](#).

The Centre for Migration Studies will provide letters of invitation where required to enable speakers and participants to travel to Ghana.

Bursaries

Funding for travel subsidies will be very limited and will be restricted to those who will be presenting at the conference. We strongly encourage participants to look for funding support from other sources. The application is available online:

<http://tinyurl.com/y3auqurb>

Further Information (PDF)
