Refugee Research Network

Susan McGrath (Lead Researcher), Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Canada

Institutional Partners

Canada
Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS)
Canadian Council for Refugees
Centre for Refugee Studies, York University
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development

International
African Centre for Migration and Society, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
Center for Forced Migration Studies, Northwestern University, USA
Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, Egypt
Centre for Refugee Research, University of New South Wales, Australia
Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees & Belonging, University of East London, UK
Division of Population Research, Institute of Social Studies and Research, University of Tehran, Iran
Group on Political Theory and Legal Theory, Javeriana University, Colombia
Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University, USA
International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM)
Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, India
Refugee Law Initiative, University of London, UK
Refugee Law Project, Makerere University, Uganda
Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, UK
UNHCR
Funded by SSHRC

"*Innovations in Forced Migration*"
Showcasing research from the Refugee Research Network (RRN)* and beyond
June 15-16, 2015
York Hall A100, Glendon College, York University
2275 Bayview Avenue, Toronto

Conference Report

On June 15 and 16, 2015, the Refugee Research Network (RRN) hosted a conference entitled, "Innovations in Forced Migration." The conference brought together 61 scholars (faculty and students), practitioners, and policymakers from across Canada and internationally to mobilize knowledge on innovations in forced migration. Organized in a workshop format, where all participants were able to attend all of the sessions, the conference was comprised of seven panels, one public keynote address, and a book launch where three recent publications were showcased. A public book fair and poster session displayed publications from the field of forced migration from the past five years and highlighted success stories of the RRN's research clusters and networks. The event concluded with a facilitated session that sought to identify and prioritize next steps in knowledge mobilization support for RRN members as the first round of funding comes to an end. The workshop was supported with a SSHRC Connection Grant.

Presenters focused on new and emerging research on a range of topics in multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral panels. Recordings of most presentations are available on the RRN website (www.refugeeresearch.net). The conference aimed to increase understandings of complex, multi-dimensional forced migration issues and inform effective policy and programming responses. The specific objectives of the event, as identified by the conference organizers, were:

- To creatively engage researchers, practitioners and students in partnerships across disciplines, sectors, thematic areas and geographic areas;
- To transform the growing field of forced migration studies; and,
- To propose innovative solutions to displacement challenges.

The conference was aimed at members of the RRN and key scholars and students in the expanding field of refugee and forced migration studies.

All of the major research centres on forced migration in the world – at York University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Oxford University, University of London, University of East London, Makerere University (Uganda), Witwatersrand University (South Africa), Calcutta Research Group (India), University of New South Wales (Australia), Javeriana University (Colombia) and University of Tehran (Iran) – were invited to participate as presenters, panel chairs and/or discussants.

This provided a unique opportunity for innovative collaboration across a range of academic disciplines and geographic regions. Representatives from government, non-governmental organizations, and the United Nations also participated in the conference. These participants on the frontlines of service delivery and policymaking offered different perspectives on forced migration issues and had the opportunity to learn about the newest research on a range of ongoing and emerging themes.

Overview of panels

Monday, June 15, 2015

Historical and contemporary perspectives on forced migration

The conference opened with a panel on the importance of context, methods, and historical perspective in understanding how forced migration is framed and studied. Ranabir Samaddar (Calcutta Research Group) underscored the historical and ongoing connections between labour studies and forced migration studies, whereby both are central to the reproduction of state power. Nergis Canefe (York University) cautioned against the re-definition of Syrian refugees in Turkey as low-wage labourers. Alexander Betts (joining the conference via skype from the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford) highlighted refugee entrepreneurialism and social innovation. Susan Martin (Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University) concluded the panel by speaking to contemporary challenges in forced migration studies, with a focus on methods and ethics.

Protection and armed conflict

This panel brought together three Canadian scholars who focus on legal and policy issues in the field. Donald Galloway (University of Victoria) discussed recent shifts in Canadian refugee policy, arguing there has been a move from prioritizing minimum protection for refugees to maximum protection of national citizenry. Sharryn Aiken (Queen's University) used the example of Tamil refugees in Canada to map out the increasing intersections of anti-human smuggling policies with asylum policy and a disturbing trend towards criminalization, penalization, and refoulement of asylum seekers in Canada. Finally, James Simeon (York University) focused his presentation on war refugees and the need for policymakers to direct their attention to eradicating conflicts as a means to address global displacement.

*Note: Roberto Vidal (Javeriana University) had been scheduled to present on this panel regarding transitional justice and the peace process in Colombia, but was unable to attend.

Settlement

Panelists included scholars and practitioners that focus on understanding and improving the settlement processes for refugees in Canada, the United States, and Germany. Michaela Hynie (York University) and Ashley Korn (YMCA) presented a new model of integration that emerged out of their community-university collaboration to evaluate Ontario's Client Support Service model for Government Assisted Refugees. Anita Fábos (Clark University) articulated "constellations of home," a conceptual framework for understanding notions of home in contexts of protracted displacement. Janet Dench (Canadian

Council for Refugees) discussed the motivations and aims of recent campaigns by Canadian refugee advocates to counter negative stereotypes and discourses about refugees with a positive vision. Finally, Faith Nibbs (Southern Methodist University) compared the experiences of Hmong refugees who had been resettled to a major US city (Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas) and a small village in Germany, finding that expectations and perceptions of sponsors were influential in the kinds of relationships that developed and in the experiences of sponsored refugees.

Passages: Flight, interception, confinement, and deportation

This panel drew together an interdisciplinary set of studies that examine processes of arrival, detention, and deportation of asylum seekers in various contexts related to the European Union. Keegan Williams (co-author Alison Mountz, both of Wilfrid Laurier University) compiled a database of boat losses and interceptions in the Mediterranean Sea from 1990-2015 in order to analyze the relationship between state externalization practices and migrant deaths at sea. Drawing on case studies from the UK and Malta, Stephanie Silverman (co-author Cetta Mainwaring; University of Ottawa and Wilfrid Laurier University, respectively) argued that detention functions as a spectacle in the state production of a crisis of irregular migration. William Walters (Carleton University) underscored the importance of transportation infrastructure to state practices around immigration control, focusing on planes as an active element rather than simply a means in the process of deportation.

Keynote/Public Lecture

Deputy High Commissioner of the UNHCR Alexander Aleinikoff gave the keynote address, which was open to the public. He argued that protracted refugee situations and long-term displacement are the rule rather than the exception in the international refugee regime, drawing our attention to what he termed the middle space between displacement and durable solution. People who are displaced tend to stay displaced and many of them experience a second exile in the country where they find some degree of asylum, meaning they face a cumulative set of exclusions. Deputy High Commissioner Aleinikoff articulated questions in four areas for further research:

1) What do experiences of long-term displacement and limbo look like? What does second exile really look like?
2) How can we generate research to show that inclusionary policies in contexts of displacement are helpful?
3) Request for data on effective resettlement policies and practices.
   - What kinds of policies in circumstances of displacement would help with solutions (return, resettlement)?
   - What have we learned from the Canadian private resettlement system? What works? What doesn't work? How could we lobby other states to take up similar programs?
4) Diaspora as an untapped resource in the international refugee regime
   - What is the role of the diaspora in contexts of displacement?
   - What might help to engage the diaspora on policies in the middle space?

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

Intersectionality: Age, Gender and Sexuality

The second day of the conference commenced with a multidisciplinary panel on intersectionality. Joining via skype, Susan Kneebone (Melbourne Law School) presented her research on how states manage and respond to marriage migration in Asia, asking whether human trafficking is the best paradigm for understanding the issue. Paula Banerjee (Calcutta Research Group and IASFM) discussed experiences of insecurity around the Bengal-Bangladesh border with a focus on women in Bengal jails who in almost all cases were unwilling to name their traffickers. The next presentation, by Galya Ruffer (Northwestern University), challenged us to ask new questions about gender-based violence in contexts of displacement and to think in particular about what justice means in such contexts and on what the will to address sexual violence depends. Christina Clark-Kazak (York University) drew our attention to the need for social age analysis in research about migration, which means identifying what norms about age and generational relations are operating within immigration and refugee policies, practices and research and examining differential experiences and intersectionalities of age with other factors. Finally, Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi (University of Tehran and Australian National University) underscored the necessity of demographic research in the field of forced migration studies, especially given the increasing scale, complexity and diversity of displacement in the last twenty years, but acknowledged the methodological challenges of collecting and accessing such data.

Environment and Forced Migration

This panel reported on the Environmental Displacement Research Cluster, which has focused its work to date on considering whether there is common ground between displacement provoked by extraction, climate change and conservation. Cluster members continue to work through what they term this "productively uneasy relationship." Libby Lunstrum (York University) began by examining new trends in conservation-induced displacement, raising questions about what constitutes "voluntary" displacement, the reorganization or removal of international borders, and the securitization of conservation. Pablo Bose (University of Vermont) challenged us to think through what it means to construct the "environmental refugee" as threat, and argued that many climate-change adaptation and mitigation strategies are creating anticipatory or preventative forms of displacement. Ryan Hackett (York University) presented his research about negotiations and siting of environmental offsets in relation to oil sands development in Northern Alberta, Canada. Finally, Francis Massé (York University) argued that the creation of the Greater Limpopo Conservancy to combat Rhino poaching along South Africa's border with Mozambique is an example of how conservation gets linked to security practices and becomes a depoliticized alibi for dispossession and displacement – or how ecology is mobilized for border protection.

Pedagogy and Forced Migration

The final panel examined issues of access to tertiary education in contexts of forced migration, drawing on two examples: the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) project in Dadaab, Kenya, and refugee students in Canada. Don Dippo (York University) introduced the BHER project and discussed an example of a course offered through the project, which is offered at York University in Canada and

slightly adapted to the local context of Dadaab. Wenona Giles (York University) raised questions about the relationships of security and insecurity to knowledge access especially in contexts of long-term displacement but influenced by the "emergency excuse." Finally, Louise Harlley and Aaron Doupe (both of Glendon College, York University) discussed some of the specific challenges faced by people who arrive in Canada as refugees, and proposed solutions at local and community levels to facilitate access to post-secondary education.

Facilitated session:

Where do we go from here? Knowledge Production, Partnerships and Methodologies

Moderator: Michaela Hynie (York University)

This final session was framed by a set of presentations about the Emerging Scholars and Practitioners on Migration Issues (ESPMI) network and the emerging relationship between the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) and the RRN.

Brittany Lauren Wheeler (Field Museum of Chicago) and Petra Molnar (University of Toronto) highlighted the innovative, creative, and accessible ways in which the ESPMI network is mobilizing knowledge and developing collaborations across disciplinary, sectoral, and geographical divides. They shared some recent examples of their work, including the just published second edition of the e-journal *Refugee Review*. The ESPMI offers impressive approaches and modalities to the broader RRN of how to connect people and translate knowledge between contexts.

Members of the IASFM executive committee discussed their vision for how their network and the RRN can continue to work together symbiotically. IASFM President Paula Banerjee reminded participants that the RRN emerged out of the IASFM, seeking ways to extend and support the work of IASFM member institutions, promote collaboration, and develop innovative and effective knowledge mobilization tools and strategies. The achievements of the RRN in networking, research, and knowledge mobilization over its seven-year history – demonstrated through the presentations, publications, and other outputs shared at this finale conference and in other venues – have demonstrated what can be catalyzed with the strategic and timely application of resources in the form of seed funding and travel and research assistant support. The IASFM has agreed to take up these efforts and integrate the lessons of the RRN back into its organizational structure, so that the IASFM can evolve into more than an organization that supports bi-annual conferences and the lessons learned and achievements of the RRN can be sustained.

The networking, collaboration, and connections that have been nurtured and expanded through the RRN will be sustained through the IASFM, which has committed to increasing membership, funding emerging collaborations through seed grants, and supporting the emerging scholars and practitioners' network. Existing and emerging research clusters and networks will also be supported through the knowledge mobilization infrastructure that has been developed through the RRN project. It is around

this knowledge mobilization capacity that the final facilitated session was seeking input from conference participants.

Participants were divided into four groups and asked to discuss a set of interrelated questions about how the existing RRN knowledge mobilization tools and approaches can be improved and/or oriented to better support their knowledge translation and dissemination efforts. Participants were asked to think about whether there is a role for the RRN in supporting their own knowledge mobilization activities and, if so, what they would like support in doing. Three questions organized the group discussions:

1) What kinds of *audiences* are you trying to reach with your research?
2) What kinds of *media or modalities* would be most useful for you to reach these audiences in your context?
3) What kinds of *tools or training* would you like access to, for KM or for research or pedagogy more generally?

The smaller groups summarized their discussions on flip charts that were then shared with the whole group. All participants were then asked to vote for those ideas and suggestions they felt were most relevant and important, and on which they would like the RRN to focus over the final year of funding of the project. The goal is to improve the KM infrastructure and strategies and to make the tools and approaches sustainable as the project moves into its next phase.

Audiences

Participants thought that the RRN should focus on audiences both "within" and "outside" the field of forced migration: within the field would include scholars (faculty and students), practitioners, affected populations, and policymakers, while outside the field was conceptualized by one group as related fields like development, security, and environment. One group raised the question, who do we prioritize? Many participants also appreciated how another group conceptualized the question of audiences, where the key and operating activity in relation to a range of audiences was translation.

Media and Modalities – or Approaches

Participants identified a range of approaches to knowledge mobilization that would be responsive to and reach different audiences. Ideas that got the most votes included:

1) The importance of developing and engaging audiences by integrating them into the research process
2) The role of teaching in KM (at all levels of education including undergraduate, graduate, professional) – integrating research and experiential education into courses
3) The need for outreach to advance research agendas – in terms of both leveraging personal connections and making media aware of expertise
4) The importance of more accessible language and formats, including:
   - Policy briefs to practitioners and policymakers
   - "Twoots" – a creative term for one-page summaries that outline success stories / arguments / outputs / recommendations
   - Literature reviews and annotated bibliographies
   - Use of "plain but smart" language

5) Suggestions for re-conceptualizing the RRN website
- Modelled after academia.edu – RRN.edu – self-sustaining
- Forced Migration Current Awareness Blog

Tools and Training – or Resources

Participants expressed a desire for ongoing training through open access, in areas such as

- Policy briefs
- Media training (general, social) – Social Media 101: increase knowledge of KM in new technologies
- Classroom / experiential teaching
- Online forum (Ted talks) – can learn "how to" lessons from other researchers

Participants also identified existing and desired resources that could be of use, including making more use of the ORTT platform as a teaching tool and the desire for a closed network where people could share course syllabi.

Finally, there was interest in supporting efforts to produce a counter-narrative, through approaches such as pro-refugee "bumper stickers," satire / humour, fact-checking, and one group underscored the need "to be visual."

*The Refugee Research Network was funded by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) as a 7-year Strategic Knowledge Cluster grant in 2008 and is based at the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University.

www.refugeeresearch.net

Participants

Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, jalal.abbasi@anu.edu.au

Sharryn Aiken, aiken@queensu.ca

Alexander Aleinikoff, aleiniko@unhcr.org

Idil Atak, idil.atak@arts.ryerson.ca

Paula Bannerjee, paulabanerjee44@gmail.com

Alexander Betts (via Skype), alexander.betts@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Pablo Bose, pbose@uvm.edu

Christina Clark-Kazak, CClark-Kazak@glendon.yorku.ca

Furio De Angelis, deangeli@unhcr.org

Janet Dench, jdench@CCRWEB.CA

Refugee Research Network

Don Dippo, ddippo@edu.yorku.ca

Aaron Doupe, adoupe@glendon.yorku.ca

Anita Fabos, AFabos@clarku.edu

Donald Galloway, galloway@uvic.ca

Wenona Giles, wgiles@yorku.ca

Ryan Hacket, hackett@yorku.ca

Louise Harlley, lharlley@gmail.com

David Hull, davidhull1986@gmail.com

Jennifer Hyndman, jhyndman@yorku.ca

Michaela Hynie, mhynie@yorku.ca

Donald Ipperciel, principal@glendon.yorku.ca

Susan Kneebone (via Skype), susan.kneebone@monash.edu

Ashley Korn, Ashley.Korn@YMCAGTA.ORG

Khatija Labonne, hanna_labonne@hotmail.com

Emily Leahy, eleahy@my.yorku.ca

Libby Lunstrum, lunstrum@yorku.ca

Francis Massé, massef@yorku.ca

Susan Martin, martinsf@georgetown.edu

Susan McGrath, smcgrath@yorku.ca

Michele Millard, mmillard@yorku.ca

Petra Molnar Diop, petramdiop@gmail.com

Jean Michel Montsion, jmmontsion@glendon.yorku.ca

Alison Mountz, amountz@wlu.ca

Kathleen Nadeau, Kathleen.Nadeau@cic.gc.ca

Delphine Nakache, Delphine.Nakache@uottawa.ca

Faith Nibbs, fnibbs@mail.smu.edu

StephenOola, oolalawyer@gmail.com

Galya Ruffer, g-ruffer@northwestern.edu

Ranabir Samaddar, ranabir@mcrg.ac.in

Dianna Shandy,

Stephanie Silverman, sj.silverman@gmail.com

James C. Simeon, jcsimeon@yorku.ca

Ashley Walcott   aawalcott@gmail.com

William Walters,

Keegan Williams,

Brittany Lauren Wheeler, brittany.lauren.wheeler@gmail.com

Mina Yoon, MYoon@glendon.yorku.ca

Julie Young, juliey@yorku.ca

Dorna Zaboli, dorna.zaboli@gmail.com