

Social Justice, Solidarity, and Forced Migration

Colloquium Report, 2019

Date: March 7th, 2019

Venue: Jackson Institute of Global Affairs, Yale University

Organizers: Catherine Panter-Brick; Louisa Lombard; Hannah Strohmeier

Summary

The Colloquium on *Social Justice, Solidarity, and Forced Migration* was funded by the Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund, and jointly hosted by the MacMillan Center's Program on Refugees, Forced Displacement and Humanitarian Responses, and the Program on Conflict, Resilience & Health. It follows a number of other workshops organized at Yale over the past three years, such as *Violence, Intervention, and Agency* (Fall 2015), *Health and Humanitarian Action: Bridging Gaps between Research and Practice* (April 2018), and *Forced Migration and Humanitarian Policy* (October 2018). See <https://refugee.macmillan.yale.edu/> and <https://crh.macmillan.yale.edu/workshops>.

The Colloquium brought together academics with the objectives of discussing how the themes of religion, law, solidarity and social justice intersect with refugee experiences and mesh with broader socio-political dynamics. Distinguished speakers – Alastair Ager, Erica Bornstein, Mark Eggerman, Louisa Lombard, and Catherine Panter-Brick – reflected in three presentations on challenges and gaps in the ongoing discourse, and shared their critical thinking regarding existing theories. Their insightful presentations were followed by reflections from one discussant, Helena Hansen, and a fruitful discussion that engaged the audience.

Immediately after the Colloquium, individual speakers shared their thoughts and key messages through dialogues with Kaveh Khoshnood. These conversations are made available in the form of podcasts. See <https://soundcloud.com/yaleuniversity/sets/colloquium-on-social-justice-1>

Speakers

Alastair Ager: “On Faith and Solidarity within Secular Humanitarian Engagement”

Institute for Global Health and Development, Queen Margaret University, UK

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/schools-and-divisions/ighd/ighd-staff/professor-alastair-ager/>

Erica Bornstein: “Advocacy, Faith, and Profit: Humanitarian Intervention at the Limits of Law”

Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

<https://uwm.edu/anthropology/people/bornstein-erica/>

Mark Eggerman, Louisa Lombard, Catherine Panter-Brick: “Tensions, Faith, and Solidarity on the Border”

MacMillan Center for International and Areas Studies & Department of Anthropology, Yale University

<https://macmillan.yale.edu/mark-eggerman>

<https://anthropology.yale.edu/people/louisa-lombard>

<https://anthropology.yale.edu/people/catherine-panter-brick>

Discussant

Helena Hansen

Department of Psychiatry, NYU

<https://med.nyu.edu/faculty/helena-b-hansen>

Podcasts

Kaveh Khoshnood

Yale School of Public Health, Yale University

https://publichealth.yale.edu/people/kaveh_khoshnood.profile

Presentations

Speakers delivered three presentations at the Colloquium:

Alastair Ager shared personal thoughts from meetings with religious leaders in Darfur and reflected on the construct of solidarity in a post-secular world. He referred to theories from Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Cornel West and contrasted their respective positions.

Erica Bornstein presented the relationship of law and humanitarianism. She distinguished three forms of humanitarian interventions: bureaucratic and charismatic interventions, as well as judicial advocacy. Erica highlighted that some countries control and crack down on NGOs as sites of dissidents, and attributed this audit culture to Weber's rationalization thesis.

Mark Eggerman, Louisa Lombard and Catherine Panter-Brick examined how faith-based organizations (FBOs) assist forcibly displaced migrants and refugees, as part of a British Council-funded research project (Bridging Voices) focused on religion, social justice, and migration. Their presentation included insights into how people express concepts of solidarity and social justice, and how religion affects refugee experiences.

Critical reflections

The discussion engaged with the following issues regarding Alastair Ager's presentation:

- Are FBOs at humanitarian projects potential vehicles for interfaith collaboration and an overlapping of zones of belonging and safety? Are FBOs widening the web of care and identification, thereby establishing a transnational economy of care and hope?

Regarding Erica Bornstein's presentation, discussants raised the following questions:

- What is the legitimacy and role of nation-states in crisis? Who forms and enforces the law in an era of corporate globalization and usurping of nation-states' power to set terms of employment and trade?

Reflections on Mark Eggerman, Louisa Lombard and Catherine Panter-Brick's presentation included the following:

- What are the colonial hierarchies and dynamics of the conflicts, their histories, and resistance of host countries to refugee resettlement?
- Are there any non-Christian FBOs involved, and how do their histories with colonialism come to bear on the way they define their work and their discourses of aid and faith?

The colloquium then provided time for the audience to engage. Questions and comments raised concerned the following issues:

- Researchers' gender, race, and religion matter in undertaking such research;

- There are tensions between gaps in service provision due to absent state action, and organizations' commitment to filling these gaps and the bypassing of states with aid, respectively;
- The collaboration of FBOs and the UN/INGOs to address restricted access of the latter, and the role of FBOs as market actors, respectively.

References of interest

- Abramowitz S and Panter-Brick C (2015). *Medical Humanitarianism: Ethnographies of Practice*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press. <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15407.html>
- Ager A and Ager J (2015). *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the role of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137472137>
- Bornstein E and Redfield P (2011). *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics*. Santa Fe, School for Advanced Research Press. <https://sarweb.org/forces-of-compassion/>
- Good B J, DelVecchio Good M, Abramowitz S, Kleinman A and Panter-Brick C (2014). Medical Humanitarianism: Research Insights in a Changing Field of Practice. *Social Science & Medicine*, 120, 311-316. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/social-science-and-medicine/vol/120>
- Hansen, H (2018). *Addicted to Christ: Remaking Men in Puerto Rican Pentecostal Drug Ministries*. Oakland, University of California Press. <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520298040/addicted-to-christ>
- Lombard L (2016). *State of Rebellion: Violence and Intervention in the Central African Republic*. London, Zed Books. <https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/S/bo25073297.html>