

Colloquium Report, 2018

Forced Migration and Humanitarian Policy

Date: October 4th, 2018

Venue: Jackson Institute of Global Affairs, Yale University

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

Summary

The Colloquium on *Forced Migration and Humanitarian Policy* 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) and *Health and Humanitarian Action: Bridging Gaps between Research and Practice* (April 2018). See <https://refugee.macmillan.yale.edu/> and <https://crh.macmillan.yale.edu/workshops>.

The Colloquium brought together academics and practitioners with the objectives of discussing migration issues in Europe and making a significant contribution to emerging discussions around the future of humanitarian interventions. Three distinguished speakers – Sara Barragán, Bayard Roberts, and Maggie Powers – reflected on challenges and gaps in the ongoing discourse, and shared their thinking regarding how to move forward and address these challenges in the years to come. Their insightful presentations were followed by reflections from two discussants, Professor Marcia Inhorn and Professor Jason Lyall, and a fruitful discussion that engaged the audience.

Speakers

1. Sara Barragán, Migration and health policy framing: a European analysis

Sara Barragán is an International Consultant. She worked for the WHO migration program in Europe, where she was responsible for policy and advocacy activities. She co-wrote the first European resolution, strategy, and action plan on refugee and migrant health, and assisted intergovernmental negotiations. Her work focuses on political and policy analyses of health equity, emergencies, and the governance of health and forced migration.

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2016/12/first-who-toolkit-to-strengthen-europes-health-response-to-migration/sara-barragan-montes>

2. Maggie Powers, Governing human mobility: UN Global Compacts and lessons from Europe

Maggie Powers is Advisor to the International Mobility Group at Columbia University in New York. The International Migration Project is a joint venture undertaken in collaboration with the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration. The project aims to develop a new migration agenda for the coming decade.

<http://beta.global.columbia.edu/people/maggie-powers>

3. Bayard Roberts, Forced migration: gaps in mental health research and accountability.

Bayard Roberts is Professor of Health Systems and Policy, at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He is a co-investigator of STRENGTHS, a project aiming to deliver a community-based mental health care intervention for Syrian refugees in Europe and in countries bordering Syria. He is leading work to analyse health systems to support scaled-up mental health responses in these countries, and co-editing a new book on health policy and systems responses to forced migration.

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/people/roberts.bayard>

Discussants

1. Marcia Inhorn

Marcia Inhorn is Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs at Yale University, and Past-President of the Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) of the American Anthropological Association. Her expertise is focused on gender and health, religion and bioethics, globalization and global health. Her most recent book is entitled *America's Arab Refugees: Vulnerability and Health on the Margins*.

<https://anthropology.yale.edu/people/marcia-inhorn>

2. Jason Lyall

Jason Lyall is Associate Professor of Political Science and the Director of the Political Violence FieldLab at Yale University. His research focuses on civil and conventional wars, and examines how political violence and humanitarian aid affect civilian attitudes and behavior in conflict settings. He has served as Technical Advisor for USAID, and is a member of the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) network. <https://politicalscience.yale.edu/people/jason-lyall>

Papers

We distributed three short papers, written by the speakers, in advance of the Colloquium. These papers focused on forced migration and humanitarian policy in Europe, with respect to the global compact of migration, local responses to refugee issues in cities, and scaled-up provision of mental health services. Speakers briefly highlighted the main points of their papers at the start of the colloquium:

Sara Barragán provided an overview of the complex interrelationships that exist among the actors involved in the multisectoral and multi-level governance of forced migration and health in Europe. She also framed the European experience in this area within the broader ongoing international discussions around the necessity to reform the global health architecture to better suit the changing humanitarian landscape.

Bayard Roberts highlighted critical evidence gaps on the effectiveness of mental health and psycho-social support care for refugees in Europe and forced migrants in low- and middle-income countries. He also discussed how these gaps relate to broader challenges in humanitarian accountability.

Maggie Powers examined the current migration context in Europe, detailed recent developments in the international migration and refugee regimes, assessed governance gaps in those regimes, and proposed a lens through which effective governance should develop over the long-term. She also promoted the inclusion of local and regional authorities in global governance and highlighted innovative policy solutions being offered by local authorities in Europe.

Critical reflections

The discussion engaged with specific issues related to forced migration in Europe, and the broader principles of humanitarian policy and humanitarian action. Our two discussants shared some critical reflections and raised important questions. Regarding Sara Barragán's paper these included:

- What drives variation in national differences between European states (within and across)? Such variation is not just a matter of framing, but also of political dynamics around immigration/refugees.

- Not all forced migrants are refugees, is it thus important to disaggregate forced migrants from refugees? What are the pluses and minuses of doing so, and what are the implications of this for humanitarian healthcare delivery?

Regarding Bayard Roberts' paper, discussants raised the following:

- What is the role of academics in pushing NGOs towards Randomized Control Trials (RCTs), and what is the solution for non-RCT studies to get more data?
- What should be done other than bringing anthropologists on board to evaluate studies? How do we move beyond critique to constructive mental health program building for refugees and other vulnerable migrant populations?

Discussants' reflections on Maggie Power's paper included the following:

- What can be done to bolster the humanitarian capabilities of cities? What is the downside of a city-based approach?
- Is a global structure feasible?
- Should "mixed migrant" populations, including refugees, economic migrants, and those forcibly displaced for other reasons such as food insecurity or ecological disasters be lumped together in humanitarian assistance?

The colloquium then provided time for the audience to engage. Comments raised include:

- National politics and domestic pressures need to be taken into account as key determinants when evaluating the diverse response to forced migration among European countries;
- Humanitarian funders need to push implementing entities for accountability to facilitate interventions based on evidence;
- Time-consuming Institutional Review Board processes need to be streamlined to facilitate research and address the huge demand for evidence-based data; and
- Migrants need to be portrayed not only as vulnerable, but also as important role models given their crucial contributions to the refugee response.

Next steps

The colloquium will be complemented by a second event in spring 2019. This second event will specifically focus on humanitarian practice and theory.