



LUND UNIVERSITY

Conceptions and Epistemologies of “Crisis” in regard to Disasters, Migration and Refugees

Wednesday 25 April 2018

09:15 – 12:00

Pufendorf IAS seminar room, 2nd floor, Biskopsgatan 3, Lund 221 00

Abstracts and Presentations

Title: Media Constructions of the Refugee Crisis Discourse

The presentation will focus on media representations of the “refugee crisis”, particularly of Syrian refugees, in mainstream daily newspapers in Sweden, Jordan and Turkey. Focusing on 2015, the year in which perceptions of the current refugee emergency came to the forefront of public discourse in many countries, I wish to disentangle the crisis discourse into its specific components. As media images of undifferentiated masses of third world refugees crossing the Mediterranean became an almost daily banality, Swedish newspapers focused on the “refugee crisis” as a source of concern for policy and politics at the local, national and EU levels. While some of these concerns stressed that refugees are better received and settled in hosting countries that share similar cultural and religious backgrounds, a similar problematic was observed in neighbouring countries. Newspapers in neighbouring countries (Jordan and Turkey in my study) stressed narratives of refugees as competitors for jobs and as sources of social and cultural conflict. In comparing the discourses in the three contexts, despite their disparate media institutions, state of economic development, numbers of refugees received and general attitudes towards them, my analysis shows that the “refugee crisis” of 2015 is constructed around uncertainties and inability to fathom the demands and consequences of such inflows of large numbers of people. Such uncertainties provide the basis on which a sense of moral, communal or institutional crises become understood as a refugee crisis in different settings.

Dalia Abdelhady is a Reader in Sociology and the Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University. Her work focuses on the experiences of different groups of migrants (and their children) in different national and regional contexts. Specifically, she looks at forms of identification, communal belonging and cultural expression as aspects of integration trajectories. Additionally, she studies the ways institutions such as labour markets, schools and media influence the experiences of migration and integration.

Title: Wars and Migration Crises: On missing persons during armed conflict and international migration

This presentation sets out to juxtapose the missing persons produced in two seemingly disparate situations: those who are disappeared during or because of armed conflict (mostly nationals), and the migrants and refugees who go missing as an effect of stricter border enforcement policies and practices (generally non-nationals). The aim is to understand and theorize both the political projects that produce

disappearances in different situations and the initiatives – or lack of initiatives – that publicly address the structural factors behind their occurrence. Global concern for missing people is predominantly cast as responses to war, armed conflict, terrorism and natural disasters, or, when involving migrants, to trafficking. Paying attention to the crises provoked in families and communities when a relative goes missing makes evident that the significance of human disappearances lies in the level of force and disciplinary power involved.

Ninna Nyberg Sørensen holds a PhD in Social Anthropology and is a senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies. She has worked on transnational migration issues for most of her career and published widely on migration, development, conflict and gender, for example *Work and Migration* (London 2002), *The Migration-Development Nexus* (Geneva 2003), *Living Across Worlds* (Geneva 2007) and *The Migration Industry and the Commercialization of International Migration* (London 2013). Her recent work explores undocumented migration of Central Americans and Dominicans, including the effects of disappearance and deportation on local communities. She is also involved in policy analysis of the European 'migration crisis'.

Title: Meditations on "Refugee Crisis"

The refugees are coming! From political claims about the pressure on Europe's borders to media representations of refugees walking across Europe and overfilled boats trying to cross the Mediterranean, the term "refugee crisis" is invoked time and time again to make competing political and humanitarian claims. In the present talk, "refugee crisis" is sought unpacked through a set of Cartesian meditations. This includes, as the first part, a critical examination of the spatial, temporal and epistemological claims made to show how "refugee crisis" is defined in narrow geographical and contemporary terms, as well as a crisis *res extensa* rather than *res cogitans*. The second part of the talk examines the relationship between refugee policy and refugee scholarship through the prism of "refugee crisis". Here it is argued that we are currently seeing political attempts to sideline or break up existing scholarly bodies of knowledge, prompting difficult dilemmas for scholars and a potential fragmentation of the academic knowledge production.

Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen is Research Director at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Professor II at the Faculty of Law, University of Oslo and adjunct Professor of Law at Aarhus University. He received his PhD (in international law) from Aarhus University, MSc (in refugee studies) from the University of Oxford and MA (in political science) from the University of Copenhagen. His research focuses on international refugee law, human rights, and the relationship between international law and politics. Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen previously served as member of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board and is a regular consultant for governments, international organisations and NGOs on refugee and migration policy.

Advanced Study Group on Crisis

This ASG on CRISIS revolves around critical explorations of crisis. The ASG's work focuses on the alarming reports about crises such as hurricanes and floods; political instability and unpredictability; soaring civilian casualties due to armed conflict; scenes of desperate refugees and migrants; persisting poverty; and outbreaks of aggressive diseases. Such discourses, images and practices weave our world together and this trend is sustained by global media narratives reporting on crisis across the world. Yet, crises also refer to the pressing realities that those affected by experience, many of which cause societal rupture and destruction.

A crisis, materialised or perceived, provides for rapid shifts in the socio-political and economic landscapes of the world and brings to the surface the inherently gendered dimensions of any given crisis. Gender, masculinity, power and socioeconomic privileges are critical factors to take into account when studying crisis, not only to understand the ramifications of a crisis, but also to unfold definitions of a crisis and attempts of resolving it.

The new advanced study group asks a set of questions pertaining to critical explorations of crisis; what does crisis mean for the security, precariousness, rights, and social justice of particular individuals and groups in specific contexts?

Urgent calls for political action and ethical calls for more inclusive and efficient models for crisis prevention, mitigation and restoration all indicate the importance of critically exploring crisis from an interdisciplinary perspective. Hence, the new group will undertake interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary examinations of the conceptualization of crisis, the reciprocity between various types of crises, and the gender dynamics by which a crisis is configured.

Participants of the Advanced Study Group:

Coordinator

Helle Rydström, Professor.

Department of Gender Studies, Lund University.

Core Group

Annika Bergman Rosamond, Associate Professor.

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