

Sanctuary Songs: Refugees and asylum-seekers in/and the media: an academic conference and cultural festival – June 2023

The academic conference will take place between 19-21 June 2023 during UNHCR Refugee week) at Newcastle University, UK, a University of Sanctuary. The conference will be **in person only**, although we will record the keynote presentations. The cultural festival will take place in buildings and sites on campus and at venues around the city of Newcastle, a City of Sanctuary, between 19-25 June, although some exhibitions might extend into the following weeks. Further details about the cultural festival including a programme of events and activities, will be available nearer the time.

Call for Papers

The experiences of refugees and asylum-seekers remains salient in and for the media as journalists report from one conflict zone to another, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine adding immediacy to the coverage of war in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, (re)animating public and political debate about how 'we' should respond. At the same time, major crises in regions such as DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, South Sudan, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Nigeria, Burundi and Ethiopia go largely unreported (Wanless et al, 2022). Generations of Palestinians have now grown up in UN-administered refugee camps in the Middle East, around one million Rohingya people from Myanmar are living in refugee camps in Bangladesh, and the accelerating climate crisis is leading to the further displacement of millions of people worldwide. Some scholars suggest that media coverage of war often lacks context or historical perspective, so that discussions about the economic and cultural aspects as well as the wider structural issue of migration, are largely ignored (Fengler et al, 2022). It is scarcely original to suggest that mainstream media outlets play an important role in informing the public about refugees and asylum-seekers – for example, the number of people attempting (and sometimes tragically failing) to enter Britain informally via the English Channel are a regular feature of UK national news – but the *way* the issue is reported is seen by many commentators as contributing to the rise of hostile populism across Europe and beyond. However, refugees, asylum-seekers, activists and others interested in calling media to account are not standing passively by, but are increasingly using both legacy and social media platforms and technologies to challenge and contest misinformation and negative and polarising and narratives, not least in order to tell their own stories in their own words.

For the academic conference, we now welcome abstracts which focus on any aspect of the relationship between refugees, asylum-seekers and the media from a range of contributors including academics, media professionals and media practitioners, especially those with lived experience and/or experience of collaborating with refugee or asylum-seeker communities. We are keen to receive abstracts of work which will be presented in a variety of formats including text, screen and sound-based based forms, as well as multi-media work*. Topics could range from, but are definitely not limited to:

- representations in mainstream or social media
- reporting policy and/or legal responses
- refugee and asylum-seeking media practices, websites and/or social media accounts
- refugee and asylum-seeking experiences as sources or subjects of news discourse

- alternative media and community media representations
- refugees and asylum-seekers making media
- citizen journalism and the refugee and asylum-seeking experience
- participatory media projects with refugees and asylum-seekers
- practices of journalists and media practitioners with lived experience as refugees
- the ethics of reporting
- refugee and asylum-seeker voices in the public sphere
- empathy and affect in media discourse
- journalism education in relation to covering refugees and asylum-seekers
- collaborative media projects with refugee or asylum-seeker communities
- refugees, asylum-seekers and the adoption/adaptation of media technologies

Publication opportunity

After the conference, we will be inviting full papers to be submitted for possible inclusion in a special double issue of *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics* which will be published in 2024 (issue 2, summer; issue 3, autumn).

Dates for your diary

- 9 December, 2022 – submission of abstracts/posters (350-500 words)
- 6 February, 2023 - decisions announced
- 20 February, 2023 – registration opens

Posters

PhD students are welcome to submit abstracts but can, as an alternative, submit a research poster.

For further information, please contact Karen Ross and David Baines at:

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*depending on the technical requirements

References

- Fengler, S., Bastian, M., Brinkmann, J., Zappe, A.C., Tatah, V., Andindilile, M., Assefa, E., Chibita, M., Mbaine, A., Obonyo, L. and Quashigah, T. (2022) Covering migration - in Africa and Europe: Results from a comparative analysis of 11 countries. *Journalism Practice*, 16(1), pp.140-160.
- Wanless J., Michou H., Peyre-Costa P., Schembri K., Kårstad I., Olivesi M., Foster E, Toure M., Vu M., Taylor J., Skarstein T. (2022) The World's Most Neglected Displacement Crises 2021. Norwegian Refugee Council. Availableat: [NeglectedList2021_ENG_LR.pdf](#)