

WORKSHOP

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Rethinking Refuge: Processes of Refuge Seeking in Africa and Beyond

Convener: Marcia Schenck (re:work, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Forum Transregionale Studien, Wallotstr. 14, 14193 Berlin

This is a closed event. Registration/participation is not possible.

According to the UNHCR there were 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, among them 22.5 million registered refugees in 2016 alone. The largest percentage, 30% of the world's displaced people, are being hosted in Africa. Yet, those Africans who make their way to Europe dominate discussions in the global North. Nearly 180,000 African migrants were caught last year on boats from Libya, Turkey, Algeria and Morocco. In response fortress Europe is pulling up its bridge; migrants are demonized as security threat and burden on the welfare state, unless they can prove their refugee status. Public discourse overwhelmingly paints African (forced) migrants as victims or perpetrators, but rarely paints a more nuanced picture of the reasons and motives of African refugee seekers and the global and regional interrelated structures that drive processes of refugee seeking.

African refugee seekers have been studied by anthropologists (like Liisa Malkki) and political scientists (such as Alexander Betts and Loren Landau) but very little attention has been paid to a longer-term approach to the history of African refugees. What kind of narratives can we develop about the history of refugee seeking in Africa? And how can we feed some of these diverse narratives back into public discourse?

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