

## Call for Papers for the Panel ‘The Refugee Citizen: Oxymoron or Emerging Reality?’

Panel Submission to the 22<sup>nd</sup> IMISCOE annual conference on “Decentering migration studies”, 1-4 July 2025, Paris–Aubervilliers

In the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt famously argued that refugees, having lost their affiliation with ‘any community whatsoever’, are deprived of the ‘right to have rights’ and are thus condemned to live in the ‘abstract nakedness of being human’. Since then, the depiction of refugees as ‘speechless emissaries’<sup>1</sup> left with no alternative but to surrender their political voice has become a popular thread in Critical Refugee Studies and has inspired generations of political theorists who have repeatedly called for the reparation of the broken political bond in the country of asylum.

Yet this view has not gone unchallenged. Empirically, while it is true that forcibly displaced persons have too often remained durably deprived of the political power of citizenship, the depth and strength of this deprivation varies substantially across geographical, political and historical contexts. Conceptually, the narrow focus on countries of destination neglects the enduring ties refugees have to their original political communities, which may be leveraged to reclaim membership in their state of nationality. Epistemologically, the term ‘refugee’ as an abstract figure overlooks the critical role of legal categorizations and the sorting of people seeking asylum into an ever more complex spectrum of administrative labels in shaping forced migrants’ varying degrees of political rights.

To engage with ongoing debates surrounding refugees' political rights, the team members of the [SNSF-funded project “Humans or Citizens”](#) invite papers for the panel ‘The Refugee Citizen: Oxymoron or Emerging Reality?’ to be held at the 22<sup>nd</sup> IMISCOE annual conference on “Decentering migration studies”, taking place from 1-4 July 2025, in Paris–Aubervilliers. We welcome empirical, theoretical, conceptual, epistemological or normative contributions addressing themes including but not limited to:

- Variations in the political inclusion of refugees across geographical, political and historical contexts and among different categories of ‘forced migrants’.
- Experiences and strategies of forcibly displaced persons in navigating legal and practical obstacles to their political participation, both in their countries of nationality and host countries.
- Role of legal and political categorization processes in determining the political rights and duties of the persons thus categorized.

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<sup>1</sup> Malkki, Liisa H. “Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization.” *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 377–404

- Implications of the essentially transnational nature of the ‘refugeedom’, including states of origin, states of asylum, international organizations and refugees themselves, in shaping refugees’ political opportunities and constraints in their home and host countries.

The selection process will aim to balance disciplines, emphasize international comparisons, support young researchers, and ensure the representation of scholars from or based in low-/middle-income countries.

Panel Convenors: Jean-Thomas Arrighi, Sara de Athouguia Filipe and Robin Stünzi, University of Neuchâtel

Paper proposals should include a maximum 250-word abstract and the name(s), affiliation(s), and contact details of the author(s).

Please send your proposals to Robin Stünzi at [robin.stunzi@unine.ch](mailto:robin.stunzi@unine.ch) no later than 15 September 2024.