



Migration studies at Oxford: a retrospective

Robin Cohen and Nick Van Hear

Migration Oxford event
26 January 2023



today's talk



Reflecting on the emergence and development of migration studies at Oxford

Today looking at the earlier period, from 1970s to about 2000

Welcome views on how to address the period 2000 onwards, when the picture gets more complicated

Wider aim of reflecting on the political economy of knowledge production in migration studies



Ceri Peach

(1939-2018)

West Indian Migrations to Britain: A Social Geography (1968)

Urban Social Segregation (1975)

The Caribbean in Europe, contrasting patterns of migration and settlement in Britain, France and the Netherlands (1991)



Renee Hirschon

*The Social Institutions of an Urban
Locality of Refugee Origin in
Piraeus* (Oxford DPhil Thesis, 1976).

*Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe:
The Social Life of Asia Minor
Refugees in Piraeus* (1989).

*Crossing the Aegean : An Appraisal
of the 1923 Population Exchange
Between Greece and Turkey*
(editor) (2003)



Colin Clarke

Colin Clarke, David Ley, Ceri Peach (eds)
Geography and Ethnic Pluralism (1984)

Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach and Steven
Vertovec (eds) ***South Asians Overseas:
Migration and Ethnicity*** (1990).

***Racist Regimes, Forced Labour and
Death: British Slavery in the Colonial
Caribbean and the Holocaust in Germany
and Occupied Europe*** (forthcoming)



J. Clyde Mitchell

(1918-1995)

***Social Networks in Urban Situations:
Analysis of Personal Relationships in
Central African Towns*** (1969)

Networks, Norms & Institutions (1973)

Founding member of the International Network for
Social Network Analysis

The Mitchell Centre for Social Network Analysis
founded at the University of Manchester (2020)



David Coleman

Representative selection

‘Reproduction and survival in an unknown world: what drives today’s industrial populations, and to what future?’ *Lecture at the Royal Netherlands Academy for Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam, 7 May 1998.*

‘Projections of the Ethnic Minority Populations of the United Kingdom 2006-2056’, *Population and development review*, 2010,36 (3), 2010, 441-486

‘Immigration and Ethnic Change in Low-Fertility Countries: A Third Demographic Transition’. *Population and Development Review* 32 (3), 2006, 401-46.

‘A Demographic Rationale for Brexit’, *Population and Development Review*, 42 (4), 2016, 681–92.



Barbara Harrell-Bond

(1932-2018)

Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees 1986

Founding director of the Refugee Studies Programme 1982-96 (later the Refugee Studies Centre), American University of Cairo 2000-2008, Rights in Exile (book 2005, and international legal aid organisation for refugees)



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Ahmed Karadawi

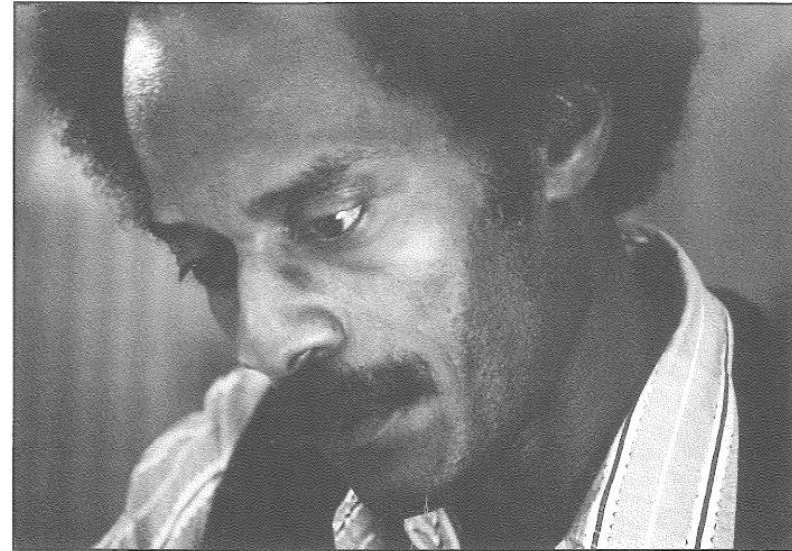
(1945-1995)


Commissioner for Refugees, Sudan from
1970

Degrees from Khartoum, Reading and
Oxford

Co-founder of the RSP

Refugee Policy in the Sudan, 1967–1984.
1999





Global south or global north?

Early dilemmas of 'knowledge production'

In fact, in 1982, when a centre at Oxford was originally mooted, I resisted the idea. From the beginning, I believed that such an institution belonged in the countries most affected by refugees. I approached individuals at Juba University and out of these conversations, the Juba Centre for Refugee Studies was born. With such enthusiasm, unsupported by adequate libraries and trained staff, I realised that there was a need for a northern institution to support this initiative. Moreover, the world of refugees is global and there should be such centres everywhere. So long as the RSP kept this vision and its integrity, I believed that there was justification for developing a centre in Oxford

Barbara Harrell-Bond 1998





‘The anarchist commune across the road’

‘the best way to describe the Oxford RSP is as an expanding network of individuals around the world who have collaborated in developing this new multi-disciplinary field of academic pursuit’

Part of the dynamic [of the RSP] was the response and commitment of Oxford students, mainly undergraduates. They packed our Wednesday seminars; they photocopied, they stuffed envelopes, they debated refugee issues in my home. Our 1984 Conference, Assistance to Refugees: Alternative Viewpoints', brought refugees'" from all over the continent to Oxford. I remember in December 1983 we had no money and no advance registrations, yet nearly 200 people attended the next March. It was organised with only a part-time secretary and the students who volunteered their time. No one who attended that conference will ever forget the experience. For the first time humanitarian organisations heard themselves being appraised by their beneficiaries.



Barbara Harrell-Bond 1998

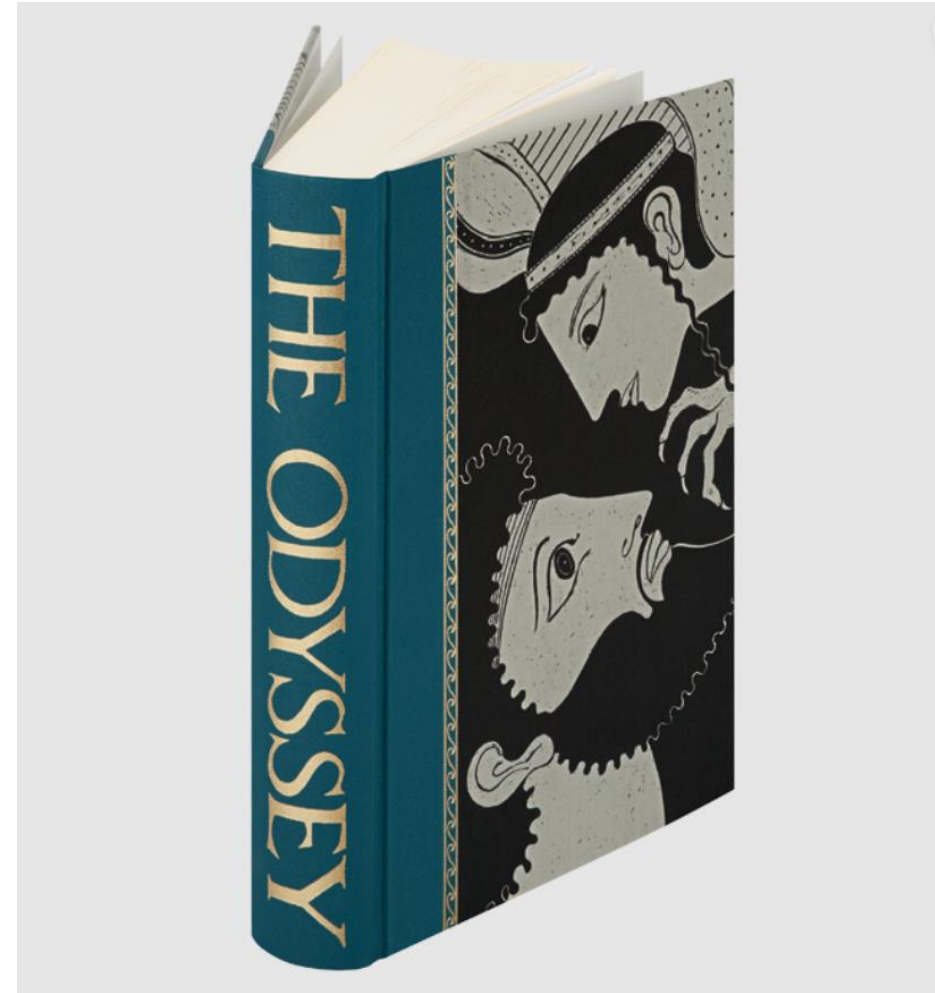
the Odyssey club, 1990s

Realisation in the early to mid 1990s that there was a 'critical mass' of migration scholars (perhaps 50 or so) at Oxford across colleges and departments, and at Oxford Brookes

NVH and RC initiated informal gatherings of such scholars

Evolved into the Odyssey club, meeting for food, gossip and exchange of ideas

Odyssey 'branch' in Geneva initiated by Jeff Crisp



Geopolitical context from the 1990s



- Iran-Iraq war
- Disintegration of the Soviet Union
- Caucasus wars
- Gulf conflict
- Balkans wars
- Rwanda/Burundi/Congo wars
- Liberia, Sierra Leone
- Nepal
- Ongoing conflicts – Somalia/Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Myanmar, Central America, Colombia....

- Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts 2001 →

Plus the ravages of neo-liberalism in the 'global south' → socio-economic upheavals (Ghana, Nigeria...)

all led to out-migration, displacement, refugees and diaspora formation



Refugee Studies Programme

Oxford Brookes

Odyssey Club

Transnational Communities Programme

**Refugee Studies Centre
(1982-)**

**International Migration
Institute**

Oxford (2006-2017)
Amsterdam (2019-2022)

**Centre on Migration, Policy and
Society (2003-)**

Includes **Migration Observatory**

Forced migration masters degree

Migration studies masters degree

Oxford Diasporas Programme

Border Criminologies

Journal of Refugee
Studies

Forced Migration
Review

Global Networks:
A Journal of Transnational Affairs

Migration Studies

migration@oxford

Migration Studies Society

Migration and Mobility Network/
Migration Oxford



The uses of migration knowledge



Research/scholarship

Working with people on the move

Working with civil society

Working with media

Dilemmas of working with governments and international organisations

