Decolonization, Cold War, and the Organization of African Unity: The creation of an African refugee regime in global perspective 1963-1984

Work Plan

Contents

[Research Topic & Research Questions 3](#_Toc70445788)

[Relation of the project to the existing literature in the field 4](#_Toc70445789)

[Academic & Societal relevance of the research project 4](#_Toc70445790)

[Archives 4](#_Toc70445791)

[Annotated Table of Content 6](#_Toc70445792)

[Preparatory work: 9](#_Toc70445793)

[Writing Schedule in Munich 14](#_Toc70445794)

[Research Output 15](#_Toc70445795)

[Writing at the Historical College in Munich 15](#_Toc70445796)

[Short Bibliography 16](#_Toc70445797)

# Research Topic & Research Questions

The early 1960s were heady days for Africa, as sub-Saharan nations gained independence from colonial rule – seventeen alone in what became known as the “Year of Africa” in 1960 –and the future of the continent appeared to be wide open (Engel & Schler, 2019). In 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded to shape the continent’s pan-African future. From the OAU’s inception refugees were high on its agenda. At the *First Conference of Independent African Heads of State and Government*, held in Addis Ababa in May 1963, a solution “to grant scholarships, educational facilities, and possibilities of employment in African government services to refugees from South Africa” was adopted.[[1]](#footnote-1)

As nation states and nation state borders were in the making, Africa’s refugees became visible, and their numbers rose rapidly. In 1964 – at a time when the 1951 Refugee Convention was still restricted in time and scope to European refugees – the OAU started the process of drafting its very own refugee convention, the 1969 *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. This convention led to several innovations in international refugee law, among them, prohibiting the expulsion of refugees, framing asylum as a non-political act, and paving the way for group rights. It also reverberated beyond the continent, as its extended refugee definition influenced the Latin American Cartagena resolution of 1984 and became national law in Belize in 1991.

Despite its wide-ranging implications, little is known about the history of the making of the 1969 OAU convention and even less about the history of the OAU regarding African refugees. This project asks, with James Scott’s classic approach of “Seeing like a state” (Scott, 1998): How did the OAU ‘see’ refugees? What was a refugee at the time? How did the OAU render refugees legible, accountable - in short, governable? What kind of programs did it facilitate and for what purpose? In answering these questions, this study turns to three areas. First, it examines the creation and adaptation of the OAU’s own refugee convention. Secondly, it examines the fate of – in the parlance of the time “professional refugees” or “elite refugees” – namely those pursuing or possessing higher education. Here the OAU’s Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees, with its focus on its scholarship and job placement programs, plays a central role (Oloka-Onyango, 1994). Lastly, it examines various resettlement programs for those refugees known at the time simply as “rural refugees,” who comprised the vast majority of all refugees on the African continent.

In investigating these different aspects, the study discusses the place of African ideas in refugee management. The project focuses on the period between the founding of the OAU in 1963 and the signing of the Cartagena declaration in 1984, which allows zooming in on contradictory tendencies: the 1969 convention made a lasting impact on the international legal scene, while in Africa refugee protection deteriorated as countries failed to live up to the standards of the convention, refugee numbers rose, and the negative economic effects of structural adjustment programs were felt across the continent.

This book re-tells the story of refugee management in the second half of the 20th century *from* the Global South. Positioning Africa in its center, not just as refugee producing and refugee hosting continent, but also as place where new ideas regarding refugee management were developed, concepts that subsequently influenced refugee management in other places around the globe.

# Relation of the project to the existing literature in the field

There is no book on the history of African refugees that frames the issue in a continent-wide single analytical framework. The closest we come to an overview of African refugees is legal scholar Marina Sharp’s book about refugee protection law in Africa (Sharpe, 2018). What is missing is a historical analysis of the convention and the concepts as well as the programs and practices with which the OAU shaped the lives of African refugees. This book will be the first authored by a historian that seeks to focus on the OAU’s refugee policies.

This project is both, a work of synthesis that relies on the country level analysis of other scholars and a book advancing original primary source analysis of heretofore under or even unexplored archival collections in Africa, Europe and the US. Few scholars thus far have drawn on the OAU archive, because it is plagued by similar political access restrictions as many post-independence archives on the continent but the African Union is advancing a digitalization project of the resolutions and other official documentation of the OAU’s work. Scholars like Ulf Engel have recently advanced our knowledge on the early history of the OAU (Engel, 2019) and different projects e.g. on the OAUs liberation committee are in the making. This book will be published at a time of renewed interest in the OAU’s history.

Joel Glasman successfully applied Scott to West Africa to examine the work of the UNHCR in “Seeing like a refugee agency” (Glasman, 2017; Scott, 1998). My project is inspired by this approach and seeks to apply it to the OAU. It builds on new scholarship detailing local and national refugee contexts (Rosenthal, 2015; Shadle, 2018; Tague, 2019; Williams, 2015) to shed light on the supra-national level of the OAU and (inter)national agencies with which it worked. It thus addresses an important gap in our rudimentary understanding of the history of refugee management in the Global South.

A note on language is in order: Since I am interested in making my work accessible on the African continent, and the scholarly conversation on this topic is mainly conducted in English, this book will be written in English.

# Academic & Societal relevance of the research project

Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world, from Bangladesh to South Africa, have been preoccupied with what is often labelled a global “refugee crisis.” These crises are far too often dehistoricized in public discussions. Yet, historians around the globe have traced how refugees are co-constitutive of nation states; far from being an exception to the norm, they are the norm. The history of refuge seeking in Africa is a young and upcoming research field, which will draw our attention to the importance of refugees from, to and in Africa. As of today, we know too little about seeking and providing refuge in the Global South in general, where the majority of refugees have been and continue to be hosted. Similarly, most African refugees have sought and continue to seek refuge in neighboring countries on the continent. This book project will contribute to better understanding this complex history. By drawing our awareness to African contributions to international refugee law, Africa emerges as the producer of legal innovations that led to changes in refugee law in Latin America.

# Archives

This archive-based study combines a reading of archives of international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and liberation movements and (future) governments. I have assembled the bulk of the archival material that I need to undertake this study as of January 2020 and am currently continuing a few online investigations which I will have completed by September 2021. As of the writing of this application, I am confident to state that I already have collected sufficient archival material to write this book. I have already assembled more than 100,000 images of documents from the following archives:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number | Archive | Location | Research Time | Topics |
| 1 | The African Union Archives  | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | Nov. 2019 | Section on OAU: Everything located to do with the OAU & refugees: Special focus on annual meetings, draft conferences, and the BPEAR office of refugee coordination. Including cost analysis, country reports and program overviews. |
| 2 | The Archives of the United Nations | New York, USA | Dec. 2019 & ongoing online\*\* | Conversation between UN Secretary General and OAU SG and other staff pertaining to refugees. Documents about the 1969 OAU convention and pertaining to scholarship programs for southern African refugees. |
| 3 | The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Archives | Geneva, Switzerland | April 2019 | Documents about the drafting of the 1969 OAU convention and conversations between UNHCR and OAU regarding the 1967 conference and UNHCR observations on the role of the OAU in the Afro-Asian solidarity movement. |
| 4 | The Archives of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) | Geneva, Switzerland | April 2019 | Country reports, country level analysis of camps and humanitarian aide (Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania) |
| 5 | The Archives of the Dag Hammerskjöld Foundation | Uppsala, Sweden | Jan. 2020 | Conference organization of the international 1967 conference on Legal, Economic and Social Aspects of African Refugee Problems. |
| 6 | George Padmore Research Library | Accra, Ghana | July 2020 shared by Eric Burton\* | Papers: African Affairs Centre. Scholarship applications of refugee students from southern Africa. |
| 7 | University of Fort Hare, Howard Pim Library | Alice, South Africa | July 2020 shared by Eric Burton\* | ANC documents. Scholarship applications of refugee students from South Africa |
| 8 | British Library | London, UK | Online\*\* | Endangered Archives Programme. Zambia’s UNIP archive, much pertaining to independence movements and refugees in Dar es Salaam (student refugees and exiles). |
| 9 | Firestone, Princeton Library | Princeton, USA | December 2019 & ongoing. | International newspapers on microfilm or online.\*\*\* Observations about OAU refugee policies. |

\* Eric Burton was so kind as to share some of his archival material from his fieldtrips to Ghana and South Africa prior to the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions.

\*\* Despite travel restrictions, I am still growing my archival source base online. The UN archive has digitized sources on their African refugee education programs and some useful material on refugees in Zambia and Tanzania are available online via the British Library. Most of the smaller archives, for instance the UNHCR have been closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the time of writing it remains unclear when access will be granted again. I do, however, have enough material to write this book and am not dependent on any further research trips.

\*\*\* I have assembled a collection of international newspapers (including *Daily News* -Tanzania; *Egyptian Gazette*; *Ghanaian Times*; *Ugandan Argus*; *La Nación* – Argentina; *El Informador* – Mexico; *New York Times*, *The Guardian*) regarding their reporting on the OAU in the 1960s and 70s. This collection of newspapers is still growing as I am planning to add East and West German sources, Brazilian and Portuguese as well as Asian sources over the next three months to obtain as vast a reach as possible.

# Annotated Table of Content

**Introduction: Decolonization, Cold War, Pan-Africanism and African Refugees**

Argument: The 1960s and 70s are often referred to as a “golden age” for refugees on the African continent. In this context, African hospitality, pan-Africanism and a so-called “open-door policy” towards refugees feature prominently. However, it was more complex than that. In this book, I will critically examine the “golden age” perception by investigating different aspects of refugee management in turn: the legal realm, education and job placement initiatives for those who were known as “urban” or “elite” refugees, and zonal development plans and resettlement initiatives for those who were referred to as the “rural masses.” In so doing, the book traces both African contributions that made a lasting impact in international refugee management (for example the 1969 convention in the legal realm) and initiatives which failed to bring about the desired impact on refugees’ lives (for instance the 1969 convention implementation across Africa). In unearthing the little-known history about refugees on the African continent from the early 1960s to the early 1980s, this book brings to the fore the complexities of refugee management during a time marked by decolonization and the Cold War. Refugees were seen neither solely as a humanitarian nor purely a political affair but were discussed at the nexus of both. Discourses about development and the building of states met humanitarian discourses and practices of saving those in need of protection: where both merged to perceive the refugee as a developmental asset, doors were indeed opened for refugees, but where the discourses diverged and refugees were only seen as humanitarian burden or liability in the name of pan-African solidarity, doors were soon closed again. In this discussion, the label “refugee” emerges as an ambiguous and fluid category in practice, intertwining humanitarian discourse with political and personal interests. While some states like Tanzania welcomed refugees as “settlers” and eventually offered collective groups of refugees citizenship, others, like Botswana, were keen on closely controlling their borders, afraid that the newly independent countries might be “overrun” by a “flood” of refugees. Today’s reader cannot help but to be aware of parallel discourses in our present.

Sources: I draw on a wide range of secondary literatures including the history of international organizations like the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, African hospitality and pan-Africanism, and the intersection between the histories of decolonization, Cold War histories, histories of development, and histories of humanitarianism. It is also necessary to engage with historians and anthropologists examining various refugee contexts across the continent during the 1960s-80s, among them Biafra, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and the Portuguese territories, to paint a picture of the contemporary refugee context on the continent.

**Chapter 1: The “African Refugee Problem:” Seeing refugees like the Organization of African Unity during the 1960s**

Argument: Seeing the refugee as a problem is not an invention of the 21st century. The OAU conceptualized the African refugee as a “problem to be solved” right from its inception. It earnestly planned to resolve the issue of – at the time – roughly 400,000 refugees through pan-African solidarity. This seemed rather possible, given the OAU’s framing of refugees as a temporary problem limited to decolonization processes on the one hand, and the strong appeal to unite against colonial regimes and support those struggling to free themselves on the other. In this chapter, I examine the way the OAU framed and conceptualized refugees as decolonization issue and contend that this conceptualization was incomplete, as refugees were, right from the start, also the result of intra-state conflicts in the context of state-formation and inter-state conflict between neighboring African states. In practice, the African refugee was a rather nebulous category encompassing freedom fighters, students, economic migrants, and farmers seeking sanctuary. This fluidity allowed those on the move to temporarily navigate and negotiate access to land or scholarships or safe haven. While the recorded numbers of those registered as refugees rose steadily on the continent, the way they were perceived by the OAU and host country governments began to change over time.

Sources: In this chapter I mainly draw on the OAU archives to establish the way that refugees were “seen” i.e., rendered legible, accountable, and countable by the administration of the OAU. The administrative detail will be contrasted with the grand rhetoric surrounding refugees as political and humanitarian issue, evident for political summit discussions around refugees instance at the 1967 conference on African refugees and. The OAU archives are supplemented with the UNHCR archives and the Dag Hammerskjöld Foundation archives, each of which contain documents that shed light on the OAU representatives’ views on the refugee issue as problem and allow for tracing a change over time from the early 1960s to the early 1980s.

**Chapter 2: Just Paper? The 1969 Refugee Convention in the Making**

Argument: I argue that the unique historical constellation of the 1960s allowed for enshrining a radically more welcoming approach to hosting refugees in Africa into regionally binding law than would have been possible at other points in time. It is my theory that the 1969 convention was only possible at this distinct historical juncture at the confluence of decolonization struggles, ideas about pan-African solidarity, and the influence of the Cold War in Africa. In this chapter, I will trace the making of the OAU convention from 1964-69 and its international reception and will embed that emerging story in its larger historical context to understand why a pan-African refugee convention came into being in the late 1960s.

Sources: For this chapter I draw on a mix of primary and secondary sources. For example, I draw on legal scholars examining the 1969 convention and its legacy in (inter)national refugee law. In tracing the evolution of the 1969 convention, I draw upon both the OAU archives records and the UNHCR’s archives notes of draft meetings. Because the UNHCR participated in the later draft sessions, it can function as a shadow archive (Allman, 2013) to fill in the gaps left by the OAU archive. In addition, I will draw on newspaper articles from across newspapers on different continents (Daily News -Tanzania; Egyptian Gazette; Ghanaian times; Ugandan Argus; La Nacion – Argentina; El Informador – Mexico; New Yorkt Times, The Guardian, among others) to examine the contemporary international reception of the 1969 convention.

**Chapter 3: “Elite” Refugees: The Bureau for the Placement and Education of Refugees**

Argument: I stipulate that refugee higher education needs to be understood within the development framework of human capital theory, which was meant to support political pan-African concerns for a decolonized continent and merged with humanitarian arguments to create a hybrid form of humanitarian developmentalism. I will illustrate this argument with case studies from the creation and practice of the OAU’s Bureau for the Placement and Education of Refugees (BPEAR) and supplement those with an analysis of education programmes for southern African students from the UN and various voluntary associations like the African American Institute, all of which supported higher education scholarships in the name of African refugee human capital development.

Sources: This chapter draws on primary sources from the OAU’s BPEAR boxes, the UN’s Scholarship Programs for Southern African Refugees, The Dag Hammerskjöld 1967 conference material, the George Padmore Research Library’s African Affairs Centre scholarship application material, the Howard Pim Library’s ANC archives refugee student material, and the British Libraries UNIP material discussing refugee students in the endangered archives collection. It further engages the secondary literature on education and development in Africa and on the higher education of African refugees specifically.

**Chapter 4: The “rural masses:” Settlement and Self-Help Programs**

Argument: I contend that that the OAU framed land settlement as a “durable solution” pioneered in Africa. Designed to deal with rural mass migration of mostly farming populations across state borders, land settlement in the 1960s and 70s distinguished between two types: spontaneous and planned. While both approaches to settlement were supported, the OAU, along with international experts, made plans for zonal development, which would encourage refugees to settle and become productive farmers. Initially, they were to produce for their own subsistence within the framework of self-help but soon were to expand their capabilities to become productive members of their host societies. Consequently, refugee development policy was to be thought alongside the development of the host community and refugee settlements were to contribute to the overall economic and social development of the country of asylum. This chapter critically examines development paradigms discussed by policymakers, experts, and representatives of international organizations together with the assumptions these discourses encompassed with regard to the behavior of refugees, local populations, and host governments alike.

Sources: This chapter draws on resettlement cases in the UNHCR archives, the Dag Hammerskjöld 1967 conference material, the Lutheran World Federation country studies material, and published primary source material on refugee management in Africa in the 1960s to uncover the zonal development plans at the time and discuss the mantra of self-help.

**Chapter 5: “African problems – African solutions:” African refugee management in international comparison**

Argument: This chapter explores the discourse around “African solutions” for refugee management and sheds light on how “African” African approaches to refugee management were. What emerges is that the impetus for a continent-wide refugee management system was indeed an OAU initiative, but already during the draft stages of the convention, the UNHCR became involved in the name of furnishing technocratic expertise, but in the process subverting the role of the convention for fear that it might trump the 1951 Geneva convention with its 1967 protocol under the watch of the UNHCR. While the UNHCR had been an organization initially focused on Europe after its creation in 1950, by the 1960s it began to slowly globalize its operations and by the late 1960s Africa became increasingly important. I contend that the story of African refugee management is thus one in which the OAU and the UNHCR co-produce knowledge, standards, and practices, which are then adapted, challenged, and negotiated by nation states and voluntary agencies alike.

Sources: This chapter will draw primarily on the OAU and UNHCR archives to trace the history of their collaboration. It also draws on the archives of voluntary organizations like the LWF and the Dag Hammerskjöld Foundation, which in the 1960s still played a more important role than the UNHCR in engaging refugees on the ground. Together, these sources paint a picture of a sometimes troubled, sometimes productive engagement of the OAU with the UNHCR and international as well as continental non-governmental organizations, a story in which the UNHCR continues to become more dominant.

**Epilogue: African refugees - still a problem?**

Argument: In the epilogue, I reiterate that the picture of refugee management in the 1960s is much more complex than notions of a “golden age” allow for. While African hospitality did indeed play a role in the open-door policies of countries like Tanzania, their decision to welcome collective refugee groups was not a purely humanitarian decision but interwoven with political and economic motives ranging from pan-African convictions to the need to settle empty stretches of land in border regions. In other countries political and economic reasons led to the closing of border to refugees, or their swift onwards movement. Botswana, for instance, feared that welcoming refugees from apartheid South Africa would translate to fewer resources to satisfy their own wanting citizenry and therefore endanger their newly won independence. The OAU saw refugees as a prime concern of the continent in light of the demands of decolonization, the Cold War, and pan-Africanism. It sought to design a unified refugee policy for the continent, one that would demonstrate the pan-African values of African hospitality in the face of the fight against foreign domination. Instead of “solving” the refugee issue by means of educating people to serve their home countries after liberation and integrating rural mass migrants in rural production systems, refugee numbers on the continent have grown dramatically, from 400,000 in 1963 to nearly 6.5 million today. This epilogue thus engages lines of continuity and changes looking at the very beginning of refugee management on the continent after independence in the 1960s and contrasting that with the situation today. The African Union (AU), the successor of the OAU, Kenya and Uganda will feature prominently in the outlook. Uganda is today widely acknowledged for its progressive refugee policies, including the right to work and significant freedom of movement, whereas Kenya is decried for its restrictive encampment policies.

Sources: This chapter draws on the materials already discussed and in addition engages AU reports on refugees such as AU ECHO 2019, the global compact on refugees, and country reports of Uganda and Kenya alongside secondary literature like Alexander Betts 2021 book, *The Wealth of Refugees*.

# Preparatory work:

In addition to having assembled the necessary archival material to complete this study, I have engaged with the topic of the history of refuge seeking on the African continent in a variety of ways, bridging research, science communication, and teaching. In chronological fashion, I will first speak about the organization of an international workshop on the topic, next I will discuss the cross-fertilization between research and teaching, and engage three peer-reviewed article projects, before I will list relevant conference and workshop participation.

**1. “Rethinking Refuge: Processes of Refuge Seeking in Africa and Beyond”**

I hosted an international workshop with the same title as this section at the Forum for Transregional Studies in Berlin in June 2019, bringing together scholars from Africa, Europe, and North America who study African refugee history. Three outcomes have resulted from this workshop, which contribute to pushing research of the history of African refugees forward by communicating its importance to a broader readership, setting up an institution to allow for sustainable scholarly exchange and community building, and producing relevant scholarship:

* Together with my colleague George Njung, based at the University of Witwatersrand in South Arica, I am editing a *double issue titled* ***Rethinking Refuge: Processes of Refuge Seeking in Africa*** for *Africa Today*. All articles have passed peer review at the stage of writing and are scheduled to appear as 68.2 (winter 2022) and 68.3 (spring 2023).
* Madina Thiam, based at UCLA, edited a Blog Series, ***Histories of Refuge***for *Africa is a Country*. Individual contributions of workshop participants were published Nov. 2020 to March 2021. <https://africasacountry.com/series/histories-of-refuge>
* Together with Keren Weitzberg (UCL) and Jochen Lingelbach (Bayreuth) I founded and am now managing an **H-Net Cross-Network Project** ***Refugees in African history*** which offers scholars interested in the history of refugee seeking a platform for exchange and the dissemination of cfps and conference announcements, book reviews etc. It links [H-Africa](https://networks.h-net.org/h-africa) with [H-Migration](https://networks.h-net.org/h-migration) and thus reaches a subscriber base of more than 8000 subscribers.

Most importantly, with this initiative I created a sustainable and supportive community of scholars who continue to work with one another and who will be able to provide feedback during the writing of the book. Further, we created a large network of scholars interested in the topic of African refuge seeking, who form a larger potential readership for this book. And lastly, we have experienced how much interest there is in this topic in the general public across the continents, which drives home the importance of studying this topic not just for an academic conversation.

**2. Global History Dialogues Project: Teaching & researching refugee and forced migration issues**

In collaboration with Princeton’s Global History, I developed and have been teaching the History Dialogues Project since 2019, a course that integrates refugee students and host country students from across the globe into the same victual classroom and trains them to undertake their own global history research projects.[[2]](#footnote-2) The resulting conversations have led to publications focusing on the representation of refugee voices and issue of knowledge creation, together with the student-researchers.

* **History Dialogues: Opportunities and Challenges of Oral History Research through Refugee Voices, Narratives, and Memories,**withMohamed Zakaria Abdalla, Richesse Ndiritiro, Shaema Omar, Kate Reed, Samson Rer, and Gerawork Teferra. In *Global South Scholars in the Western Academy: Harnessing Unique Experiences, Knowledges, and Positionality in the Third Space,* Staci B. Martin, Deepra Dandekar, (eds), Behavioural Science and Education Series, Routledge (forthcoming 2021).

This article draws on experiences of students and instructors in an oral history course for refugee and migrant learners. Together we explore what it means to create ‘third spaces’ that operate across structural global inequalities through collaborative research and writing processes. What are the possibilities and limitations of these spaces, which hold space and resources for historically marginalized communities, but often do so on terms set by individuals and institutions in the Global North? We argue that epistemological exclusion and material inequalities operate in tandem, preserving hierarchies of knowledge and authority. At the same time, we explore how third spaces like our research seminar can allow the contestation of ‘traditional’ notions of historical scholarship, moving beyond limited paradigms of inclusion towards practices that allow for new voices to destabilize, undermine, and profoundly transform narratives about our global past.

* ***The Right to Research: Historical Narratives by Refugee & Global South Researchers.***Co-edited with Kate Reed. Refugee and Forced Migration Studies Series. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

In a similar vein, this edited volume builds on the research of refugees conducted within the History Dialogues Project. With this book we seek to draw attention to refugees as knowledge producers. As the number of refugees and forcibly displaced people has continued to grow, reaching 79.5 million people at the end of 2019—fully 1 percent of the world’s population—interest in the history of refuge-seeking has followed.[[3]](#footnote-3) Though other fields, such as anthropology and political science, remain predominant in the interdisciplinary field of refugee and migration studies, historical approaches that excavate the longer histories of refuge, statelessness, and protracted refugee situations are gaining ground. Scholars are paying increased attention to refugees as historical actors. Largely missing from their focus on refuge-seeking as history, however, are refugees and displaced people as narrators of history. This edited volume seeks to address this gap. Consisting of original works of historical research by refugee and migrant students living in Kenya, Rwanda, Yemen, and Ethiopia, it makes important contributions in terms of both process and content: the authors’ pieces advance historical knowledge in their own right, and their collected work invites reflection on how history is told, by whom, and how the inclusion of new voices might shape our understanding of the past. This issue, in other words, seeks to change the relationship between researcher as subject and researched as object, between the “what” of history and the “who” that narrates it. “The Right to Research” thus offers an important, timely, and very unique intervention in the burgeoning literature on the history of refuge. It coincides with renewed calls to decolonize the university and dismantle the forms of exclusion and oppression—structural and epistemological—that structure the academy and the production of knowledge within it.

In Potsdam, I have further taught related BA and MA courses, for instance:

* **Refugees and (Forced) Migrants in Global History**, BA-Lecture
* **Processes of Refuge Seeking in 20th Century Africa and Beyond**, MA-Seminar
* **The Cold War in Africa**, MA-Seminar
* **International Organizations: The History and Historiography of the Organization of African Unity**, MA-Seminar

These courses allowed me to engage relevant key readings in African and global refugee history and discuss them with students at Potsdam University, students at Cagliari University, and Princeton’s Global History Lab.

**3. Peer-reviewed articles on topics explored further in this book**

I am in the process of publishing three peer-reviewed journal articles (two in English, one in German, which I have, for the purpose of this document, also rendered in English), one of which has passed peer review at the stage of writing this application. The three articles are conceptualized in a way that allows me to engage with the substantive themes of the book. This approach has the advantage that I will read through much of the collected archival material and work with the secondary literature in these fields already during 2021, leaving me well prepared to write my first chapter and a draft introduction during the first part of 2022 to then hit the ground running upon the start of the Fellowship in October 2022.

Related to Chapter 3: “‘Elite’ Refugees: The Bureau for the Placement and Education of Refugees”

* **A different class of refugee: University scholarships and developmentalism in late 1960s Africa,** *Africa Today*, has passed peer review and is scheduled to come out as part of the special issue on *Rethinking Refuge* I co-edit with George Njung**.**

Using documents assembled in connection with the 1967 Conference on the Legal, Economic and Social Aspects of African Refugee Problems, this article discusses African refugee higher education discourses in the 1960s at the level of international organizations, volunteer agencies, and government representatives. While education and development history have recently been studied in conjunction, not many scholars have focused on the history of refugee higher education in Africa. It argues that refugee higher education needs to be understood within the development framework of human capital theory, which was meant to support political pan-African concerns for a decolonized continent and merged with humanitarian arguments to create a hybrid form of humanitarian developmentalism. The paper zooms in on higher education scholarships, above all for refugees from southern Africa, as a means of support for African refugee human capital development. It becomes apparent that refugee higher education was both a result of and driver for increased international cooperation.

Related to Chapter 1 “The ‘African Refugee Problem:’ Seeing refugees like the Organization of African Unity during the 1960s:”

* **Die afrikanische Antwort auf die 1951 Flüchtlingskonvention: Die 1969 Flüchtlingskonvention der Organisaton der Afrikanischen Einheit***, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte,* to be submitted on the October 1st, 2021. Contribution solicited.

In 1969 the Organization of African Unity adopted its own refugee convention, which was ratified on June 20, 1974. To this day we celebrate world refugee day on June 20th to commemorate what promised to be a landmark convention but has since had limited impact on the continent as Marina Sharpe (2018) and others have shown. This article examines the global historic context and the regionally specific confluences of decolonization struggles and ideas about pan-African solidarity to argue that it was only during a very specific historic window of opportunity that a convention like the OAU 1969 convention was able to enter into force. The convention inspired several inventions for refugee law, such as a group-rights claim to refugee status, framing asylum as peaceful non-political act, codifying the principle of voluntary repatriation, and introducing the prohibition of refoulement. All this would not have been possible if the African imperative to come together to solve what was known then as the continent wide “African refugee problem” had not been high on the OAU’s priority agenda in the name of decolonizing the continent and finding “African solutions to African problems.” On the basis of the OAU’s archive and the UNHCR’s archive, this article will trace the development of the OAU convention historically and in so doing will reveal the fraught nature of drafting a new convention for the African continent at a time when international refugee law expanded beyond Europe and the UNHCR was anxious to safeguard the 1951 Geneva refugee convention as the international marker of global refugee rights.

Related to Chapter 4: “The ‘rural masses:’ Settlement and Self-Help Programs:”

* **Rural Refugees as Agents of Development: Land Settlement Schemes and Zonal Planning in the Horn of Africa in the 1960s**, Special Issue of *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal on Migration, Human Trafficking, and Displacement in the Horn***,** to be submitted on the July 30th, 2021. Abstract accepted.

In 1967, land settlement was to be the answer for the local integration of large groups of rural refugees who had few alternatives to making a living as farmers. Land settlement was thus framed as a durable solution, and one pioneered in the African context. UNHCR High Commissioner Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan even spoke of land settlement as the “most original aspect of refugee work in Africa”, one “dictated by the very nature of the problem” – rural mass migrations (1967 Final Conference Report, 159). Spontaneous land settlement was to be supported with material assistance. Systematic land settlement in new rural settlements was to be undertaken within the framework of zonal development plans. The assumption for both cases was that refugees would turn into permanent “settlers,” and that therefore self-sufficiency at mere subsistence level was not sufficient. Rather, refugee settlements should contribute to the overall economic and social development of the country of asylum, within the framework of its development policy. Refugee development policy was to be thought alongside the development of the host community, to mutual benefit. Using documents assembled in connection with the 1967 Conference on the Legal, Economic and Social Aspects of African Refugee Problems held in Addis Ababa, and drawing on archival material from the UNHCR’s, Organization of African Unity’s, and voluntary agencies’ archives, such as the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, this article discusses land settlement and zonal planning schemes. It does so by paying attention to the discourses employed at the level of international organizations, volunteer agencies, and government representatives in the 1960s. It critically examines development paradigms and assumptions that policymakers, experts, and representatives of international organizations held with regard to the behavior of refugees, local populations, and host governments alike.

**4. Conference and workshop participation, and invited talks related to the book project:**

* **Pan-Africanism, Decolonization and the Organization of African Unity’s 1969 Refugee Convention in Global Perspective,** Contesting Universalism – Provincializing Europe?, Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz – virtual, March 24-26, 2021. Presentation.
* **Refugees today, technocrats tomorrow?: Refugee higher education and developmentalism in the late 1960s Africa,** Humanitarian Organizations: (Hi)Stories, Impact and Challenges, international virtual conference, Global Institute for Research, Education & Scholarships, GIRES, Amsterdam – virtual, Feb. 20-21, 2021. Presentation.
* **Aiding freedom fighters? The Organization of African Unity’s Refugee Convention of 1969 in the making**, Solidarity and Humanitarianism in the Global South between Decolonization and the Cold War (1960s-1980s), Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin, Germany, Sept. 28-29, 2020. Presentation.
* **History Dialogues: an experiment in humanitarian humanities**, 49. Jahrestagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Hochschuldidaktik an der Freien Universität Berlin, Presentation on the transfer market, Berlin – virtual, March 11-13, 2020. Exhibit.
* **Decolonization, Cold War and the Organization of African Unity: The creation of the African refugee regime in global perspective 1963-1984**, African History Seminar, Princeton University, December 6, 2019. Invited talk.
* **Archives of Refuge**, Seminar Series: Perspectives and Positions on an Anthropology of the Political, with Arjun Appadurai, Regina Römhild, Pedram Sarhangi, and Nadiye Ünsal, Humboldt University, Berlin, Oct. 30, 2018. Presentation.
* **A historical perspective on processes of refuge seeking in Africa,** 2. Conference of the Netzwerk Fluchtforschung, Eichstätt, Oct. 4-6, 2018. Panel organizer and commentator.

Preview of further relevant talks in 2021:

* **History Dialogues: Applied Humanities in Emergency Situations**, Disrupting Theory, Unsettling Practice: Towards Transformative Forced Migration Scholarship and Policy, University of Ghana, Accra – virtual, July 26-29, 2021.
* **Refugee Narratives: Perspectives from the South,** Disrupting Theory, Unsettling Practice: Towards Transformative Forced Migration Scholarship and Policy, University of Ghana, Accra – virtual, July 26-29, 2021. Panel co-organization together with Staci Martin, Portland University.
* **Aiding refugee students, farmers or freedom fighters? The Organization of African Unity’s Refugee Convention of 1969,** Sixth European Congress on World and Global History, Minorities, Cultures of Integration and Patterns of Exclusion, Turku – virtual, June 15-19, 2021.
* **The Cold War, Refugees and the Organization of African Unity: Reflections on International Bureaucracies and New International Paradigms,** Divided Together? International Organizations and the Cold War**,** University of Vienna – virtual, May 19- 20, 2021.

# Writing Schedule in Munich

I will be on academic leave from my home institution from the 1st of October 2022 until the 31st of September 2023 and free to reside in Munich to fully engage with the colleagues at the Historical College and benefit from the support through the College’s permanent staff.

Upon my arrival in Munich, I will have completed chapter 1, “The ‘African Refugee Problem:’ Seeing refugees like the Organization of African Unity during the 1960s,” which draws on the OAU, UNHCR, UN archives, and my collection of newspaper articles. I will further have a preliminary introduction written that sets out the big themes I engage in this book.

My writing schedule for the duration of the fellowship is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Month** | **Goal** | **Steps** |
| 1. | Oct. 2022 | Arrival & start Ch. 2 *“Just Paper? The 1969 Refugee Convention in the Making”* | I have already worked through much of the relevant source material (OAU & UNHCR archives & newspapers) for my article in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* and will thus be able to finish working through the remainder and write this chapter in the two-months’ timeframe. |
| 2.  | Nov. 2022 | **Complete: Ch. 2** |  See above |
| 3. | Dec. 2022 | **Write and send out book proposal** & conduct conversations with publishers | During this month I will prepare the materials for my book proposal package (book proposal, sample chapter(s), CV, cover letter) and reach out for preliminary discussions with publishers. |
| 4. | Jan. 2023 | Start Ch. 3 *“‘Elite’ Refugees: The Bureau for the Placement and Education of Refugees”* | I have already worked through a significant amount of the archival material on refugee education and job placement for my article in *Africa Today* and will be able to work through the reminder and write the chapter in the two-months’ timeframe.  |
| 5. | Feb. 2023 | **Complete Ch. 3** | See above |
| 6. | Mar. 2023 | **Write & Complete** Ch. 4 *“The ‘rural masses:’ Settlement and Self-Help Programs”* | This chapter will not differ substantially from my article written for *African & Black Diaspora* and will therefore be completed within one month.  |
| 7. | April 2023 | Write Chapter 5 *“‘African problems – African solutions:’ African refugee management in international comparison”* | This chapter will draw on the OAU archives, UNHCR archives and newspaper articles, material with which I will be familiar. In addition, it engages with online research regarding the South American component of this project.  |
| 8. | May 2023 | **Complete Ch. 5** | See above |
| 9. | June 2023 | **Write & Complete the Epilogue:** *“African refugees - still a problem?”* | The epilogue will summarize the main argument of the book and bring the topic of the OAU refugee convention into the present by providing an outlook on the present refugee management on the African continent. |
| 10. | July 2023 | **Complete the Introduction** *“Decolonization, Cold War, Pan-Africanism and African Refugees”* | Given that the reading of secondary material and primary material has been accomplished and all chapters have been written, the draft Introduction can now be rewritten for the book within one month.  |
| 11. | Aug. 2023 | **Edit** Manuscript | During this time, I plan to edit all chapters for consistency, assemble the complete biography, add a foreword, and, depending on the publisher, an index.  |
| 12. | Sept. 2023 | **Revise** the entire manuscript & **submit** to publisher at the end of the month | Given that I have two months to edit the manuscript, a process that I do not expect to take longer than five weeks, I have intended three weeks as a **buffer zone** for unexpected changes. |

# Research Output

As outlined above, I will submit my complete book manuscript for review to a publisher by the end of the fellowship term. I will have submitted my book proposal to several publishers during the third month of my fellowship period and will have identified an interested publisher by its end. In terms of publishers, my first choice are international university presses such as Cambridge’s *Asylum and Migration Studies Series*, Bristol’s *Global Migration and Social Change Series*, the University of California’s *Critical Refugee Studies Book Series*, or McGill-Queen’s University Press *Refugee and Forced Migration Studies Series*. Further, many good books in my field are also published by academic presses such as in the Berghahn *Migration & Refugee Series* or their *Forced Migration Series*. I am highly motivated to adhere to this time schedule as I need my second book not only under contract but well advanced towards publication by December 2023 to satisfy tenure requirements.

# Writing at the Historical College in Munich

I was privileged to benefit from the concentrated environment of ten months of writing time in the company of colleagues at an international research center during my time as Guest of the Director at re:work in Berlin during 2017 – 18. As a W-2 tenure-track professor I have a period of four years to qualify while teaching eight SWS per semester. I am confident that given my extensive preparatory work, I am in the position to greatly benefit from the fellowship time. The period of undisturbed focus that a stay at the Kaulbach Villa would afford me is essential to the completion of my book manuscript and therefore to the success of my tenure-track evaluation. Munich is an ideal place to write as several exceptional libraries and the proximity to colleagues working on global history at the LMU’s Munich Centre for Global History, the soon-to-be-established Käthe Hamburger Kolleg on Global Dis:connects, and the Institute für Zeitgeschichte are bound to inspire. I believe I can add to the historical college through my focus on post-colonial African and global migration history and I greatly look forward to many a stimulating conversation with the other fellows. I am flexible on when to present and, as mentioned in my cover letter, my suggested presentation title is: *Flüchtlinge? Widerstandskämpfer? Studierende? Wirtschaftsmigranten?: Eine afrikanische Perspektive auf Flucht in der Dekolonisierungszeit*. I would be honored to be selected for a fellowship and would regard my involvement with the college and its affiliates as the beginning of additional future collaborations.

# Short Bibliography

Betts, A. (2021). *The Wealth of Refugees: How Displaced People Can Build Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Engel, U. (2019). The Organisation of African Unity in the 1960s: From Euphoria to Disenchentment.

*Comparativ, 29*(4), 48-67.

Engel, U., L. Schler (2019). Introduction: The Momentous 1960s – Reflections on an African Decade.

*Comparativ 29*(4), 9-12.

Glasman, J. (2017). Seeing like a Refugee Agency: A Short History of UNHCR Classifications in Central Africa (1961-2015). *Journal of Refugee Studies, 30*(2), 337–362.

Ligelbach, J. (2020). *On the Edges of Whiteness: Polish Refugees in British Colonial Africa during and after the Second World War.* New York: Berghahn.

Okoth-Obbo, G. (2001). Thirty years on: A legal review of the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. *Refugee Survey Quarterly 20*(1), 79-138.

Oloka-Onyango, J. (1994). The Place and Role of the OAU Bureau for Refugees in the African Refugee Crisis. *International Journal of Refugee Law, 6*(1), 34-52.

Rosenthal, J. (2015). From ‘migrants’ to ‘refugees’: indentiy, aid, and decolonization in Ngara district, Tanzania. *Journal of African History, 56*, 261-279.

Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shadle, B. L. (2018). Refugees and Migration in African History. In W. W. Charles Ambler, Nwando Achebe (Ed.), *A Companion to African History* (pp. 247-264). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Sharpe, M. (2018). *The Regional Law of Refugee Protection in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tague, J. (2019). *Displaced Mozambicans in Postcolonial Tanzania: Refugee Power, Mobility, Education, and Rural Development*: Routledge.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (1968). *Conference on the Legal, Economic and Social Aspects of African Refugee Problems*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Final Conference Report.

Williams, C. A. (2015). *National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa: a historical ethnography of SWAPO’s exile camps*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

1. CIAS, First Conference of Independent African Heads of State and Government. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22–25 May 1963, Addis Ababa. /Plen.2/Rev.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Global History Dialogues Website](https://globalhistorydialogues.org" \t "_blank) featuring student-researchers’ work from the History Dialogues Project, went live in November 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UNHCR, “Figures at a Glance,” <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>, accessed April 15, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)