Forced Displacement and Humanitarian Action: A Case Study with Syria Refugees

In the wake of the Syria crisis, we see numerous reports documenting the trauma, loss, and stress of communities affected by war and forced displacement; a few also highlight evidence of resilience as Syrian refugees rebuild their lives in new communities. In the Middle East region, the No Lost Generation initiative is one example of a platform grouping together humanitarian programs focused on issues of protection, wellbeing, and social cohesion. While interfacing with donors and the public, such programs embrace a well-articulated narrative of risk and resilience, one in which notions of social justice and human rights surface more or less explicitly. Over the past two years, I directed a research partnership to engage interdisciplinary scholars with the No Lost Generation programming in Jordan. I helped to assess a humanitarian program, evaluating how the impacts of stress can be measured over time and what resilience means for young Syrian refugees and Jordanian hosts living side-by-side in communities heavily impacted by the Syrian crisis. In this presentation, I examine how anthropologists can partner with other scholars and humanitarians to engage in more critical discussions of fairness, dignity, and accountability.