

Asylum and Conversion to Christianity – New Directions in Research

Interdisciplinary Workshop (Online), 7 June 2022

Organised by Dr. Lena Rose (University of Oxford) and Dr. Ebru Öztürk (Mid Sweden University)

Amidst the arrival of many millions of asylum seekers in Europe since 2015, a significant number have based their asylum claim on fear of religious persecution following a conversion to Christianity in their country of origin, in transit, or their host country. In this workshop, we would like to draw together those who research the connection between asylum and conversion to Christianity across different jurisdictions and from different disciplines (e.g. law, anthropology, sociology, socio-legal studies, religious studies, theology, geography) in order to share insights and questions, and build networks across our research field. We also welcome contributions from practitioners (e.g. pastors, lawyers, interpreters, judges).

We particularly invite contributions addressing at least one of four distinct areas:

CREDIBILITY. Each asylum claim based on conversion is assessed by an initial decision-maker (and judge(s), if the case is appealed), employed by states with different secular histories/identities. What counts as credible conversion to Christianity in these hearings? What methods and resources do decision-makers and judges draw upon to arrive at their decisions? How is equality before the law understood and practiced in administrative/migration courts?

STATE AND RELIGION. A tension has arisen between on the one hand, the authority of the state in assessing asylum claims based on conversion to Christianity and on the other hand, churches admitting and potentially baptizing new asylum seeking members. How does this conflict play out in different European states? What kinds of activism does the phenomenon of asylum-seeking converts inspire of each of the actors involved (ministries dealing with migration, courts, churches, asylum-seekers themselves)?

CONVERSION NARRATIVES. How are conversion narratives shaped, and who influences this process? What ideas and experiences of Christianity and/or modernity propel those who convert? How do they coalesce/conflict with ideas and experiences of Christianity in transit or host countries? What kinds of inconsistencies, misunderstandings, or transformations (intercultural, linguistic, etc.) occur in the production of conversion narratives?

MIGRANT STRATEGIES. While asylum systems are often viewed and researched from a national perspective, asylum seekers may move through countries more fluidly. What religious networks, resources, and considerations shape potential onward journeys of asylum seekers who have or are in the process of converting? How do they shape asylum seeker's understanding of Christianity?

As a result of this workshop, we would like to work towards an **edited book** reflecting the state-of-the-art research on asylum and conversion to Christianity from a variety of disciplinary and geographic perspectives.

If you are interested to participate, please submit an abstract of your planned contribution of max. 300 words, as well as a short biography, by **31 March 2022** to lena.rose@csls.ox.ac.uk.