Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration

The Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration (OxMo) is a bi-annual, independent, academic journal engaging in a global intellectual dialogue about forced migration with students, researchers, academics, volunteers, activists, artists, as well as those displaced themselves. By monitoring policy, legal, political and academic developments, OxMo draws attention to the realities of forced migration and identifies gaps in refugee protection.

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A Swedish volunteer sleeps at the entrance to the Moria refugee camp in Greece, hoping to offset a violent police raid. Threats of their tear gas ensured a near constant background tension.

STEPHEN DOVER
Foreword

Dear Reader,

In current thinking and writing about displacement, avenues remain few for young critical thinkers to emerge on the scene and for their perspectives to matter. Knowledge about refugees and migrants is largely produced by people who travel across borders with ease, sometimes perpetuating the very inequalities they seek to spotlight. Over the past nine years, OxMo’s aim has been to invite thinkers, both without - but especially with - personal experiences of forced displacement to push those boundaries and to bring what is happening at the fringes of the debate on forced migration to the front and centre.

This issue provides such an avenue for twenty-one selected articles and art works of up-and-coming academics, practitioners, activists, and artists. Viewing both written and visual input in dialogue with each other, we hope that you will find joy, inspiration, as well as food for thought and action in engaging with their ideas, images, critical reflections, and personal stories.

The featured contributions vary across theme, geographical focus, as well as format, and cut across law, policy, and academic engagement with forced migration. These pieces expand whose voice is heard and what issues are discussed on matters of state policy and law, media representation, as well as humanitarian practices in the field. They offer critique, challenge the status quo, consider successes and provide fresh insights: from second and third generation’s testimonies of upheaval and loss to grass-root volunteerism, the impact of nature on refugees’ well-being, or the oft-ignored actions and perspectives of pacific states and refugee hosting countries in responding to displacement.

For the first time, OxMo also introduces a new space for artistic expressions, thereby adding a creative layer to the narratives around forced migration. We are proud to present in this issue photography from Greece and Uganda, art from an Afghan refugee in Indonesia, as well as poetry in Arabic and Spanish, accompanied by English translations. Together, these pieces give life to the structural injustices and difficulties experienced in forced migration, as well as the strength and beauty that continue to exist within these spaces.

We are excited to draw your attention to OxMo’s brand-new website (‘www.oxforcedmigration.com’), launched in conjunction with this issue. We warmly invite you to visit us online to access individual articles, further explore the visual art featured in this issue, or browse through past issues.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has worked tirelessly to put out OxMo’s Volume 8.1, not least the editors, authors and artists, without whom this issue would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the staff and faculty of the University of Oxford for their continued and strong support of OxMo. A special thank you to Jorica Pamintuan for the graphic design of this issue and to Ivan Veleslavov for his work on OxMo’s new website.

Enjoy reading!

Chloe Marshall-Denton & Lena Kainz
Co-Editors-in-Chief
Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration
A Good Mistake

AMIN

I am proud to call myself a refugee. Being a refugee means that I will not allow oppression to bow me. Iran’s government punishes those who shout for freedom. I was one of those people shouting, and I was forced to leave. This article starts in Iran, where I worked hard to have a normal life. But sometimes people need to pass through the wilderness, and when they arrive to their destination they will be so happy. My story, my amazing experience, is now a part of Europe which people say is free.

After many difficult situations, I realized that the gap between the things that people or media say about culture, government policies towards migrants, language, and people’s behavior, and the reality, is large. After all, I realized that my experience as a migrant and what I thought it would be are totally different. In this article, I try to show the difficulty of a young refugee who was forced to leave his own country and find a new life in a different country. People have told me that I made a mistake migrating. The only mistake was the difference between my thought of what the experience would be and the reality. Nevertheless, it was a good mistake, and a mistake I am proud of.

My journey began when I was forced to leave home at only seventeen. I remember hugging my family before I left. My mother and sister embraced me tightly and I began to shake with fear. My father, with a smile on his face, shook my hand - he wanted me to be strong. I had to become a man if I was going to make from Iran to Europe by myself. This image of my family remains in my mind. It is the last time I saw them, now over two years ago.

After travelling for one night, I reached the border of Iran and Turkey. At this first border, fear and anxiety welled inside me. I didn’t know what would happen. I could be picked up by the police and brought to prison. And even if I successfully crossed the border to Turkey, what then? I had no idea if things would work out. At the same time, I felt relief at leaving Iran. I was finally going to get away from the violence and oppression that plagues the country, and from my own troubles there. In Iran, I was a political and social activist, which made me a government target. I frequently faced police threats and intimidation. I was even imprisoned because of my activism. After being released from the detention center, I knew that I had to leave, because I would always be a target.

After crossing into Turkey, I went straight to Istanbul and waited for my guide - the person who knows how everything works for migrants. The guide told me to wait for another migrant who would arrive that night. I was afraid that being young and alone would make me a target. I couldn’t trust anybody. But in life sometimes you have to make dangerous decisions.

When the time came, myself and five others packed our backpacks with items that would prepare us for any unforeseeable event. We bought big plastic ponchos in case of rain, a few changes of clothes, and a jacket that I hoped would keep me warm enough during my journey. Some fellow travelers from Iraq and Syria in their mid- to late twenties and I decided to buy a big bottle of vodka to keep the cold from entering our bones during the journey overnight. Before we could even open it to warm ourselves, our guide saw the bottle and made us throw it away. The journey would be too dangerous, he said, and we needed to be alert.

By the time we were to begin our journey, our group had grown to at least

1 The author prefers to only use his first name.
twelve people including a father and his three children. At one point, I carried one of the sons on my back so the child wouldn’t get too tired. We didn’t realize how long the walk would be - it was about 5 kilometers through rivers and forest to reach the border of Greece. After walking for hours, the cold was in my bones. My jacket and several layers of clothing were not enough to protect me from the unfathomable cold.

We could see torches of the patrolling Greek police lighting the border between Turkey and Greece. Occasionally, the police headed in our direction and we had to lay on the ground to avoid being seen. I was so scared of the police and of snakes or other dangerous creatures. We tried to rest while waiting for the car that would transport us to our next destination, but it hadn’t arrived yet. We found an abandoned shanty and used it as shelter. It was still so cold, and we were so tired that we tried to sleep even while standing on our feet. Our guide didn’t let us smoke or use a lighter for fear the police would see it. My friend from Iran tried to keep me awake because I was tired and scared and only wanted to sleep. We were so hungry, and the father of the children gave us some biscuits which gave me a little energy. I don’t know why we didn’t bring even a little food…

The car we were expecting didn’t arrive so we had to continue on foot. After some time, we arrived at a narrow freezing river which we had to cross in a boat. One of our group fell in and was submerged under the rushing water. Luckily, we were able to grab him and pull him back on the boat before the river took him. The boat crossed several times to carry everyone, and we could only relax once all the group made it to the other side.

The last obstacle was to get to the car that would take us to Thessaloniki. From there we took a bus to Athens.

In Athens, the situation was very dire for asylum seekers. You must wait for months and months to get papers, and even to get any type of accommodation. At first, I tried to leave right away to Western Europe. I had a contact through the guide who helped me with accommodation and travel plans. The journey was unsuccessful and I had a fight with the man who sold me the passports - they were very expensive and they did not work. Eventually he threatened to kill me so I had to leave the safe house. I slept on the street, but it was very hard to live that way. I was always afraid of violence and theft, and was unable to shower or to get a good night’s sleep. Living on the street I saw many terrible things: I saw my friend sell his body just for a little money, people getting robbed, and drug use.

I tried to ask for asylum. I was hopeful since I had the support of close friends from France, Canada, and Spain who accompanied me to KATEHAK, as asylum seekers call the Ministry of Citizen Protection, named after the nearest subway line. This office provides information on applying for asylum and getting accommodation. We were shocked when the office staff said I didn’t have any option allowing me to apply for asylum. I was at least able to get work permission. Unfortunately, I was unable to find a job. None of the places I applied to knew what to do with my work documents, and they didn’t want to take a chance hiring me. I eventually found a program run by the Greek government and United Nations that pays 90 Euros a month to individual asylum seekers, but it is hard to get enrolled, and this amount of money is nowhere nearly enough to live on.

I had a lot of panic attacks during those first five months in Athens. I couldn’t handle all of the stress and uncertainty. I was not used to living rough and couldn’t comprehend the things I was witnessing. My mind was sick.
I needed accommodation. The shelters were full, the camps were full, and even the illegal squats were full. Especially as an underage male it would be hard to find accommodation. I contacted a social worker at an NGO in Athens I knew to ask her for help with accommodation. Eventually she asked her friends, also volunteers, if I could stay with them. I hoped that the good deeds I had done in the past would give me some good karma, and it worked. She called me back saying that they would take me in. She warned me that they were putting themselves in danger because it is illegal to host minors. I ensured her that I would not cause any problems.

During the four months I lived with the volunteers I tried to find a job, learn the language, get involved in different activities to occupy my mind, and get used to living in Greece. Although I was finally living in a safe place, my mind couldn’t heal itself and I had a very severe panic attack. I ended up staying in the hospital for one week to take rest and strengthen myself. When my friends left, I was alone, but they helped me rent a home and find an unpaid job working with an agency helping other asylum seekers. There, I worked as a translator and helped create programs to assist refugees to explain their situation and adjust to Greek culture.

I was happy to have work, but it was not easy to witness the struggles of the migrants who came to the organization for help. I remember seeing a mother from Afghanistan worried that her daughter was going blind due to the harsh and unsanitary conditions of the camp where they sheltered. But my boss said that there was nothing we could do. When I asked her why, my boss responded this: ‘We can’t help everyone.’

I was very lucky and happy to have met friends, but Greece wasn’t a good situation to live in. I felt there was no progress in my case, and I wasn’t even allowed to study. So, after ten months of living in Athens, I decided again to try to go to Spain.

In Barcelona, I was again alone in the streets. Trying to find a safe place to sleep in the city was impossible, so in the end, I chose to go into the mountains. I felt safer where there were fewer people. I had no money and had asked for help from social services several times but they said ‘There is no help for young people,’ gave me some food and sent me away, back into the mountains.

People weren’t the only thing I had to worry about. One night I had only one apple left. I woke up the next morning to find a wild pig eating the apple. I had no strength to fight with the pig, and cried a lot that morning. I walked all twenty kilometers to Barcelona to ask for help. When I arrived, I was given a lunch ticket and was able to get some food. I was told of a shelter so I went there but it was so full and the waiting period was more than two weeks.

I was so sick and lost twenty kilograms in one month and sometimes couldn’t even walk because I was so weak. I kept thinking, ‘Why do I deserve these problems and why doesn’t the government have any help or some options?’ I was frustrated, tired and angry. I missed my family, and just wanted a basic standard of living – not to be hungry and scared all the time. My heart fluttered and I felt dizzy – I was having another panic attack. I went to the hospital but they didn’t respond to me since my panic attack was over. I wondered why, when a young person needed help, all the doors seemed to be closed.

Back in Barcelona, I went to meetings with a new friend from Europe and I was able to find friends to host me for a while. Again, a volunteer helped me and we found a place with proud Catalanians. They hosted me without any aim, just out of kindness. They were amazing friends then and still are.

The government called me after three months to come in for an interview. After some time, the Red Cross gave
me a place to stay with people from different countries. They also put me in a program to learn Spanish and get to know the city. After that, I began to rent a room, to study, and even found a job. I just wanted to start a normal life.

The papers that the government gave me weren’t enough to live a normal life as a part of society. I was unable to even open a bank account. I wondered why the government didn’t inform the banks about these documents for asylum seekers or find a way to allow us to open bank accounts.

I am still waiting in Barcelona for the verdict of my asylum claim. Nevertheless, I feel so lucky, especially after all I have been through, and I think about the young boys still sleeping on the streets of Athens and Barcelona.

Now I no longer fear for my life, as I did in Iran, and I am finally in a place where I can start my life. I spend my days writing about my experience, volunteering with NGOs and political organisations which help immigrants and minors. The only thing that stands between me and the life that I have begun, is a decision by the state. If I am granted refugee status, I can stay and make a life for myself. But I don’t know what their decision might be. I am no longer a minor and if I am rejected I don’t know what I will do. Should I start a new journey? I’m not sure. I am scared to start from zero again. I believe in #noborders. And I would love to work towards this aim.

The author

My name is Amin. At twelve years old, I joined different social and political movements. I was also able to travel to different countries, like Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq, which opened my eyes to different realities. My broader understanding opened my mind and allowed me to publish and connect with special people, and even start an organization, learning how to create a website, and becoming part of a big political organization fighting for social justice in Iran. At seventeen, I was forced to leave my country for Europe after being detained by the government and enduring corporal punishment. At nineteen years old, I currently live in Barcelona, where I work, study, and have joined social movements to help immigrants and others in the Spanish society.
Imagine You are a Refugee
Kinda Hawasli

I never thought that I would make my story public or share my feelings, which I always try to hide. I never expected that my life, which I had planned, would turn upside down, and everything would change, and everything would be destroyed.

When I say everything, it doesn’t only mean my professional career, my practical experience, my home, my future, my dreams, and my hopes. Everything also means my humanity, my feelings, my thoughts, and my outlook on life. All of that happened when I was named refugee, only a refugee.

Previously, the meaning of being a refugee was not clear to me. Although my country received and embraced many refugees, being inside the experience is very different from dealing with it from the outside.

There are a lot of stories, feelings, and thoughts carried by this ‘refugee’, whom you may come across on public transportation, or on the streets. You might look at him with pity or anger, and continue your life as if nothing had happened. If you are interested in understanding the asylum status and experiencing some of the feelings it brings about, finish reading these lines. These words may help you see the world from the perspective of millions of refugees, who are increasing day by day.

But first, I want you to know that when I share my feelings, I don’t want your sympathy or your pity. I want your understanding and only that.

I want you to be aware of how you will affect humanity if you become a decision-maker in the future, especially if you rely on false biases, negative stereotypes, judge people based on appearances, and ignore people’s lived experiences. It is only for this reason that I share my black box with you.
بداية الدوامة

الآن، إن كنت جاهزاً، أغمض عينيك وتخيل معي لدقائق أنك لاجئ، ستكون بطل قصتي اليوم الذي سيتعرّف عليه الأشخاص الآخرين لأول مرة. البداية حتماً لا توجد نسبياً للعبة الفردية التي ستشتهر بها، ستكون آخر الفصول في حياتك أن تكون في حالة واحدة جيدة. أطمئن والنوم في الحفرة ولن تتطأر أبنائك من البرد، ولن تلدغهم الأفاعي والعقارب .. أطمئن أنت في آمن.

بداية ستجد كما في الأفلام السينمائية أن حياتك الملؤّة الرتيبة في مدينتك قد انقلبت إلى رمادية، وأن بلادك البسيطة الفقيرة التي طالما احتضنتك وأوّلتك وجارت عليك وظلمتك وأتعبتك، قد أصبحت مكاناً خيفياً لأسباب متنوعة قد تكون حرباً أو كارثة طبيعية أو حتى كارثة بشرية كأن يتسلم ديكتاتور معمزم الساحة ويقرر أن يتوزع الحمولة على الشعب إلى عيد مباركة من العام. وفي هذه الحالة سيكون خيارك الأوليّ الصمود والنضال والصبر والتشبث بأرضك وأحلامك، ومع هذا الثبات المصطنع تدور في عقلك ملايين الأسئلة وملايين الحوارات.

ماذا لو ساءت الأمور أكثر من ذلك؟ ماذا لو خسرت أحداً من عائلتي؟ هنا يبدأ ثقبل اللجوء الأسود بابتلاعك، وأنت تنظر إلى أطفالك الصغار وقد حرموا من طفولتهم، وتشاهد رسوماتهم البريئة وقد امتلأت بالقذائف والطائرات الحربية والدماء المنتشرة هنا وهناك، وتراقب الهلع في عيونهم وتخوّفهم من كُل شيء، وتشعر أنك لا تساعد حكاياتهم العربية مع ملايين الأسئلة والحوارات.

ستبدأ حكميّات حياتك وت졌يز للمغادرة - هذا إن أسفك الحظ - وقد تجد نفسك دون حقائب ودون ذكريات تحمل أطفالك. ستتجه إلى آخر الحفرة عاجزة عن التمسك، وتشهد رسوماتهم التي كانت قد تمرّت جراء الأحداث، وتلتقي نظرًا وداعًا، وأنت تفكر أن كل شيء سيكمن على مديان، وأن هذه الرحلة السريعة ستكون مغامرة قصيرة ستنتهي بالعودة إلى المنزل قريبًا، ليكملوا اللعب بدأً من المهرة وإبرادواٌ لذيذة التي تجذر بها العيد. هنا. وأنت تفكر باحتياً على الأعان المؤقتة، سيكون الخوف مسيطرًا على كل شيء، لذا أطمئن لن تشعر وقتًا بأي آمر، ستكون منهكًا متجاوبًا غاية ألمك، ستكون لن يكمل الأمل أن تتمكن على الأرض وتنام، وقد تكون_Assay حظًاً لو فكرت بالسفر مبكراً إلى أي دولة جارٍ، قبل أن تقرر...
Catching your breath

You might have luckily thought about travelling before any of your neighbouring countries decided to shut their door in your face and refuse you entry.

At this stage, the stories and the details vary, the suffering and duration vary, but it is definitely a temporary place of safety. You will repeat many, many times to yourself and those around you that this is a temporary stage and you will be forced to return when things calm down.

Everything will change in this new land. Your life will be colourful again after a long time of living in dark grey. You will hear clamour and music instead of the sound of explosions and moaning. Your children will be excited, and they will ask you questions about many things they do not know as a result of their tragic childhood.

Here, please take a breath and enjoy these few tranquil moments after the long fatiguing journey.

Dealing with your difficult choices

At this time, you will be in a neighbouring country studying your options. You will compare the difference between temporary stability and moving to a destination with better opportunities. You will try to acquire the three most important necessities for your life as a refugee: shelter, a smartphone, and the Internet.

You will start looking, dear lucky refugee, for shelter for your family, after inquiring about housing options and doing several financial estimates. You are looking just for walls with a roof to preserve your privacy and humanity, and ensure your children's safety, but please note that this isn’t an easy task.
مخدّرة بعد صدمة الرحيل، وبينما تعيد ترتيب حياتك وتعد لأسرتك التوازن تلجأ ل الهاتف الذكي الذي قد يراعك الجميع، لا يجب أن يمتلكه من هو في مثل وضعك، فهم لا يدركون أن ما تبقى من عالمك يبقى فيه، ففعلت تلك المثلثات في أرجاء الأرض أفكارك وأصدقائك. صورك القديمة، وأخبار بلادك كلها ستكون في هذه القطعة الجامدة التي ستدفع من أجلها مئات الدولارات.

وبينما أنت غارق في استعادة توازنك، ستغزو عقولك أسئلة جديدة تتعلق بك تفكيرك وتستمع إلى أسئلة جبريل. ستخطط لنفسك كيف ستكون أصغرها. ستقوم بتقنين خريطة العالم وتستكشفها، ستقوم بتقنين شكل الحدود والدول، وتتعلم عن الأوروباasti وحقوق اللاجئين، وستتعلم عن الأونروا ومكاتب الأمم المتحدة، وجمعيات حقوق الإنسان، وتستمع إلى القصص المؤلمة، وتستمع إلى القصص الفاشلة، وتستمع إلى القصص الملهمة، وتستمع إلى القصص الفاشلة، وتستمع إلى القصص الملهمة.

ستكون هذه القطعة الجامدة التي ستكون给你駻千 دولاراً.

وكثير من الأسئلة التي ستكون لك في هذه القطعة الجامدة تتعلق بك تفكيرك وتستمع إلى أسئلة جبريل. ستقوم بتقنين خريطة العالم وتستكشفها، ستقوم بتقنين شكل الحدود والدول، وتتعلم عن الأوروباasti وحقوق اللاجئين، وستتعلم عن الأونروا ومكاتب الأمم المتحدة، وجمعيات حقوق الإنسان، وتستمع إلى القصص المؤلمة، وتستمع إلى القصص الفاشلة، وتستمع إلى القصص الملهمة.

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وكثير من الأسئلة التي ستكون لك في هذه القطعة الجامدة تتعلق بك تفكيرك وتستمع إلى أسئلة جبريل. ستقوم بتقنين خريطة العالم وتستكشفها، ستقوم بتقنين شكل الحدود والدول، وتتعلم عن الأوروباasti وحقوق اللاجئين، وستتعلم عن الأونروا ومكاتب الأمم المتحدة، وجمعيات حقوق الإنسان، وتستمع إلى القصص المؤلمة، وتستمع إلى القصص الفاشلة، وتستمع إلى القصص الملهمة.
المشاعر القاتلة

حبد صراع طويل ستتحسن أمرك بتردد. ستستمضي فيما خططت له، سواء وصلت إلى وجهتك أم أثرت البقاء في مكانك. سيكون عليك البدء بترتيب حياتك من جديد بعد أن عزمت على حط الرحال. وفي مكانك الجديد وبعد أن يرتاج جسدك المتعب وتظن أن حياتك بدأت تنتمى في سياقها الإنساني ولو بشكل مؤقت، تبدأ تلك المشاعر المخدرة اللعينة بالظهور، وتبدأ تلك الأسئلة المؤجلة باجتياج عقلك رويداً رويداً.

هل كان الخروج خياراً صائباً؟ ألم يكن من الأفضل البقاء في بلادي والصبر؟

ماذا عن من بقي هناك؟ هل سأعود؟ ماذا عن بيتها والائتي؟

هل قصرت؟ أين أخطأت؟

ماذا وصلنا إلى هناك؟ مالذي حدث حتى كانت النهاية مروعة إلى هذا الحد؟

وينتمي إلى أذنيك أصوات رفاق الدرب وصحاتهم التي خرجوا بها إلى الشوارع مطالبين بحياة أفضل، وستتذكر نغالكم معهم حول تفاصيل المستقبل الذي خططتم لنائحته. وستعيش مجدداً غصة الألم عند تنذك لحظة استشهاد أحدهم أمام ناظرك أو لحظة

_attempts. You will think again, and again, and weigh your present options here with those of other places.

You will face death closely, and the most important question will be, would it be better to die alone in this dangerous, deadly experience? Or to die as a family together?

Would it be better to cross the ocean using small, old boats or hiding inside cargo trucks?

Would sinking be the easier option? Or to die in the forests and jungles? Or to be shot by guards at the border?

You will know that you are breaking the rules, challenging the countries’ security and risking everything—gambling with a high probability of loss. You will have to decide between risky and riskier choices in your struggle for safety and stability.

You will make your decision with hesitation. You will either go forward with your plan of reaching your new destination or stay put in your current place.
Deadly feelings

In the new land, you will begin your life again. As you rest your tired body, and just when you think that your life is starting to get organised, feelings of doubt will begin to resurface. Was it a good decision? Would it have been better to stay patiently in my country? What has come of those who stayed behind? When will I return? What about my family, my home? Have I neglected my duties? Where did I go wrong? Why did we get here? What happened to cause such a terrible outcome?

At some point, you may remember the voices of your companions and their loud cries in the streets demanding a better life. You will remember your passionate discussions on what you all planned to build. When you remember the moment one of them was killed or the moment someone was arrested and taken to an unknown place, you will relive the pain. You will blame yourself, feel guilty about your sense of safety, for not sacrificing enough, for being alive.

Believe me, dear lucky refugee, these questions will be more exhausting than any of the travelling. Your attempts to find convincing answers to silence the noise in your head will not work most of the time. And you will feel worse day by day.

But, do you know what will be the worst? The sudden nostalgia and memories that you’ve tried hard to avoid, which will surface after you smell something related to your country, or see a tree, a flower, or a scene that brings back a previous memory. Or when you pass through a street and recall that it’s similar to a street in your distant country. You will enter a difficult spiral, where you have only two choices: giving in to the sadness of the memory, or wrestling to escape the memory and delete it like pressing Alt+Ctr+Del.

But, be warned. This process often fails and your memories will attack again.

During these struggles, you will notice that your kids are growing up without any images of their country. Their happy
في ساحة المقايضات السياسية... 
ويتمحور عن عمل يقيق ذل السؤال، بعد أن رمت شهاداتك وخبراتك وسنواتك الدراسية وراء ظهرك، ومحتو كلامك. وبدأت من تحت الصفر... 
تستغل كل فرصة سانحة وتجرب كل الخبرات... 
الحياة المحتلة، لا تنسى - أيها اللاجئ المحظوظ - أن تتخلص يومياً على لفظ كلمات الشكر والإمتنان باللغة الجديدة التي فرضت عليك، وأن تتجوز مسبقاً لتوفر من كل مناطق أنك مواطن صالح الإيجابي الفعال الممتل لما قدم له، وأن تحفظ الأدبيات المطلوبة للمثلك المعتاد عن ظهر قلب، تشرح من خلالها باللغة الجديدة التي لم تتمكن منها بعد أيًا معقدة يصعب عليك فهمها، والخشوع من ذلك كله أن تتقن "فن الاعتذار". فعليك أيها اللاجئ المحظوظ أن تتدرب دائمًا عما إذا كنت أو عن ما يجري عنك، وأن تتحمل مسؤولية أخطاء اللاجئين الآخرين والمحاقين والسلوك مثير لمبرر في أشعار الدنيا، وأن تقبل بإلهامك إبقاء نظرات الاستنكار واللوم، وأن تعزز رأيك موقفاً الجماعي، ولا تنسى أن تعذر لأنك أزنت العالم ممكناً 
وعليك -عزيزي القارئ- أن تقبل أن اسمك الجديد "اللاجئ" سيُكرر في الأخبار مرةً واحدًا، وستصبح السبب وراء نصف مشاكل العالم وفشل الحكومات، وستتفق بأفكار السنة السياسية الذين سيتفافرون بالأموال التي منحتها حكوماتهم "الإنسانية" لحضارتك الكريمة، تلك التي صرف حزم كبير منها على المؤسسات والجهات والمنظمات المعترضة برامجه الاجتماعية ملحوظةً بك وعصره، ومستماثقة وواحدة جمهورها بأنها ستطهر بلدنا من شروط، قابل كل ذلك بنفس الالتزام بشروط، وبانسحاباً هز رأسك إيجاباً، وإياك أن تتعذر أو تظهر حزنك، لهذا تعتذر أنك مالم بالتعويض، واعمل أنك كان على إقامة دافع أو جسد هذه البلد فستظل غريباً وسيراً على جميع دائماً و في كل فرصة وكل حين يأتى من أصول لاجئ، ماذا تدلي لذي الكنيت لآسف عليك ولكن أعتقد أن هذه الرحلة التخلية أُعتبِت حاليًاً لذلك، اقترح moments and childhood are associated with the new place, and they are trying hard to forget all the horrifying images they carry from their country.

Here you realize the danger. Your children are losing touch with their homeland, especially as they learn a new language in their new schools. This means returning to your country will be more difficult.

In your free time, you will make an effort to re-connect your children with their homeland. You may even have to lie sometimes when you talk about the beauty and the great life you had in your country, trying to confuse them with the same passion you have for your country that continues to grow in your heart without any reason. You will try to hide your tears as you attempt to answer their confusing and difficult questions with the simple, logical answers they want about why all these terrible things happened.

Don't be sad when you throw out your certificates, your experiences, your education, and everything you had planned as you struggle hard to find work that can provide you with a decent life.

In the midst of political bartering...

You will start from the beginning and take advantage of every opportunity available. Do not forget, dear refugee, to learn words for gratitude in the new language. Prepare to prove at every occasion that you are a good citizen who is grateful for everything given to you. And memorise hard all the expected answers which explain your complicated, difficult case in the new language which you are not familiar with.

And most importantly, you need to become an expert at apologising. You, dear lucky refugee, have to apologise and take responsibility for other refugees in every corner of the world. You have to take
The author

Kinda Hawasli holds a BA in Civil Engineering from Damascus University and a Diploma in Architecture, Urban Development for Sustainable Reconstruction in Syria from Lund University. Kinda has five years of experience in journalism and news editing, research experience, and has published a number of reports, most of them focusing on women’s issues. In 2015, Kinda received a Research Innovation Award from Rushd University. As a Syrian refugee, Kinda also contributes to many volunteer activities with different Syrian organisations and teams. She is married and has three kids.

The author would like to thank a friend, who wishes to remain anonymous, for providing photo materials for this article. The photographs were taken in Douma, north east of Damascus, Syria.

responsibility for economic, health, political, and environmental crises that happen here, or in any other place—it’s all on you.

You have to accept that your new name—refugee—will be repeated in the news again and again, and you will be blamed for any failures or difficulties faced by countries. You will be the main subject of many politicians’ stories, who will be proud of the money that their ‘humanitarian’ governments give for your sake, which is spent on conferences, workshops and luxury meetings held in five-star hotels.

Don’t be upset when the opposition parties use you as a part of their election strategy, promising their audience to deal with your cases and cleanse their country from your evil.

Face all of this with an idiotic smile, and don’t forget to shake your head with positivity. Do not allow anyone to notice your objections or your grief. Because it would be rude and would deny what has been given to you.

Please remember that even if you get permanent residence or nationality, you will always be a stranger, and everyone will remind you at every opportunity that you were at one point a refugee.

I still have a lot to tell you, but I think that this imaginary journey has tired you. You can now sit back and breathe deeply and return to your life. But please do not forget your humanity when you make any decisions. Please reconsider your country’s policies, the international community’s policies, and think deeply about whether these policies have been successful in making the world a more humane place.
محظوظ انت يا سيدي
You are Lucky
OUSAMA HAJI HASAN

هناك من يقضي الليل وحيدا ولا يشعر يعنى النهار
محظوظ انت لست جائع
تستطيع ان تحضر ل😉نانق قهوتك المعتاد
و تختار وجبة الغداء كما ترغب
وبمجرد إذا شعرت بالملل تستطيع أن تجلس على إحدى الطاولات المطاعم عند العشاء
بينما الطعام بالنسبة للآخرين هو حلم
محظوظ انت أن الشتاء لديك دافئ
تستطيع الهرب من الشتاء إلى المدافئ التي تنتظر
تستطيع ان تصدع إلى سيارتك حتى لا يبلبل المطر ثيابك
اما الآخرون عاجزون حتى ان يتجبون طرود الشتاء
أما الشتاء هو مكان رومانسي لك حتى ممارس الحب
اما الآخرون هو مكان مظلم ومخيف

محظوظ يا سيدي
انك تشعر بالشفقة على الآخرين
و لست تستحق الشفقة
محظوظ يا سيدي لست تغير اسمك
لم تغير مكانك ولاموطنك
رغم انك تذهب للسياحة
و زيارة الأصدقاء عندما ترغب
و حتى لو كانوا يبعدون آلاف الأميال
محظوظ انت يا سيدي
انك كامل الجسد
تستطيع الوقوف و السير
لا تحتاج من يعنى حتى تصل إلى الطعام والشراب
و لا ان يدفع كرسي لك ذو عجلات
محظوظ انت تستطيع الحديث هناك من يصمى لك
بينما الكثير يسمعون أنفسهم فقط أنفسهم
محظوظ انت تستطيع أن تصر محدثك
بينما هناك الكثير يحتاج لأن ينسوا أنفسهم
محظوظ ان ذاكرتك تساعدك عندما ترغب
بينما كثيرون نسوا حتى أنفسهم
و ليس لديهم هوية أو عنوان
محظوظ انت يا سيدي انك لا تفكر كم لديك من الحظ
و لا بتعاة الآخرين الذين تخلى الحظ عنهم

محظوظ انت يا سيدي لأنك تقرأ هذه الكلمات
اما آخرون يعجزون حتى عن قراءة أسماءهم
اعذرني ان كان لديك الكثير من الحظ
و لم أكتب عنه كما يجب
رغم انك تستحق الكثير
و أكثر مما كتبت
مؤكد انك لن تغير العالم
او تزيل البؤس و الشقاء
فقط فكر كم لديك من الحظ كل يوم دون أن تشعر
وكم الاخرون لا يملكون

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You are lucky

There are people who spend the night alone
and don’t remember the touch of daylight

You are lucky, not hungry

You can wake and have your usual coffee,
then choose your lunch

and even if you are bored you can sit at the table in the restaurant to have dinner

While others can only dream of food

You are lucky that in the winter you have warmth

You can escape, a fireplace waits for you

You can stay in your car so your clothes stay dry
while the others can’t avoid it

Winter is a romantic place for you to fall in love;
for others, it is only dark

You are lucky because you can feel pity for others

and don’t need pity from others

You are lucky because you didn’t change your name,
your place, or your home

You go on vacation. And visit friends whenever you want,
even if they are far away
You are lucky because your body is healthy
    You can stand and walk
You don’t need help to reach for food or drink
    Or someone to push your wheelchair
You can speak, and people will listen
    While others only hear themselves
You can see and you don’t need glasses
    While many are blind
your memory helps you when you want to remember
    While the others forget
who they are
You are lucky that you don’t think about how much luck you have
    and you don’t need to think about others
You are sure you won’t change the world, and you won’t remove misery
    Just think that others don’t have your luck
You are lucky because you are able to read these words
    While others they aren’t even able to read their names
Excuse me if you have luck
that I have forgotten to write about.

The author
My name is Ousama Haji Hasan. I am a Syrian refugee who relocated from Greece to Cyprus. I graduated with a degree in law from a university in Syria, and I plan to continue my Master’s degree when I get the chance. During my university studies, I started writing and sharing poems and prose. Because of the war, I left Syria and stopped writing. Now that I am starting to organise my life again, I also picked up writing again and am working on a novel. I published a poem with a Danish magazine a few months ago, and ‘You Are Lucky’ is my second poem. In the future, I hope to publish more.
¿Refugiados o repudiadíos?
Refugees or the Disavowed?
Alberto Grajales García

Alguien hizo esta pregunta:
¿Quiénes son los refugiados?

Todavía no encuentro su exacta definición

Yo intento comprender, ellos podrían ser:
supervivientes ignorados, trashumantes sin destino,
campesinos errantes sin tierra ni arado,
viudas estoicas de ojos áridos por tanto llorar,
niños con carga de adulto madurados en la adversidad,
ciudadanos indefensos huyendo de una guerra
para conservar la vida... un bien prioritario y esencial,
jóvenes decepcionados buscadores de un mejor futuro
que no aceptan las armas como único oficio,
familias expoliadas de sus bienes,
de sus hijos y de su tranquilidad,
perseguidos por su libre conciencia
por su libre expresión,
victimas eternizadas de todos los conflictos
que asuelan los países desde que tenemos memoria,
historia repetida violencia cíclica,

¿Serán tal vez?
extranjeros advenedizos en sociedades intolerantes
rechazados y estigmatizados,
pasto de lobos hambrientos
comida fácil para autoridades migratorias
asquerosamente corruptas, que ponen trabas
o se inventan faltas para extraer dinero
o presionar a las mujeres exigiendo un favor sexual.
A veces podrían ser personas consideradas indeseables para los políticos de turno que niegan el asilo o marcan con el hierro candente de la desconfianza para esconder la falta de reglas coherentes en materia de asilo y refugio, víctimas también de burócratas insensibles que tramitan sus solicitudes con desdén y displicente lentitud.

¿Serán tal vez? ciudadanos incómodos invisibles para su gobierno que casi nunca son mencionados en sus informes, fuente de ingresos para algunas organizaciones que solo ven en ellos una fuente para lucrarse, los refugiados son seres humanos que sufren que a veces son degradados en su dignidad y son vistos por una parte de la sociedad como seres marginales y debido a su precariedad deben mendigar una ayuda, un trabajo...

una oportunidad

La pregunta aún está abierta
¿Quiénes son los refugiados?
sí alguien sabe la respuesta es necesario decirlo
millones de personas se lo agradecerán.

Someone asked the question: Who are the refugees?
I still have not found an exact definition
I try to understand, they could be:
ignored survivors, transient beings with no destination,
wandering peasants with no land or plow,
stoic widows with dry eyes from so much crying,
children with adult baggage matured in adversity,
helpless citizens fleeing from a war to preserve life...a primary and essential good,
disappointed youth seeking a better future that do not accept weapons as their occupation
families plundered from their goods, from their children and their serenity, persecuted for their free conscience, for their free expression, eternal victims of all the conflicts that destroy countries since before we can remember history repeated, cyclical violence, Could that be them, maybe?
Foreign outsiders in intolerant societies Rejected and stigmatized,
Food for hungry wolves Easy targets for migration authorities Disgustingly corrupt, that place traps Or invent faults to extract money Or pressure women demanding a sexual favor.
Sometimes they can be people considered undesirable by the politicians in turn that deny asylum or brand distrust with a burning iron to hide
The lack of coherent rules when it comes to asylum and refuge, Victims also of insensitive bureaucrats That process their requests with disdain and apathetic slowness Could that be them, maybe? Uncomfortable citizens invisible to their government
Almost never mentioned in their reports,
Sources of income for some organizations
That only see in them a source for enriching themselves.
Refugees are human beings that suffer
That are sometimes denied their
dignity and
to be seen by a part of society
as marginal beings and due to their precarity
must beg for help, for work…
one opportunity
The question remains open
Who are the refugees?
If someone knows the answer it’s necessary
to say it
millions of people will thank you.

The author
Alberto Grajales García (born in Neira, Caldas, Colombia) is a narrator and poet with a strong interest in social dynamics. He started writing at an early age, and entered poetry as a teenager. Creating narratives has been taking over most of his literary work. In his novels, short stories and stories for children, the characters are part of Colombia’s urban experience in recent decades. He has lived in Colombia, Chile and Ecuador, and currently lives in Canada. The experiences in feelings expressed in this poem are based on his personal experiences, and the reason for writing it is to share them with others.
At three times its intended capacity, living conditions in Greece’s Moria camp deteriorated to such an extent that the camp’s Kurdish population self-evacuated. With nowhere to go, they made their way to Mytilene, sleeping in parks or on the streets. Fleeing ethnic violence, roughly 300 Kurdish refugees sought shelter on a football pitch for almost three months before being relocated to Athens.

When unprecedented numbers of refugees arrived to Lesvos in the Spring of 2015 a hotspot mechanism was implemented, with Moria camp soon becoming the most infamous of these hotspots. Essentially, a hotspot mechanism requires formal camps to allow for processing and potential deportation. Another practice has been to impose geographic restrictions, meaning asylum seekers may spend up to a year in the hotspot region. While this may appear like a structured approach, the lack of a coherent European migration policy has further diluted institutional responsibility and intensified issues such as long-term integration, radicalisation, as well as people’s mental and physical well-being.
After several days, many Kurdish refugees had relocated to either the volunteer-run camp PIKPA, or the House of Humanity centre, which operated out of a sports facility. I was present there with one of several grass-roots NGOs that assisted with distributing water, food, and clothing. These images cover the initial arrival and the uncertainty that followed.

Among the many problems with the asylum process is that the authorities do not distinguish between arrivals from the same country of origin. Ideally, this is to prevent discrimination. In practice, however, it means asylum seekers from different sides of a civil war are forced to live beside each other. ‘We came to escape these people, and find here the same’ a community representative told me. In Syria, his hand had been mutilated as punishment for smoking.

The events following the establishment of this emergency accommodation revealed many of the structural absurdities that form the European migrant crisis. A constant state of fear does not allow for people to truly escape the conflict. Instead, custodial detention facilities create a deep sense of hopelessness further compounding perpetual instability. While those who left Moria each had their own reason for doing so, as they had when they initially left for Europe, claims of targeted violence and acts of self-determination were absorbed back into the architecture of Europe’s border control.
(1) This was one of the first food distributions, which happened twice a day. As time went on it became more and more difficult to raise funds to cover nutrition and sanitation.

(2) Women were given access to showers off site. The facility was so small the service could not be extended to men. They constructed a make-shift shower around a tap.

(3) View of camp after two weeks. While others choose to relocate to Athens or return to Moria roughly 300 people chose to remain on the grounds due to safety concerns.
An Islamic State slogan was spray painted beside the gates of Moria, a warning not to return. I was told there were many more Islamic State symbols inside the camp. Confirmed later by German intelligence, a small gang appropriate the reputation of IS to control prostitution and drug rings. While it is uncertain if these sympathies are sincerely held, the gang had taken control of the area where the Kurds were previously accommodated.

The photographer
Stephen Dover is a freelance photographer from Dublin, Ireland. He has a Masters in Geopolitics and The Global Economy from UCD and is interested in nationalism and identity formation. He can be contacted through stephendover@live.ie.

To view more of Stephen’s photographs, please visit www.oxforcedmigration.com.
This article examines the ethical obligations of UNHCR and state actors in implementing cessation by comparing UNHCR’s cessation procedures for refugees from Rwanda, Liberia, and now Myanmar. In evaluating how UNHCR’s approach to Chin refugees from Myanmar diverges from past policies, the article raises concerns regarding UNHCR and state obligations when administering cessation procedures. It highlights the issues that arise in cessation determination procedures for states, individuals, UNHCR, and advocates both in the country of asylum and in the country of origin. This analysis seeks to demonstrate that transparent decision-making and adherence to ethical obligations are paramount in carrying out cessation measures in the future.

Introduction

In mid-2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced a plan to end the international protection of Chin refugees from Myanmar, who predominately reside in Malaysia, India, and Thailand (APRRN 2018). The rationale for this decision was that fundamental and durable changes had occurred in Myanmar, and consequently Chin refugees no longer required international protection under UNHCR’s mandate. After an extended advocacy effort by the Chin community and civil society, including media pressure, UNHCR announced in March 2019 a withdrawal of the initial assessment, noting fundamental and durable changes had not, in fact, occurred, and that Chin refugees continued to require international protection. Though no Chin refugees ultimately lost status, trauma reverberated in the community. Moreover, Chin asylum seekers in Malaysia continue to have their refugee claims rejected en masse. Though this is not the first time UNHCR has implemented cessation procedures, it is the first time UNHCR has announced plans to withdraw international protection without lengthy planning, transparency, and responsibility sharing agreements from states and stakeholders.

The Cessation Clause

The 1951 Refugee Convention (the Convention) created an international framework to confer refugee status upon individuals who have fled their country due to a fear of persecution on the basis of their race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group. In states that are not party to the Convention or where the government does not conduct Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for whatever reason, UNHCR may conduct RSD in lieu of the government and recognise individuals as refugees under its own mandate.

The underlying rationale of this regime is to provide individuals with a form of surrogate protection in the absence of meaningful national protection in their country of origin. Accordingly, the Convention and subsequent 1967 Protocol enshrine legal rights and protections for those with refugee status, which are to last only for as long as such international protection is required. This is written into the Convention in the form of the ‘Cessation Clause’ at Article 1(C)(5) and (6). This clause states that a refugee will no longer qualify for international protection where the circumstances that led to their becoming refugees
have ceased to exist and/or effective protection has been re-established in the country of origin or asylum.

UNHCR has developed a Handbook (2011) and several Guidelines (1997; 2003) for decision-makers to use when assessing whether cessation is appropriate. Firstly, cessation requires that a fundamental and durable change has taken place in the entire country of origin. The focus of the assessment should: (i) address the causes of displacement which led to the granting of refugee status; (ii) evaluate the consequences of cessation on refugees; and (iii) consider the experiences of returnees to the country of origin. Developments which show significant and profound change should be given time to stabilise before any decision on general cessation is made; UNHCR has recommended a minimum timeframe of 12 to 18 months, with the average standard being five years (1997). Moreover, the Cessation Guidelines require that ‘in determining whether circumstances have changed so as to justify cessation under Article 1C(5) or (6), another crucial question is whether the refugee can effectively re-avail him or herself of the protection of his or her own country’ (UNHCR 2003: 5). The Cessation Guidelines further explain that such protection must be more than ‘mere physical security or safety’ and should include, inter alia, a functioning government and legal system, and ‘adequate infrastructure to enable residents to exercise their rights, including their right to a basic livelihood’ (Ibid). The UNHCR Handbook clarifies that the cessation clauses should be interpreted strictly and restrictively. Moreover, UNHCR Cessation Guidelines (2003: 3) emphasise that ‘cessation practices should be developed in a manner consistent with the goal of durable solutions’ and ‘the principle that conditions within the country of origin must have changed in a profound and enduring manner before cessation can be applied’.

Case Studies

Using Rwanda and Liberia as case studies, we can see how, historically, decision-makers – both UNHCR and governments in affected States – have worked together to deal with protracted and large refugee populations when the need for international protection appears to come to an end. In both cases, a comprehensive strategy was devised by UNHCR over many years, with adequate flexibility for change based on the situation. In late 2009, at the 60th Session of the Executive Committee (EXCOM), UNHCR announced a ‘Comprehensive Solutions Strategy’ to begin returning Rwandan and Liberian refugees and invoking cessation of their refugee status. These strategies were comprised of four components: (i) enhancing promotion of voluntary repatriation and reintegration; (ii) pursuing opportunities for local integration or alternative legal status in countries of asylum; (iii) continuing to meet the needs of those individuals unable to return to their country of origin for protection-related reasons; and (iv) elaborating a common schedule leading to the cessation of refugee status.

The following section compares cessation procedures implemented in the wake of previous displacement from Rwanda and Liberia, respectively, with UNHCR’s recent cessation plans in response to the displacement of Chin refugees from Myanmar.

Rwanda

In 1994, the Rwandan genocide caused over two million people to flee the country, settling in neighbouring countries where they lived as refugees. In 2002, UNHCR began promoting voluntary repatriation for those displaced by the conflict and interested in returning home safely (Mutuli 2003). Over the following decade, UNHCR worked with the Rwandan government
and countries of asylum to draft and sign multiple agreements to ensure safe, dignified, and voluntary returns to Rwanda. In late 2009, UNHCR (2011) announced a more in-depth strategy to begin returning Rwandan refugees and invoking cessation of their refugee status. The goal was to implement this strategy fully by 2011. In the ‘Comprehensive Solutions Strategy’ UNHCR published recommendations including an assessment of the situation in Rwanda, with a comprehensive overview of the ‘fundamental and crucially positive changes’ since the 1994 genocide (ibid). After a review of progress in 2011, UNHCR extended this date to 2012, and then later to 2013, citing the need for improved facilitation of the agreed-upon procedures. This entire process included conversations with government officials from 21 African countries hosting Rwandan refugees, allowing refugee communities to conduct Rwandan site visits to determine the changes in country, as well as visits to exiled communities by UNHCR and the Rwandan government to update them on the current situation in Rwanda.

Over 3.1 million Rwandan refugees returned home, and UNHCR monitored returns for a decade, acknowledging there were some challenges for returnees, mainly from an economic perspective. In 2015, UNHCR and relevant states again met to assess the situation, as many Rwandans continued to live in exile, afraid or unwilling to return to Rwanda. UNHCR (2016) announced they would not be able to offer support for the Rwandan population after 2017 and encouraged interested states to continue to implement durable solutions, such as local integration and voluntary repatriation, for remaining persons of concern. The procedures around cessation of refugee status were ongoing until 2017.

It is important to note that there has been strong opposition to repatriation, not only from Rwandan refugees themselves but also the international community (IRIN 2012). Advocates argued that the issues that culminated in genocide have not been solved and that the cessation procedures have allowed countries of asylum to restrict protections for Rwandan refugees and new arrivals. Though there were safeguards in place for those who wished to request an exemption from cessation, in practice, many refugees faced issues accessing cessation interviews, and therefore could not put forth their claim to be exempted. While UNHCR and participating states have underlined the need to offer opportunities for local integration and voluntary repatriation in lieu of pressure from cessation proceedings, there are still protection gaps for refugees who are unable to integrate and feel repatriation is not appropriate or safe (ibid).

Despite these concerns, the fact that transparent discussions occurred between UNHCR and participating states over a long period of time, and that strategic plans were devised to establish cessation standards, suggests that the Rwandan case still holds valuable lessons for other states when implementing cessation procedures.

**Liberia**

For over two decades, Liberia was embroiled in protracted civil conflicts between a myriad of rebel groups and the military government, which led many Liberians to flee the country and live in exile abroad. Over half a million civilians were killed in the conflicts, and over a million displaced. Human rights abuses were rampant on both sides, including the use of child soldiers and sexual and gender-based violence. After 2003 there was a change in leadership in the country and a signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement by the Liberian government and rebel factions.

From 2004 to 2011, over 169,000 Liberians returned home, most with the
Chin refugees have fled increasing violence in Chin State, Myanmar, for more than a decade (Alexander 2009). After the elections in 2015, in which Aung San Suu Kyi was voted State Counsellor - a role equivalent to Prime Minister - many thought the situation would improve throughout the country. However, the situation in Chin State, as well as elsewhere in Myanmar, has not improved. Indeed, many reports suggest that Chin State is still the site of active armed conflict, forced labour, and human trafficking (Choudhury 2018). The Myanmar military (officially named ‘Tatmadaw’) is liable for a multitude of human rights violations, including alleged genocide, and still has de facto control of the country (Cohrane 2017).

In June 2018, UNHCR organised meetings with Chin community members and community leaders, to explain that, because of the change in circumstances in Myanmar, the Chin population would cease to have refugee status at the end of December 2019 (Bedi et. al. 2018). They provided the Chin refugee community with a choice of two options. First, Chin refugees could extend their UNHCR identity card until the end of 2019, waiving a right to an individual interview, and keep their refugee status until the end of 2019. Second, Chin refugees could choose to have an individual interview to determine if they were still in need of UNHCR’s protection. A decision on their case would be made within two months and protection would cease immediately if UNHCR determined that the person was no longer a refugee.

Though a UNHCR spokesperson said they met with representatives of the Chin community regularly over the past four years to discuss the eventual ending of their status, UNHCR’s decision came as a shock to many (Bedi 2018). In addition, a public statement made by the Independent Chin Communities (a consortium of five Chin refugee
community groups) suggests that this decision was not discussed as openly as UNHCR suggests (Independent Chin Communities 2018).

Other than this community statement and the discussions sparked in response to it, as well as the meetings that the UNHCR spokesperson noted were held with the Chin community, there has been no mention of further discussions. The government of Myanmar has made no public statement in support of this plan or outlining any plan to aid repatriation efforts. In addition, the Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saifuddin Abdullah, noted that the Malaysian government does not have the ability or intention to keep all refugees in the country but is not ‘pursuing the business of chasing people out’ (Chow 2018). While the governments of Thailand and India have been quiet about this decision, UNHCR representatives in India decided to defer interviews of Chin refugees until they undertook a mission to Chin State to evaluate the situation (APRRN 2018). These statements, or lack thereof, suggest that the governments of these countries had not been closely involved in UNHCR’s decision to revoke protection for Chin refugees and any subsequent plans to repatriate these individuals.

Due to the absence of inter-state discussions, there was no public plan for the facilitation of the return of the Chin population from host countries to Myanmar. In the case of Liberian and Rwandan refugees, the extensive government meetings involved discussions of repatriation measures that would need to be undertaken. This included travel back to the country of origin, the issuance of travel documents, the waiving of any immigration violations, and support for these individuals upon repatriation. Discussion of these repatriation issues ensured that individuals had a smooth return, were properly treated, and were reintegrated into their home country. In the case of Chin refugees, it appears that none of these issues had been discussed or addressed by the relevant governments and UNHCR.

**Deviation from past procedures in Chin cessation proceedings**

Compared to cessation practices in the cases of Rwanda and Liberia, UNHCR’s plan and practice in response to Chin displacement deviates from past cessation procedures in a few significant ways. Each of these deviations has resulted in confusion and instability for refugees and the practitioners who serve this population.

First, there were no public state agreements or discussions with the countries of asylum or the country of origin in the case of the Chin refugees. In the case of Rwandan refugees, participants from several states, including the countries of asylum and Rwanda itself, took part in talks before a decision of cessation was made. Similarly, in the case of Liberia, talks spanned over several years and included all relevant stakeholders. The repatriation and cessation plan slowly took form over eight years before finally coming into force. In the case of Chin refugees, there has been no public discussion of talks between or involving India, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar. This is a major deviation from UNHCR’s earlier plans and practices to end refugee status for populations.

Second, there has been a lack of transparency regarding UNHCR’s decision-making process. In the case of Rwandan and Liberian refugees, details from the discussions between UNHCR and governments, as well as UNHCR’s decision-making processes were made publicly available. In addition, UNHCR published position papers months, even years, before they took any action to re-evaluate refugee status or end international protection. Liberian refugees were first notified of UNHCR’s plans in 2009, with cessation occurring in 2012, while Rwandan refugees were
alerted in 2009, with cessation occurring finally in 2017. In the case of the Chin refugees, no discussions or decision-making of UNHCR was made public until UNHCR announced its decision to end refugee protection. Within a year and a half of the announcement, it was intended that all Chin refugees in India, Malaysia, and Thailand would no longer have refugee protection.

It must be noted that the situation in the countries of asylum for Chin refugees is different from the situation facing Liberian and Rwandan refugees. In the case of Liberian and Rwandan refugees, the countries of asylum formally recognised their refugee status and afforded certain protections to refugees. However, the governments of Malaysia, India, and Thailand do not formally recognise the refugee status of Chin individuals or the decisions of UNHCR, nor do they afford any legal protections to individuals whom UNHCR deems to be refugees under its mandate. Although those with UNHCR documents are provided with an informal ability to remain in these countries, they are not afforded a legal status or visa from the relevant governments. This means that certain aspects of a comprehensive cessation assessment, for example, the evaluation of local integration opportunities, or ties to the country of asylum, are absent, complicating the ability to implement durable solutions for refugees.

In the case of Chin refugees, UNHCR had noted that international protection would cease at the end of 2019 but UNHCR had not discussed the consequences of such a decision. UNHCR’s decision to end refugee status would not have formally affected Chin refugees’ legal right to remain in Thailand, Malaysia or India or resulted in their immediate return; however, as they do not have a legal right to remain as granted by the governments, it would have de facto affected their ability to stay and may have resulted in increased arrests, deportations, and violations of the principle of non-refoulement as the governments deport those without valid UNHCR documents. This would have been in direct opposition to UNHCR’s international protection mandate. Without any discussion with the relevant countries, these individuals could have been returned forcibly without any assistance or monitoring of the situation after their return. This put them in an dangerous and precarious position, and an influx of returnees could have resulted in further deterioration of the situation in Chin State and Myanmar as a whole.

**Conclusion**

There are several reasons why these deviations from UNHCR’s practices should be of concern. UNHCR’s announcement in March 2019 to reverse the decision to cease international protection of Chin refugees shows that implementation without a comprehensive understanding of the situation in a country of origin can lead to mistakes affecting thousands of vulnerable individuals. UNHCR’s (2019) press release acknowledges that ‘UNHCR received a number of new reports and assessments, which did not support its original conclusion of fundamental and durable changes in Chin State and Sagaing Region’. However, given that UNHCR’s cessation plan remained in place for nine months before the reversal, this resulted in trauma and stress among the Chin community. This confusion created a drain on the community as they tried to understand what would happen, with panic and uncertainty among refugee communities sparking many individuals to try to advocate for themselves. Moreover, the resources required for the accelerated processing of cases tied to the prioritisation of Chin cessation put a strain on already overburdened UNHCR resources, shifting them away from much needed assistance. The lack of discussions with the relevant governments and a clear
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Bibliography


Statelessness in the Context of Climate Change

GIULIA BORSA

Climate change is hindering lives and livelihoods around the world. Some examples are Bolivia, Haiti, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Uganda, Alaska, Nepal or Bangladesh among many others. This is due to stronger extreme weather events, sea-level rise, desertification or ocean acidification, among many others. In particular, some atoll islands are on the frontline of severe climate change impact. These island nations may disappear in the next decades due to slow-onset sea-level rise causing its nationals to become stateless. This paper gives an overview of current Public International Law provisions to prevent statelessness, and human rights instruments which can protect forced migrants in the context of climate change induced state disappearance.

Introduction

If global warming reaches 1.5°C or more, the impacts of changing climatic conditions would be devastating for many populations. Some of these impacts include extreme weather events, increased acidity and temperature of the ocean, and sea-level rise. Consequently, water-stress, food insecurity or worsened diseases, among other negative impacts will force people to move from their areas of residence (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018).

Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) are in the frontline of severe climate change aftermaths (UNDP, 2014). For instance, islands like Tuvalu and Kiribati, which do not protrude more than 3 to 4 meters sea level, are at risk of disappearance due to inundations and land degradation caused by saltwater (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018). Likewise, Solomon Islands, Maldives or Fiji among others, are also threatened. Sea level is predicted to rise at the average rate of five millimetre per year, from 0.09 meters to 0.88 meters by the end of this century (Ralston et al 2004). This vulnerability is compounded by SIDS’S isolation from other nations and the global economic market, and factors such as insufficient financial, technical and institutional capacities to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change (Benjamin and Thomas, 2018). The eventual submersion of these states could amount to the statelessness of its citizens.

Under the premises of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967, refugee status may be granted on the basis of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group. Therefore, climate change is not explicitly applicable as persecution (Refugee Convention 1951; Refugee protocol 1967). This paper builds on the assertion that there is no legal terminology such as climate change refugees. Rather than analyzing International Refugee Law, this paper will brief current Public International Law provisions to prevent statelessness, and human rights instruments that can be used to protect forced migrants in the context of state disappearance due to climate change.

Statelessness: Meaning and implications

Stateless is a term applied to a person who is not considered a national by any country under national law (Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 1954). People become stateless when they do not acquire a nationality at birth, their state of origin does not exist anymore, or their country is not willing to accept them as citizens.
Citizenship establishes a person’s right to participate in a country’s political decisions, intervene with its opinions and enjoy the protections and rights offered by a nation. Thus, statelessness is produced by governments, not an individual’s action (Milbrandt 2011). There are two manners in which a person could become stateless. First, de jure statelessness is the case when a State is no longer recognized by the international community and thus, the person cannot claim its nationality and citizenship. This may be the case of a country that ceases to exist, and no other state replaces its position (Milbrandt 2011).

Second, de facto statelessness is a situation when a person has a genuine right to claim citizenship of a state but cannot access it due to practical considerations such as expenses, circumstances of civil disorder, or fear of persecution. This also applies to those inside the country of their nationality (Milbrandt 2011).

If citizenship is not granted, whether due to De Jure or De Facto statelessness, people cannot achieve human security (Blitz et al 2009). Accordingly, economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights are affected. For instance, a stateless person cannot access birth registration, identity documentation, education, healthcare, property ownership or participate politically. It may also drive people to seek any possibility of employment even in illegal or unethical trades (Milbrandt 2011). Stateless children may be turned away by schools or, in some countries, be forced to work to survive. Similarly, stateless women are likely to end up in prostitution, sexual trafficking or convenience marriage (Weissbrodt and Collins 2006; Milbrandt 2011).

Would the population of states disappeared by climate change be considered stateless?

According to Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States of 1993, the four elements of statehood include the following aspects: first, a defined territory; second, a permanent population; third, an effective government and fourth, the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Montevideo Convention 1993). This Convention is recognized to be part of customary international law. However, no internationally agreed definition of the state exists (McAdam 2012). This lack of precision in assessing statehood is due to the fact that very few cases of state disappearance have happened thus far. Moreover, states prefer to maintain their liberty to recognize new states, not only in case it applies in reverse against them in the future, but also to preserve their strategic relationships with other states which may not be willing to accept the disappeared state as a real one (McAdam 2012).

For instance, when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, they were still considered as the whole Republic of Yugoslavia, which prevented them to be protected by the prohibition of intervention and the use of force according to international law (Hillgruber 1998).

The four elements above would supposedly be required for a state to exist. However, the absence of one of them, may not suppose the end of statehood. In fact, there is a high presumption of continuity of state existence. There are just a few cases in which statehood extinction was voluntary due to political succession (McAdam 2012; Park 2001). As there is no precedence of State disappearance in the context of climate change, it is not clear what would happen in the case of natural disappearance of a state’s territory, whether or not its population and government are in exile. Even if air space and the territorial sea physically remain, these are considered appurtenances to the land territory and, would therefore disappear with the land (Park 2001).

There are some requirements if the presumption of continuity of the state
was to be adopted. First, as Park (2001) points out, there is the need to consider the typical elements of statehood in conjunction with the level of disappearance of a state’s land. Second, whether or not other countries and international organisations continue to recognize a disappearing state matters. For instance, continuity of state existence has been recognized despite the fact that a loss of authority occurred. In fact, during World War II, some governments in exile continued to provide national passports to their citizens without being questioned by the International community (Park 2001). On the other hand, UNHCR outlined that even if continuity of the state can be presumed, citizens of disappearing states residing in other nations could remain unprotected and be considered de facto stateless by those nations (McAdam 2012). Thus, it remains to be determined if and what internationally agreed position on the status of nationals of disappeared states would be adopted.

In customary international law, the right to nationality does not exist. However, there is a high presumption of the prevention of statelessness in any change of nationality or state succession. While article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the Right to nationality, but it does not impose a duty of States to confer it (UDHR 1948). By contrast, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights does not even refer to such a right (ICCPR 1966). In addition, there are two treaty bodies of relevance in relation to statelessness. One is the Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons of 1954 which provides a formal definition of statelessness and describes rights for stateless persons who are not refugees. This Convention has been poorly ratified by just 80 States. Secondly, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961 imposes a duty to prevent statelessness. However, with just 55 signatories, it counts even fewer ratifications (Statelessness Convention 1961). These two international conventions do not consider physical statelessness explicitly, which is the problem that disappearing states would face. The 1961 Convention stands out in its resolution appended to the Final Act that persons who are de facto stateless, shall be considered, at least, as they were de jure stateless in order to guarantee them the possibility to acquire an effective nationality (McAdam 2012).

In sum, it would be naïve to think about a new legally binding agreement to protect stateless people in the context of climate change. The narrow juridical focus of these conventions does not allow broader interpretations to address the situation of people whose country is at risk of disappearing. Moreover, it is not clear which position the international community would adopt; that is, whether or not the international community would recognize the continuity of statehood of a disappeared state. If statehood is not recognized any longer, then the obligations to prevent and diminish statelessness by states bound by the Conventions would be applicable (Borsa 2018).

As a result, scholars have turned to discussing more practical, ad-hoc solutions. First, state cessation of its territory has been considered in order to facilitate the continuity of the disappearing state (Toscano 2015). The second option revolves around a purchase of land by the disappearing sate, as it has been done by Kiribati, which bought some land in Fiji (Caramel 2014). A third idea is the unification of the disappearing State with an existing one, either creating a new one or the latter absorbing the former (Toscano 2015).

Nonetheless, these are just solutions to solve statehood disappearance per se. Although these approaches would likely also determine the status of the citizens, they are not a comprehensive and detailed protection mechanism for statelessness in the context of climate change. At this point, creating soft-
law mechanism alongside guidance and recommendations to address statelessness in the context of climate change seems to be the most feasible option.

**Human Rights Law**

Due to the weak protection offered by the aforementioned Conventions regarding statelessness, the role of International Human Rights Law becomes essential as a basis for complementary protection to respond to forced migration in the context of climate change (McAdam 2012).

States have to respect human rights and take appropriate measure to guarantee their effective enjoyment by the people in their jurisdiction (McAdam 2012). As mentioned earlier, being stateless automatically jeopardizes the effective enjoyment of human rights. For instance, the right to be protected from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, the right to health, the right to food and water, and even the right to life which is considered an ius cogens norm of International law, and its derogation is forbidden even in situations of state emergency. These rights are protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and both International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural rights of 1966 (UDHR 1948; ICCPR 1966; ICESCR 1966).

Further, the right to life and the right not to be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment lead to the international customary norm of non-refoulement, (McAdam 2012), the ius cogens norm which obligates states not to return a person to the borderlines of a territory where their life or freedom is threatened (Refugee Convention 1951). This is of particular relevance as it applies to every case when the integrity of a person is in danger if returned or expelled, regardless of whether refugee status has been granted or not (Goodwin-Gill 1986).

States are obligated under International Human Rights Law to protect climate change-induced forced migrants in their jurisdiction. An effective way to ensure their enjoyment of human rights would be to provide a nationality before the state in question disappears. In that case, dual nationality may be allowed at least for a transitional period, or stateless persons may be required to resign their nationality (McAdam 2012). In fact, one of the key areas of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda (currently followed up by the Platform on Disaster Displacement) is precisely the creation and implementation of standards for the treatment of climate change affected populations. This includes allowing admission and granting status to forced migrants affected by climate change.

**Conclusion**

This paper has outlined the deficiencies to effectively address statelessness in the worst-case scenario of state disappearance due to climate change. International law establishes clearly what elements need a state to be so. However, there is no assertion that the absence of one of these elements would provoke the extinction of statehood per se. This is rather a grey area. Moreover, if people from disappeared states where to be considered stateless, then, seeking protection in the two existing conventions would not be likely to adequately address protection need and mitigate the risks of statelessness.

Currently, only International Human Rights Law would confer rights to the forced-displaced people and require the receiving states to maintain the enjoyment of human rights by climate change forced migrants. This is not to say there is a universal obligation to confer a nationality to those affected. But indeed, conferring a nationality would secure the effective enjoyment of human rights of the citizens of disappearing or
disappeared states. In line with human rights obligations, a complementary soft-law mechanism could possibly pave the way towards a more comprehensive response to offering protection for those affected by climate change.

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Giulia Borsa is an International Human Rights jurist. She holds a bachelor’s degree in law from the University Autonoma of Barcelona and an LLM in International Human Rights Law from Oxford Brookes, with a dissertation written on climate change related displacement. Giulia has been working as a postgraduate researcher for the past two years, collaborating with organizations such as CLISEL or GNDR. She has also been coordinating the division on Climate Change and Human Rights of the International Organization for Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) in Geneva and she is currently working at EcoVadis. Before, Giulia also volunteered for 5 years in a small Spanish NGO providing adequate nutrition to people without resources. She speaks 5 languages and has won several awards, including the Ideas that Change the World Competition in Oxford.

Bibliography


International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966.


Green Hell

Murtaza Ali

DIVERSITY. Traveling out of my town and country taught me many things. One of them is diversity, and I feel how important accepting diversity is for everyone who is living in this planet. My painting says we as human must have acceptance and respect to each other for living a better life in our communities. In short, life is beautiful when we are together.
The majority of my artworks are based on my journey and reflections, in other words a form of self-expression. For me, art is not only just for fun or entertainment but also to build bridges between humans; reuniting and recording fragments of thoughts, feelings, and memory; and saying things that can’t be expressed in any other way. All these answers are deeply personal. I love art and want to promote it, while also enhancing the knowledge about my history, culture and nation and to understand ethics and values of others.

*SAD BUDDHA.* While looking at this painting, it takes me to the worst age of extremism in my beloved country Afghanistan, a country full of sorrow and pain that has not restored peace yet. In this painting, I used every element that came to my mind to explore the brutality of the Taliban, who destroyed a massive and extraordinary Buddah statue in Afghanistan which had a 7-thousand-year history.
Being an artist, I cannot just sit and not do something for the sake of humanity. I am a visual artist and I strongly believe that painting is another powerful form of art that heals, brings laughter and creates harmony and peace. There are some people around us which suffer from depression and psychological issues. I strongly believe that art has a great power to bring positive changes in people, society and even in a country. I like the quote that ‘if we don’t start somewhere, then we are not going anywhere’. History has proved that artists have played a golden role for humanity and humans. The world is beautiful and can be made more beautiful by art.

You may ask yourself why I chose the title ‘Green Hell’ for my paintings? It has been around five years since I have lived in Indonesia, far away from my family. It is a beautiful country full of exciting places for others. But for me, it is a hell because I have been deprived of basic rights such as education, medical care and even a casual job to support myself financially. The only reason for this is that I am a refugee here. Life here is so difficult, full of depression and stress. And my paintings are my self-impression on the canvases.

**STRUGGLE.** I used the colors and symbols, like a rope, distorted figures with golden heads, blood and the dark background, in order to explore my feelings and emotions and to show how hard life is when being labeled as a refugee in this world. It feels like you are in the middle of nowhere.

**The artist**

My name is Murtaza Ali from Afghanistan. I have been learning visual art since I was very young. I love all forms of art such as musicology, performing art, and literature. Visual art is my favorite because art helps me to explore things like emotions and feelings in a positive way which I can’t express or say with words. Art has given me the power to bring out my catharsis in meaningful ways. Most of the time when I paint or draw something on a canvas it heals me – I like a joyful, soft and energetic feeling while I create any piece of art.
A ‘Migrant Registration Framework’: Counting Venezuelan Immigrants in Trinidad & Tobago

SHIVA S. MOHAN

Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) has been the recipient of the largest numbers of Venezuelan migrants in the Southern Caribbean, with conflicting statistics showing that there are approximately 40,000 to 60,000 Venezuelan immigrants residing in the island nation. Under international pressure and amidst domestic agitations, the T&T government has only belatedly acknowledged the presence of Venezuelans domestically. In June 2019, the government undertook an exercise called the ‘Migrant Registration Framework’, a work permit exemption policy, which commenced with a call to all Venezuelan immigrants on the island to register with authorities during a 2-week period. Touted as a humanitarian outreach that provides for Venezuelans to work legally in T&T for one year, this policy is in effect a short-term measure that serves as a rudimentary counting and surveillance mechanism, that is incognizant of migrants’ daily precarities and the indeterminate situation in Venezuela.

Introduction

The crisis in Venezuela has prompted an unprecedented level of emigration of its nationals – as of June 2019, joint UNHCR and IOM numbers estimate that there has been an outflow of over 4 million Venezuelans (IOM 2019). Several neighbouring territories have been on the receiving end of this migration, including Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), the twin-island nation that sits just north-east of mainland Venezuela. It is suggested that T&T has been the recipient of the largest number of Venezuelan migrants in the Southern Caribbean (Human Rights Watch 2018), with numbers ranging from 40,000 to 60,000 people (UNHCR 2019; Vice News 2019) equating approximately 3-5% of the islands’ population. On 31 May 2019, the T&T government undertook a two-week registration of Venezuelans, called the ‘Migrant Registration Framework’ or the ‘Work Permit Exemption’ policy (Office of the Prime Minister 2019a), through which 16,523 Venezuelans were registered (Senate Deb. 25 June 2019). This exercise marked a shift in government policy toward Venezuelans domestically. The state had been lethargic in its response, towing the line of ‘non-intervention and non-interference’ (CARICOM 2019), which is considered a ‘principled position’ in line with the regional CARICOM1 stance on the Venezuela question. This policy of registration has been touted as an opportunity for Venezuelans to work legally in T&T for a designated period; however, I argue that this short-term policy is piecemeal and incognizant of migrants’ daily precarities and the indeterminate situation in Venezuela. Far from a humanitarian response, this policy, in effect, works to expose Venezuelans to intensified cross-state regulation and policing, and does not address the critical challenges faced by Venezuelans in T&T.

The policy in practice

The policy was put into motion with an initial 2-week call to all Venezuelans on the island to present themselves to authorities to be ‘registered’. Persons there legally and illegally registered without penalty – what the state termed an ‘amnesty’ period. During this process, migrants provided their fingerprints, photographs, and evidence of their

1CARICOM or Caribbean Community is a regional bloc of 15 Caribbean nations that promotes economic integration, cooperation and coordinates regional foreign policy.
nationality and address in T&T, signing a statutory declaration that the information was authentic. They were also required to undergo a medical examination. In a robust media campaign, the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security outlined the provisions of this registration, stating that registered migrants would be afforded primary healthcare or emergency services only. Furthermore, there would be ‘no guarantee to the right to education, training or any other government service’ (Office of the Prime Minister 2019a). After ‘due diligence’, the exercise would provide the migrant with a registration card along with the right to work for one year. Initially, permission to work will be granted for a period of 6 months until reassessed. Persons not registered in the 2-week ‘amnesty’ period are subject to the regular immigration laws of the land.

The titles ‘Migrant Registration Framework’ and ‘Work Permit Exemption’ only vaguely reflect the genuine intent of the policy. Pronounced as humanitarian outreach to Venezuelans in T&T, this registration policy is a rudimentary enumeration, intelligence-gathering, and policing exercise. The work-permit exemption is not provided automatically. The state, in collaboration with international security agencies such as INTERPOL and ‘authorities in Venezuela’, verify that registrants do not have a criminal history (Office of the Prime Minister 2019b). This in turn surrenders migrants’ identities to high-level security scrutiny, as well as the political gaze of the Venezuelan government. Given the political upheaval in Venezuela, this heightens the precarity of migrants who may have fled the country for political reasons. Furthermore, if a registrant is found to have a criminal record, the Ministry of National Security has the ‘discretion’ to determine if the registrant should be detained and deported. Given current circumstances in Venezuela, including the political disruptions and scarcity of resources, it is difficult to assess an individual’s engagement in illicit activity as criminal. The policy’s promise of non-persecution is, in fact, loaded with non-descript avenues for persecution by the state.

With the state’s asymmetrical focus on numbers and surveillance, the policy fails to consider the daily realities of Venezuelans in T&T. Discrimination, abuse, and exploitation have become part of the daily lived experience for Venezuelans. There have been many reports of ‘under the table’ job exploitation and abuse, rapes of Venezuelan women, unprovoked violent attacks on Venezuelan males by locals, and police abuse (see Bruzual 2019; Doodnath 2019; Kong Soo 2019). Trinidadians and Tobagonians have long held an inauspicious view of Venezuelans, in particular, there is a general sexualisation of Venezuelan women in T&T (Nakhid & Welch 2017; Kissoon 2019; Teff 2019). With the ‘influx’ of Venezuelans into the islands, this view has been amplified and has morphed into discriminatory and xenophobic characterizations of Venezuelans. These opinions have been exacerbated by the state through its (in)action and failure to address violence against Venezuelan immigrants. The transformation of T&T’s landscape due to Venezuelan immigration seems to have gone unnoticed by the state (John 2018). Beyond the provision of a one-year work permit, the state has failed to take any measures to protect migrants from the daily challenges of integrating into a new country. Therefore, the timing, structure, and intent of the government’s belated policy must be called to question.

The barriers to education and social services due to T&T law and policy, as well as the short-term nature of the one-year labour policy, demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding by the T&T government of the continually degenerating situation in Venezuela. A large number of Venezuelans who have migrated to T&T bring their entire families. At present, the laws of T&T prevent migrant children from accessing the public-school system. Venezuelans
must pay for private education for their children, which presents a significant barrier for those fleeing economic deprivation and crisis. In addition, the short-term nature of the one-year policy suggests that the state foresees a prompt resolution to the conflict in Venezuela. However, the reality in Venezuela points to a more protracted situation. The Venezuelan economy is in disarray. With an inflation rate of 1.37 million percent in 2018, rampant food insecurity, and increasing social violence (Doocy et al 2019), it will require more than a few years for the average citizen to regain access to basic medical supplies and goods, even if conciliatory political efforts are put in motion. In light of this reality, T&T’s one-year work-permit exemption policy appears myopic.

**Conclusion**

This registration policy exemplifies the T&T government’s reactionary politics to Venezuelan migration. The state’s shift from a position of non-acknowledgment of a crisis in Venezuela and migration at home to a one-year policy brings to light changing political agendas. At present, there exists a pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment among the electorate in T&T, who did not welcome the work permit exemption for Venezuelans. With the impending general election in 2020, the government has faced significant pressure from the opposition and the international community to take a position on the Venezuela situation. This quick move by the government to develop a policy here, we are dealing with migrants’ in reference to Venezuelan inflows to T&T (Senate Deb. 24 June 2019).

The one-year policy further justifies the government’s pronouncement on the Venezuela question: that T&T is ‘not a refugee camp’ (Bridglal 2018; Christopher 2019). This position has been met with significant criticism from international agencies including Amnesty International and the UNHCR. It is a position that runs diametrically opposed to the May 2019 UNHCR ‘Guidance Note on the Outflow of Venezuelans’ which characterises Venezuelans as largely a refugee movement and calls for receiving countries to treat persons as such. The T&T government’s attempt to shift the narrative away from refugee protection is unsurprising. In the lead up to the execution of the current policy, the state refused any assistance from the local UNHCR implementing partner, the Living Waters Community, who made frequent representations to the state about the need for local refugee law, given the significant increase in asylum claims on the island. This move hinted at the state’s intention to discount categorising Venezuelans in T & T as refugees.

**On shifting the narrative**

The state is attempting to shift focus and change the tone of the Venezuela-T&T migration discourse by erasing the term ‘refugee’ from the wider conversation. Although T&T is signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, to date, the government has failed to implement domestic legislation to operationalise the protections and safeguards afforded therein, despite numerous official and unofficial reassurances that the government has been working on drafting a local refugee law. The Migrant Registration Framework solely focuses on labour permit exemptions for Venezuelans, which suggests the state is characterising Venezuelan immigrants as economic migrants. This does not reflect the complexities of migration flows and the different motivations for Venezuelans’ migration (see for example Van Hear 2011; Betts 2013; Betts 2019), but instead places migrants into a neat and manageable category. The Minister of National Security recently confirmed this position, when he stated in Parliament that ‘refugees’ is simply a ‘buzz word’, further claiming that ‘we do not have refugees.
with a limited lifespan as a response to these agitations, suggests an attempt to appease short-term demands, while maintaining political expedience due to the policy's culmination the year of the general election.

As the layers are peeled back on the Migrant Registration Framework, it can be demonstrated that this specific labour initiative is short-sighted and vacuous, devoid of contextual, holistic, and pragmatic considerations to properly address the daily realities of Venezuelan immigrants in T&T. Further, the state's strategic and timely presentation of such an initiative illuminates its reactionary positioning to external and domestic pressures, as well as the state's use of an opportunistic moment and policy for future political gain.

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Bibliography


Planning for the Worst: The Normative Significance of Fiji’s Planned Relocation Guidelines for the Protection of Climate-IDPs in the Pacific

Liam Moore

The Fijian Government’s recently released Planned Relocation Guidelines, the first of their kind, offer a blueprint for Pacific nations to use domestic legislation and policy to increase protection for those at risk of climate-related displacement. Fiji’s acknowledgement of key normative principles relating to the protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) shows that domestic approaches can utilise existing soft law around IDPs to overcome gaps within existing frameworks of protection.

Introduction

Fiji launched its Planned Relocation Guidelines (PRGs) at the UN Climate Change Conference in December 2018. These guidelines represent one of the first attempts to develop national-level policy on climate-related displacement and relocation. Domestically, the guidelines were necessary as Fiji has already been forced to relocate three communities, and government reports identify another 43 coastal communities in need of imminent relocation (Republic of Fiji 2019). The policy, however, has broader implications insofar as it lays the foundations for the development of an international protection regime around climate displacement. It also provides a valuable blueprint for other states to follow as they develop their own policies on climate-related displacement and relocations. I explore the policy’s implications by first assessing the existing protection framework for climate-induced IDPs, before showing how the PRGs begin to bridge the protection gap within this framework. Finally, I consider the normative implications this has for the protection of those at risk of climate-related displacement in the Pacific.

Protection framework for climate-induced IDPs

IDPs exist within a formal protection gap as their rights and protections are not specifically outlined under international legal instruments (Ferris 2011:31). The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (hereafter, Guiding Principles), however, while not legally binding, acknowledge the nexus between man-made and natural hazards and forced displacement, thereby providing the most relevant standard of rights and protections for disaster and climate-induced IDPs. For IDPs more broadly, the Guiding Principles introduce three norms which form the basis of the IDP protection regime: the first defines who can be considered an IDP, including those who flee because of violence, conflict, human rights violations, or man-made and natural hazards, and who have not crossed an international border; the second establishes that IDPs are entitled to the same legal protections as other citizens within their countries; and the third asserts the need for assistance to be provided to IDPs, principally from the state, but also from the international community (Orchard 2018:6-7). The protections set out for IDPs in the Guiding Principles are strengthened by their solid grounding in established international law, including
human rights, humanitarian, refugee, environmental, and customary law (Kälin 2008).

The Guiding Principles recognise the same level of entitlements, rights, and protections to those displaced by disasters as other displaced persons. Bradley and Cohen (2010), however, argue that those affected by the types of slow-onset disasters commonly associated with climate change fall outside the Guiding Principles’ definition of rights-holding IDPs. This is due to a lack of clarity over the point at which movement is considered forced; an especially difficult assessment in the context of slow-onset disasters and climate change-related migration. Unless movement is considered forced, individuals are not entitled to the rights and protections of IDPs. I argue that, despite this limitation, Fijian policymakers and communities, through the PRGs, have been able to stretch, interpret, and co-opt these principles to address the specific challenges they face and close the protection gap for those at risk of climate-related displacement (Betts 2013:190–191). By implementing protection norms in the context of climate-related relocations, Fiji has made a potentially significant contribution to the development of a normative protection regime around climate-IDPs.

Fiji’s Planned Relocation Guidelines

Prior to publishing the PRGs, Fiji engaged in three planned community relocation projects, two of which have now been completed. In Vunidogoloa, 150 people living in 30 households were relocated two kilometres inland because of recurrent flooding (McNamara and des Combes 2015:316–317; Tronquet 2015:122). In the wake of Cyclone Evan in 2012 the community of Denimanu was partially relocated, with 19 houses constructed 250 meters inland to house around half of the 170 community members (Martin et al. 2018:4, 10). The relocation of Narikoso is still in progress. Out of a community of around one hundred people, the seven most at-risk households were scheduled to move to a new site, 150 meters inland, in November 2018. However, there has been significant delays, in part due to engineering issues with the new site and a lack of funding. While there are plans for reuniting the community with a full relocation in the future, no timeline for this has been established (Kürschner 2017; Talei 2018; Tronquet 2015:139). Officials have noted that these relocations will be used as ‘the benchmark for future village or community relocations...[and] as case studies in the development of the Relocation Guidelines’ (Cava 2015). While Narikoso’s relocation is ongoing, the sentiment among those who have moved in the first two cases is that the process has been largely successful (McNamara and des Combes 2015:318; Nunn 2018).

The content of the PRGs show the Fijian Government is developing and implementing normative protections for climate-IDPs. In particular, the document notes the importance of principles contained within the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and multiple human rights conventions. While the published PRGs do not directly reference the Guiding Principles, they were mentioned as a key guiding force in a draft of the guidelines (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation 2015:4). The influence of these key international agreements, principles, and declarations is further

Bradley and Cohen (2010:2) include instances of drought, desertification, rising sea levels, extreme temperatures, deforestation, and land degradation as examples of slow-onset disasters. In Fiji, cases of recurrent inundation and accelerated coastal erosion as a result of sea-level rise pose the biggest risks for displacement.
Perhaps the most significant way in which the PRGs fill the protection gap for those facing climate-related displacement from slow-onset hazards is through the development of a preemptive approach and forward-looking principles. A key protection gap for those facing slow-onset disasters, as touched on by Bradley and Cohen (2010) and others, is the point at which these individuals can claim the protections and rights associated with displacement (Kälin 2001; McAdam 2011; McAdam and Ferris 2015). Once migration occurs, the line between migration for economic reasons and forced displacement due to climate-related hazards often becomes blurred. However, borrowing from analogous concepts in development displacement literature, environmental studies, and refugee law, the PRGs recognise that those at risk of being affected by disasters and environmental change can also be protected by these principles and norms (Cernea 2003; Ferris 2011:26; Wisner et al. 2004:23). In these circumstances, climate change presents an opportunity to intervene and act before displacement occurs (McAdam 2011:4–5).

The roles of stakeholders during the relocation process are only briefly outlined in the guidelines. Standard operating procedures are meant to follow with prescriptive detail on the relocation process, however as of yet, no timeline has been specified for their development or publication. At a normative level, this suggests the implementation of these norms is in the early stages of an iterative process, where participants may, to a certain extent, exercise their agency to shape what happens on the ground and thereby, in turn, shape the nature of the norm. This can be seen in practice, for example, in the relocation of Narikoso. In this case, villagers pushed back on initial plans to permanently separate the community with a partial relocation. As a result, a two-stage relocation plan was approved, one that will see the community remain together in the long-

emphasised by the government’s stated commitment to observing ‘all international norms and standards available’ regarding relocations (Ministry of Economy 2018:5).

The remainder of this section briefly outlines the five approaches to planned relocations set out in the PRGs, which can be grouped within two categories, namely community-focused principles and forward-looking principles.

Community-focused principles include the PRGs’ human-centric, livelihood-based, and human rights-centred approaches. These seek to avoid the problems created by top-down policy development by ensuring that bottom-up perspectives on relocation are prioritised and the rights of communities upheld. The PRGs affirm that the government will pursue a broad policy of migration as adaptation to ensure people who move are not negatively affected in terms of their physical security or their livelihoods. Within this approach, relocation is seen as an option of last resort; the decision to relocate can only be made with the cooperation and full, free, and informed consent of at-risk communities (Ministry of Economy 2018:8-9). Importantly, these approaches exemplify the institutionalisation of normative principles, drawn from existing international law, standards, and policies, which emphasise the importance of voluntariness during relocation.2 The guidelines also allow individual relocation projects to be tailored to consider the specific needs and interests of the communities involved, to ensure their voices are heard and their rights are protected.

2 Section five, Principle 28 of the Guiding Principles, Article 13(2) of the UDHR, Article 12(4) of the ICCPR, customary international humanitarian law, and several UN Security Council resolutions have confirmed that individuals have the right to voluntarily choose to return or be resettled following displacement (Kälin and Chapuisat 2018:244–245; Oluka-Onyango 2010:12, 18).
established protection principles to bridge the protection gap for climate-induced IDPs. The reality of climate change in the Pacific means Fiji has been forced to confront the challenges of protecting communities at-risk of climate-related displacement. Clearly, the principles of the developing IDP protection regime, particularly those within the Guiding Principles, have shaped the development of the PRGs. This in itself is important, as it displays the growing legitimacy and influence of the largely informal IDP protection regime (Orchard 2019:7-9). However, more significantly for the protection of climate-IDPs, by stretching and co-opting established norms to address locally specific issues facing climate-vulnerable communities, these guidelines may provide the foundation for other states to similarly re-interpret and stretch protection norms within their own approaches to climate-related displacement. While the development of protection norms around climate-related displacement is only in its infancy, the PRGs represent an important development for the protection of climate-vulnerable communities.

Conclusion: the normative significance of the PRGs

Like the Guiding Principles, the PRGs do not set out explicit instructions for the process of relocation, nor do they enshrine the rights of affected communities or the obligations of government agencies in Fijian law. However, as Orchard (2010) has argued, soft law can play an important role in advancing norms and standards in areas where protection gaps exist. This is because soft law can have a broader scope than hard law, allowing it to work in areas where states are reluctant to create binding legal instruments. Soft law can also provide a ready-made set of standards to be co-opted for domestic purposes.

In the Fijian case, norms around IDP protection were stretched to include communities who were at risk of being displaced by climate-related hazards like sea-level rise, storm surges, and recurrent inundations. By developing the PRGs as guidelines rather than binding legal obligations, Fiji was able to develop an ambitious policy and provide a wide scope of protections around relocations. This allowed policymakers to act as norm entrepreneurs, stretching established protection principles to bridge the protection gap for climate-induced IDPs.
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Neither Fair Nor Realistic? How the EU Deals with Afghan Asylum Seekers

BERND PARUSEL

This article draws from the situation of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe to identify two shortcomings and injustices of the common asylum policy of the EU: firstly, the lack of a harmonised decision-making practice in asylum cases; and secondly, the problem of the EU Member States’ unrealistic expectations regarding the return of rejected applicants to their countries of origin. Over the past ten years, almost 580,000 Afghan nationals have applied for asylum in the European Union. Afghanistan was the second most important country of origin among asylum seekers in the EU, after Syria. The way the EU Member States deal with them is subject to much controversy. Despite a worsening security situation in their country of origin, on average more than half of all asylum claims by Afghans are rejected. They are also confronted with severe injustices as their recognition rates vary greatly, depending on where in the EU their claims are examined. Among the many who are rejected, a majority risk ending up in protracted legal and social limbo situations as they are required to leave the EU, but are in reality rarely returned to their country of origin.

Introduction

In the current political discussion on reforms of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), issues such as a fairer sharing of responsibilities among the EU Member States for the intake of asylum seekers, a more uniform asylum decision-making practice and a more credible return policy play a prominent role (Parusel and Schneider 2018). The CEAS sets out a series of legal provisions which regulate the determination of the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application and set out minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers and asylum procedures, as well as criteria for the recognition of non-EU nationals as refugees or persons in need of subsidiary protection. The CEAS is supplemented by further legal measures that go beyond asylum in the narrow sense, such as common basic rules for the return of persons obliged to leave the EU.

The problems Afghan asylum seekers face in the EU are illustrative of some severe shortcomings of the CEAS and related instruments. In the absence of an EU-wide distribution system for asylum seekers, most of the roughly 580,000 Afghan asylum seekers who reached the EU during the period from 2009 to 2018 lodged their claims in Germany (226,000), Hungary (69,000), Sweden (64,000) and Austria (47,000). These numbers reflect, to some extent, a choice by the applicants themselves, but they can also be the result of migrants being detected and forced to halt their journey en route to other destinations. Some countries (such as Malta, Estonia, Portugal, Latvia, and the Czech Republic) counted less than 200 Afghan applicants during the same period (Eurostat 2019a).

Asylum adjudication in the EU – a lottery?

According to many institutions and observers, the security situation in Afghanistan has over recent years deteriorated rather than improved (EASO 2018), and UNHCR recently confirmed that Afghanistan was the second largest source country of refugees worldwide, with 5.1 million people displaced, either internally or as refugees or asylum-seekers (UNHCR 2019: 7).

Despite this development, the prospects of Afghans who have arrived in Europe to seek asylum have been decreasing. In 2015, the EU Member
States granted around 67 percent of all Afghan asylum seekers refugee status, subsidiary protection, or a right to stay on humanitarian grounds. This EU-wide, average protection rate decreased to 57 percent in 2016 and roughly 47 percent in 2017 and 2018 (Eurostat 2019b).

Whether or not an applicant from Afghanistan receives protection also varies greatly from one Member State to another. In Germany, the main receiving country in the EU, the protection rate for Afghans was 43.4 percent in 2018. By contrast, it was below ten percent in Croatia and Bulgaria, around 20 percent in Denmark, and 32 percent in Sweden. Much more generous were France (67.2 percent), Greece (74.6), Spain (85.7), and Italy (87.5). In Ireland, Luxemburg and the non-EU country Switzerland, the protection rate for Afghans was above 90 percent.1

Given the fact that the EU has worked towards harmonising national asylum decision-making standards for almost two decades, these differences are striking. In 1999, the European Council in Tampere agreed on the objective to achieve an ‘approximation of rules on the recognition and content of the refugee status’ and ‘measures on subsidiary forms of protection’ (European Council 1999). In 2004, the EU adopted its first binding Directive on asylum recognition, which was further strengthened in 2011 (European Union 2011). Among other things, it provided common criteria for the determination of refugee status and the granting of subsidiary protection. Since 2016, negotiations have been ongoing for even further strengthening of EU legislation on asylum adjudication by turning the 2011 Directive into a regulation. This would mean a shift from minimum standards that Member States had to transpose into national law to directly applicable rules. In parallel, the EU and its Member States have also tried to achieve a gradual harmonisation of national decision-making through EU-organised networks and mechanisms for an exchange of experiences among national asylum practitioners.

As the above percentages show, neither common legislation nor practical cooperation has so far achieved their objectives in the sense that Member States would treat the same type of asylum applicants in the same, or at least similar, manner. Studies also show that not only overall protection rates for various nationality groups differ greatly from one Member State to another, but also the types of protection granted (Parusel and Schneider 2018).

Return to Afghanistan – An Illusion?

Another problem is the return of those Afghan asylum seekers who are, despite the worsening security and human rights situation in their country of nationality, determined not to be in need of protection. When an asylum application is rejected, the persons concerned usually have to leave their host country, and unless they leave voluntarily, they are to be removed by force. The example of Afghanistan shows how difficult and problematic this can really be. In 2016 and 2017 together, over 59,000 Afghan nationals received a return decision, but less than 13,000 left the territory of the Member States (Eurostat 2018a; Eurostat 2018b). Thus, there is a huge gap between the rejection of asylum applications by Afghan asylum applicants and their subsequent return.

In the political discussion about the difficulty of carrying out returns, reference is often made to a lack of willingness among the asylum seekers themselves to comply with rejection decisions. Problems can also relate to the rejected asylum seeker holding no travel documents or not submitting these to enforcement agencies, refusing to disclose their identities, or evading deportation by absconding. Countries

1Protection rates calculated by the author on the basis of Eurostat 2019b.
of origin sometimes refuse to readmit their own nationals, or do not issue passports (EMN 2016).

While such explanations may hold true in many cases, the example of Afghanistan suggests that there are more fundamental reasons for non-return as well. The EU and several of its Member States have concluded readmission agreements with Afghanistan, which aim to eliminate several of the practical return obstacles mentioned. In fact, the so-called ‘Joint Way Forward’ agreement signed by the EU and Afghanistan in 2016 directly addresses obstacles to return, for example, by placing a time limit of four weeks for Afghan authorities to identify Afghan nationals and issue travel documents. There are concerns about the deal, however, including that the agreement bypassed parliamentary scrutiny; that the Afghan side only accepted the deal because it feared to lose development aid payments and investment from Europe; and that it attempts a difficult balance as Afghanistan already struggles to maintain security and to support hundreds of thousands of returnees from neighbouring countries and internally displaced people. Afghan officials and politicians have also raised concerns about its provisions (ECRE 2017).

While Afghanistan generally admits citizens who have been denied asylum in Europe back to Afghan territory, the security situation there has repeatedly caused problems. For example, several German federal states have halted deportations to Afghanistan due to security concerns (Deutscher Bundestag 2017) and, in May 2017, deportations were temporarily stopped nationwide following a terror attack near the German Embassy in Kabul. In Sweden, planned deportations have sometimes been cancelled last-minute, for unknown reasons. A survey by the European Migration Network (2017) showed that several EU Member States seldom carry out forced removals to Afghanistan, or never at all, or that they in practice only deport single adult men – exempting, for example, unaccompanied minors, women, families, or other potentially vulnerable persons. In addition, deportation does not necessarily result in dangers only to the Afghan returnees themselves, but possibly also to officials involved in the return process, such as police, border guards, and embassy staff.

Given that a growing share of Afghan asylum seekers are rejected while, at the same time, their return is seldom realistic, this ultimately leads to more irregular or semi-legal stays in Europe. In Germany, most ‘non-returnables’ from Afghanistan end up with the unstable legal status of ‘toleration’, which is a temporary suspension of deportation that hinders integration. Swedish authorities can issue temporary residence permits in cases of long-standing obstacles to return, but the respective practice is restrictive and very few Afghans have so far received such permits. Most rejected asylum applicants from Afghanistan who do not leave remain in the country with no legal status or move onward within Europe. In 2018 and 2019, Swedish media reported that failed Afghan asylum seekers, particularly young adults, left Sweden and tried to get asylum in France instead (Eriksson 2019; Parusel 2019).

A need for harmonisation and pragmatism

The fact that the asylum decision-making practice of the EU Member States varies enormously challenges one of the cornerstones of the Common European Asylum System – the aim of a uniform assessment of the protection needs of asylum seekers. A strengthening of the role of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) could partly remedy the situation, for example if the Agency were given the power to review Member States’ decision-making practice and make (binding) suggestions for improvement in cases where the authorities of a Member State deviate
strongly from common EU guidelines. In 2016, the European Commission proposed to convert the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) into a European Union Agency for Asylum, strengthening and widening its mandate and tasks, but this is not likely to quickly improve diverging asylum assessments. Besides more operative powers, the proposal gives the Agency the task of coordinating efforts among Member States to engage and develop common guidance on the situation in countries of origin, but it does not foresee that the new Agency can impose a certain decision-making practice on a Member State or intervene if a national approach is out-of-line. A ‘joint processing’ of asylum applications by officials from two or more Member States and/or centrally by EASO is not foreseen either (EC 2016).

Progress towards a further harmonisation of decision-making is essential, however, not only for general fairness principles but also with regard to any future responsibility-sharing system that would distribute asylum seekers more evenly across Member States. Obviously, it would be deeply unfair to allocate asylum seekers to a Member state where they would most likely be rejected, while the same persons would receive protection in another state. Already today, the lack of harmonised asylum adjudication is one reason behind secondary movements of asylum seekers from one Member State to another. The Dublin regulation aims to prevent and counteract repeated applications by the same persons in more than one Member State, but secondary movement is of course understandable if the same person has an above 80 percent chance to receive protection in some countries and below 20 percent chances in others.

As regards return policies, the example of Afghanistan speaks to a need for more honesty, realism, and pragmatism. On the one hand, the often-heard argument that a credible asylum policy also includes the return of persons who are not entitled to protection is plausible. On the other hand, if many asylum seekers are not granted protection while at the same time their repatriation is dangerous, unreasonable, or unenforceable, a credibility problem arises. Are people denied protection, who given the lack of a realistic return option would actually be in need of it? Or do we need to address the problem of rejected asylum seekers who cannot return through other, non-asylum solutions? One possibility could be to allow ‘non-returnable’ persons a status change towards legal residence on the basis of work or studies in the EU. Another option is to widen the applicability of humanitarian grounds for residence in the EU. Even if an individual does not qualify as a refugee or for subsidiary protection, they might deserve the opportunity to stay and integrate in a country of refuge.

If nothing happens, the obvious risk is that an asylum policy, as in the case of Afghanistan, where protection is often denied but at the same time a termination of residence cannot be enforced without major risks and dangers, becomes illegitimate and untrustworthy.
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Several countries are implementing or exploring policies to enable refugees or asylum seekers to access economic immigration pathways. These can be grouped into policies targeting asylum seekers after arrival and those targeting refugees and potential asylum seekers before arrival; all enable people to access labour migrant status in-country or admission through economic immigration. This analysis identifies a range of policy objectives across these policies in order to help policy makers answer the central question: Who should be eligible for these pathways?

Introduction

In a handful of countries, practical imperatives or humanitarian objectives are persuading governments to open economic immigration pathways to refugees or asylum seekers. This is a relatively nascent policy area in Western countries, despite a historical parallel: in the interwar period and shortly after the Second World War, thousands of refugees were admitted under systems designed for workers (UNHCR and ILO 2012).

More countries may soon follow. The scale of global displacement (UNHCR 2019) and the limits of the protection regime have led the international community to develop new instruments that include commitments to increase mobility options — such as labour mobility — for refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations. The Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration encourage countries to be practical in ensuring that people who need to move do so in safe and lawful ways. New government practices that flow from the Global Compacts can benefit from the lessons of existing programmes that connect protection regimes with economic immigration.

This article analyses the stated policy objectives of four current practices in Canada, Germany (two policies) and Sweden. These examples can be grouped into policies targeting asylum seekers after their arrival; and those targeting refugees in countries of first asylum and potential asylum seekers before their arrival. All policies seek to enable people to obtain a labour migrant status or admission through economic immigration. Our analysis of policy objectives aims to help policymakers answer this fundamental question: Who should be eligible for these pathways?

Policy Objectives of Four State Practices

Germany’s ‘Lane Change’ Policy

In 2016, Germany introduced a policy enabling rejected asylum seekers to receive a temporary quasi-residence title (suspension of deportation) for the duration of their vocational training, with the possibility to later ‘change lanes’ to a regular residence status with unrestricted access to the labour market. Applicants must secure vocational training in a state-recognised profession and are only eligible if they have not committed crimes, if they are not from a designated ‘safe country of origin,’ and if concrete measures to initiate their return have not yet been taken. For business associations, which had long lobbied the federal government for a lane change option, this offers the opportunity to hire and train rejected
asylum seekers and those still in the asylum process without the risk of losing investments in human resources in the longer term; for the government, it presents a venue to fill labour shortages with qualified workers who are already in the country; and for rejected claimants who cannot be deported, it offers the possibility of regular employment. The main argument against the policy (in Germany and Sweden, see below) made by politicians is the potential to create a new ‘pull factor,’ although this is difficult to prove (Kolb 2018; Calleman 2018).

**Sweden’s ‘Lane Change’ Policy**

Sweden introduced the option for rejected asylum seekers to apply for a work permit in 2008 (Government of Sweden 2007/08:147). They can apply under certain conditions, such as holding a job (on conditions according to collective agreements), and only within a short time window after the asylum decision. The goal of the policy is to increase incentives for asylum seekers to work and to regularise their work status. However, few applicants were found to be eligible. Data on past applications show most applicants were rejected because they fell short of the requirements, such as filing an application within a two-week period following an asylum decision. Calleman (2015) analysed about 500 of these cases and found arbitrary decision-making, concluding implementation of the policy was not always just or consistent. The future of the policy is reportedly uncertain under the current government.²

¹ Other requirements include having worked for at least four months; holding an employment offer for at least one year from the date of the application; and meeting certain prevailing wage, insurance and other employment conditions.

² It should be noted that if Germany or Sweden succeed in making the asylum process more efficient, eligibility for ‘lane change’ policies under current criteria could significantly drop because

**Canada’s Economic Mobility Pathways Project**

Canada began to test refugee access to existing economic immigration pathways in early 2018 through a small pilot for refugees living in Kenya, Jordan and Lebanon, called the Economic Mobility Pathways Project. Under the pilot, two partner NGOs, Talent Beyond Boundaries and RefugeePoint, refer skilled refugees to Canadian employers and participating provincial and territorial governments. Applicants who meet the human capital criteria³ and who have employment offers or expressions of interest from a province or territory proceed to an immigration application. The pilot aims to better understand barriers facing refugees in the economic stream and, where possible, solve administrative barriers facing qualified refugee applicants, such as a requirement to provide proof of ‘settlement funds’ or personal savings. The pilot ultimately aims to inform policy that enables displaced populations to access a durable solution in Canada through economic immigration (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2018). The first phase of the pilot runs until late 2019 and may inform the development of a new immigration stream or changes across existing economic pathways.

**Germany’s Western Balkan Regulation**

Germany opened the labour market to nationals from six Balkan countries for a period of five years until 2020. Applicants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia do not require minimum skills or qualifications, including German asylum seekers would have less time in-country to secure employment or apprenticeships prior to a negative decision.³ The human capital criteria in Canada’s more than 80 economic immigration pathways vary but typically include work experience, education, and language skills.
Determining Policy Objectives and Eligibility Criteria

If skilled immigration pathways for refugees or asylum seekers should be complementary to the protection system, a key conceptual question in developing these pathways is whether these constitute a protection policy with some economic objectives; or an economic policy with some protection objectives. Broadly considered, protection objectives may include providing protection, deterring unsafe mobility, or enabling regular status for those unwilling or unable to return home. The balancing of these and other objectives, such as orderly and managed migration,4 should inform policy thinking on eligibility for these pathways.

4 The term ‘managed migration’ is used in this article to convey the objective to achieve safe, orderly and regular migration, which includes the desire by states ‘to steer migration flows according to their political and economic interests’ (Geiger and Pécoud 2012: 12).

Table 1 categorises some of the main stated policy objectives across the four practices from Canada, Germany, and Sweden. We group the objectives in three categories, recognising that there is often overlap among them and that they may be conflicting: economic growth, protection, and managed migration. We then suggest respective eligibility criteria. These criteria can also be categorised: immigration status criteria, as well as skills and employment criteria.

Eligibility criteria should derive from clear policy objectives, and the degree of selectivity should vary accordingly. This clarity may help to achieve greater policy coherence, communication to the public, and monitoring and evaluation of the policy in the longer term. In general, we argue:

- if a policy intends to meet primarily economic growth objectives, eligibility criteria related to immigration status may be more open, but criteria related to skills and employment may be more selective; and
- if a policy intends to meet primarily protection (humanitarian) objectives, eligibility criteria related to immigration status may be more selective, but criteria related to skills and employment may be more open; and
- if a policy intends to first and foremost meet managed migration objectives, all criteria may be more selective.

These considerations are visualised in the matrix in Table 2.
### Table 1. Policy Objectives and Eligibility Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Policy Objectives</th>
<th>Eligibility Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **After Arrival (Rejected asylum seekers)**  
(Example: ‘Lane change’ policy in Germany and Sweden) | • To provide employers with added certainty when hiring and training asylum seekers before an asylum decision is made, or when hiring rejected asylum seekers  
• To fill labour shortages and skills gaps                                                                 | • Rejected asylum seekers, especially those who cannot be deported⁵  
• Those with employment and/or in-demand skills                                                                 |
| Economic growth           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                       |
| Protection                | • To facilitate regular status for those already in-country                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                       |
| Managed migration         | • To achieve other objectives without creating an incentive (‘pull factor’) for others to seek access to the inland asylum system                                                                               |                                                                                       |
| **Before Arrival (Recognised refugees & potential asylum seekers)**  
(Examples: Canada’s EMPP & Germany’s Western Balkan Regulation) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                       |
| Economic growth           | • To fill gaps by attracting talent from within mobile populations that are invisible to traditional economic immigration policy  
• Refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations, including persons under UNHCR or UNRWA mandate, and internally displaced people  
• Potential asylum seekers from safe countries of origin whose asylum claims are highly likely to be rejected  
• Those who have particular employment and/or in-demand skills  
**Consider additional criteria:**  
• Cases from a specific nationality or country/region only                                                                 |                                                                                       |

⁵ We suggest rejected asylum seekers only, and not current asylum seekers, because there are several risks, such as creating the perception of a delegitimised asylum procedure. There is also a practical risk of mixing employability and protection criteria in asylum determinations (if procedures are not properly separated), and the alleged risk of creating additional incentives to migrate via unsafe routes.
Table 2. Eligibility Criteria Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills and Employment Criteria</th>
<th>Immigration Status Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Managed Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Protection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Selective</th>
<th>Open</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Growth and/or Protection</td>
<td>Economic Growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

Clear policy objectives should inform how policymakers determine who qualifies for economic immigration pathways that are designed for refugees, migrants in vulnerable situations or asylum seekers. The stakes are high because there are few safe and regular mobility pathways globally relative to the scale of the displaced population. Any limits placed on the eligibility of these groups should therefore be thoughtfully determined. Our analysis shows that, in general, economic growth objectives may lead to more selective skills and employment criteria but more open immigration criteria; while protection objectives may lead to more selective immigration status criteria but more open skills and employment criteria.

Coherence between objectives and eligibility will likely deliver other significant benefits, such as the ability to take steps to implement a policy and to better measure its effectiveness. If relevant authorities know what the policy intends to achieve, and who is eligible to benefit from it, then it will become easier to identify indicators to assess its impact.

A second, critical reason for developing clear objectives and eligibility criteria is to better evaluate needed safeguards such as residence status and the right to stay. Economic immigration pathways may enable either temporary or permanent residence status, and different pathways may carry different rights and obligations, including access to citizenship in the longer term. Options for permanent residence may be essential if these pathways change or limit prior access to protection, for example, when refugees move from a country of first asylum to a new country as economic immigrants. But participants in new mobility programmes should not, as a result, lose the basic protections previously entitled to them. Temporary work permits may be sufficient for other groups, such as rejected asylum seekers; but offering permanent residence may be more consistent with a stated objective to increase international protection space for displaced populations.

Another benefit is credibility and legitimacy of asylum and immigration systems in the public eye. Without clarity on what a policy intends to achieve and for whom, there is a risk that it will be viewed as providing undue privilege over others or incentivizing travel by unsafe routes. Clear policy objectives can help to maintain public trust in these emerging migration pathways and policy decisions.
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CALLEMAN, C. (2018) Presentation attended by the authors delivered at the workshop Skilled Immigration Pathways for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Embassy of Canada to Germany, 11 October 2018.


In the context of protracted forced displacement, development approaches are of significant added value for both refugees and major refugee-hosting countries. While host countries and refugees are the clear target group for such approaches, their voices are not always those heard within the international policy arena. Moreover, many of the approaches implemented to date have experienced challenges in implementation. This article presents policy options provided by refugee country stakeholders, which focus on four main areas they believe need to be better taken into account to better respond to refugees’ needs and development opportunities. Having been tested in major refugee-hosting countries, they can be brought forward into the policy arena for other refugee-hosting countries, donors and international organisations.

Introduction

In the context of protracted forced displacement, during which impacts on refugee communities and host communities are long-lasting, sometimes even generational, development approaches can be of added value for both refugees and major refugee-hosting countries. Such approaches engage the concept of the ‘development-displacement nexus’, which, while not new, has recently gained traction within academic and policy circles (Holborn 1975; Brooks and El-Ayouty 1970; Betts 2009). A ‘nexus’ approach suggests integrating development approaches into traditional humanitarian responses to displacement. The argument for such approaches being that while responses to refugee crises are primarily short-term in nature, displacement often continues for years, implying a need for a longer-term strategy to minimise negative impacts and maximise the potential for opportunities among refugee and host communities.

However, while host countries and refugees are the clear target group for such approaches, their interests are not always those heard within the international policy arena (Howden, Patchett and Alfred 2017; Lenner and Turner 2018a; Barbelet et al. 2018). Moreover, it is often donor priorities that shape the direction of policies and the ability of host states to respond to urgent needs. Indeed, as of October 2018, the Jordanian government received 149% of required funding for refugee livelihoods for 2018 – a ‘hot topic’ in the international policy arena at the moment – as compared to 3% of required funding for energy and 17% for education (Gharaibeh 2018; see also Hendow 2019). For these reasons, many of the approaches implemented to date have experienced challenges in implementation. This article outlines the limitations of recent national, regional and international efforts before presenting alternative policy approaches suggested by host country stakeholders themselves, based on fieldwork with stakeholders from Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

National, Regional, and International Efforts

While recent development-displacement nexus approaches have pushed the boundaries of work between humanitarian and development actors, they also demonstrate key areas for
future improvements. At the national level, the Jordan Compact has garnered significant attention in the academic and international arena for being an innovative ‘game-changing’ approach to promoting development for the benefit of refugees and host communities (Betts and Collier 2017, 2015; Howden et al. 2017). Based on an EU commitment to trade concessions for products exported from special economic zones in which refugees are granted access to work, the Jordan Compact has experienced a variety of challenges in implementation. These have been attributed to a number of perceived policy design flaws, including: lack of engagement of refugees, local experts, NGOs, and the private sector during policy design; bureaucratic obstacles and high registration costs; focus on work permit issuances as indicators of success; and mismatch between the skillset of Syrian refugees in Jordan and their foreseen employment in the Jordanian garment sector (Howden et al. 2017; Betts, Ali and Memişoğlu 2018; Lenner and Turner 2018a, 2018b; Overseas Development Institute 2018).

At the regional level, the European Union Regional Development and Protection Programme for Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, revamped from purely protection-oriented programmes, have wedded a socioeconomic development component and protection within a regional framework. This approach reflects a broader shift by the EU to consistently integrate development approaches in humanitarian responses to refugee displacement across their external engagement (European Commission 2016a, 2017b). Nonetheless, critiques of the previous Regional Protection Programmes highlighted the continued prevalence of national-level projects and classic UNHCR services, with the ‘regional’ and ‘development’ aspects not yet sufficiently reflected (Papadopoulou 2015). UNHCR’s Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework similarly aims at bridging humanitarian and development approaches and is a key component of and framework for implementation of the recently concluded Global Compact on Refugees. The approach has only recently been launched and thus comprehensive analysis of implementation is not yet available. However, first analyses have highlighted the challenges the framework faces in terms of building and sustaining political support, both from countries of resettlement and refugee hosting countries (Hansen 2018; Genest 2018).

Policy Approaches

In the context of broader efforts to incorporate development approaches in responses to displacement, the author engaged with policy stakeholders in major refugee-hosting countries.\(^1\) The author conducted 30 semi-structured interviews and 15 stakeholder consultations in a roundtable format with representatives of government institutions, chambers of commerce, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations (including UN agencies and donor agencies) from or operating in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey between June and October 2018.\(^2\) This represents a complementary perspective to other policy guidance.

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\(^1\) Research was conducted in the framework of an OPEC Fund for International Development co-funded study on refugee protection and the development-displacement nexus (for more information, see Hendow 2019).

\(^2\) While input from affected populations is also key to designing approaches catered to their specific needs, the research questions focused on structural issues and approaches related to the design of policies. Thus, interviews focused those stakeholders actively engaged in the policy debate and design in the relevant countries, including those with knowledge and experience of working with and advocating on behalf of refugees. Moreover, during the tailoring process of policies, assessments, and all relevant activities suggested, the engagement of the relevant refugee population is an essential recommendation.
available, which tends to outline the views of international practitioners, rather than the perspective of countries with experience of hosting large-scale and long-term displaced populations.

The input from stakeholders reflected four main thematic areas and 20 key approaches in terms of designing and implementing more effective policy responses to protracted refugee displacement. These suggested approaches are actions considered as essential in order to maximise the development potential and minimise negative impacts of protracted displacement for host countries and refugees. The suggestions were reiterated across stakeholders – and thus represent areas of broad consensus, including between representatives of host countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental practitioners.

This is significant, as development approaches to displacement (which often reflect ‘local integration’ approaches) have varying acceptance across sectors, institutions, regions, and the general public in the host countries considered, and may at times be in contradiction to perspectives from donors, UN agencies, and NGOs. The suggestions thus put forward areas where concrete work can already be done and where tangible success may be more feasible.

First, a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the situation on the ground is critical to better tailor and design policy approaches. This entails ensuring that all relevant information on refugees has been collected and assessed, in order to design and prioritise the most appropriate actions. In contrast to short-term ‘crisis response’ approaches, countries and implementing agencies have in mind longer-term strategies based on a clear understanding of the country’s needs generally and with respect to the refugee population. Moreover, host country institutions highlighted the differences across regions, municipalities, and institutions, and the need for policies and methods that are more inclusive during the design period, particularly by donors and implementing agencies. Where local-level stakeholders are not included, tailored responses can be hampered because of a lack of understanding of local needs. On the other hand, in Turkey, the provincial representation of the Turkish employment agency convenes provincial-level boards including stakeholders from the Chamber of Commerce, Ministries of Education and Health, and others, in order to shape responses to labour issues within the region. This has facilitated labour matching programmes, skills development programmes and other services of which Syrian refugees can avail. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders through consultations or inclusion in projects were mentioned as concrete ways to ensure that the full spectrum of perspectives is included.

Second, interviewees have stressed the importance of communicating needs, raising awareness, and coordinating response. While approaches that are more inclusive can help ensure more effective policies and programmes, lack of coordination or leadership by an institution in a host country can equally hinder progress, and it is important for donors and implementing agencies to understand and effectively assist countries in designing a tailored approach. At the same time, communicating the added value of refugees to the society, and supporting programmes that promote social cohesion (such as cross-community activities and media training) should be core aspects to a country's actions and rhetoric in order to support and reinforce social cohesion. In Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, a number of recent projects have focused on these aspects, often run through local partners and through community centres, who engage with both the host and (Syrian) refugee community through intercultural activities and services on a more regular basis. Piggybacking on established

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3 One of the three “durable solutions” to refugee displacement, promoted by UNHCR, the others being resettlement to third countries and voluntary repatriation.
local and community structures, while perhaps smaller-scale in size, can be a more effective way to access and bring together both communities (host and refugee).

Third, integrating development approaches into national and local service provision and policies is key. This is not always immediately possible for all sectors or institutions, according to each country’s particularities. But at the same time countries and international stakeholders highlighted the importance of using international support to bolster service infrastructure, rather than creating unsustainable parallel systems. Refugee inclusion in education systems (whether immediately or gradually), for example, seems to be a key area of consensus across countries. Lebanon and Jordan have already implemented second-shift schools\(^4\) since 2014 and 2016, respectively. As of 2014, Turkey made efforts to facilitate Syrian refugees’ enrolment in public schools and also established “Temporary Education Centres” for them in camps and urban centres with curricula in Arabic and Turkish. However, these centres have been phasing out since 2016, in recognition of the need to find more permanent solutions to the protracted situation. Host community inclusion (particularly vulnerable communities) in programmes outreaching to refugees has been equally emphasised, particularly to support social cohesion.

And finally, further boosting business and decent work for refugees and host communities is critical to improve livelihoods. There is already a plethora of (vocational) training programmes aimed at refugees in all countries. Yet stakeholders agreed on the need to link these more concretely to labour market needs, including through certification programmes and access to employment. This was generally highlighted by chambers of commerce, NGOs, and UN agencies, and specifically related to refugee-focused services by policy makers. In Turkey, Syrians have been employed by government ministries in service provision in the areas of health (within the Turkish health care system), education (through the Temporary Education Centres), family and social programmes(Ministry of Family and Social Policies home visits on vulnerable groups and guidance on access to services). This approach was implemented in order to improve outreach to the Syrian refugee population in Turkey, which they were previously having challenges accessing due to linguistic and cultural barriers. Supporting investment and business development by refugee and host country entrepreneurs was also considered a key area for development not yet sufficiently explored considering the already sizeable investment by refugees in (informal and formal) businesses in all three countries. Policy options should thus focus more on developing programmes that better match and respond to host country needs, refugee skills, and business development.

These four areas highlight the main issues stakeholders from refugee-hosting countries agree should be taken into account comprehensively to better respond to refugees’ needs and to take advantage of development opportunities in major host countries. All four areas aim at empowering refugees to regain control over their individual situation and require the active involvement of refugees and a variety of host country actors in policy design and implementation in order to meet protection and development policy objectives. Finally, the options call on the international community, especially donors and implementing agencies, to more closely align policy approaches with host country needs.

\(^4\) Second-shift schools are public schools that remain open for a second group of classes in the afternoon.
Conclusion

Rather than being considered as subjects of policy reform with regard to protracted displacement, major host countries have rich expertise from which we can learn lessons for the improved implementation of development-displacement approaches. Refugee-hosting countries should be recognised at the international level as stakeholders with good practices and valuable insights on how to respond to refugee needs and their own development needs in a constrained environment.

In addition, it is also worth considering convening similar consultations in other refugee-hosting regions to explore how to enhance the design and implementation of development-oriented responses to protracted refugee situations. Doing so can be seen as a means to recognise the global good major refugee-hosting countries provide to the international community, as well as to better respond to protection and development-oriented needs of both refugees and host communities alike.

The author

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Bibliography


In 2015 and 2016, the Greek island of Lesbos saw half a million refugees fleeing war and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan or DR Congo, among other countries. The island was, alongside Chios and Samos, one of the main entry points on the migration route in Greece. As the 2016 EU-Turkey deal changed the character of migration, thousands of asylum seekers remained trapped on the Aegean islands. The number of arrivals has now dropped – but not stopped. According to the Aegean Boat Report’s statistics, 493 boats started their trip towards the Greek islands in July 2019, carrying 15,140 people. 175 boats arrived in Greece, carrying 5099 people. A staggering 318 boats were stopped, and 10,041 people were arrested.

For more information, please see Aegean Boat Report from August 3, 2019: https://www.facebook.com/AegeanBoatReport/photos/a.285312485325196/623213364868438/?type=3&theater.

Weather poses a serious challenge: water often enters the tents during the monsoon-like rains while summers are unbearably hot.
The Moria migrants’ reception center, located about twenty minutes by car from Mytilene, is the new arrivals’ first stop on Lesbos which, in many cases, becomes a permanent place. With a capacity for about 3 000 people, the former military base – now for many resembling a prison – is hopelessly overcrowded: it became a place of detention instead of a place of transit, leaving asylum seekers in limbo, in many cases for years. This situation poses a real threat to the physical and mental health of already vulnerable populations.

Some escape the worsening security situation and living conditions by moving to the Olive Grove, adjacent to Moria. Here, women, men and families seek more privacy on a steep hill, in shelters built using tents, blankets, branches, pallets and other available materials. This feature was created in January 2019 when, according to UNHCR data, 5,000 people were staying in Moria – and about 2,000 in the Olive Grove.²

The cold, strong wind and the almost constantly pouring rain deteriorated the already dire conditions in the Olive Grove, a place without regular access to electricity or sanitary facilities, without clear prospects for the future – but with unimaginable resilience.

This photographic project was supported by Minority Rights Group International.


“All I want is to have a safe place and an opportunity to work.”
Please, open the Hungarian border.

I'm strong too much.

I do not know about my family, our province fell.

We worked hard in Iran, what will happen to us?
Weather poses a serious challenge: water often enters the tents during the monsoon-like rains while summers are unbearably hot.

Electricity is scarce and highly unreliable in the Olive Grove, with sometimes only two hours of access per day. When the night falls, the security situation both in Moria and the Olive Grove worsens, posing an everyday risk of clashes, riots and incidents of sexual violence.
“Come, come, have some tea.” Hospitality is in stark contrast with the dire conditions.
A group of friends gathers next to the bonfire, trying to make a cold winter evening bearable.

The photographer

Diana Takacsova is a Slovak/Hungarian photographer now based in Brussels, Belgium, focusing on questions of identity, physical and emotional connection to place and human relationship to nature and environment. From Europe to the Middle East and Africa, she seeks smaller stories that tell more about the whole, investigating the daily life of different groups and communities and the impacts on them. She is a Slovak Press Photo Award recipient (2016) and nominee (2018), and a participant of an artist residency documenting urban territories/personal territories in Paris, France.

To view more of Diana’s photographs, please visit www.oxforcedmigration.com.
Grassroots Volunteerism in Athens: Notes from the Field

Marie Aline Klinger, Lisa Nüsslein, Elena Liberati and Elena Nikiforova

Three years after the closing of the Balkan route and implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement, Athens is still a hub and junction for people on the move in Greece. As a response to this influx, an extensive humanitarian field embracing a wide spectrum of actors has developed, from small grassroots organisations to large INGOs. Volunteers play a crucial role in the functioning of this field. This paper is based on a pilot study of people who cooperate on a voluntary basis with small-scale initiatives in Athens. As our research shows, many small-scale initiatives' participants perceive ‘volunteering’ - and their labelling as volunteers - problematic. This paper explores why the conventional V-term has become controversial, considers its alternative labels, and links this conceptual debate to the broader problems of humanitarianism.

Introduction

Three years after the closing of the Balkan route and implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement, Athens is still a hub and junction for people on the move in Greece. Migrants and refugees find themselves stranded in Athens waiting for their cases to be considered. As a response to this influx, an extensive humanitarian field has developed, one that embraces a wide spectrum of actors, from humanitarian groups to business initiatives, small grassroots organisations to large international organisations. Volunteers play a crucial role in the functioning of this ever-expanding field, as many organisations actively engage volunteers in their activities or rely entirely on volunteer work.

We, four female social scientists from Germany, Italy, and Russia, carried out a small research project on the phenomenon of volunteering in Athens. Our pilot research was conducted in Athens in January 2019, as part of an anthropological winter school on ‘Migration in the Margins of Europe’ held by the Netherlands Institute of Athens. Facing a multiplicity of actors and perspectives, we were particularly interested in grassroots activities and civic engagement, and narrowed our gaze to small scale initiatives, which are significantly different, conceptually and practically, from large and established humanitarian bodies.

Research Questions and Methodology

Starting this research project, two of us had prior experience of volunteering in Athens and another was engaged in similar activities in Italy. Our motivation to explore the topic on an empirical and theoretical level was therefore grounded in our prior first-hand experience. We went to the field armed with two sets of questions. The first set explored the individual meanings and motives of engagement in volunteering: people’s incentives, previous experiences, what they have gained from being volunteers, and how this experience can be placed within their broader life trajectories. The second set of questions concerned the definitional and conceptual aspects of the phenomenon of volunteering and the debate on differences and convergences between volunteering and social activism (see Wilson 2000: 216).

From our previous experience, we knew that for an involved and reflexive practitioner, volunteerism, conventionally defined as ‘any activity
in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or cause’ (Wilson 2000: 215), crumbles into a complex array of categories, subject positions, and related identities. It is a complicated and morally loaded field. Moreover, many people working in the field find the very notion of ‘volunteering’ problematic and prefer using other labels instead. For example, one of our interlocutors (Chiara, an Italian independent volunteer and writer) explains this uneasiness as follows: ‘I don’t like to be considered a volunteer, because ... it is not just a matter of helping people, it is a matter of acting and being aware, of being an aware citizen’ (see also Rozakou 2016: 94; Serntedakis 2017: 92). What is so problematic about using the accustomed and conventional ‘V-word’ label for those engaged in producing this field? What are alternative ways for ‘volunteers’ to label and define themselves? How do these labels and debates about their meanings relate to broader conceptual and moral questions faced by humanitarianism today? Those were the questions we had starting our fieldwork.

People serving as volunteers in Athens make for a rather diverse community, and we tried to reflect this diversity in our interview sample. Of our seven total interlocutors, two were Greek citizens who live in Athens on a permanent basis, two were short term internationals, three had been to Greece for a year or longer. Among the latter, two people had recent forced migration experience. Besides these seven in-depth interviews, we conducted many informal conversations with the volunteers of all above mentioned backgrounds and also, in some cases, conducted follow-up conversations during a return visit to the field site in June 2019.

Results: Reflections on Volunteerism

A common theme brought up by all interlocutors concerns the nature of volunteering and the meaning that this category has gained since the ‘summer of migration’ of 2015. Volunteering has become a term that represents relationships of inequality and hierarchies entrenched in the humanitarian industry. Most of our interviewees deliberately and thoughtfully chose to join grassroots and hands-on initiatives, remaining very critical of large international NGOs which get ‘huge amounts of funding, spend them nobody knows how, and are still looking for volunteers to do their job for free’ (Artemis, from Greece). Some were pushed away from involvement in international NGOs (often EU or government funded) by the perception that their work reproduced hierarchies in many ways, from wearing logotyped uniforms to operating in line with state interests driven by strict bordering policies.

Volunteering is also loaded with other meanings derived from cultural contexts in which voluntary activities are linked to community work or religious groups: ‘I don’t like the term ‘volunteer’ because in Italy it is always referred to something Catholic’ (Chiara). Since most of our interlocutors see the work they are doing as unquestionably political, it is not surprising that, not wanting to appear solely as good Samaritans, they find this mix of connotations problematic. They perceive volunteering as ‘a weak category’ associated with subordinated position within existing social structures, whereas in their view these very structures should be subjected to criticism and transformation.

The criticism of volunteerism we observed during our research resonates with the findings of Giorgos Serntedakis (2017) and Katerina Rozakou (2016; 2017), anthropologists who have carried out in-depth studies of volunteerism in Greece. Rozakou points at the existence of two types of volunteerism in Greece, distinguishing between ‘official volunteerism’ and ‘vernacular humanitarianism.’ Official volunteerism was crafted by the state in the
Most of our interlocutors do voluntary work for solidarity initiatives of this kind and endorse these ideas, working them into practice. They also developed reflections on the deep and problematic contradictions between their own positionality and mode of living and the conditions of those whom they have come to assist:

‘Solidarian’ – I would prefer it – showing solidarity to the people and trying to support them in the situation in which we are on a horizontal level. I understand that I am Italian with a passport, so this horizontal level, perhaps, does not exist, but...Yeah. Solidarian. (Chiara).

The term ‘solidarian’ is a neologism that signifies the radicalisation of solidarity that took place in austerity-ridden Greece and resonates with local responses to neoliberalisation (Rozakou 2017). At the core of solidarity practices lies socialising with people, not only the distribution of material goods. The movement is driven by the goal to change structures and eliminate inequality and brings these ideas to the practical level through socialising and making everyone feel valued and equal. Solidarians’ ethics presupposes co-production of the common good – not just distributing food, but cooking the food together, talking, dancing, and co-creating a sociality which drives a better life.

As Rozakou discusses, concerning moral attitudes towards ‘the Other’, hospitality stands alongside the two modes of humanitarianism (official and vernacular) as the most established ‘code of dealing with alterity in Greece’ (Rozakou 2016: 100). We add ‘voluntourism’ as a fourth parameter to this picture, linking two central perceptions of Greece as both a tourist destination and a location for volunteer activities. ‘Volunteer tourism’ relates to the growing trend of a short-term travel with the goal of both ‘doing good’ and...
experiencing novelty and adventure. ‘Voluntourism’ is often criticised as an explicitly short-term endeavour that allows for quick and targeted actions but prevents deep emotional and practical engagement with the place and its problems (see Knott 2018).

However, temporariness is not the main reason why some of our interlocutors looked at voluntourism with criticism, if not with disapproval. While in many cases perceived ‘voluntourists’ turn out to be just as devoted, voluntourism in general is seen suspiciously. As Artemis explains: ‘it’s good for them to go and help a bit the people, the refugees, immigrants, and you know. But in general, they don’t have this mindset’. It is assumed that voluntourists are not seriously motivated, not prepared enough, and can often do more harm than good. Being too close to leisure on a conceptual and practical level, with excursions, partying, and fun as a part of daily volunteer routine, voluntourism also comes too close to subverting the unwritten moral foundations of solidarity as a social and political project.

Conclusion

Perceived voluntourists, outspoken solidarians, volunteers, Greeks, internationals - these are just some of the labels and identities, conscious and prescribed, that compose the complex field of volunteer activities centred on people on the move in today’s Athens. The complexity of individual identities is supplemented by myriad forms of institutions, including small grassroots organisations. While the pilot character of our research does not allow to make deep and extensive conclusions, it is nonetheless possible to suggest that small grassroots initiatives play a special role in the humanitarian constellation of Athens. Emerging in many instances in opposition to established and commercialised forms of humanitarianism, they actively reclaim and promote the universal right of being human, rather than human-itarian, grounding their work on horizontal ideals of social equality rather than help. They also contribute to diminishing boundaries between different categories of volunteers, serving as institutional host to anyone sharing similar attitudes and values, be it to solidarians, volunteers, Greeks, or refugees who have joined to help. Along with the broader task of further exploring the role of small grassroots initiatives in the humanitarian field of Athens, another important theme for future research is the involvement of people with the forced migration backgrounds in voluntary activities - a phenomenon obviously overlooked and understudied.
The authors

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Post-Secondary Education in and Beyond Forced Migration Contexts: The Community Mobilization In Crisis Project

Nadia Abu-Zahra, Diana El Richani, and Emily Regan Wills

The Community Mobilization in Crisis (CMIC) project co-creates open education resources with and for communities in crisis, particularly refugee and host communities. The resources, co-created and/or used in Turtle Island (Canada/US), Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Brazil, and Mexico, are openly available at http://cmic-mobilize.org/. This brief note details our context, approach, and open educational resources (interview videos, transcripts, reading texts, e-portfolio questions, activity sheets, blogs, and more), and our finding that mobilising and sharing our experiences as community mobilisers or mobilisers-in-training is in itself educational and empowering.

Introduction

‘[W]hile calls for radical changes to the ways in which we think about and organize and participate in programs [...] are relatively widespread [...] educators familiar with an expanding literature on feminist pedagogy are no doubt aware of the difficulties such a transformation of the structures of classroom social relations entails’ (Dippo et al. 1991, 82). This statement from nearly two decades ago is from among the world’s leading actors in transforming post-secondary education, through an innovative programme named ‘Borderless Higher Education for Refugees’ (BHER). When we first met Wenona Giles, Don Dippo, Aida Orgocka, Emily Antze (and by teleconference, Marangu Njogu and Josephine Gitome) at York University a few years ago – and what seems a long time ago – we were not only struck by the near-uniqueness of the BHER programme at the time, but also by how the programme facilitated changes in York University that benefitted not only Somali refugees in Kenya, but also all students and professors involved in York University programmes or courses affected by BHER. In other words, the traditional way of thinking of programmes extended to refugees is that they are for refugees; but these programmes can also be part of larger efforts to transform power structures in post-secondary education, to the benefit of all those engaged within them.

The ‘radical changes’ and ‘transformation of the structures’, to which Dippo and his co-authors refer, are indeed, as they say, difficult, but when they happen, even in tiny proportions, they are also truly rewarding. In this article, we explain how we – as three individuals from our home institution, the University of Ottawa – have been privileged to work among a large international team of mostly volunteers – students, staff and faculty, community members and (other) mobilisers – to learn from the BHER programme, and to build a similar but different multi-institutional programme, ‘Community Mobilization in Crisis’.

As the programme took shape, we were reminded that not only refugees are excluded from post-secondary education; more powerfully, we were reminded of our own institution’s role in the repression of First Nations, as it is not only located on unceded (i.e. illegally taken) land from the Algonquin nation but was also founded by and for decades served as a training institution for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whose priests were responsible for rampant
Scholarships, for instance, have a large impact for a small number of individuals. Information sharing portals serve a larger population but offer referrals rather than educational services (see Refugee Support Network 2019; European Resettlement Network 2019; Gladwell et al 2016: 5; MOOCs4inclusion 2019). Online learning platforms are more accessible, but are rarely tailored logistically or pedagogically for forced migration contexts; they also can entail learner/user costs, have varying levels of involvement of qualified specialists, and rarely have face-to-face contact (Gladwell et al 2016: 43).

Other programmes, such as those in the Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium (UNHCR 2019), are specifically designed to include forced migration contexts, either uniquely or among other contexts. These programmes incorporate face-to-face learning, even while creating or co-creating digital—and sometimes open—educational resources (InZone 2019; Mosaik 2019; Gladwell et al 2016: 15). The Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) project, for instance, is a joint initiative between universities and foundations in Kenya and Canada and offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in education and geography to refugee teachers and others in Dadaab and Kakuma camps in Kenya.

Case Study: The Community Mobilization in Crisis Project

In 2013, inspired by the BHER project, the University of Ottawa began what would become the Community Mobilization in Crisis (CMIC) project. Influenced by efforts such as the #shiftthepower campaign, as well as our experiences in working with communities and civil society in West Asia, Turtle Island\(^1\), and elsewhere, we chose not

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\(^1\) The colonial imposition of labels – like ‘North America’ and ‘Middle East’ – preserves the violent hegemony of colonial powers. As such, we try to utilise the language that the Indigenous

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to use existing curriculum and instead to transnationally co-create materials following the Indigenous principles of non-hierarchical, ‘circle’ learning. This follows from our normative commitment to undoing colonial epistemologies and actions, given our position as researchers and teachers working on unceded Algonquin territory in Turtle Island, and with roots in Lebanon, Palestine, and Ireland via Lenni Lenape and Mohawk territory.

Originally conceived to serve refugees in a camp in Jordan, the launch location shifted to Beirut, in recognition of Lebanon’s major refugee-hosting role, where today every third person is a refugee (Human Rights Watch 2019: 353, 355), and for every refugee is another person in an equally challenging socioeconomic situation (World Bank 2019). We reached out to numerous organisations across Turtle Island (Canada/US) and West Asia and were welcomed by the American University of Beirut (AUB), which was already responding quickly to the growing numbers of people forced from their homes in Syria and elsewhere. Together, the AUB’s Faculty of Health Sciences’ team (led by Professor Sawsan Abdulrahim) and the University of Ottawa team (which, over a six year period and for varying other periods, included four professors, over 60 local and international students, and six employees) began the process of co-creating educational materials with community mobilisers in Turtle Island, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, and Mexico. They developed ‘open educational materials’, i.e. digital and in-person materials such as interview videos, transcripts, reading texts, e-portfolio questions, which are openly accessible to all.

**Community Mobilization: Collective Initiatives, Common Struggles**

We began to frame our contribution as making space for learners who wanted to do something that was not available in local or international universities, and who wanted to remain involved in their communities while still building their skills and credentials. Our approach utilises different aspects of the five modalities of education—physical presence at a local institution of higher education, a digital platform to support blended learning, and tuition-free education rather than granting scholarships to existing programmes. While community mobilisation was a needed skill identified by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations agencies such as the UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, and other community workers with whom we spoke, that was not our only reason for choosing it; we also wanted to break from top-down approaches to implementing development and humanitarian projects, and work towards the collaborative empowerment of communities in crisis.

Community mobilisation is a set of practices that entail individuals joining together as collectives, based on shared concerns (societal issues or injustices), strengths, or interests, to initiate and sustain local engagement and coordinated action (Rubin and Rubin 2001; Shragge 2013; Ganz 2016). Longstanding ‘command and control’ style practices in times of crisis have been criticised for their impracticality, inefficacy, temporariness, and wastefulness, as well as for maintaining or exacerbating unjust social hierarchies and power structures (Lentfer and Cothran 2017; Imperiale and Vanclay 2019). By contrast, communal ownership of initiatives gives more power to nations of Turtle Island use. ‘West Asia’ is not an Indigenous term; we use it to combine regions known as ‘al-Hijāz’, ‘al-Shām’, and ‘al-Yaman’, roughly translating to ‘the separator’ (between the Red Sea and an eastern region of Najd), land on ‘the left’ and land on ‘the right’ (if located in al-Hijāz and facing east), as well as other neighbouring regions. Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, for instance, are part of the lands of the north, Bilād al-Shām. Other terms used are al-Mashriq and al-Maghrib (i.e. east and west), referring to areas east and west of al-Hijāz.
community members, who necessarily have insights and knowledge that are less visible to outsiders and inverts the hierarchical top-down implementation of development or humanitarian projects. Community leadership also provides opportunities to explore the institutionalised nature of crises through a stronger connection to people’s experiences over lifetimes and generations, making visible the need for social change on the systematic level rather than the individual. Community mobilisation is a powerful tool in social change-making, because ‘the vulnerable are less vulnerable when they stand together against common struggles’ (Yasmine and Moughalian 2016).

Community-based and participatory approaches are ‘on trend’ in many forms of humanitarian and development assistance. However, many of these simply place the burden of responsibility on the communities affected by crisis and war without truly turning over power, control, and resources to them. Adding ‘community consultations’ or ‘participatory processes’ to standard development projects does little to shift the balance of power away from international donors, project-driven aid delivery mechanisms, and the persistent, hierarchical NGO-isation of the process of making social change (Roy 2016: 331-335). However, putting the decision-making power and resources to make change into the hands of people facing challenges and communities affected by crisis has the potential to transform how those power structures work. We therefore co-create educational resources with community-based initiatives that showcase how community members are able to identify problems and work towards solving them without the need to replicate the donor-based model of NGOs. When refugees and host community members work with our materials to support them in developing their own projects, they do so through learning that individuals can create change in their own communities, that there are other ways to organise initiatives rather than through hierarchical decision-making power. Those students, who we call mobilisers-in-training, go on to design initiatives that rely on the community and its resources in order to address issues that they choose.

Co-Creating Open Educational Resources

The bulk of our materials are co-created with community mobilisers, including the team members at the two universities (i.e. many of whom had experience in community mobilisation, despite it not necessarily being their ‘academic’ field). All those who learn from the resources can in turn speak back to them and join, through an iterative process, in their co-creation. Users of the resources thus become contributors to the resources, and the cycle continues. This is happening transnationally, with partners in Turtle Island, Lebanon, Palestine, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Brazil, and elsewhere. We also built upon frameworks used in what is termed ‘anti-oppressive’ education, much of which is all-too-frequently omitted from university curricula and instead is best known in ‘popular’ education. The three figures below, for instance, are part of asset-based community development and are often used in many forms of crisis, including among survivors of violence against women.

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The open educational materials have been used in various contexts, for example in pilots with displaced people, refugees, and host community members in the Bekaa region of Lebanon and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, with university students at the University of Brasilia and the University of Ottawa, and with NGO workers in Beirut, New York City, and Toronto. Although our learning objectives are always different, contextualised, and co-developed, certain threads remain in common: we strive to support all mobilisers-
in-training in designing community-based initiatives and solutions through important tasks such as understanding one’s own community and role within it, conducting research in order to identify problems, designing an action plan that involves community leadership and engagement, and identifying local resources to sustain these initiatives. Our focus when facilitating these programmes is on how community members themselves can create and implement projects relevant to their day-to-day lives and context, rather than replicating NGO-style work often limited to giving awareness sessions and providing services.

In some cases, it is a struggle for participants to reorient themselves towards the community-based approach for which we advocate. For instance, in the Lebanon pilot, the mobilisers talked about the problems affecting their communities, including access to education, health, employment, and others. However, the solutions proposed placed them outside of their community, working as service providers rather than members affected themselves by the problems. During the in-person sessions meant to work on project design, there was a constant back and forth critically engaging the mobilisers to address sustainability, community involvement, and decision-making. Together, we identified the need to expand the curriculum to tackle issues on how to shift away from practices that replicate NGO work when talking about community-based initiatives, how to design and implement without the necessary need for funding, and how to define community mobilisation in terms of ownership and agency.

As we have used these materials and supported others in using them elsewhere, we have found—in our own institutions and beyond—that all the mobilisers-in-training as well as our teams face the same challenges to education and barriers to mobilising: the dominance of formalised, white-saviour, top-down directed models of social change, and a systematic bias towards telling people in crisis what they need, rather than letting them control the process. The stories mobilisers share benefit us all, and the questions they wrestle with echo each other. This kind of cross-context work mirrors a direction being taken in the field of forced migration and post-secondary education: not creating programmes or materials that are only ‘for refugees’ but instead are for everyone, enriched by all, including but not limited to people forced from their homes. The hope is that someday, through ‘radical changes’ and ‘transformation of the structures’ that include but go far beyond the small programme of CMIC, the one per cent will be no longer, and in its place will be open opportunities for all, to the benefit of all.

**Figure 1.** This image demonstrates how to build personal and collective strength in times of crisis. It is also used to identify and later assemble resources to strengthen whatever initiative emerges, whether it be advocacy, fulfilling a need, mutual support, communication, or another form of collective engagement or action.
**Figure 2.** This image is used to identify common struggles and shared concerns, as well as pooled talents and collective interests.

**Figure 3.** The list on the left is just a sample; users create their own lists of factors they consider to be ‘self-care’ and weigh their relative (and varying) importance in their lives. This ‘self-check-in’ tool is later used in coping and communicating through subsequent challenges.
The authors
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Bibliography


Life of Congolese Refugees in Kampala, Uganda

ELENA HABERSKY

Photography has always been a passion of mine since I was a child. It is a joy for me to photograph both places I have been fortunate enough to travel to and the people I meet whose stories truly shape the places in which they reside. As a researcher in the field of migration looking towards the Global South, I continually look for new and innovative ways to share my research with others, particularly with my interlocutors, that is not just written academic text.

This past March I conducted field work in Kampala, Uganda, through a grant from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation and the American University in Cairo’s HUSSLab. My research looks at the ways in which African refugees shape the urban areas in which they reside. Having previously conducted research in Amman and Cairo, I wanted to travel to East Africa where my interlocutors originate from. The group I chose to photograph is Congolese refugees who live in Uganda’s capital. Whether it’s creating music, for which their country is historically well-known, or eating traditional foods at a restaurant overlooking the downtown shopping area, my interlocutors find small comforts away from home by being together in community. Through this way of life, refugees constantly change the urban areas where they are residing, leading to positive growth of urban centers.
THE GUITAR-MAN. This famous Congolese singer is well-known in Uganda for adhering to the roots of Congolese music as well as singing some songs in the local language of Luganda.
A local Congolese restaurant in downtown Kampala welcomes visitors in English, Swahili and Luganda.

Beans and rice. A simple food staple which brings comfort to Congolese looking for a community away from their villages.
MAMA. The true boss of the restaurant who makes sure everything is running in and day out and that all guests leave satisfied.
The photographer
Elena Habersky is a Research Associate at the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo (AUC). She received her MA in Migration and Refugee Studies from AUC and has conducted ethnographic fieldwork with African refugees in the urban settings of Amman, Cairo, and Kampala.
‘What we Knew was Lost’: Oral History and Narratives of Loss Amongst a Family of Greek Cypriot Displaced Persons

CHRISTAKIS PERISTIANIS

This article examines the changing texture of family relations and the different ways displacement is understood to have influenced these relations in my extended family of Greek Cypriot displaced persons. Its emphasis is situated in both the way the displaced generation comprehends their displacement and the extent to which such meanings have been inter-generationally transmitted to the second generation. As the article argues, a concept at the core of both generations’ understanding of the influence of displacement on family life is identity, with the family recognized as a guarantor of identity and displacement as a trigger for its reconsideration. All testimonies presented emphasized family life as an object of identification, with displacement associated with the disruption of both the object itself and its related settings, village life and proximity of residence.

On the 15th of August 1974, my maternal extended family left their village of Zodeia in the Morphou region of Cyprus to escape the advancing Turkish army. On that day, they became internally displaced persons.1 My grandparents, Andreas and Panayiota, along with their six young children, got in their car and left the village with nearly nothing, anticipating their journey would be short. The family took shelter in four different villages during the next year. First, they stayed for a day in the village of Evrychou, hosted by a friend of my grandfather’s. They were then hosted in the village of Sina Oros for approximately 40 days, at the home of a family they had never met before. Afterwards, they squatted in a house in the mountain peaks of Troodos where they remained for three months. Eventually, the family would make its way to the village of Astomeritis, where my eldest married uncle resided. They would initially stay at his home for some weeks and then rent a house in the same neighbourhood for a few months. Eventually the family would be given land in the village to build a new home through a self-built government scheme.2 While both my grandparents died while being displaced in Astomeritis, their children would eventually find their way back to their place of origin, if only for a visit; 30 years later.3

In their analysis of refugee and forced migration studies, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Sigona, Long and Loescher (2014) have argued that the Western discourse observed in much of the forced migration literature has tended to focus on the individualistic experiences of displacement, paying little attention to

1 A note on terminology: The Greek Cypriot displaced persons are according to law ‘internally displaced’ rather than ‘refugees’. The government of the Republic of Cyprus and the international community do not consider these displaced persons to have officially crossed an international border. As Roger Zetter notes, however, the term ‘refugee’ was used as ‘a convenient and realistic designation of social status and identity’ (1999: 20). In addition, the term prosfrys (προσφύγας; refugee) has surfaced in the Greek Cypriot community’s vocabulary to connote the situation of dislocation resulting from 1974, pushing aside the more legally accurate term ektopismenos (εκτοπισμένος; displaced). In this article I have chosen to employ the latter and have accordingly changed it in participants’ testimonies in order to be consistent.

2 See Zetter (1991) and Loizos (2008) for further information on the concessionary government grants and loans towards displaced persons in Cyprus for the building of property.

3 This return refers to the opening of the border dividing the two communities in 2003, which allowed the crossing from one side to the other for the first time since 1974. See Bryant (2010) and Dikomitis (2009, 2012).
other experiences and perspectives. This essay is intended to challenge such notions through its consideration of the familial level of the experience of displacement. More precisely, its scope lies in the changing texture of family relations in my extended family as a result of displacement, with an emphasis on the personal meanings by the displaced generation and the extent to which these have been intergenerationally transmitted. At the core of this analysis is the concept of identity and the way it intersects with the institution of the family and the surroundings in which family life took place prior to displacement (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995; Benmayor & Skotnes 1994). The argument of this article is that family members acknowledged the family as a guarantor of identity and an object of identification, with displacement a trigger for its reconsideration and restructuring (Rozińska 2011). The disruption of family life is related to two particular settings: the context and ontology of village life, and the proximity of residence among the extended family in such village communities.

In all testimonies presented in this article, family life was the ‘first memory’, the principal and primary mode through which family members, independent of generation, interpreted displacement. These testimonies referred, however, to a specific type of family and family life. This familial framework relates to what Philip Greven has called the modified extended family, which consists of ‘a kinship network of separate, but related, households’, with the principal variable being ‘not the structure of the household, but the structure and extent of the extended kin group residing within the community’ (1970: 15-16). The modified extended family is characterized by frequent interaction by choice and due to close distance, immediate affective bonds and a connection by means of mutual aid and social activities (Troll 1971; Bengtson & Cutler 1976). As Tamara Hareven (1974) has argued, this type of family and family life is contingent to the web of connections that a proximity of residence guarantees for different members of kin.

This was a kind of family life widespread in the rural communities of Cyprus prior to 1974. Following testimonies from members of my extended family, I understood that in the same neighbourhood where the family resided, also lived their paternal grandparents and the families of two of their paternal uncles. In the village of Zodeia, moreover, also resided their maternal grandparents, the families of three of their paternal aunts, the families of two of their maternal uncles and the family of their maternal aunt. One could even argue that the village community was to a certain extent comprised of relatives of different degrees. This description confirms Peter Loizos’ (1981) assertion that life in rural Cyprus ‘faced inwards’, oriented towards the family group and fellow villagers, with the two categories often being intertwined.

In terms of its methodology, this article is based on oral testimonies exploring the ways displacement is understood to influence the pattern of family relations in my extended family. They originated from the individuals this article examines, seeking to offer an alternative history of the family and its relation to displacement (Modell 1989). One has to recall, however, that oral testimonies are not a door to the actual events narrated. As Alessandro Portelli (2003) reminds us in relation to oral history testimonies, they tell us more about subjectivity, as they display what people think about events rather than the events themselves. As such, the kind of experiences designated in the narratives, originate in the different ways family members made sense of displacement, and the ways they tried to deal with its challenges.

Another point of consideration for the methodology of the study is the way the historian’s subjectivity influenced the narrators’ testimonies. In a well-known
article in oral history methodology, Valerie Yow (1997) has urged historians to be aware of their relationship to the narrator and to the content, and the ways they could influence the interview relationship and the information generated. She advocates for a set of considerations in relation to the above concerns: (a) an appreciation of the real motives behind any project, (b) the feelings towards the narrator, (c) the reaction towards the testimony, and (d) the intrusion of one’s assumptions and self-schema into the interview and its interpretation (Yow 1997). The testimonies presented herein are part of my doctoral dissertation, which looks into the memory of displacement in my maternal extended family. As Laura Marcus comments, however, one has to be ‘sincere in the attempts to understand the self [here, the family] and explain that self to others’ (1994: 3). For me, this attempt laid in a yearning for comprehension of the intergenerational dynamics within my extended family and the influence of displacement in the way the latter have played out. These personal motivations were accompanied, on the one hand, by considerations such as access to and consent by participants, and how practical such issues would become. On the other hand, I had to acknowledge that my rapport with the participants was not merely familiarity and ease of interaction, but also that the research relationship was augmented by a mutual identification, emotional attachment, and personal and affectionate history which predated the research arrangement (Taylor 2011). This dialogic nature of the encounter has to be acknowledged, along with the way history emerged as a relationship, where, in the efforts to reconstruct a past, it enlisted emotions, both of the narrators and my own (Roper 2014).
Before proceeding to the main part of the essay, I would like to assert that my personal relationships with the participants of this study, and the way they affected both its conduct and the analysis, are something which I have strived to recognise and make evident throughout the article. On the one hand, I have left intact instances where the participants would clearly speak about my relationship with them or other members of the family (e.g. ‘your grandfather’). On the other hand, I have tried to be reflexive and proceeded in disclosing ways my relationship with these individuals affected the interview dynamic, as well as the knowledge produced. As a historian, I cannot but recognise the meta-discourse in this study, the way I as a researcher have affected the information provided and presented, as well as the various linguistic traces of my relationship in the text (Rentel 2012).

The following sections present excerpts from testimonies of two of the six siblings who fled from Zodeia in 1974, Petros and Sofia, as well as excerpts from the testimonies from two of their children, Marios and Andreas. The first section presents and analyses testimonies from Petros (born 1957) and his son Marios (born 2002). The second section presents and analyses testimonies from Sofia (born 1952) and her son Andreas (born 1981).

The extended family and the context of the village

It was Saturday morning when my father drove me to my uncle Petros’ house in the village of Peristerona. Petros lives with his wife Eugenia and their two younger sons in a Turkish traditional village house that Eugenia’s family took over after their own displacement. Eugenia has ‘inherited’ the house from her parents, despite not having the title deeds. Their oldest son lives in Nicosia with his fiancé while their second son lives and works in the island of Lesbos in Greece. I recall pondering as I entered their large living room: ‘how long has it been since I last came here?’ The living room was large and had a rectangular shape with very high ceilings. Its walls had a white-colour rough texture while the vintage furniture in the living room was made of dark-coloured wenge.

On that morning, I interviewed both Eugenia and Petros. Their youngest son Marios was home as well and would occasionally walk through the living room during the interviews, without, however, interrupting their testimonies. Petros sat in the room during Eugenia’s interview, but she herself left to prepare lunch during her husband’s testimony. The first open-ended question for both was: ‘Can you tell me what 1974 means for you, the events and experiences that were and are important for you?’ The following excerpt opened Petros’ testimony and captures the way he comprehends displacement and the severity of its damage: Cypriot traditional village house that Eugenia’s family took over after their own displacement.

The names used herein are the real names of my family members, having all agreed and signed consent forms to the use of their real names (not surnames). I should reiterate that the ethical issues and concerns with such form of study were recognised and dealt with throughout my doctoral studies.
room during the interviews, without, however, interrupting their testimonies. Petros sat in the room during Eugenia’s interview, but she herself left to prepare lunch during her husband’s testimony. The first open-ended question for both was: ‘Can you tell me what 1974 means for you, the events and experiences that were and are important for you?’ The following excerpt opened Petros’ testimony and captures the way he comprehends displacement and the severity of its damage:

Until 74, I was 16 years old. We lived a discreet life. A calm life, in the village. And suddenly, everything was overturned. And how were they overturned? Our family was a farming family. We dealt with orchards, we dealt with your grandfather’s flock. We went to school. These. These were [elements] of the simple life of the village, of Cyprus. Like the older generation knew it and how we found it. Now, the invasion and the war overturned these things completely. How were they overturned? Firstly, from the familial point of view, all the families were disrupted. Because leaving from a village, the families, the way they were before... some went in one place, some went somewhere else. So the bond of the family, the way we knew it, was lost. Each went with their own family and tried to survive. (Petros, interview with author, 9 September 2017)

The above excerpt could be divided in two parts. Its first part documented life prior to 1974 while the second chronicled what Petros perceives to be the influence of displacement. The written form of the excerpt, while containing the words and phrases which ascribed meaning to Petros’ narrative, fails to recognise its oral elements such as pace and rhythm (Portelli 2003). The first part of the narrative was characterised by a decreased pace and the unhurried description of village life prior to 1974, with Petros speaking as if he took pleasure in its narration. The second part, on the other hand, was marked by a much faster pace. While the sentences in this second part seem longer, the narrative itself was characterised by more pauses and interruptions which signified more emotional content.

Petros began his narrative with a reference to the way of life in the village, ‘the discreet and calm life’ that characterised his childhood and adolescent years. As Peter Loizos (1985) has also documented, this was a life dominated by agricultural production and animal husbandry. The family owned approximately 39,600 m² of orchards with citrus trees (oranges, lemons and grapefruit), 26,400 m² of land where they grew barley and wheat, and a herd of goats which provided with milk and cheese. Taking care of the orchards and the herd included tasks and activities which ensued throughout the year and which occupied a large part of life in the village. As Sarah and Robert LeVine (1985) maintain, the domestic and familial use of child labour was a fundamental strategy in agrarian families, one which was often central to the public definitions of age and gender roles in the society. At the age of 16, Petros was already responsible for many tasks associated with the family’s orchards such as irrigation and harvesting. These tasks, as Petros contends, formed part of a life which was transmitted to them, a way of life their parents and grandparents lived by and one which they were born and brought up into.

Petros’ tone of voice and the way he unpacked his personal meanings in this first part of the excerpt suggested that this way of life was for him more fulfilling, a way of life he treasured and still cherished. Marked by an abrupt change in oral tone and form, the second part of the excerpt described what Petros understood to be the influence of displacement. In his efforts to verbalise this influence, the first subject he alluded
an alteration to was family life, and more particularly, the extended family. This family and its setting were the first intuitive relation he made to the kind of disruption displacement was. As he maintained, displacement interrupted the normal order of things, ‘the way things were before’ and ‘the way they knew it’. This normative knowledge concerned the interconnected households of their extended kin and the kind of interactions they enjoyed with them. This setting was a bond well-preserved and deeply rooted to the idea of village life. The vicinity with one’s kin and the surroundings of rural life provided for a genealogical depth and strength in kinship ties which urban life was unable to provide. For Petros, therefore, the act of leaving from their village meant that this type of family life had been lost, interrupted by displacement.

It is important to note the association between the extended family and displacement that Petros arrived to, as he had done so freely and through his own mental material. It was an association which established the extended family as material that mattered to him, as an idea which he was deeply invested in. As Hollway and Jefferson uphold, such free associations in the interview setting ‘follow pathways that are defined by emotional motivations’ (2008: 309) and express things that one has sentimental value in. The second part of the excerpt indicates precisely Petros’ strong personal meanings regarding village life and its relation to the extended family. The latter was constructed as a fundamental aspect of a larger village ontology, one which he had earlier eloquently described and elaborated upon. To this extent, the extended family and village life in its totality can be seen as features in which Petros is emotionally invested in, features in which his identity and subjectivity were located, and features which trembled with displacement. The disruption of the object of identification would inevitably bring, however, the reconsideration and restructuring of identity itself.

Petros’ life after displacement holds a particular position in relation to the rest of his siblings. He was the only male child to be married after displacement and one of the two who stayed in a rural environment after their marriage. While his older sister Eirini did so, however, due to the wishes of her husband, he had done so due to the possibility of raising his family in the ontology of village life he cherished. As he maintained in his testimony:

I realised that I would be staying here [refers to his current house in Peristerona] for the reason that I would have assistance. It [the proximity of his mother-in-law] is a great ease for a man that has three children... but three children. We are talking about in 3-4 years I made all three of them. And you leave the house and you are comfortable. And you know that they will be here. You are leaving, the kids are sleeping. There is the grandmother to care for them, to feed them, to do... A great help. There is no such thing. Whichever nursery you want to take an infant of 40 days... it is not the same. (Petros, interview with author, 9 September 2017)

This excerpt underlined Petros’ belief in the kind of support the proximity of residence provided for childrearing in his family. As he maintained, the extended family and the village setting guaranteed the safety of the children and provided an affirmation that they will be taken care of even in his absence. It is an excerpt which documents the way Petros managed to reconfigure his identity following displacement, a reconfiguration which took place and mirrored the village life ontology he was so invested in prior to 1974. His testimony revealed that he reverted back to this life with his marriage, establishing his household in the village of Peristerona, with his wife’s sister and mother living in
close proximity, and himself taking over the orchards that Eugenia inherited from her father. The village life ontology has thus become part of his identity, a way of being through which he has been able to be true to himself (Creet 2011). One should not question, nonetheless, that the initial loss and disruption to the object of identification was disheartening for Petros. While he did manage to reconstruct and reconsider his identity after 1974 in the same setting, that damage was shocking and dreadful, as revealed through his testimony.

With such strong connections between displacement, the extended family and the village setting in Petros’ personal meanings, the way his children understood the impact of displacement warrants consideration. An excerpt from the testimony of Petros’ youngest son Marios will be presented, in which similar associations between displacement and the extended family were made. On Saturday when I interviewed his parents, I had arranged with Marios to visit him during the week, as school had not yet begun. On Friday morning, therefore, I drove to Peristerona where I once again met him at their family home. As with his parents, the interview took place in the living room. At about five minutes into the interview and after his narration of what he knew about his parents’ displacements, I asked him ‘what’, he thinks, ‘displacement means for his family?’ He looked perplexed from the question and hesitated in providing an immediate response. After a few seconds, he asked: ‘that is?’ (A phrase more in line with ‘what do you mean’). I rephrased my question: ‘what do you think your father or your mother mean when they say ‘I am displaced’? Marios’ response was very short: ‘it means they are not living in the place where they were born, in their family home... eh... it means... this.’ The power and pervasiveness of the historical representation and social imagination of ‘1974’ in the Greek Cypriot society became evident though Marios’ response (Popular Memory Group 2003). As Victor Roudometof and Miranda Christou (2016) have argued, the events of 1974 have been solidified as a cultural trauma on the Greek Cypriot collective identity, experienced through discursive, representational and institutional practices that have established the invasion and occupation - and their commemoration - as an everyday routine. Influenced by such social rhetoric, Marios’ intuitive response placed the experience of his parents in terms of the loss of land and property.

I found Marios’ response to the question unsatisfying. A feeling of frustration took over me as I had expected a richer, more articulate narrative concerning his thoughts about his parents’ displacement. Both Petros and Eugenia, as well as Marios’ two oldest brothers, who I was more acquainted with, were very vocal and expressive about displacement and their identities as ‘displaced’ and ‘displaced descendants’ respectively. Slightly annoyed with and disappointed by the answer, I proceeded to rephrase the question once more. The result was providing an articulate and stereotypical hypothetical setting for Marios, accompanied by a leading question.

As Rebecca Bryant (2012) adds, within months after the invasion, dominant social institutions engaged in a narration of the past and of the events of 1974 in ways that they recreated the social and political realities of the division and occupation. As Victor Roudometof and Miranda Christou (2016) have argued, the events of 1974 have been solidified as a cultural trauma on the Greek Cypriot collective identity, experienced through discursive, representational and institutional practices that have established the invasion and occupation - and their commemoration - as an everyday routine. Influenced by such social rhetoric, Marios’ intuitive response placed the experience of his parents in terms of the loss of land and property.

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5 Eugenia’s family were ‘lucky’ to have a portion of their property remain on the south of the Buffer Zone and, thus, under Greek Cypriot administration. Petros has taken over her share of the land and has been planting various crops (mainly potatoes, melons and watermelons). His full-time employment, moreover, is with the Cyprus Grain Commission, having worked there since finishing school.

6 As Rebecca Bryant (2012) adds, within months after the invasion, dominant social institutions engaged in a narration of the past and of the events of 1974 in ways that they recreated the social and political realities of the division and occupation.

7 Petros himself has been considerably active in the political scene of Cyprus, being a member of the Cypriot Socialist party (EDEK) for over 40 years, having served also as President of its Youth section in the town of Paphos. He is also currently the President of the Farmers’ Trade Union in Cyprus.
Okay... imagine that ‘the Turk’ comes, as you are sitting in this very moment, in this very house where you were raised, that it has been 16 years now... and he kicks you out. What do you think you will feel? That thing that your parents felt as well?

One the one hand, I am ashamed to admit that my description of the hypothetical setting of a ‘second invasion’ was filled with over-generalised stereotypes concerning an aggressive ‘other’ in the form of ‘the Turk’. My emotions of frustration during the interview were complemented by the social imagination and public discourse concerning an inanimate aggressor ‘other’ I myself was exposed to throughout my life. On the other hand, the question I posed to Marios suggested the kind of information I was looking to confirm through his testimony: emotions of fear and anguish. Despite these mistakes on my part, Marios’ response was one which mirrored his father’s personal meanings and association between displacement, the extended family and the village setting:

That I will never... fear will overtake me. You do not know if you will meet again your own. You do not know what the purpose is of those who have kicked you out. So there is an uncertainty for the future, over what will happen. (Marios, interview with author, 15 September 2017)

Marios was raised in the village of Peristerona, with his aunt’s family living in close proximity to their house and his maternal grandmother living in the same house as his family. His answer to the question concerning displacement expressed thoughts and concerns which were largely determined and contingent to his present experiences and interactions (Lothane 2018), a family life based on the extended kin. With his reference to ‘not seeing again your own’, he relates displacement with not only the nuclear family but also the extended one, a type of family life which he associates with the village he currently lives. Similar to his father, family life and the village setting are the first association he makes to displacement. It was the first postmemory (Hirsch 2012), the entry point to the ‘affective thematism of [his] spontaneous associations (Lothane 2018: 412) and the way he constructively imagined what it means to be a displaced person. To this extent, both Petros’ and Marios’ personal meanings about displacement had at their core the disruption to the extended family, a family life which they both clearly associated with rural Cyprus and life in villages.

The extended family and the proximity of residence

My Aunt Sofia’s house is located directly next to my family’s house. These residential arrangements proved quite convenient for the first phase of my fieldwork in 2016 where I was to collect testimonies from all members of her nuclear family. Given that she was a pensioner (she used to work for the Cyprus Police), we had agreed to conduct the interview on a Tuesday morning. I recall her calling me on that morning from her kitchen door and inviting me to her house for the interview. I entered her house from the back door which led directly to the kitchen. Once there, I sat on the kitchen table in the middle of the room and she offered me coffee. After preparing coffee for the both of us, she sat opposite me, smiled and asked to begin. As I turned the voice

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8 The choice of Sofia to have the interview in the kitchen can be seen as symbolic of the association of women with the domestic sphere and the household in Greek Cypriot culture. Her husband, conversely, had asked for the interview to be conducted in an outside space, in their house’s back yard. For an elaboration of gender roles in a Greek cultural context, see Dubisch (1986).
incorporating to her understanding of this family life also her siblings. By doing so, she collectivizes the experience of belonging and participation, and in extension, the identification with the extended family (Nájera 2018).

One should not undermine, nevertheless, the importance of these declarations of belonging. Similar to her brother Petros, Sofia’s assertions delineate and draw associations to the identity of the subject and the loss of the object of identification. Rather than focusing on the village setting itself, however, Sofia highlights proximity in both spatial and sentimental ways that this setting provided. The object of identification as the extended family is not altered; what changes is the association the two siblings make with it, one with the village setting, and the other with proximities. This position affirms philosopher Zofia Rozińska’s contention that the object of identification for migrants is ‘not an actual physical object but rather a bundle of varied experiences and impressions’ (2011: 31).9

Out of Sofia’s two sons, only her youngest Andreas discussed family life and its relationship to displacement in his testimony. Andreas’ interview was carried out in his own flat (which is located less than a mile away from his parents’ house) where he lives by himself, on a Friday afternoon after he finished work. I arrived at his flat at about seven. We had dinner together, accompanied with some alcohol, prior to sitting in his living room for the interview. His testimony was the longest among the second generation and provided plentiful and rich information in relation to how he understands displacement and its influence on family relationships. The following excerpt forms part of his response to a question in relation to the influence of displacement for his family:

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9 See also Renos Papadopoulos’ (2002) concept of ‘nostalgic disorientation’ to describe the refugee predicament.
Displacement, according to Andreas, eradicated this sense of belonging and identity. As he maintains, the elimination of the context within which identity was formed had major consequences upon the parental generation. His emphasis and repetition of the term ‘dispersion’ indicates a belief that what was lost was not merely the individuals which formed the extended family, but the sense of belonging itself. An interesting aspect in Andreas’ testimony, moreover, was that this disruption to identity was not one he only perceived for the displaced generation, but one he experienced himself as a child. While the displaced generation suffered the most in this elimination of the context of belonging, Andreas believed that the latter had effects on his own self-concept as a descendant. Continuing his narrative, he argued the following:

So it [displacement] affected in that some uncles, aunts and cousins, I would not see them for years. So it has affected contact with relatives. Also everyday contact… with others we would not meet as often as there was some distance, in different regions. So it has affected regular and everyday contact. (Andreas, interview with author, 9 September 2016)

Applying this theorisation to Andreas’ narrative, we can argue that he comprehends this process to have occurred primarily in the context of the extended family. The focus in the narrative is on the proximity and daily interaction between members of the extended kin, and how these influenced the individual self-concepts of family members. The phrase ‘all together’ is used as an inclusive expression of interaction and communication. Similar to the possessive pronoun ‘our’ used by his mother, it is a phrase which delineates a sense of belonging, an inability to imagine the sense of self as separate from the extended family. Andreas’ usage of the word ‘close’ later in the excerpt has analogous connotations to the way it was used by his mother: it delineates both spatial and emotional proximity, intended as a recognition of an identity and belonging.

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had transgenerational repercussions and was not limited to the way the displaced generation experienced family life.

**Concluding remarks**

This article concentrated on the changing texture of family relations in my maternal extended family and the different ways displacement is understood to have influenced these relations. Two interrelated conclusions can be made in relation to its analysis. First, how memories (or postmemories) of displacement should not be considered as in situ or as merely involving a consideration of fixity and of an unchanging environment (Creet 2011). The oral testimonies presented herein have demonstrated that the memory of displacement escapes such fixity. While involving stable environments (for example neighbourhoods and villages), the memory of displacement, and of migration more generally, can be associated with relationships, with bonds and with emotional intimacies not firm on places but on people. While place has its own significance (e.g. as proximity), the memory and personal meanings of the individuals involved can be engrossed in real people and real subjects without places themselves seen as secondary.

In addition, the article has shown how identity as concept is at the core of the experience of displacement, both for the generation which have actually experienced it but also for their children. The extended family was presented and analysed as a guarantor of identity, not just in its end form but in the process and foundations of its development (Rozińska 2011). In all excerpts presented, both from the parental and second generations, the extended family was recognised as an object of identification, with displacement associated with the disruption of both this object and its related settings, the context of village life and the proximity of residence.

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A Loss for Words: Visual Representations of Migrants and Refugees in the Leave and Trump Campaigns

Theophilus Kwek and Anne Martine Solstad

In 2016, both the ‘Leave’ campaign in the UK and President Trump’s electoral campaign in the US used visual representations of refugees and migrants to great effect in mobilising support for the restrictive immigration policies espoused by their respective platforms. This paper outlines the literature on understanding the role of images in public discourse, and draws on established methodologies to analyse the portrayal of migrants in these two campaigns. It identifies three predominant visual frames that were adopted, and argues that these frames effectively linked debates over immigration policy with other live issues so as to amplify the popular sentiments associated with these grievances. Finally, it reflects on the responsibilities of those who produce images and the possibilities of reframing migration in today’s world.

Introduction

2016 was marked by two political campaigns in the Anglophone world which drew comparisons for their thematic similarities and unexpected successes at the ballot-box: the cross-party ‘Leave’ campaign in the UK, ahead of the referendum on its membership in the European Union, and Donald Trump’s Republican campaign in the US, ahead of Presidential elections in November. Mainstream commentators were quick to identify these similarities. Even before the referendum, for example, a BBC presenter laid out the reasons ‘Why Brexit Could Signal Trump Winning the White House’ (Kay 2016), and several days after the Leave campaign’s victory, a New Yorker columnist warned that ‘parallels with the Trump campaign could not be more obvious’ (Wood 2016). Immediately after the Leave vote, then-candidate Trump publicly hailed the victory as a precursor to his own (Collinson 2016).

Among other similarities in their messages and personalities (Curtis 2016), immigration stood out as a key theme in both campaigns. Since the outbreak of conflict in Syria, political debate in the US and UK had increasingly revolved around immigration-related issues. Not only had voters come to see these issues as increasingly important (IPSOS Mori 2016, Pew Research Centre 2016), observers also noted a swing towards the ‘new right’ on immigration issues (Ingram 2016:92). The fact that both Trump and Leave campaigns actively promoted restrictive immigration policies offers at least a plausible explanation for their success, given the distinctive similarities in the images accompanying these campaigns.

Across political platforms, images are not only powerful stimuli for engagement; they transcend differences in education and literacy, potentially making information more accessible. The predominance of social media – which privilege visual material – as sites of political messaging suggests that images carried a special salience in the 2016 campaigns. It is therefore important to analyse the Leave and Trump campaigns’ portrayals of refugees and migrants through their respective use of images, to understand how they catered to voters’ preconceptions.

Specifically, images allowed political actors in both campaigns to frame of immigration-related issues to their advantage. Issue framing is the act of focusing on strategically-chosen aspects of reality, making them noticeable and memorable (Entman 1993). In both the
First, images have a unique role in representing meanings in the public sphere. The ‘public sphere’, in Habermas’s conception, is the realm of ‘political confrontation’ distinct from both the private sphere of the home and the governing structure of the state (Habermas 1991: 27). It is where public opinion is contested, and where democratic governments must seek influence, support and legitimacy. In this sphere, opposing views and perspectives can only be made ‘visible and legible’ to others through ‘dynamics of representation’ (Johnson 2011: 1017); as Bleiker puts it, ‘meanings are made public through representation’ (2001: 515). It is this role of representation that images perform when circulated in the public sphere, serving as visual shorthand for the ideas deployed therein, and conveying them in highly unique ways.

One medium of public circulation where images have a distinctively representative role is in photojournalism. Photographs often accompany news headlines to depict situations of significance or crisis, thus allowing readers familiar with the same ‘cultural code’ to know what is described and what response is expected. The images themselves help to ‘express, reinforce, and connote’ that dominant cultural code, thus situating the reader as they engage with her (Banks 2012:4). Moreover, photographs serve to ‘underpin journalistic claims of objectivity’ by creating a sense that ‘the reader [is seeing] what the photographer sees’ (ibid, 296), and the routine use of photography to verify textual meanings suggests that texts are only partially effective in guaranteeing this ‘objectivity’. Even photographic representations, however, present – at best – a contested notion of ‘objectivity’. As visual anthropologists like Poole (1997) have shown, photographs have often been used to entrench race- and class-based ‘canons of taste and distinction’, while ample historical examples demonstrate how earlier forms

**Reading Images in the Public Sphere**

Much of the existing literature on public discourse favours textual modes of political messaging, such as speeches, news editorials, and literary material (Waheed et al 2012, Jacobs and Townsley 2011). Where images are studied, they are often ‘regarded as secondary to texts by many researchers’, and taken to occupy ‘merely a supportive role’ in what is communicated (Banks 2012: 296). There are two reasons, however, why images ought to have a more central place in public discourse analysis: they convey particular representations of public meanings, and do so in ways distinct but inseparable from rationalist modes of public reasoning.

Leave and Trump campaigns, visual elements of images were used to craft and emphasise selective justifications for restrictive immigration policies. Our analysis seeks to identify how these perspectives were promoted through visual patterns across both campaigns. In particular, we ask: How were migrants and refugees visually represented in these campaigns? What were the mechanisms associating migrants and refugees to negative narratives? And, as the two campaigns progressed and overlapped, did distinct visual patterns emerge to differentiate them?

We begin by outlining the literature on the role of visual analysis in understanding public discourse, which lays the bedrock for our methodology; at the same time, we reflect on the challenges of approaching and interpreting visual material. We then flesh out three thematic trends in the presentation of migrants across both campaigns, and, in a brief concluding section, discuss their implications and associations. It is our hope that the following exploration contributes to how we engage with, and understand, visual presentations of migrants in the public sphere today.
of imagery have also been deployed to embody political messages in their own right (Anglo 1992: 121, Ryan 1997:13). In these instances, links can be drawn between particular political agents or agendas and images with specific meanings and modes of representation.

In today's political campaigns, images are predominantly circulated through the internet. As early as 2002, Papacharissi acknowledged that while internet connectivity did not necessarily ‘ensure a more representative and robust public sphere’, online engagement could at least constitute a ‘public space’ across spatial and cultural boundaries (2002: 12). More recent scholarship suggests that the online political environment resembles a ‘dispersed’ public sphere tending towards heterogeneity, as opposed to traditional ‘mass media [which] tend to produce homogeneity’ (Rasmussen 2012: 97-8). In particular, social networking sites support, within such ‘dispersed’ public spheres, a ‘participatory culture’ where ‘members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection’ (Mazali 2011: 290). When images are shared across public spaces online, they cross boundaries present in traditional print media, and must be understood in light of heterogeneous discourses that proliferate on the internet. They must also be understood as artefacts meant to engage directly and democratically with viewers, who are often encouraged to ‘like’, share, or comment on them.

The second important feature of images is their power to communicate meanings in non-rationalisable ways. Aesthetic elements lend images dramatic, often emotive effects distinct from more rationalist modes of political messaging. As Johnson argues, images operate ‘at the level of the aesthetic ... partly on the level of perception and emotion rather than thought’. As such, they can ‘go beyond language’ in ‘shaping and support[ing] dominant narratives’ (2011: 1017). One effect is that, when paired with textual messages, images disrupt viewers’ assessments of the messages’ validity and salience, and can also determine the extent of the message’s impact on public discourse. Greer observes that by ‘adding a face to a name’ or ‘establishing the identity of key players’, for example, images are able to ‘lend a dramatic or sensational edge to an otherwise “ordinary” piece of news’ (2003: 79). In other words, images do not only invite rational engagement but influence, at a subconscious level, the likelihood and emotional valence of that engagement.

The aesthetic nature of images demands modes of analysis that do not rely on simple notions of ‘what’ is depicted or what ‘message’ is intended. They must be approached in ways that apprehend how pictures, in Barthes’ words, ‘are more imperative than writing’, in the sense that they ‘impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it’ (1972:110). One approach, Hansen argues, is to understand images as ‘icons’ or ‘visual nodal points’. When particular images (often attached to a particular moment in political history) become ‘easily recognisable and widely disseminated’, they can ‘activate strong emotional identification or response’, which allows them to circulate further with an almost immediate impact (Hansen 2015:265-271). Though not all images achieve this level of circulation (and hence iconic status), the idea of the icon, derived from religious history, provides a helpful way to understand why those that do are able to speak powerfully to a wide range of audiences. These include the Leave campaign’s infamous ‘Breaking Point’ banner (Stewart and Mason 2016) or the image of Alan Kurdi, a drowned child on the beach (Williams 2016). As Malkki and others have argued, the absence of contextual data in some of these images makes it easier to gloss over the fact that images of refugees are ‘taken of a particular ... situation of migration in a specific location’ (1995:9), and render the images re-usable, universal, and transferable.
Many approaches have been developed for analysing images as ‘data’ (Banks 2014:4). In their 2008 study on centre-right British newspapers, Jones and Wardle suggest that meanings are constructed through: ‘(a) the image itself (its contents, framing, colour, quality, and composition); (b) its relation to other images; and (c) their relation to the headline text’ (2008:60). These elements can be studied on two levels, namely, through content analysis, focusing on the ‘relative size, number, and content of images’, and visual analysis, focusing on the juxtaposition and arrangement of an image in relation to other visual elements (Jones and Wardle 2008:60). Others rely on similar principles, but point out that even so, visual media are ‘open to multiple interpretations’: there is no ‘correct’ reading of why two images may be paired on a broadsheet, for example (Banks 2012:299). We have chosen to adapt elements of their approach (see ‘Methodology’), while remaining conscious of these ambiguities.

Besides recognising the value of studying images as a distinctive component of contemporary political discourse, however, it is also important to recognise the limits of doing so. The aesthetic and emotive aspect of images present one key limitation: that images are ‘simply too messy, too rich, too particular to be reduced to abstraction’ (Banks 2014:16). Regardless of our analytical frameworks, this quality means that images – especially the most powerful ones – will, at some level, defy explanation. Another limitation is that images, in themselves, are only one side of the story. While studying images in context may reveal something of their intended representations, it is far more difficult to measure the reception of images. ‘Without empirical investigation’, in other words, the researcher can ‘never know how viewers actually respond to the images presented’ (ibid, 8). Similarly, it is impossible to presume the viewer’s positionality, or to measure how much of what the viewer perceives is derived from an image, as opposed to information she already possesses from context or prior knowledge. These obstacles should not discourage the researcher altogether. As Banks again puts it: researchers can be ‘honest’ about their restrictions, and see the ‘apparent limitations of visual methodologies as synonymous with the limits of human self-knowledge itself’ (Banks 2014:16). It is with this honesty that we approach our task.

Methodology

We first chose to focus on images produced or shared by official platforms behind the Leave and Trump campaigns. However, we quickly realised that both were far from cohesive, but rather a family of related campaigns. In the UK, the two platforms which enjoyed the widest following were leave.eu and Vote Leave. Whereas Vote Leave was chosen as the official campaign by the Electoral Commission in April 2016, it was Nigel Farage from the leave.eu campaign who represented the Leave side on ITV’s live debate, opposite Prime Minister David Cameron who represented the Remain side, on 8 June, 2016. In the US, the Trump campaign produced fewer images of immigrants, but often shared third-party news articles and images. We chose to include these, along with videos produced by the Trump campaign, because they formed a significant part of its overall visual output (Brightcom 2016).

We sourced these images from the official campaign websites, and their Twitter, Facebook and Youtube profiles, accounting for posts in the one-year period before the EU referendum on 23 June, 2016, and the Presidential election on 9 November, 2016 respectively. Instead of scrolling through these posts manually, we used systematic search strings (key phrases such as ‘migrant crisis’ or ‘refugee deal’) to identify the images and their accompanying captions. As Banks observed (2012:6),

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textual captions are an essential part of the framing process. Conversely, manual selection might have biased us towards the most recent or visually provocative examples, and using search strings minimised the risk of a skewed sample. Since the legal statuses of ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ were often used interchangeably, our search strings included both terms; few discernible visual differences could be drawn between images paired with each term.

While we originally hoped to prioritise images produced by the campaigns themselves, we recognised that from the ordinary viewer’s perspective, these did not stand out from third-party news articles or websites shared by these campaigns. This is largely due to the layout of social media platforms, which allow users to frame the interpretation of third-party images within larger campaign messages by pairing them with customised captions. When an article is shared on Facebook, for instance, the layout privileges the image and headline from the original article but displays little else, giving the user considerable leeway with the accompanying caption. From the viewer’s perspective, the images and captions are inseparable, and sharing ‘header’ images from news articles allows users to exploit their visual impact. Given these possibilities and strategies, campaign platforms can be more accurately described as ‘curators’, rather than merely ‘producers’ of visual material.

Having selected our images, we applied a loose adaptation of Jones and Wardle’s (2008) approach to image analysis. We chose to focus especially on the components of the images themselves, along with their relationship to the headline text, and their overall effect. Specifically, we paid most attention to their compositions, symbolic elements, the demographics of their subjects, and any in-frame text or infographics used: components which have also received greatest attention from other scholars (Bleiker et al 2013). Where symbolic elements were analysed, we inferred their referents and connotations from the perspective of Anglophone viewers of voting age, broadly familiar with elements of public imagery and Western popular culture.

As a preliminary example, Figure 1 – shared from Donald Trump Jr’s Twitter account, and bearing the Trump campaign logo – compares the US’s ‘Syrian refugee problem’ to a bowl of coloured sweets, with the caption ‘If I had a bowl of skittles [sic] and I told you just three would kill you. Would you take a handful?’ The collective terms (‘bowl’, ‘three’, ‘handful’) place the numerical aspect of the refugee situation at the visual focus of the image, while the dramatic language (‘kill’) immediately invokes security concerns. The image depersonalises refugees, and implies that one might not be able to tell which of the Skittles are poisonous, analogous to the idea that one might not be able to tell which Syrians are really terrorists in disguise.

![Figure 1](image-url) @DonaldJTrumpJr tweet, 19 September 2016, ‘This image says it all…’

There are, of course, risks of reading images in this way: all ‘actions, objects, and practices are socially meaningful’, and these meanings are shaped by highly specific contexts (Fischer 2003: 73). Likewise, meanings derived from analysing images are inseparable from
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Other studies have shown that images of migrants tend to include groups of over fifteen persons (Bleiker et al. 2013: 404), and our image sample overwhelmingly followed this trend. Beyond the numbers, however, refugees and migrants are frequently also portrayed as both deviants and strangers. As Banks (2012: 293) has shown, the migrant is often coded as a ‘criminal immigrant’, a visual framing which fuses ‘the otherness of the stranger with the otherness of the deviant’. This resonated with our findings, where migrants were presented by both campaigns as morally deviant, and as strangers who were alien to the social majority. While the former relied on a perception of their behaviour as irregular, and thus threatening, the latter relied on their being seen as culturally incompatible, and both dynamics were amplified through images that stressed the gendered and racialised dimensions of their ‘otherness’ vis-à-vis a dominant ‘white’ majority. As Sanchez (2018) and others have shown, this reflects a wider trend among contemporary presentations of migration flows to the US that focus on the ‘journeys of gendered and racialised Others’, and portray them as ‘invasions’.

In addition, a third theme emerged among the images we studied: that of migrants as burdens on the state. This portrayal did not fit easily into the sinner-stranger dichotomy, as the focus was not on how migrants were ‘other’ to the host country and its inhabitants, but on how similar they were, as intimidating competitors for work and social provision within the polity of the host state. These three themes – the presentation of refugees and migrants as threats to security, disruptions to society, and burdens on the state – are explored here in turn.

Sinner, Stranger, Scrounger: Three visual frames

Since the 1951 Refugee Convention established the legal definition of a ‘refugee’, Johnson (2011: 1016) has identified a re-framing of the ‘image of the refugee … from a heroic, political individual to a nameless flood of poverty-stricken women and children’ (also Bleiker et al. 2014:193). Many contemporary media portrayals render refugees as helpless and vulnerable, borrowing visual tropes of the ‘Madonna and Child’ (Wright 2014:462), while those fleeing the effects of environmental degradation have also been depicted as such (Mehtman 2014:422). We found that representations of refugees and migrants in the Leave and Trump campaigns differed from these narratives: though a numerical element remained important, the ‘nameless flood’ consisted of racialised images of young, dark-skinned men who were neither heroic nor vulnerable.

Emphasising the numbers of migrants is a key technique of anonymisation. Refugees are often portrayed as ‘shadowy strangers’, or as persons with ‘no visible features’ (Banks 2012:10). At greater distances and group sizes, individuals are less visible, and images are not ‘likely to create compassion and empathy in viewers’ (Bleiker et al. 2014:193). Other studies have shown that images of migrants tend to include groups of over fifteen persons (Bleiker et al 2013: 404), and our image sample overwhelmingly followed this trend.

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The migrant as deviant

First, images from the Leave and Trump campaigns constructed immigrants as ‘deviants’, and hence as threats to public
and personal security. These images were able to draw on established ideas of the state’s responsibility for its citizens’ safety, which had special resonance with conservative political audiences in the US (Meese 2011) and UK (Dathan 2016).

First, migrants and refugees were presented as threats to public security. The images in our sampled drew on contemporary, widely-held concerns generated by terrorist attacks in the US and Europe, including false stereotypes associating the attacks with refugees (Funk and Parkes 2016). They implied (and occasionally stated) that the EU’s current immigration arrangements and the Clinton campaign’s push for more liberal immigration policies were not only irresponsible, but detrimental to the security of the UK and US. The terrorism narrative was most visible in images shared from Donald Trump’s own Facebook page during the campaign, with illustrations of ISIL fighters in almost every piece about migration (see Figure 2b).

In Figure 2a, three armed security personnel have their backs turned to the camera, and are facing a large crowd of young men with urgent expressions. Although none of the UK’s borders corresponds to the scene depicted, the accompanying headline (‘Now is the time…’) suggests that this is intended to represent a European land border. The presence of a small number of security personnel implies both that it may be necessary to deploy force at the border, but also that the existing deployment is insufficient by far to prevent the crowd from crossing an invisible border to where we, the viewers, are. This subtle connotation of a military threat is rendered explicit in Figure 2b, where the migrant is directly coded as a masked militant. Over the last two decades, the figure of the masked militant has become heavily associated with presentations of Muslims in the UK’s news media (Moore et al 2008) as well as news and film in the US (Ramji 2003). Indeed, the ways in which these images are deployed are reminiscent of Baker et al’s longer-term findings (2013) of how Muslim men have been constructed in the press as ‘passive and active agents’ in the threat posed by religious violence to British society.

Nevertheless, not just public security was at stake. Immigrants were also presented as threats to personal security, through portrayals of them as morally unscrupulous or deviant. Many images accompanying articles shared by the Trump campaign included handcuffs and other police effects (see Figure 3b). In the Trump campaign videos, too, migrants were pictured with blurred or hidden features, evoking forbidding notions of subversion and racialised criminality.
various identity markers are conflated or essentialised, and given normative relevance in political debate over immigration issues (Rettberg and Gajjala 2016). The Trump and Brexit campaigns were no different. Conflated identity attributes – such as culture, ethnicity, religion, age and gender – were invoked through images (and their accompanying texts) to associate disruptive or unruly attributes with ‘otherness’. These were powerfully juxtaposed, in turn, against ideas of ‘European’ civility and order. The images below focus on migrants’ numbers, age, and gender, but also their ethnicities, which suggest Middle Eastern or North African heritage. Refugees are often racialised (Mehtmann 2014), and, as the caption of Figure 4b suggests, the stereotypes associated with these ethnicities are conflated with those surrounding Islam. Not only does the caption present a racialised portrayal of ‘immigrants from the Muslim world’; the image itself implies that the ‘Muslim world’ is about to penetrate – and overwhelm – the US, which is only defended by flimsy tape. These images invoke a stereotype of the ‘Middle-Eastern man’ as threatening and dangerous, especially for women (Rettberg and Gajjala 2016). There is also a thinly-veiled fear of demographic change; that a greater proportion of the population will be dark-skinned.

Figure 3a, left. Leave.eu website news article, 9 September 2015, ‘Ten percent of refugees…’
Figure 3b, right. Donald J. Trump Facebook post, 2 August 2016, ‘Police arrest…’

Figure 3a, shared by Leave.eu, depicts policemen apprehending a ‘delinquent’ who (in accordance with the headline) is assumed to be a refugee. Even though prominent supporters of the Leave campaign, such as Security Minister John Hayes, blamed the EU’s centralised bureaucracy rather than immigrants for reduced security (Dominiczak and Hope 2016), images like these still focused on the criminality of refugees and the potential threat they represented to everyday life. Given the British context, the term ‘delinquent’ was poised to evoke irrational deviance among youths, gesturing towards the moral panics of an earlier era surrounding ‘hooligan’ subcultures (Cohen 2011), which took on further class- and race-based undertones in media coverage of the August 2011 riots, which followed the police shooting of Mark Duggan (LSE and The Guardian 2011).

The migrant as alien

A second common theme was the presentation of migrants as alien, and hence disruptive, to the culture of the host community. Other scholars have examined dynamics of ‘othering’ within anti-migrant discourse in the UK and other European contexts (see for example Strani and Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018). Often, various identity markers are conflated or essentialised, and given normative relevance in political debate over immigration issues (Rettberg and Gajjala 2016). The Trump and Brexit campaigns were no different. Conflated identity attributes – such as culture, ethnicity, religion, age and gender – were invoked through images (and their accompanying texts) to associate disruptive or unruly attributes with ‘otherness’. These were powerfully juxtaposed, in turn, against ideas of ‘European’ civility and order. The images below focus on migrants’ numbers, age, and gender, but also their ethnicities, which suggest Middle Eastern or North African heritage. Refugees are often racialised (Mehtmann 2014), and, as the caption of Figure 4b suggests, the stereotypes associated with these ethnicities are conflated with those surrounding Islam. Not only does the caption present a racialised portrayal of ‘immigrants from the Muslim world’; the image itself implies that the ‘Muslim world’ is about to penetrate – and overwhelm – the US, which is only defended by flimsy tape. These images invoke a stereotype of the ‘Middle-Eastern man’ as threatening and dangerous, especially for women (Rettberg and Gajjala 2016). There is also a thinly-veiled fear of demographic change; that a greater proportion of the population will be dark-skinned.
public discourse on the importance of rules, queues, and tidiness. In many images, exemplified below, we see migrants' tents filling up the frame, in the vicinity of sleeping bags, plastic bags, and belongings scattered in bushes and on the ground. Without providing any context explaining the ‘mess’, the image conflates migrants with their surroundings, implying that this messy situation might be transferred to the UK.

Presentations of ‘otherness’ are doubly stark when contrasted with images of ‘order’. Scepticism against immigrants is often justified through references to cultural incompatibility, and implications that a fragile cultural balance, or prevailing expectations of social etiquette, will be upset by the entry of migrants. This theme was more prevalent in the UK context, perhaps rooted in cultural preferences or general public discourse on the importance of rules, queues, and tidiness. In many images, exemplified below, we see migrants’ tents filling up the frame, in the vicinity of sleeping bags, plastic bags, and belongings scattered in bushes and on the ground. Without providing any context explaining the ‘mess’, the image conflates migrants with their surroundings, implying that this messy situation might be transferred to the UK.

Figure 4a, left. @leave.eu on Twitter, 3 April 2016, ‘Greece on brink...’
Figure 4b, right. Donald J Trump on Facebook, 30 August 2016, ‘One million Muslim...’

Figure 5a, left. @Leave.eu on Twitter, 8 February 2016, ‘Is it really wise...’
Figure 5b, right. @Leave.eu on Twitter, 26 November 2015, ‘EU can’t take...’
More urgently, in Figure 5b, which shows young men pushing to get on a bus, the appeal is towards ‘European’ values of queuing and orderliness, which are seen to be lacking among migrants. Disorder is thus presented as an essentialised attribute of migrants, which lends itself to invoking moral panic; by ‘amplifying deviance’, the media encourages ‘increased public anxiety and intensified policing’ (Banks 2012:2). As Esses et al have argued, the perception that a particular group ‘lacks prosocial values’ can form the basis of a view that the group is ‘less human and thus less worthy of humane treatment’ (2013:521).

The migrant as burden

The third theme, seeing migrants as burdens to the state, departs from the ‘stranger/deviant’ duality to frame migrants as having similar needs and hence competing for the same resources. To make this case, images focused on the numbers of immigrants, rather than specific challenges to state provision. Both campaigns framed a rapid increase in immigration as exceeding state capacity; while the Leave campaign depicted migrants as posing an increased demand for welfare benefits, both campaigns accused migrants as creating competition for work.

Concerns about welfare were predominant across Leave platforms, and less so in the Trump campaign. Figure 6a shows a queue of immigrants positioned across the image to resemble a river, recalling then-Prime Minister David Cameron’s controversial description of immigrants as a ‘swarm’, or the Daily Mail’s reference to a ‘tidal wave’ (Shariatmadari 2015). The depth of field created by the image’s blurred backdrop suggests that the line of immigrants extends indefinitely, and the focus is not on any individual but on the number of people. A bright red slogan, ‘Breaking Point’, implies that a limit has been breached, while the subtitles imply that the state would only fulfil its mandate by imposing restrictions on this number.

More specific images create perceptions of an increased (and unsustainable) demand for welfare provisions. In Figure 6b, a statistic about rising immigration is paired with the hashtag ‘#TakeControl’, and the slogan ‘Save our NHS’. The image depicts figures in red – matching the red text of ‘EU immigration is growing’ and the icon of a red EU flag – who outnumber figures in yellow, meant to depict existing citizens. The implication is that a group of people flying the EU flag are eroding the stable pyramid-shaped structure of the NHS, creating a ‘big strain’. The comparison in the caption to ‘a city like Newcastle’ further draws on public conceptions about the Northeast’s structural lack of
resources, and targets an audience that is far more likely to identify with the population of Newcastle than with new immigrants.

Visual patterns focusing on work were found in both the Leave and Trump campaigns. The images largely portrayed migrants as competitors to existing citizens of the UK and the US, and focused on their ability, rather than their vulnerability. People presented in the images were often of working age, male, and able-bodied. Migrants were presented as competing for the same jobs that low-skilled workers currently held. In some images from the Leave campaign (e.g. Figure 7b), ethnic differences were in fact downplayed: images of ‘white’, European migrants were chosen to suggest that a majority of migrants were in fact similar to, and hence competing against, British workers for jobs.

In the US too, a similar narrative could be identified. One Trump campaign video (a still of which is shown in Figure 7a) claimed that ‘Large corporations bring in many thousands of low wage workers...from overseas and across the border to fill jobs that could easily be filled by our veterans’. Here, the migrants are presented as shadows and shapes, indistinguishable from other workers – drawing on the pre-existing concerns of many working-class voters about being mere digits in an impersonal economy, one that caters to the interests of ‘large corporations’. While Republicans from an earlier era may well have wholeheartedly supported such corporate interests, this language is intended to tap into the anxieties of a post-industrial demographic – for whom transnational corporate powers are more likely to be seen as a threat to social cohesiveness (at least, for the cultural majority) and to national sovereignty (Brown 2010). Moreover, for many on the political right, veterans embody a republican ideal of ‘deservingness’ within the state, having earned their access to public provision through service and sacrifice (Cowen 2006). In the perceived zero-sum game of economic competition, there is no question of whether they, or low-wage migrants, are more deserving of American jobs.

**Conclusion**

In the preceding pages, we have presented a working methodology of analysing campaign images on social media platforms, taking into account
the ease and strategic value of pairing particular captions or messages with images from otherwise credible news sites. Based on this approach, we have examined images used in both the Leave and Trump campaigns, and assessed how they created and reinforced perceptions of refugees and migrants as threats to security (through difference and deviance), disruptions to society (through ‘otherness’ and disorderliness), as well as burdens on the state (by competing for work and welfare). Each of these frames tapped deliberately into popular anxieties that were already salient in the political discourse of the UK and US respectively, bringing them together in the figure of the racialised, gendered migrant, and mobilising images strategically to leverage on their combined electoral appeal.

These findings are, inevitably, inexhaustive. Given our methodology, it is difficult to tell which of the three frames examined above had greatest salience, and with which audiences. More extensive investigation (as well as real-time data on the evolving conversations surrounding both campaigns) would be required to understand the precise ways in which images not only amplified pre-existing concerns, but shifted perceptions and seeded new misconceptions. On a more personal level, having examined the campaign material in retrospect, it has been difficult for us as researchers to dissociate our social media artefacts from before the UK referendum or US election with the political facts of anti-migrant policy and discourse that took shape after both votes. Nevertheless, the findings provide some basis for critical reflection.

The extensive use of images from external websites and news articles – images not produced by the campaigns themselves – reminds us that circulation in the public sphere implies heavy responsibilities for all producers of visual material. Technology allows the easy co-optation of public images into explicit political discourses; even ‘real’ images, in other words, can be used to entrench false (and harmful) narratives (see Esses et al 2013). Since the 2016 campaigns, governments around the world have placed increased emphasis on legislating safeguards against the spread of deliberate online falsehoods. Few, however, emphasise the potential impacts of images, or the responsibilities of those who create them. Particularly where existing power differences allow the subjects of such representations little right of reply, visual producers must be especially careful of the terms and frames they employ (Cole 2016).

At the same time, concerns about security threats, societal changes, and insufficient state welfare services are not new. Refugees and migrants have arguably become such salient visual subjects in both campaigns only because the theme of immigration has proven exceptionally and consistently powerful in amplifying these pre-existing political issues. Political actors with a broadly conservative policy agenda have, in other words, managed the representations of migrants so as to mobilise latent grievances not directly related to immigration. The injustice perpetuated in turning those who are often already in need of protection from political violence elsewhere into subjects of domestic political manipulation should outrage us (Blitz 2017). However, there are also reasons to hope. If the deeper concerns in these campaigns and their treatments of migrants are not about immigration per se, perhaps there are opportunities to resist the narrative they perpetuate: by addressing those underlying grievances at the level of state and community, by adopting positive frames towards immigration issues in wider public discourse, and by ensuring the fair representation of migrant and refugee communities in the production and gatekeeping of this discourse.

It is worth mentioning, in closing, one ethical concern of this study. By using and perusing the campaign images, we
too have become part of their audience – and by increasing internet traffic to the relevant sites and accounts, inadvertently raised their viewership and search profiles. As Dauphinée (2007) points out, there are ethical complications involved in using and reproducing any depiction of suffering, and the same may be said of representations that distort and malign refugees and migrants, as those we have used above. Though we have taken pains to exercise critical awareness in our engagements with these images, and urge all our readers to do the same, a deeper point nonetheless remains: we are all implicated in what we see.

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Bibliography


Empowerment through Development? Towards a Political Critique of the ‘Jordan Compact’

ALEXANDER BURLIN

This paper examines the effectiveness of development-based refugee policy in addressing protracted displacement challenges by evaluating at the impact of the Jordan Compact, a 2016 multi-stakeholder policy agreement that promised to turn the Syrian ‘refugee crisis’ in Jordan into a ‘development opportunity’ through a series of macroeconomic schemes, access-oriented initiatives, and supply-side interventions. Three years since the Compact was issued, there are little indications that development strategies have contributed to refugee empowerment, and Syrians continue to suffer from extreme levels of socio-economic marginalization. While recent scholarship has pointed out the ‘decontextualized’ nature of the Compact’s development programs, this literature has largely reiterated the need for economic development in general, and that of formal employment in particular. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Jordan during summer 2018, I show how labour formalization is an inadequate tool to address the economic disempowerment of Syrians. While informal employment is part of the equation, the socio-economic marginalization of Syrians is a product of a larger set of legal and political challenges, most importantly the failure of the Jordanian host state in offering adequate refugee protection. To address the discrimination, abuse, and economic exploitation of Syrians in Jordan, policy makers will thus need to address the overarching structures that contribute to refugee disempowerment. This includes adopting a rights-based approach to displacement management that strives for increased levels of refugee protection as well as long-term durable solutions for all Syrian refugees.

Introduction

Although the global refugee regime has traditionally looked to repatriation, local integration, and resettlement as the preferred ‘durable solutions’ to refugee crises, a growing number of refugee responses rely on ad hoc, temporary solutions that put refugees in a state of suspended displacement, what Sandi Hilal and Nasser Abourahme (2018) have called the ‘permanent temporariness’ of refugeehood.1 By the end of 2018, 15.9 million refugees were in protracted refugee situations (UNHCR 2019a). As displacement crises have become increasingly protracted, development planning has emerged as a central feature of most humanitarian responses. Indeed, during the past decade the refugee regime can be said to have entered a new phase of displacement management, in which humanitarian assistance is seen as inseparable from development aid, and where refugee responses are to be organized around a ‘humanitarian-development nexus’ (Gabiam 2016: 383). Instead of humanitarian subjects in need of legal and political protection, refugees are increasingly seen as socio-economic agents in need of market reforms, job creation, and economic growth.

As ‘the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time’ (UNHCR 2019b), the Syrian refugee crisis has played a critical role in instigating the development phase of the refugee regime, serving as a backdrop for some of the past years’ most important multilateral policy discussions and processes, including the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the 2016 New York Declaration and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees. By acting as a laboratory for development-based refugee policy, the Syrian crisis has allowed donors,

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1 In developing this concept, Hilal and Petty draw on Zygmunt Bauman’s idea of the ‘frozen transience’ of refugeehood (2007: 46).
NGOs and host countries to experiment with new strategies and techniques for displacement management, which have subsequently been codified in the form of regional and national policy agreements. One such agreement is the Jordan Compact, a multi-stakeholder policy document that promised to turn the ‘refugee crisis’ in Jordan into a ‘development opportunity’ through a series of macroeconomic schemes, access-oriented initiatives, and supply-side interventions (Government of Jordan 2016b). The Compact was hailed as ‘a new paradigm’ in displacement management, and, following its issuance in 2016, it has been exported as a ‘globalized blueprint’ to be imposed on other refugee crises in the Global South, such as the Eritrean refugee crisis in Ethiopia (Lenner and Turner 2018: 76).

Despite the grand expectations on the Jordan Compact much points to it having had a limited impact for Syrian refugees, most of whom continue to suffer from extreme levels of marginalization, both in socio-economic terms and other wise. In view of this, this paper examines the effectiveness of development-based refugee policy in addressing protracted displacement challenges by looking at the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan. It begins by providing a history of the Jordan Compact and a summary of its results so far. It then moves on to a brief review of the academic critique that has been published on the Compact over the past three years. While this literature has pointed out some of the barriers that exist to the economic empowerment of Syrians, relatively little has been said about the interaction between development programming and the legal and political context of refugeehood. Here, I argue that Syrian marginalization is not just a product of ‘economic underdevelopment’, but more so the lack of a strong protection regime. The intersection of socio-economic, civil and political rightlessness for refugees in Jordan limit the benefit Syrians have gained from the Jordan Compact, which treats development and refugee empowerment exclusively in economic terms.

My analysis is largely based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Jordan during the summer of 2018. Over the course of two months, I completed semi-structured interviews with thirty-five Syrian refugees in Amman and Irbid. In addition to this, I completed eleven interviews with NGO workers and one interview with a government representative. My fieldwork was also informed by approximately 100 hours of participant observation where I would learn about the lives of with Syrian refugees in more informal settings. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Arabic, with a small amount being conducted in English, and most were sampled using a so-called ‘snowballing technique’. Whenever possible and appropriate, I would record these interviews on a tape recorder, provided that consent was given. When I was not able to record, I would take notes that were transcribed when the interview was finished. To protect the anonymity of my interlocutors, all names in this article are fabricated.

The Jordan Compact: From Idea to Implementation

Eight years after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Syrian refugee crisis remains the world’s largest displacement crisis, accounting for more than 5.6 million refugees and 6.6 million internally displaced persons (UNHCR 2019b). Jordan has taken in the second most refugees per capita after Lebanon, and currently hosts more than 660,600 Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2019c).

The reported number of Syrian refugees differ drastically in Jordan depending on the source. According to UNHCR, there are 662,010 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan as of June 2019. The Government of Jordan, however, has reported that the number of Syrians in Jordan amount to over 1.2 million. This number has been highly contested by NGOs and scholars, some of whom argue that the Jordanian government
As a laboratory of displacement management, the country has become a site of contested visions and widespread policy debate. In the beginning of the refugee crisis, the international response was characterized by an emphasis on emergency relief, such as ‘the registration and documentation of new arrivals, basic protection, and life-saving activities’ (UNHCR 2013). As time passed, however, the growing scale of these operations would connect various discourses, practices, and geopolitical interests, leading to a shift in refugee policy. In 2015, security, economic, and political concerns over an ‘EU migrant crisis’ increased European stakes in managing the Syrian refugee crisis, and caused leaders to push for ‘non-entrée’ policies in the Mediterranean and ‘strategies of containment’ in sending countries (Moreno-Lax 2018; Zaragoza-Cristiani 2017; Dahlman 2016). At the same time, Jordan began to put on heavier demands for increased levels of burden-sharing and more international aid, raising concerns of a growing ‘refugee burden’ at home. To prevent a systemic meltdown both in Europe and Syria’s neighbouring countries, the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, and Kuwait announced the invitation for a two day United Nations conference to respond to the ‘needs of all those affected by the Syria crisis within the country itself and by supporting neighboring countries’ (Government of the United Kingdom 2015).

The London Conference, as it would later be referred to, was held in the beginning of February 2016. It sought to resolve some of the contradicting interests between Jordan and the EU – neither who were happy to host Syrian refugees – by facilitating what Rawan Arar (2017) has called a ‘grand new compromise’. The compromise was launched on February 7, 2016, in the form of a three-page policy document named the Jordan Compact. On one hand, the Compact represented a bargain over increased burden-sharing. The Jordanian government agreed to continue hosting Syrian refugees – as well as giving them more opportunities for work and education – in exchange for new international trade agreements and pledges of $1.7 billion in grants and concessional financing. On the other, the Compact sought to ‘[turn] the Syrian refugee crisis intro a development opportunity’ (Government of Jordan 2016b). Drawing on the work of development economists and refugee scholars such as Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, the Compact promised a new paradigm in displacement management, moving away from short-term, humanitarian assistance, and towards ‘promoting economic development and opportunities to the benefit of Jordanians and Syrian refugees’ (Ibid). In doing so, there was also an expectation that development planning would help to keep Syrians from crossing the Mediterranean. As an article in the Economist noted, ‘if refugees have reasons to stay, fewer will risk the trek to Europe’ (2016).

To address the refugee crisis the Jordan Compact called for the implementation of a specific set of development strategies. To stimulate economic growth and create new jobs, the World Bank Group (WBG) were to administer soft loans of concessional terms to ‘support Jordan’s efforts to improve the investment climate, attract investors, reform the country’s labor market’ (WBG 2016).

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Footnotes:

4 Here, burden-sharing is defined as ‘sharing the costs and responsibilities associated with the protection of refugees, alleviating the pressures on States that are hosting large number of refugees, and the recognition that refugee protection is a global responsibility’ (Ineli-Ciger 2019: 119).

3 For a discussion of this concept, see Hyndman 2000.

has consciously inflated the number of Syrians for political and economic purposes.
Similarly, the European Union acceded to simplify its Rules of Origin\(^5\) for businesses operating in certain Special Economic Zones (SEZs), in order to increase foreign export and economic activity (European Council 2016). As part of the Compact, the Jordanian government also promised to give Syrian refugees access to education and employment opportunities. A total of $181,196,240 were to be allocated to improving ‘formal education for refugees in both camps and host communities’ (Government of Jordan 2016a) and the government agreed to certain ‘administrative changes’ that would open up for 200,000 Syrian work permits in a five sectors of the formal economy (Government of Jordan 2016b).\(^6\) Finally, the Jordan Compact sought to improve the economic situation for Syrian refugees through a focus on supply-side interventions, such as new programs for ‘entrepreneurship development’ and ‘demand-based vocational training, job-matching, and apprenticeship [training]’ (Government of Jordan 2016b: 20, 106).\(^7\)

Since the issuance of the Jordan Compact in February 2016, the Compact has helped facilitate increased levels of international aid, including earmarked funding for the Jordanian government and the host community. As part of the Compact, for example, the donor community agreed to finance the 2016-2018 Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (JRP), in which approximately 40% of all international aid ($3,201,328,798) were to be allocated in the form of direct budget support (Government of Jordan 2016a). Similarly, the Jordan Compact increased the focus on, and financial support to, the Jordanian host community, emphasizing that the majority of the pledges made during the London conference were for ‘priorities outlined in the resilience component of [the JRP] targeting host communities’ (Government of Jordan 2016b).\(^8\) By opening up for concessional loans the Jordan Compact has facilitated another form of financial support to the government, including a $1.4 billion World Bank loan to mitigate foreign public debt (Jordan Times 2019). Initiatives led by other institutions, such as the Neighborhood Investment Facility (NIF) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), have also helped fund large-scale investments in Jordan’s infrastructure, including a €87.5 million loan to reinforce Jordan’s energy transmission grids and to strengthen the national power supply (Dodd 2016).

In terms of development programming, however, most of the Compact’s macroeconomic targets have not yet been met. The export-oriented schemes, for instance, have largely failed to increase the economic output of the SEZs. By July 2018, not a single Jordanian factory had scaled up exports to the EU under the revised trade agreement. Similarly, the Jordan Chamber of Industry (JCI) was not aware of any corporations having increased or initiated their activity in the SEZs between 2016 and 2018 (JCI Researcher, Interview, July 2018). As for Syrian refugees, an analysis of the standard of living points to a continued lack of socio-economic empowerment in the post-Compact period. As of December 2018, 85% of Syrians in Jordan lived

\(^5\) Rules of Origin (RoO) can be defined as ‘the criteria needed to determine the national source of a product’, where ‘their importance is derived from the fact that duties and restrictions in several cases depend upon the source of imports’ (World Trade Organisation 2018).

\(^6\) Syrian refugees are limited to work in either: agriculture; accommodation and food service; manufacturing; wholesale, retail trade and car repair; and construction (Tiltnes et al. 2018: 113). Initially, the Compact called for 200,000 ‘work opportunities’, but this was later changed to ‘work permits’.

\(^7\) These policies were promoted through the financing of the 2016-2018 Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (JRP).

\(^8\) Moving forward, the JRP stipulated that approximately half of all development programs were meant to cater to Jordanians rather than Syrians. As such, the resilience component of the Jordan Compact amounted to $2,483,123,101, approximately 48% of the total JRP Programmatic Response.
below the poverty threshold of 68 dinars (approx. $96) a month and longitudinal data suggests no positive changes in the past three years (UNHCR 2018). In fact, household income has decreased for almost half of all Syrians since the Jordan Compact was adopted, and today around a quarter of all refugees suffer from severe food insecurity (Tiltines et al. 2018: 48, 59). In terms of access to education, enrolment saw an increase for refugees aged 14-15 between 2016 and 2018, but there were no significant changes in secondary or higher education (Ibid., 10). Perhaps, the most successful program targeting Syrians has been the work formalization scheme, with the Ministry of Labour having issued 50,000-60,000 new work permits for Syrians by the end of 2018. Nevertheless, this number only represents around 25-30% of the initial target of 200,000 work permits, and as most of the issued permits have been given to formalize pre-existing jobs they do not indicate to an increase in employment per se (Buffoni, Interview, July 2018).

The Compact in Critical Literature

Although the Jordan Compact promised to turn the refugee crisis into a development opportunity, the impact of development-based refugee policy has been limited, especially when measured in terms of Syrian empowerment. In view of this, much of the recent scholarship on the Syrian crisis in Jordan has looked at why the Jordan Compact yielded such ambivalent results. Echoing the works of development scholars such as David Mosse and John Brohman, this body of literature often attributes the Compact's lack of success to an ignorance, or neglect, of the specific challenges posed by the local context. Katharina Lenner and Lewis Turner, for instance, argue that economic development programs have 'neglected core features of Jordan's political economy and labor market', such as the dominance of the informal labour market (2018: 1). Similarly, Daniel Howden, Hannah Patchett and Charlotte Alfred's (2017) analysis of 'the Compact experiment' argues that the revised EU-Jordan trade agreement underestimated specific challenges posed by the economic climate, and actually posed an economic burden on participating businesses. As both pieces indicate, there is a need to revise the Compact's macroeconomic schemes for economic growth and job creation and make these more attuned to the reality on the ground.

In analyzing the continued disempowerment of Syrians, much of the critique of the Jordan Compact has also centered on the question of work permits, labor market participation, and the social, bureaucratic and economic obstacles to labour formalization. Writing on Syrian refugee women's participation in the labour market, for example, Laura Buffoni (2018) notes that only 4% of all work permits have been issued to women. This is largely due to the fact that these permits are issued in male-dominated sectors, such as agriculture and construction, whereas Syrian women are more inclined to work in home-based businesses, including food production. A better approach, Buffoni argues, would center refugee women's voices and interests in the design process to adequately cater to their needs. Similarly, Cindy Huang and
Kate Gough have suggested that the Compact needs to ‘prioritize policies and programs that fit the local context and met the needs of refugee and host populations’, by, inter alia, ‘expanding the sub-sectors Syrian refugees are permitted to work in’ (2019). While Lenner and Turner (2018: 22) do not advocate for specific strategies to increase labour formalization, they do note that the lack of incentives for issuing work permits leaves Syrians suffering from precarious forms of informalized employment.

Although critical of the method of policy implementation, the academic literature on the Jordan Compact has largely reiterated the developmental dogma that formal employment and economic interventions will lead to refugee empowerment. To tackle the economic disempowerment of Syrians, policy makers should strive to accelerate economic growth, open up for new job opportunities, and increase the number of work permits. In making this critique, however, many scholars have overlooked or neglected some of the broader constraints upon refugee empowerment in Jordan. Thus, the remainder of this paper seeks to situate the Jordan Compact in the legal and political context of Syrian protracted displacement, by looking specifically at the relationship between job creation, labour formalization and economic empowerment.

**Economic Marginalization as a Legal and Political Issue**

Despite Jordan’s long history of refugee hosting, the country has not yet established a strong legal and political framework for refugee protection. On an international level, Jordan has failed to sign onto most agreements that govern the global refugee regime, and is not a state party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor its 1967 Protocol. On a regional level, the Jordanian government has not entered into agreements with any other Arab countries for a joint protection and burden-sharing strategy. While there was an attempt to do so through the 1994 Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugee, the convention was never ratified by any of the signatory parties. Most importantly, however, Jordan lacks a domestic legal framework to deal with refugees and asylum seekers. 11 While there are occasional references to refugees in the Law No. 24 of 1973 concerning Residency and Foreigners’ Affairs, these are, for the most part, extremely limited in scope, and the law does not establish a framework for granting protection, asylum, or refugee rights. As a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) states, ‘Jordan avoids the official recognition of refugees under its domestic laws’ (2015: 11).

Without a clear set of economic, civil and political rights, Syrians’ access to the formal labour market has been, and still remains, heavily restricted. Facing a lack of legal employment opportunities, refugees are often pushed to illegal work to cover even the most basic expenses for food, water, and shelter. According to some estimates, two thirds of all Syrian workers are working without authorisation (Tiltnes et al. 2018: 114). As irregular workers, Syrian refugees face a constant risk of arrest, detention, and deportation. While international law prohibits the forced return of refugees

11 In the absence of an overarching juridical framework, the Jordanian government has largely relied upon ad hoc legal agreements to structure its policy for refugee management. Following the influx of Iraqi refugees in 1998, for instance, Jordan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR (Stevens 2013: 10). The memorandum is one of few legal agreements signed by the government that have been made available to the public and details some of the duties and rights of refugee hosting. Today, however, it is widely acknowledged that the 1998 MoU is no longer active. Several revisions have been made over the course of the past twenty years, the last which supposedly took place in 2014 (IHRC 2015: 36). Yet, as none of the revised MoUs have been published, the details of legal protection remain unclear for Syrian refugees, and the Jordanian government seemingly uses this to their advantage.
under the principle of non-refoulement, a Human Rights Report released in October 2017 showed that Jordan has been deporting as many as 400 registered Syrian refugees per month (Human Rights Watch 2017). Moreover, the government has been known to regularly detain Syrians who are found to be engaged in ‘illegal activities’ – including irregular employment – in special detention camps such as Village 5 (V-5), a barbed-wire fenced enclave in al-Azraq camp (Jordan INGO Forum 2018: 13). Like one Syrian told me, ‘you say one word wrong, and they send you straight to Azraq’ (Mazen, Interview, June 2018).

As migration scholars long have pointed out, illegality and deportability facilitate social discrimination and economic exploitation (Castles 2011; Hiemstra 2010; Willen 2007; De Genova 2002). Without formal employment contracts, Syrian workers lack legal protection in the workplace and may easily become subject to different forms of labour exploitation. Many Syrians, for instance, complained to me about the persistent phenomenon of employers withholding salaries, either as a punishment, or as a way to slim down business expenses. Since refugees tend to live month-to-month with few savings on the side, delayed or missing wages often represent a source of enormous financial distress. When talking to a Syrian named Maher, he explained to me how the situation for refugees differ from that of Jordanians and ‘expats’ who are legally employed:

The situation is stable [for Jordanians and expats]... You know, it will be efficient. They will pay you on time. In the factory, maybe they will not pay you one month. They will say they don’t have money, and they’ll pay you later. But sometimes you don’t get paid for two months... I have a house, and need to pay for food. If I don’t get paid, what will I do? (Interview, May 2018)

Knowing that many Syrian refugees lack legal protection in the workplace, employers will frequently force Syrians to work harder, longer and faster than their Jordanian counterparts. This practice has become normalized in many businesses to the point that most local workers expect Syrians to do their part of their job as well. A Syrian named Ibrahim, for instance, described how he had been working illegally in a local supermarket for the past three years. When I asked him whether or not he had faced labour exploitation, he told me how (Jordanian) colleagues would harass him for being Syrian, and force him to do their part of the work in addition to his own:

Like he’ll sit like this, cross legged, and tell me ‘Do this’, ‘Work’, ‘Do that’. And he’s an employee just like me. But he just sits there and gives me instructions... [And] I do it! If I would say no, he would just go to the owner and say I’m causing a problem, and I would get fired. Because he’s from here (‘ashān huwwa ibn al-balad) he can do these things. (Interview, June 2018)

Similarly, another Syrian man told me that refugees were discriminated against ‘in all jobs’, and that Syrians were often pushed to work to the brink of exhaustion by their local employers and colleagues:

A Jordanian is hired and the workload increased for the Syrian! If you, a Jordanian, need to do five tasks, you’ll do one of them, and the rest you throw them to the Syrian. And you, a Syrian, do the work because you are frightened, you don’t have anything. The Jordanian is the one who takes the

12 Expats (expatriates) is a term colloquially used to refer to foreign workers of a high socio-economic status. For a more in-depth discussion of the terminology surrounding expatriate workers, see Gatti 2009.
economic disempowerment is not just a question of a lack of employment, but also what challenges Syrian refugees face as employees. When Syrians are employed illegally they are often forced to accept whatever terms or conditions their employers impose; should they refuse, the latter can just ‘call the police.’ In this context, job creation is an inadequate strategy to combat Syrian marginalization, as it does not account for the negative impact of irregular and illegal work. In fact, while 75% of the Syrian labour force are employed in one way or another, the majority of these still live below the poverty line (c.f. Tiltines et al. 2018: 11; UNHCR 2018). Although the relationship between illegality and economic marginalization have been noted in some of the aforementioned scholarship on the Jordan Compact – such as Lenner and Turner’s (2018) discussion of ‘precarious labour’ – most have assumed that this problem can be solved through labour formalization programs. However, as will be discussed below, illegality is a condition that extends beyond the absence of a work permit, forcing us to rethink the Compact’s developmental approach to economic empowerment.

‘The Work Permits Were Useless’: The Limited Impact of Employment Formalization

As discussed above, the economic disempowerment of Syrians is intimately linked to the absence of refugee rights. In theory, the Jordan Compact partly addresses the issue of economic rightlessness through a work permit initiative. While the scope of this program is limited (giving Syrians sector-specific permits rather than comprehensive economic rights), supporters have argued that labor formalization will contribute to economic empowerment by granting Syrians increased protection and mitigating unfair labour practices (see e.g. Huang and Gough 2019; Lenner...
and Turner 2018). Nevertheless, despite meeting with many of the beneficiaries of the work permit program, no Syrian I spoke to had been able to testify to experiencing any economic improvement after employment formalization. As one Syrian told me, 'the work permits were useless' (mā istafadna shī minhum) – the only reason Syrians had gone to get them was because 'the government made them free of charge' ('Issa, Interview, June 2018). For many Syrian workers, their employers would continue with previous patterns of exploitation, discrimination, and abuse even after receiving a work permit, treating their Syrian employees as if they were illegal workers. Abu Muhammad, for instance, described how the issue of withheld payments had continued after he had acquired a permit: ‘It’s all the same, permit or no permit it doesn’t matter (mā byikhālif)’ (Interview, July 2018).

The more time I spent around Syrian workers the more I began to understand that a lack of economic rights was not the only factor that contributed to the economic disempowerment of Syrian refugees. On the contrary, concepts like ‘informality’ and ‘illegality’ were inseparable from the broader context of social, legal, and political marginalization in Jordan. As Sarah Willen (2007: 11) has pointed out, ‘illegality’ is not just a ‘juridical and political status’, but also as a ‘sociopolitical condition’. Once, for instance, I asked Abu Muhammad whether or not the issue of withheld payments could be solved if he began to draft formal contracts with his contractors. Since he possessed a work permit, and was thus a legal worker, I resonated that this would allow him to bring contractors to court should they fail to pay the agreed-upon fees. My ignorance was quickly affirmed by Abu Muhammad, who laughed and told me that ‘even if we had a contract, we don’t have the money to hire a lawyer, and if we did hire a lawyer, it wouldn’t help. [The contractors] are Jordanian, so they will get the lawyers to take their case. They have connections and money, we don’t. We’re Syrians’ (Interview, July 2018). For Abu Muhammad, it did not matter whether he had a formal permit, contract, or other papers that could ensure the legality of his work. These documents would not be able to provide adequate protection in a context where Jordanian employers and contractors wield socio-economic, legal, and political privilege that no Syrian refugee could possibly acquire.

Another story was told to me by Ja’far, a Syrian refugee living in East Amman. Through a job-matching service by the ILO, he had been lucky to find employment in a factory for which he had then acquired a work permit from the Ministry of Labor (Interview, June 2018). One day, a personal engagement had forced him to take a day off, which he was entitled to according to his work contract. When it was time for his salary to be paid, however, the factory had deducted one day’s worth of wages. He subsequently raised a complaint to his Jordanian supervisor and reminded him of the terms of his contract, which specified that employers were entitled to 14 days of paid vacation. Ja’far’s complaint had infuriated the supervisor. He had told Ja’far that he ‘should know his place [as a Syrian]’ and forced him to sign a paper that he was leaving the job. When I asked Ja’far why he didn’t resist, he shrugged his shoulders: ‘As a Syrian, what can I do?’ As his boss knew, his ‘Syrian-ness’ made him vulnerable. By treating illegality as a condition rather than a status, we can see how it is a product of a structural relation of power, and not a lack of a work permit.

While Syrian refugees would often speak of their economic marginalization in terms of interpersonal employer-employee relations, many of those I interviewed pointed to the fact that this experience is rooted in the lack of adequate protection offered by the host state. Abu Muhammad, for instance, initially described exploitation as a
As Ahmed’s story makes clear, ‘illegality’ can be arbitrarily produced for Syrian refugees in Jordan. Whether standing in front of judges or police men, there is no guarantee that refugee rights will be protected – in fact, the opposite is often the case. For Syrian workers, this means that the legality of their work is often irrelevant. Legal workers still face the threat of arrest, detention, and deportation, enabling employers and contractors to decide the terms, and value, of their labour. In this context, it is not just job creation that is an inadequate solution to economic underdevelopment. The same goes for employment formalization. Since the economic exploitation of Syrians is facilitated by a structural lack of legal and political agency, it cannot be solved by technical and limited interventions for employment formalization. As Hannah Arendt argues, refugees suffer not so much from ‘the loss of specific rights’, such as the right to work, but more so from ‘the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever’ (Arendt 1976: 297). To address the discrimination, abuse, and economic exploitation of Syrians in Jordan, policy makers will need to address the overarching legal and political structures that contribute to refugee disempowerment, such as the absence of a strong protection regime.

**Conclusion: Building a Political Critique of the Jordan Compact**

As this paper has demonstrated, we need to think critically about the effectiveness of development-based refugee policy in ameliorating protracted displacement crises. We also need to think critically about how to best leverage a critique of displacement management that centers the legal and political marginalization that often accompanies protracted displacement. While criticizing the decontextualized implementation of the Jordan Compact,
most scholars have reaffirmed the dogma that – if done properly – economic development will translate to refugee empowerment. If done properly, however, has often come to mean increasing formal employment, thus overlooking some of the critical legal and political factors that contribute to the marginalization of Syrians in Jordan. In this context, migration scholars should look closer at how development-based refugee policy is experienced by Syrians as humanitarian subjects, rather than economic agents, and point out the relationship between legal and political marginalization, economic disempowerment, and protracted displacement. Instead of a call for enhanced versions of what the Jordan Compact currently offers, one should point out what the Compact does not offer – increased refugee protection.

A lack of protection is not just a concern for Syrian refugees in Jordan, as similar structures of refugee marginalization exist across the Middle East. Other major host states for Syrians – Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt included – have all failed to establish strong regimes for refugee protection (see e.g. Howden et al. 2017; İçduygu and Diker 2017). Similarly, too, they have increasingly relied on development-based refugee policy to address refugee disempowerment. In this context, the management of the Syrian refugee crisis is a regional issue. Nevertheless, the management of the Syrian refugee crisis is also a global issue. As this paper has indicated, the Jordan Compact was first and foremost a grand compromise between the EU and the Jordanian government – with neither wanting to offer long-term protection for the majority of Syrian refugees. To strive for tangible refugee empowerment, all actors within the global refugee regime – donor countries and host countries alike – need to make a concerted effort to find durable solutions to the refugee crisis. While part of this involves increasing refugee protection in the region of origin, another part involves a commitment by the EU and other states in the Global North to take on their share of the ‘refugee burden’, including by facilitating refugee resettlement and post-conflict reconstruction in Syria to make voluntary repatriation more sustainable.
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Bibliography


‘We took to the nature to become friends with the mountain’: The Impacts of Access to ‘Nature’ on Refugee Wellbeing in Camps in Epirus, Greece

Michaela Korodimou

Using a range of qualitative methods in refugee camps in the region of Epirus Greece, this paper investigates how access to nature impacts refugee wellbeing. A number of studies show an array of benefits generally arising from ‘contact with nature’, yet little work considers the impacts for refugees specifically, especially those living in camps. The results of this study indicate that the impacts of access to nature in this setting range from opening up a space for healing, stress relief, and freedom, to countering the loss of identity and agency that is commonly associated with forced displacement and encampment. Implications include both the practice-oriented proposal that authorities governing refugee management incorporate and apply these findings, and the more theoretical call for a reconceptualization of the concept of ‘rootedness’ in relation to space and territory.

Introduction

When I first set foot in Katsikas refugee camp in mid-2016, two things immediately struck me. First, the sheer blandness of it all. Rows of white army tents on endless jagged stones, a dusty creamy-grey colour touching everything in the vicinity. One-thousand-something people, on an old airfield, converted to a refugee camp. Not close enough to the mountains to feel in them, nor close enough to the city to benefit from its amenities. Marginalised in a peripheral space, the closest village being Katsikas and the closest ‘nature’ being the snakes that plagued the camp.

Second, the gentle sprouting of life was notable, emerging in the gardens growing outside people’s tents. People had been here for just over a month: they had arrived from the islands, from seas and from war. There was no hot water to wash with and temperatures were reaching zero degrees Celsius at night. Most people did not even know where they were, let alone how long

Figure 1.
Early Katsikas camp, April 2016, from Lighthouse Relief.
they would be here. Yet, despite all of this, through the simple act of planting a few seeds, many had already taken defiantly resilient action to take back some small level of control and connect themselves to this new, otherwise hostile place.

A wealth of literature exists regarding both the impacts of being a refugee (see Bhui et al., 2003; Fazel et al. 2005; Steel et al. 2009) and the ways in which proximity and access to nature can impact human wellbeing (see Kenniger, et. al. 2013 or Sandifer 2015). Studies have demonstrated that refugees face heightened rates of mental health issues including stress and anxiety as well as more social issues such as loss of identity, agency, and control. Access to nature has been shown to tangibly benefit wellbeing psychologically, physiologically, and socially (Kenniger et. al 2013). Despite the overlaps in the literature investigating the impacts of being a refugee and how proximity to nature can impact human wellbeing, there has been little academic focus thus far connecting the themes by investigating the ways in which access to nature impacts refugee wellbeing.

This paper draws upon field data gathered in refugee camps in the Epirus region of Greece between April 2016 and August 2017, which used qualitative methods to investigate how access to nature and natural environments impacts the wellbeing of refugees. First, the paper provides an insight into some of the issues faced by refugees living in camps and briefly reviews literature that shows how access to the natural environment is beneficial for wellbeing. Next, fieldwork findings are presented, contributing, in turn, to a discussion on how the current approach for planning and delivering humanitarian aid could be improved.

1 Of course, this is not even scratching the surface of the deeply engrained systemic issues that come with unemployment, poverty, and social isolation.

Nature and wellbeing

The whole idea of nature as something separate from human existence is a lie. Humans and nature construct one another. (Wilson 1992: 13)

Common conceptualisations which posit nature as separate to the self are problematic. Throughout this paper, the term ‘nature’ is used to denote a very generalised set of spaces, landscapes, and environments. The following paragraphs attempt to briefly address and justify this use of the term, and to engage briefly with its socially constructed characteristics.

In debates surrounding the commonly distanced and contested relationship between contemporary society and nature, two concepts play a key role: that of the ‘sublime’ and that of nature being ‘conquered’. The concept of nature being ‘conquered’ arose in the enlightenment period: authors such as Merchant (1996), Franklin (1999), and Vining and colleagues (2008) describe the dominant discourse of the time, namely the transformation of nature from desert wilderness to cultivated garden. This process of conquering has placed the natural at a point distanced from the self, entrenching the nature/culture dichotomy. This dichotomy is further reinforced by the notion of the ‘sublime’. From Plato to Kant and Burke in the 18th century, the concept has posited nature as something to be conquered and

2 It is important to state that this detachment and dichotomisation of nature has not been universal. Take, for example, the connection that many indigenous peoples have with nature. Raymond (2007: 79) writes of indigenous peoples as the ‘original conservationists’ due to their connection with nature and the notion that it is intricately connected to self. Salmon (2000) presents the concept of kincentric ecology whereby people view both themselves and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. Although admittedly essentialising, the literature is useful in highlighting diversity in perceptions of nature, which go well beyond Western Enlightenment dualisms.
cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community (WHO, 2014).

Measures of wellbeing employed in research literature are diverse. A number of variables categorise wellbeing into two dominant groups: hedonic, based in emotional valance, or eudaemonic, based in human needs (Nisbet 2011). The hedonic approach to wellbeing focuses on assessing the frequency of pleasant or unpleasant experiences, whereas eudaemonic variables concern indicators such as sense of purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy, and vitality. The latter typically capture aspects of optimal living that are perhaps less obviously pleasurable. My research adopts a broad approach that encompasses both hedonic and eudemonic indicators. Wellbeing is therefore seen here as encompassing a broad array of factors that contribute to the social, mental, and physical health of an individual.

In the following sections, the research is contextualised with regard to the camp setting. I consider how life in a refugee camp setting can impact factors contributing to overall wellbeing.

Theoretical Framework: The camp as a site of power and liminality

The following paragraphs frame the study by elucidating how the camp can be understood as a site of power and as exacerbating liminality. The impacts of these dynamics on the wellbeing of camp residents are explored.

The camp as a site of power

Since the Second World War, the ‘camp’ has emerged as the dominant model of refugee management (Rozakou 2012: 568). In principle a camp is designed to operate like a well-oiled machine: there are essential items feared, but also revered. DeLuca and Demo (2000: 246) describe how, during the Enlightenment period, it was argued that, as God, the most sublime being, created nature, it ought therefore to be seen as a ‘pristine wilderness where one could glimpse into the face of God’ (ibid., 2000: 246). The central paradox to this way of thinking, Cronon (1996) argues, is that ‘wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural’. By celebrating the wildness of nature, the dualism is reproduced, setting the human, ‘culture’, and the natural, ‘nature’, at opposite ends of a socially constructed spectrum. Using the term nature to describe non-built environments such as forests, mountains, coasts, and even gardens, excluding cityscapes or areas of evident human influence, exacerbates this dichotomisation and accepts the binary placing of the terms in opposition to one another.

Whilst in many ways it would be preferable to use alternative terms, such as non-built environments, to avoid exacerbating these common problems associated with the term nature, in this paper, I decided to replicate the language of my informants. Thus, wherever the term ‘nature’ appears throughout the paper, it should be interpreted as denoting non-built environments (yet not entirely un-influenced by humans): including, but not limited to, forests, national parks, coasts, rivers, gardens, and more. This decision allowed for interviews to be conducted in English and for the ease of participants I did not probe this terminological issue.

In the same way that conceptualisations of nature are elusive and complex, wellbeing, too, defies easy definition. Whereas the Oxford English Dictionary defines wellbeing simply as ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy’, the World Health Organisation (WHO) offers a more nuanced definition:

The state in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can
to be dispensed, shelter to be provided and health to be monitored. Theorised as a ‘discursive and material site of power’ (Hyndman 2000: 87), the camp is a place where refugees are monitored and supervised. Delving deeper into the camp as a site of power, Foucault’s biopower is often drawn upon in the analysis of contemporary aid. The term ‘biopower’ is often used to denote forms of power exercised over life or control enacted upon living bodies. Scott-Smith (2014: 23) critiques the reductive manner in which authors use the concept and criticises the extraction of the term from its specific historical origins. While it is important to recognise the potential of the camp to exist as a ‘discursive and material site of power’ (Hyndman 2000: 87), for these reasons this paper will avoid using biopower to define the mechanisms at play in the camp.

The camp as a liminal space

Since the 1990s, interest has grown surrounding the connections between people, place and identity. Especially with regard to refugees, the relationships between people and place are increasingly drawn upon to describe the phenomenon of ‘uprooting’, for example in the work of Stepputat (1999) and Malkki (1992). People are forcibly moved from the particular locale with which they have intricate cultural and individual connections (Sørensen, 1996). In a somewhat essentialist way, culture is tied to place, understood as existing in fixed locations, with a unique and unchanging character (Massey 1994, in Brun 2001). Accordingly, displaced populations, especially those in transit, are seen, in Mary Douglas’ (1966) terms, as ‘matter out of place’ to be managed and dealt with accordingly.

Not only are people seen as out of place because of the places they have left, but also because of the places they have yet to arrive to. In Rites of Passage (1960), van Gennep describes a period between separation from a previous state in a social structure and subsequent incorporation into a new social state. The intervening ambiguous space in which people are no longer able to continue as the social beings they were but are not yet qualified to become new social beings is termed ‘liminality’. Kunz applies the concept of liminality to refugee camps:

He has arrived at the spiritual, spatial, temporal and emotional equidistant no man’s land of midway to nowhere and the longer he remains there, the longer he becomes subject to its demoralizing effects (Kunz 1973: 133).

Building on Kunz, Mortland (1987: 380) describes the refugee in the camp as existing in a state of ‘in-betweenness’. Finally, Geertz (1983) extends the concept of liminality by viewing it as a cultural system in which dependence is created and thus institutionalised.

‘Bare life’ is a concept based on Arendt’s distinction between ζωή (zoë) and βίος (bios), built upon by Agamben (1998). It describes the existence of life without any of the benefits of social being, a removal from political life. Whereas zoë denotes zoological life, the simple fact of living, bios is the biographical life, the life that is formed through events such that it can be narrated into a story. For Agamben, the notion of bare life is nested in zoë and homo sacer – the person in roman rule who could be killed but not sacrificed. In other words, bare life describes the person whose death may occur without the recognition of its loss.

It is in this way, through removal from political life as citizens and as a result of uprooting and in-betweenness that the camp becomes a liminal space, representing an attenuated form of governance where people are managed and controlled (Redfield 2000). It is unsurprising that this, combined with the harsh environmental conditions
people often face whilst living in camps, presents an array of challenges. These include, but are not limited to, feelings of disconnection from place and people, loss of identity and agency, and mental health issues.

The impacts of access to nature on wellbeing

Nature relatedness is defined as the cognitive and experiential relationships which individuals have with the natural world (Nisbet, Zelenski and Murphy 2011: 304). It has been ascribed the capacity to ‘evoke meaning in life’ (from Hurly 2017: 262 in Howell, Passmore and Buro 2012) and to ‘predict happiness’ (Zelenski and Nisbet 2014: 16). In 1984, Wilson proposed his Biophilia hypothesis, proposing that psychological health is associated with people’s relationships with nature. His theories were founded on the intricate connections and relationships that people have with nature and the need to be near it. Since then a growing body of work has explored this hypothesis, providing nascent evidence in support of it.

In terms of psychological benefits arising from connections between human health, biodiversity, and access to nature, both Kenniger (2013) and Sandifer (2015) have identified various benefits. These range from improvements in general wellbeing to reductions in anxiety, tension, depression, dejection, anger, hostility, and stress. In support of these findings, others have found that ‘nature exposure and connectedness to nature were positively associated with psychological wellbeing and greater reported spirituality’ (Kamitsis 2013: 1).

Proximity to nature has also been found to benefit wellbeing. Morita (2006) found that hostility and depression levels decreased in participants and levels of liveliness increased in relation to the amount of time spent in the forest. Similarly, Sullivan (2004) examined the implications of green spaces on social interaction and found that increased social interactions were related to increased green spaces and the time spent in or around them (see also Park, 2009 and Li 2010). Finally, Mass and colleagues (2009) documented lower levels of anxiety and depression with increased proximity of homes to nature.

The need for research on access to nature in refugee populations

In order to understand the importance of access to nature on refugee populations, this section provides a short overview of the variety of wellbeing challenges faced by refugees living in camps. Amongst the plethora of mental health issues, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychotic disorders, anxiety, and substance abuse have been found to be most prevalent among refugee populations in camps (Bhui et al., 2003; Fazel et al., 2005; Steel et al. 2009). These studies differ in location, stage of resettlement, and cultural context, all of which impact the prevalence of mental health issues.

Post-migration stressors have been found to consistently predict levels of distress equally as powerfully as prior war exposure (Miller 2004). Ellis and colleagues (2008), among others (Sack et al., 1996; Miller et al., 2002; Heptinstall et al. 2004), emphasise the importance of post-migration stressors accounting for greater variance in levels of depression and anxiety than war-related experiences of trauma. While this does not discount the comorbidity between the two, nor the suffering experienced by losses associated with war, it highlights the importance of understanding the impact of environment and access to nature on refugee wellbeing.

Thus far, little work has explored how access to natural environments impacts refugee wellbeing in camps and its potential to alleviate post-migration stressors. The most relevant examples come from Canada, where Hurly and
Walker (2017) examined the effect of nature-based leisure in fostering refugee wellbeing. Their study investigated how a two-day camping experience affected the wellbeing of refugee participants. They found that the excursion improved wellbeing and had a number of positive psychosocial effects. However, despite being the closest example of a study like this, as with most other related projects (such as those focusing on urban gardening with refugee populations) it did not study this in the context of the camp. Instead Hurly and Walker (2017) focus on refugee populations in the post-migration stage attempting to settle and integrate permanently, thus eliminating the liminal aspect of this study.

Browsing through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee’s (UNHCR) website section entitled ‘emergency priorities and related indicators’ (UNHCR 2019) there is no mention of access to nature. Perhaps more surprising, there is also no mention of dignity or agency. When thinking about the needs of refugees in camps, Agamben’s work (1998) is commonly invoked. Refugees residing in the camp are seen as needing to be merely kept alive, but the lack of nuance and complexity in the way that their needs are perceived is indicative of the barest of lives. Although designed as a transient space, the reality is that people spend many months, often years in camp accommodation. There is a need to investigate the ways in which wellbeing can be improved for people during their time in camps. Taking into account the literature on the numerous potential benefits that access to nature can have, an opportunity therefore arises.

**Methodology and Findings**

The following section presents a brief note on methodology and the findings of the field work. Four different categories, each with its own sub-themes, illustrate how nature and access to it impacts respondents. The results are presented with partial analysis, which is expanded upon in the discussion.

**Setting the scene, positionality and a note on methodology**

I arrived in Katsikas camp at the end of April 2016 where I worked as a field coordinator for a small NGO for several months and returned again in the summer of 2017 for two months to collect data for this project and work alongside another. A lot of the connections that have been used to gather data for this paper were created during the first period working in the region. Equally, many of my observations during that time shaped my desire to conduct this research.

For the purpose of this investigation, numerous projects and means of accessing nature were studied. These comprised several formally organised projects set up by NGOs and other organisations, as well as the informal ways in which people found to engage with nature through their own means. The formally set up projects consisted of gardening groups, hiking groups, and two scout groups; one in Katsikas camp and another in Agia Eleni camp (see map 1). Organised gardening projects were found in Habibi Works (a volunteer run community centre), and in the Konitsa, Tsepelovo and Fillipiada camps. Non-organised gardening is found everywhere; in small pots and in the ground surrounding the tents. Plants range from decorative flowers to vegetables to be eaten; there was little uniformity in what was found. The findings in this paper draw upon qualitative data gathered by studying these various projects and engaging with people who took part in them.

The methodological approach adopted herein is based on Glaser’s (1965) bottom-up approach of ‘grounded theory’. This implies having flexible and interactive feedback systems in the enquiry process, whereby the
findings constantly inform the process of questioning. Data was collected using qualitative ethnographic methods including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and a photo elicitation. I spoke with stakeholders in various fields, including NGO officials, volunteers, and refugees, both those living in various camps and in the city of Ioannina. Recruitment predominantly consisted of snowball sampling and networking on the basis that participants were in the post-displacement and pre-asylum stage, namely those being housed temporarily in camps or apartments in Epirus region.

The majority of these findings come from my work with the NGO Second Tree setting up a scout's group in Agia Eleni camp. This facilitated twenty-three young people going on excursions, playing games, and learning about and engaging with the natural world. Participant observation in this setting shaped this research. On this basis, I conducted a photo elicitation activity with the older members of the scout group: ten youths aged seventeen and over. The activity involved each person receiving a disposable camera and being asked to follow a set of guidelines on taking photographs during the excursions. After the prints were developed, a discussion was held exploring the reasons for and meaning behind the captured photographs. All the data collected have been approved by the University of Oxford standard ethics approval committee.

Descriptive fieldnotes are sometimes presented alongside the quotations. These are indicated by the use of square brackets. This narrative decision was made when I felt it was important to understand the ways in which the surrounding environment was impactful or important to the conversations being had.

A space for healing, stress relief, and freedom

Opening a space for healing

In the camp you are a refugee, being helped, fed and guarded. In the face of nature, we are equal. It doesn't matter what you wear or what job you do, the mountains don’t know, and the nature doesn’t care (Interview with camp resident 2017).

In conversation with a volunteer concerning the way that she was being taught about gardening by two members of the refugee community,
was only when they went on the hiking trips that they really opened up and spoke about the issues they were facing. This is mirrored in the conversation with the volunteer who highlighted the equality felt between her and the people who participated in the project. For both cases, through altering their setting, the power balances that exist in traditional clinical settings of the patient and doctor were lessened and thus a space where people were able to start healing arose. It is possible that there is a gendered element playing a role in this finding. The social worker who described this to me emphasised the importance of the ‘feminine space’ and ‘female needs’. There were similar conversations with another psychologist who worked with a group of men. He spoke of the ways in which the participants often felt more able to open up and speak more freely about their feelings whilst out on the mountain hikes. This happened for the younger members of the population too: Once, some kids were fighting, we brought them to the middle of the group and we told the other kids to talk with them peacefully. We told them to work as a team and figure it out. ‘Why are you fighting? What is the reason?’ they asked. ‘You come from all this difficulty and you want to fight’ one of them answered. The kids talked about it, young kids, you know, but they talked about it, in the end the kids were telling the ones who were fighting, ‘we are here, we are together, we are a family and a group.’ You really saw the impact of that, and they were suddenly all crying and immediately hugging each other. This was when we were on one of the trips to the mountain. These fights happened a couple of times, and both times it was really amazing to see them change. It happened because they were away from the camp away from the pressure and the stress (Interview with scout leader 2017).

Miller and Rasco's (2004) work focuses on altering problematic settings to create environments that are better suited to people’s needs. For the residents of Katsikas camp, one of the ways this was done was by changing the setting and thus residents’ relationship to place in which they live. Despite having access to clinical methods of support, the women on the herb-collecting excursion felt they were not served by them, the social worker (quoted above) described how it
Stress relief

In interviews and through the photo elicitation, the ways in which access to nature provided stress relief were evident:

I remember one kid was biting a volunteer in the face, he was stealing money and stuff. Bad things. He was stressed, seen lots of bad things. Then, when he came into the scouts, he changed completely. He said it’s the best thing I have ever done. He was free from the camp; he was free from his worries and bad memories. He was with his friends in the mountains, making friends with the nature and trees (Interview with scout member 2017).

For young people, engaging in activities such as mountain excursions with a local scout’s group or going on hiking trips to the woods allowed them a space to release these stresses.

Similar stories come from the adult members of the population. Two women shared their experiences with me:

I enjoyed leaving the camp, you know here you’re always busy working – it’s hard. The camp, for women it means work work work. If we get the chance to leave and go to the sea, it’s good. The camp – it’s hot. To be in the water, it’s good. To be in the water, you forget some of the worries, wash them away, we need that (Interview with camp resident, 2017).

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My husband went on the trips with the scouts to the river. He came back happy, no stress, no worry –happy. It’s better for everyone (Interview with camp resident, 2017).

Although taking a walk in the woods or going for a swim in the river cannot make the very real worries and stressors people face disappear and cannot bring relatives closer or improve the dire state of the camp, it does seem to have cathartic potential. For the first scout trip that we organised with the group, we took fifteen young people to Pindos national park, to a dried-out river bed near an old bridge. It seemed somewhat irrelevant whether it helped to reduce their stress and worry or provided them with the chance to see a new part of the country, play games, and be free of the confines of the camp. They were jubilant.
Facilitating feelings of freedom

Gardening helps me to escape - to escape from the camp, from my room, from my thoughts, from this space (Interview with camp resident, 2017).

It is understandable that for people fleeing from war, torture, and numerous other atrocities, the concept of freedom is one that is placed very high in the order of priorities. In almost all my conversations with people about their interactions with nature, freedom was always mentioned. This freedom manifests itself in diverse ways. For one man, it came in the form of the liberation of his wheelchair in the local river. For others, it meant freedom from their minds by being able to focus their energies into gardening or other initiatives. For the children on the scout trips, this freedom came in the form of physical distancing from the camp.

In different interviews, the concept arose in various ways:

For the children participating on the scout trips, everything is different. They forget the war, they forget the camp, they forget the tent (Interview with camp resident 2017).

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In the camp, you are a refugee. Of course, everyone hates this word ‘refugee’, we all came from the war. In the camp people are cooking and working it’s not really nature in the camp - its full of stones, difficult to walk. In nature, you are not like you are in the camp. In nature, you are free (Interview with camp resident 2017).

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It was always making me feel better, when I was in the mountain - I wasn’t remembering the camp or how I came there and all the things I’ve been through, I was focusing on the nature and how it made me feel free (Interview with camp resident 2017).

Keep the water flowing: facilitating connections to a new land and place

In the camp, we don’t see Greek people – well, apart from you and a few volunteers. We don’t know what Greek people are like, we don’t know what your country is like. Everyone tell me it’s beautiful, what beautiful? All we have seen is the camp, all our children know of Greece is the army. We don’t know if you have mountains with the trees the same as ours, or if the mountain air smells the same. We just know the dry camp and the heat. It’s very hot here. I hear that Greece is beautiful, but I don’t know it. I want to see it; I want to see more than just the camp, and when I go to Germany one day, I will be happy to know about Greece, too (Interview with camp resident 2017).

Forced liminality entails handing over agency and being forced to ‘accept the fact that you are a refugee’ (as people in Katsikas camp were told when UNHCR officials came to explain the process of applying for asylum in 2016), combined with the marginalised locations in which refugees are expected to reside. This has a powerful potential to hinder people’s ability to connect to the place in which they currently live. It is easy to argue that this is more important with the refugees who are likely to be denied access to relocation and will be forced to stay and apply for asylum in Greece. However, it is equally important for people for whom Greece is part of a longer journey to be allowed the space to connect with the land they find themselves in. By not incentivising and facilitating people’s connections to Greece, they are denied this connection. The natural world provides an excellent medium for processing the past and connecting to the present.

On a walk with a teenage girl, she told me: The trees make me think of home, at
keep moving, keep learning, keep flowing. In the camp, we are like the water that doesn’t flow anymore, we need to start learning and doing things and flowing again (Interview with camp resident, 2017).

I was informed time and again about the multitude of ways in which the activities people engaged in relating to the natural environment made them feel more connected. These ranged from simply gaining an understanding of where they were by planning their hiking routes on a map to learning about the herbs in the local area and how they could use them. People also commonly found similarities with their home countries that they could relate to, such that cultivating and nourishing this new soil symbolised the creation of a connection with it: an act of putting down roots, if you will.

Marvelling at the broad array of shades and shapes of green in one camp resident’s garden, I asked him what he liked to grow, to which he responded: Oh, everything: vegetables, flowers, Afghan things, Greek things. [He pointed to a new kind of seed he recently got, a Greek seed. He expressed how he was unsure what it would grow into but expressed his curiosity to see.] I like to watch them grow and to help them. I like to see it start from a small seed and to help it to grow into something big, something beautiful. It makes me feel like I have a home here, a purpose. I need to look after my plants, and you know, they also look after me (Interview with camp resident, 2017).

The metaphorical images of uprooted people from their homes reflects a harsh reality of the displacement and liminality that refugees experience. It would seem a connection to the new soil could relieve, to some extent, the issues of uprooting, thereby helping people to become more grounded in the new place in which they have arrived.
Identity formation through connection to nature

In conversation with a psychologist working in one of the camps, we discussed the importance of identity and its multifaceted nature:

These people, for the past year and a half, they have been seen as refugees. Not Yannis who likes X, Y, Z and comes from this and this place. We are actively labelling them every day and asking them to identify themselves as a refugee. ... We should allow people to identify themselves by multiple identities. We need to allow people the space to feel empowered enough to rise up and ask for more, to take their lives into their own hands and to take control. Nobody is going to do that for them, they need to demand it (Interview with psychologist working in the camp 2017).

The findings from a variety of interviews with camp residents, members of the scout groups, and people of a varying ages spanning from 15-year olds to senior citizens, show that projects which allow people to engage with natural environments enable them to identify with more than just the refugee identity.

One person shared:

All the scouts have to decide on a promise to follow all their lives, it’s a scout promise. There are ten different ones: I chose to be friends with the nature and not hurt anything in the nature. I think everything has a soul or a spirit and is part of nature, and nature is part of us, and I don’t want to hurt anything that I belong to. We are part of the nature and it belongs to a part of us. I feel that connection more in the mountain, because I am closer, and it is part of me (Interview with scout leader, 2017).

No longer just another one of the thousands of refugees trapped in Greece, this man identified with something. That something was intricately connected to nature and the land – an identification, which can be taken from the camps in Epirus to Finland and beyond:

When I go to Finland, I will join the scouts – it will be the first thing I do. I already checked, they have scouts and beautiful nature, it is part of me now, it is part of who I am (Interview with scout member 2017).

All the people here, they know – I am gardener. I like to grow everything. Everyone knows it. I am the gardener (Interview with camp resident 2017).

Malkki (1992: 34) refers to the way that ‘the term “refugees” denotes an objectified, undifferentiated mass that is meaningful primarily as an aberration of categories and an object of “therapeutic interventions”.’ If this is the case, then the creation or maintenance of identity is crucially important for people, who have found themselves ‘abstractly naked’ and ‘nothing but human’ (Arendt, 1972). The loss of nuance and individuality in the way that people’s needs are recognised and addressed feeds back into the cycle of further homogenisation and institutionalisation. The projects that I witnessed allowed people to counter this process of homogenisation in a number of ways.

Agamben (1995) writes of bare life and describes the person whose death may occur without the recognition of its loss. Through the process of identity creation as a result of interactions with nature, people are also interacting with one another. Programmes such as the scouts or hiking groups allowed for the interactions between people to be amplified, thus stimulating a sense of community and encouraging the involvement in a social, political life. Bare life, in this essence is rendered...
Control over nature and one’s own life: experiences with agency and empowerment

In line with the themes outlined above relating to multiple identities and means of enabling individuals, the final finding relates to agency. It looks at how people’s interactions with the environment around them led to an enactment of agency, control, and corresponding feelings of empowerment.

Burke (1757) wrote of the sublime, describing an ‘intense passion rooted in horror, fear or terror in the face of objects that suggest vastness, infinity power, massiveness, mystery and death’ (in DeLuca and Demo 2000: 246). Koole and van den Berg (2005) build on this, arguing that nature may be simultaneously associated with both freedom and terror. Through self-regulation and rationalisation individuals have the opportunity to quell their fears, thus experiencing feelings of empowerment. This was evident for the people I spoke with.

I asked a participant, during a photo elicitation exercise, what had sparked her interest in the broken-down bridge, which was a recurring theme for many participants in their photos:

I like the bridge […] because it’s destroyed. I think it was done by nature; you can see the bits of the bridge in the river. [She contemplates for a second, looking at the photo in her hands, the others are nodding their heads in agreement.] I like it – to think how strong the river is, how strong nature is to break this big bridge. It makes me feel a bit scared, but also, I like it (Photo elicitation participant 2017).

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I joined the scout group, and it was a moment in which I decided to take control of my own life. I decided to learn English and to focus on myself, and on my future, until then I had felt trapped, frozen, waiting waiting waiting, then one day we were hiking in the mountain, I looked around and realised how small I was but also how amazing it all was, and I thought – now it is up to me (Interview with scout member 2017).

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**Figure 5 (left).** Photo of broken-down bridge taken by photo elicitation participant.  
**Figure 6 (right).** The garden built onto the container taken in Fillipiada camp, by author
Towards a systemic shift: discussion and conclusion

With approximately 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (UNHCR 2017), figuring out how to improve systems that directly affect the lives of such large numbers of people is crucial. This work has shown that there are a variety of outcomes for refugees that arise through allowing for and facilitating interactions with natural environments. These range from supporting mental health and allowing for a process of healing to occur, to supporting a connection to a new place, forming of multifaceted identities, and invoking notions of agency and empowerment. In line with this, several recommendations of change are proposed to the current systems of refugee management:

1. Consider nature-based therapy alternatives for addressing psychological distress;
2. Facilitate connections to natural environments for facilitating a connection to place;
3. Acknowledge the importance of promoting identity creation and agency;
4. Critically (re)assess space and locations of camps for alleviating liminality.

Nature-based therapy alternatives for addressing psychological distress of people living in camps

In line with Miller and Rasco’s (2004) theories on how alternative ways of engaging with place can create a more cohesive environment for dealing with psychological distress, this research has demonstrated numerous ways in which access to nature opened up a space for healing. As a result of the more collaborative group process of healing, compared to the traditional one-on-one approach of medical professional and patient, people were able to speak more

Knopf (1987) explores how autonomy and mastery can be bolstered by nature-based leisure activities. In many of my interviews (such as the quote presented above), participants emphasised the importance of being able to have some level of control in one’s life, albeit small. The methods for finding this ranged from maintaining small herb gardens to whole garden structures (such as the one in photo 6, below, at the end of this section). Very often these mechanisms seemed to translate to a deeper form of empowerment that affected many levels of people’s lives. It allowed them to remember their own agency and reflect on how it felt to take matters into one’s own hands. Indicating the garden structure attached to the outside of their container, a woman told me of the ways her husband felt similar feelings of ‘do[ing] something’:

My husband – he built this for us. You know, here you cannot really do anything. In Iraq, I had just graduated university, I was an athlete. I tried to do stuff. Here I teach [a] dance class but here the women, they are too shy when there’s not a private space, here ... [She pauses and points around to the barren camp, the 40oC heat causing everything to radiate.] Here, nothing. We have nothing, no meaning, no jobs. We left because we are Kurdish, and we were persecuted. Here we are safe, but we are nothing. My husband, he built this for me and our baby. He built it to feel like he could do something, do something for us, for his family. [She looks at the garden and she laughs with a light joyfulness that shows how much pleasure it gives her.] He built this and now it is not so hot and, it makes him feel good! (Interview with camp resident 2017).
freely about their issues and feel less isolated in their suffering. The majority of respondents reported having found relief from stress and anxiety by leaving the camp environment and becoming closer with the natural world. This is in line with the work of Sandifer (2015) who found decreased stress levels in participants spending time in nature, as well as Mass and colleagues (2009) who found that reductions in anxiety correlated directly with time spent in natural environments. Notably, almost all participants also spoke of freedom when interacting with nature, affording temporary relief from the everyday stresses of refugee life and contributing to wellbeing. Building on Miller and Rasco’s (2004) ecological paradigm, nature-based interventions have the potential to transcend the traditional clinical setting and provide an alternative setting for healing to occur. The implications of this finding suggest that there are potential benefits to the incorporation of nature-based therapeutic interventions for supporting refugee populations. It is important to consider the ways in which such strategies could be implemented in camp settings.

Facilitating connections to natural environments for facilitating a connection to place

The metaphorical and literal concept of putting down or having roots somewhere involves intimate linkages between people and place (Malkki 1992). Malkki uses botanical metaphors to theorise how people find themselves rooted in places and how their identities are thus derived. The opposite of being at home is being ‘transplanted’ or ‘uprooted’. Tuan (1977) and Malkki (1992) consider the powerful sedentary narrative in our ways of thinking and the valuing of being rooted, so often reflected in our language and social practice. Connecting to nature also means connecting to place. A connection to place is important because it allows meaning to be given to people and the process of displacement to be made somewhat easier. Scholars such as Brun (2001) advocate for a ‘re-territorialisation’ referring to ‘the way displaced and local people establish new or rather expand networks and cultural practices that define new spaces for daily life’ (Brun 2001: 23). As alluded to earlier in the paper, refugees are often seen as uprooted victims who have left their homes and cultures, but there is little space in this standpoint to conceptualise multiple spaces of belonging.

Borrowing from Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 8), ‘the power of topography has successfully concealed the topography of power’. By challenging the dominant sedentary narrative composed of independent nations and autonomous cultures, a space is opened up for people to create meaningful connections to their new locales. Whether it is through planting gardens or hiking in the mountains, connections to land work to counter the power of topography and incentivise reterritorialization. Connections to nature allow people to gain a sense of belonging and grounding, thus countering that of uprooting. Through the planting of physical roots in the ground outside of their tents, people are caring for their own metaphorical roots and bringing the abstract space of the camp in which they find themselves closer to the ground. It is important to recognise the multiplicity of attachments that people form to place(s), through living in them, remembering them and imagining them (Malkki, 1997:71). One potential way of facilitating connections to place is through connections to nature and natural environments.

Promote identity creation and agency

The notion of belonging and creating an identity was particularly evident with the scout groups. Both adults and youth
A critical (re)assessment of the locations of camps

One focus group discussion took an interesting turn relating to when there may be too much nature. This discussion was with people who lived in apartments in Ioannina city, but had previously lived in very isolated camps, in the midst of Pindos national park. They spoke of isolation and feeling of abandonment and of nature being too much, surrounded constantly by trees such that they no longer saw or appreciated its beauty. Upon reflection, though, now living in the city, many reported missing the beauty of it. However, there was a general consensus that what they did not miss was how isolated they had been from everything. This contrasts with numerous examples of people talking about how dry and barren some of the other camps were. Together, these lead to the conclusion that it was not a case of ‘too much nature’ but rather of feeling too marginalised and isolated from society and its amenities.

As discussed earlier, liminality can be seen as a state of in betweenness. The process of gaining asylum is complicated and arduous, leaving people waiting for months and years at a time. There is no need for the physical locations in which people live to also be in a state of liminality – not quite in nature, yet not in the city either. By marginalising the spaces refugees are hosted in, they are forced into liminality and prohibited from connecting well to their new locale. In thinking about the geographic locations of camps, governments and NGOs would do well to remember the power of topography and the effects it has on people. This research has shown that access to nature is important for people, but that should not be an excuse to push them as far away from ‘culture’ as possible. This paper calls for a critical reassessment of the places in which camps are built and the access that populations have to a broad array of resources, including, but not limited to, natural environments.
Conclusion

The literature review highlighted a theoretical gap in the literature regarding how nature impacts refugee wellbeing. The findings presented in this paper have shown the diverse ways in which people engage in and with nature and are impacted by it. The themes identified through these findings correspond to a range of issues that refugees commonly face. These themes also link to ways in which authors have found access to nature to help humans around the world. The findings presented here have provided a starting point for the ensuing discussion regarding how access to nature can influence wellbeing, not only for the population of Epirus, but perhaps further afield. I have highlighted the importance of incorporating access to nature in improving the over-reliance on encampment in international approaches to forcibly displaced populations. Cumulatively, enabling people to access nature makes people more resilient and able to deal with multiple stressors and risks. My findings support, replicate and extend what has been shown elsewhere in related bodies of literature, namely the capacity of contact with nature to reduce stress, to invoke notions of freedom, and to support people’s perceived agency and control. A shift is needed in how access to and engagement with nature is valued in relation to supporting wellbeing, especially for populations living in refugee camps. Further research into the impacts of access of nature on refugee wellbeing would be beneficial. Meanwhile, I have argued for practitioners to incorporate these findings into their planning and work.

The scout kids always said, the happiest days in their lives were during the most difficult period of their lives - whilst living in the refugee camp. [He smiles broadly, seemingly surprised by what he himself is saying.] They were living in a refugee camp, but when they went on the scout trips, they had the happiest days of their lives! [I do not doubt it, I tell him sincerely, having seen for myself what an immense impact the trips had on the kids. We pause and look out across the lake. The mountains and the infamous Katsikas river in the distance.] I don’t know how to say in it English... [He smiles shyly. I encourage him with a nod of my head.] But all humans, in the past - we were living with the nature. When you are human, you have this idea in your mind... you will have this idea in your heart. To spend something like 24 hours in the forest, with your friends – we can wait in the camp for one month to just have this one day, one day to be happy. [He smiles and his face breaks into jubilant laughter.] (Interview with camp resident 2017)
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Bibliography


