

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a blue ocean with white-capped waves. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular area that is tilted slightly to the right.

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quest Reception Responses From the Global North **for** **refugee**

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quest for refuge

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QUEST FOR REFUGE: RECEPTION RESPONSES FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH

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FOREWORD

Cristina Santinho

Antonio Gramsci once said that “creating a new culture doesn’t only mean to make original individual discoveries: it means also, and specially, to spread truths already discovered”. This is a book that underlines the importance of spreading such truths with regard to the “resettlement” and “integration” of refugees in a variety of national contexts (Canada, USA, Finland, Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Australia). Through the multi-disciplinary lenses of anthropology, geography, social work, and sociology, the authors demonstrate – with captivating reporting skills – that many of the issues underlying the difficulties of refugee integration (post 2014/2016 but also since the beginning of 21 century) bring to light old and well known structural problems.

By reading each of the authors contributions we inevitably wonder why asylum policies and practices aren’t yet properly managed, both at a national and local levels. Or why refugee rights are systematically denied, pushing/forcing them into a situation of social exclusion!? Why are most of the state agencies unable to provide transparent and suitable support to the different needs and specificities of the refugees from health care, to housing and education? Support that should take in to account their past life stories and their hopes for the future.

In the geographical and political contexts dealt with by this book we come across another structural and systemic predicament: the pervasive lack or inadequacy of specific training for professionals in charge of providing support to refugees. Such deficiency, added to the inconsistency of available funding, undermines the right to integration and renders complicated the

prospective relationship between refugees and their host societies. As this volume highlights, dismissing responsibilities of doing what should be done often leads to negligent policies that end up fostering racism and xenophobia.

Finally, a positive note should be pointed out as local examples elucidate the relevance of mediation, community participation and mobilization (of both local governments and civil society) in promoting overarching and articulated holistic solutions for solidarity and hospitality. As has been widely verified, when and wherever knowledge, resources and goodwill are intertwined, refugee integration prompts the development of the host society as a whole.

I recommend a close reading of this volume to everybody interested in the issues raised by asylum, especially researchers, students, politicians and social agents related in any way to this field of study and action.

CHAPTER 1

STRANDED IN MOBILITY: A CRISIS OF REFUGE

Octávio Sacramento
Pedro Gabriel Silva
Elizabeth Challinor

1. Setting the scene

In the autumn of 2017, an interdisciplinary international group of academics and a Portuguese European Union (EU) Parliament Representative met in the city of Vila Real, Portugal, to discuss refugee reception in the wake of the political, economic and environmental crises that were sparking forced migration into Europe. The conference, hosted by the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, had a two-fold focus: (i) the processes of policy-making at the higher levels of the EU and their transposition to the national and local levels and (ii) the procedures and practices of the different institutional actors involved in refugee reception and settlement. Policy framing and action, in particular following the 2015 EU's Relocation Programme punctuated the debate.

Participants concluded that asylum policies characterised by vagueness on the one hand and pronounced ideological and political outlooks on the other, are hindering the construction of a cosmopolitan post-national European project and betraying the Union's pluralistic humanistic foundations. Even when the right to request asylum is upheld and people do manage to cross the borders into Europe, their quest for refuge has only just begun. They then face a range of immaterial borders – social, economic, legal and political – operating at different scales in society, many of which hinder their integration, leaving them stranded in mobility. Hence, we ask whether such a thing as a refugee crisis exists at all (as the EU Parliament Representative Ana Gomes also asked during the conference); or is it the refugee reception and settlement system which is in crisis?

This book is a development of such debates, extending the focus to other geographies. How have countries in the Global North responded or failed to respond to the quest for refuge?¹ What, if any, reception and settlement systems have been put in place? Our discussions are purposefully pitched at different scales of analysis. For, if on the one hand, international and national legislation and policy making have a direct impact on refugee settlement and integration at the local level, on the other hand, what happens at the micro-level of social relations – often beyond the control or realm of policies and laws – is also significant. The collection illustrates the importance of articulating diverse scales of analysis and of adopting different disciplinary perspectives across international geographies in order to bring to light the complexities at play. The chapters address time-old questions in refugee studies, the urgency of which has not diminished. How is the distinction between migrant and refugee enshrined in law and played out in practice, for example? In what ways can local communities become involved in welcoming refugees? How to avoid a slippery slope towards humanitarian charity-based approaches instead of rights-based approaches towards international protection? What kind of balance needs to be found between state, private and third sector provision of services for refugees? Does third sector involvement create parallel structures that let the state off the hook? What happens when the state becomes unaccountable? In what ways do refugees respond to the settlement responses available to them? Should their freedom of movement be curtailed? How can refugee reception systems be improved to meet their needs? None of these questions can be answered in the abstract and each chapter addresses some of them from its own disciplinary and contextual perspective in order to further and deepen the debate. Before providing a summary of each chapter, the following sections give a general overview of the global issues at stake.

2. Dropping the e

From 2015 the news coverage offered images of thousands of families fleeing from Syrian bombings, stranded and pushed by diligent border police patrols in Europe's south-eastern Balkan edges, of children lying helpless, when not

1. We use the term "Global North" to refer to spaces and pockets of relative socio-economic privilege and power that can only be understood in their historical and dynamic relation to the "Global South" (Levander & Mignolo, 2011).

dead, in Greek and Turkish beaches, of men, women and children, some in their mothers' laps left adrift in the treacherous Mediterranean Sea. Growing numbers of people seeking refuge from armed conflicts, authoritarian persecutory regimes, religious extremism, environmental depredation and loss of vital ecological resources sought the more affluent and stable European countries as the looked-for destination. This increase in migratory mobilities towards Europe was amplified and spectacularised (Tazzioli, 2018) by media coverage, sparking a somehow contradictory public reaction: a humanitarian sympathetic solidarity movement involving NGOs, grassroots and individual civic demonstrations of support (Kallius, Monterescu, & Rajaram, 2016; Sacramento, Turtiainen, & Silva, 2019) in parallel with moral panic and nationalist xenophobic agendas pushing populist political right-wing resistance to reception (Dedotsi, Ioakimidis, & Teloni, 2019; Ericson, 2018; Narkowicz, 2018; Witteven, 2017).

In the process, the notion of a *refugee crisis* was framed, which ended up pervading public discussion and political decision-making while tending to confine the phenomenon to the Syrian conflict and to the Mediterranean. In spite of the large – and justified – media coverage and political attention devoted to the Syrian conflict and to the drama of refugees approaching the Mediterranean, the last six years have shown that we are far from a particular single territorial crisis. On the contrary, forced migrations have multiplied almost simultaneously in distinct parts of the world (UNHCR, 2019), accompanied by recurrent signs of retraction of the systems of asylum protection. In spite of decades of international efforts to adopt asylum frames and secure protection statuses, it seems like part of this work has been neglected, if not discarded. Instead of a common ground for addressing and securing the rights of refugees, as acknowledged by international conventions, states often foster, through bureaucratic and contradictory policies, forms of “structural violence” (Galtung, 1969) against migrants, and in some cases, impudently sustain the violation of fundamental rights, as seen in Myanmar with the Rohingya (Gorlick, 2019) or in the USA with Central-American migrants of which Michelle Martin's chapter found in this volume is particularly illustrative.

In the last years, the number of forced migrations has increased to levels never seen before. According to the UNHCR (2019), only in 2018, forced migrants increased by 2.3 million, making a total of almost 70.8 million people worldwide. The overwhelming numbers and the ubiquity of the phenomena turned forced migration and the consequent quest for protection into a global

issue that was widely disseminated and publicly and politically interpreted as a “problem”: a *refugee crisis*, dramatized by media coverage and social media networks. The refugees themselves were primarily seen as vulnerable bodies that had suffered the hardships of the migratory experience, persecution and violence in their places of origin and barriers at the borders of nation-states and unions where they sought refuge. Dominant perceptions of the *refugee crisis* now tend to focus exclusively on the figure of the refugee rather than on the wider political context of decision taking and policy framing; namely on how the reception countries of the global North turn a person into a refugee. It is not enough to talk of a so-called “refugee crisis”. It is high time we drop the *e* and talk of a refuge crisis.

3. A refuge crisis

The complex historical and structural reasons why people have been forced to leave their counties of origin and seek refuge are not the focus of this book; although they are touched upon in the epilogue by Vasilios Ioakimidis. The refuge crisis that we refer to here is above all a political crisis that lies at the very heart of the states which pledged to protect those seeking asylum, either because they take actions infringing humanitarian values and/or fail to advance clear common policies (Rea, Martiniello, Mazzola, & Meuleman, 2019; Wahlbeck, 2019). Although this book focuses on responses from countries in the Global North, it is also important to state that the majority of people seeking refuge never make it to these more affluent countries. For example, in 2018, Europe took in a mere 13.6% of the world total of refugees. Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, Sudan were amongst the countries that took in the largest numbers of asylum seekers for the period 2017-2018 (Oliveira, 2020).

The assumption of a refuge crisis and the rejection of the notion of a refugee crisis *tout court* pervades the book, as its contributing authors offer ample examples that corroborate the literature on how protection mechanisms have become erratic, sometimes contradictory, and political responses end up inducing structural violence and a blatant defilement of refugee rights (Davies, Isakjee, & Dhesi, 2017; Schneider, Shraiky, Wofford, & Awad, 2017; Tazzioli, 2018, 2020). The chapters offer detailed descriptions of erratic policy frames, structural and statutory obstacles and deficiencies in resource allocation and refugee recognition (in terms of citizenship and

agency). Moreover, as de Vries and Guild (2019, p. 2156) point out, “this is not a crisis of ‘spontaneous arrivals’ but one that has been produced by specific migration management strategies and practices”. It is a “refugee reception crisis” (Rea et al., 2019, p. 16) produced and reproduced as part of the political mechanism to manage migration mobilities, where managing turns out to be more about disciplining refugees, rather than recognizing, entitling, enhancing and ensuring rights (Demetriou, 2019) that took decades to consolidate at an international level. Barou’s historical account of the history of asylum in France in this volume draws attention to the fact that asylum was not originally conceived as an unconditional right.

So, what are the current levels of international protection that establish the key principles regarding human rights, asylum protection and the dignified reception of refugees? At the global level, they include the 1948 International Human Rights Chart (ACNUDH, 2001), the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of the United Nations (UN) (UNHCR, 2011) and the ensuing 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (*New York Protocol*) (UN General Assembly, 1967), as well as the subsequent political directions agreed in the last decades within the UNHCR.

The crisis we are focusing on in this volume, emerges mainly at intermediary and lower levels of political decision-making and action. Let us take as an example the EU where the inexistence of a solid common asylum policy produces multiple undefinitions and contradictions associated with the ideological moods and shifting interests of its member-states (Bendel, 2017; Niemann & Zaun, 2018; Sacramento & Silva, 2018; Trauner, 2016; Wahlbeck, 2019; Žagar, Šalamon, & Hacin, 2018). These inconsistencies also emerge indissociably from the structural contradiction between the spirit of solidarity underlying the 2007 Lisbon Treaty and the *not so communitarian* logic of the Dublin Convention, signed for the first time in 1990 and subjected to amendments in 2003 (Dublin II Regulation) and 2013 (Dublin III Regulation) (Maiani, 2016). This fundamental legal instrument reinforced the individual responsibility of refugees and instated severe limitations to free movement within the EU’s territory. For Wallaschek (2016), recovering the old Nansen Passport constitutes a possible solution, since free movement would not only benefit refugees but would also help to oil the system of protection and take the burden off countries in the front-line of reception, namely Italy, Greece and Malta.

Far from a common concerted system, the EU is fraught by heterogeneous political orientations, organisational designs and national, when not regional or local, settlement practices (see the chapters by Membretti and Lucchini; Silva and Sacramento; and Kilian in this book). This heterogeneity largely overlaps with the still highly precarious Common European Asylum System (CEAS) which, still under construction, began to take form after the 1999 Tampere European Council (Grigonis, 2016; Parusel, 2015; Zaun, 2017). Such political precariousness and volatility regarding the EU's migration policy can be read as a result of the Union's progressive disaffection from the key legal-political international instruments already referred to above. Fassin (2015) addresses this in his analysis of the "moral economy of asylum".² He argues that it is clear that it was not the thousands of people who crossed the Mediterranean coming from Africa or the Middle East in search of protection that created a *crisis*, in fact, they rendered more visible a situation that had been brewing for some decades: that of a progressive estrangement of EU countries from the 1951 Geneva Convention commitments.

The chapters included in this book from the USA, Australia and Canada serve to indicate that in differing degrees, the situation identified by Fassin is not exclusive to Europe. This general eschewing of the Geneva Convention commitments smears the way countries in the Global North are seen to position themselves, both morally and politically, with respect to refugee reception and the need to provide rights and effective formal protection. In many cases, we watch the conspicuous rising of old nationalist ways, fed by identity and security phobias, according to which migrants in general and refugees in particular are stereotyped as the purveyors of terrorist menaces, cultural erosion, social instability, stealers of employment opportunities and state welfare abusers (Appollonia, 2012; Sacramento, 2017). Lacroix argues in this volume that Canadian multiculturalism came under attack after 9/11 for supposedly failing to protect Canadian values. In the present pandemic state, it is not negligible that some countries use Covid-19 as a scapegoat to further close their borders and deny asylum or, due to the resultant economic crisis, reduce social protection and welfare to refugees. Take Donald Trump's 21st April 2020 executive order, posted on his Twitter account, as a manifestation

2. Fassin (2009, 2015) defines moral economies as configurations resulting from the construction, circulation and appropriation of normative values and affections related to a determined social problem in a given geographic and historical context.

of such: “In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy [Covid-19], as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!”³ Nationalist-prone surges like this occur even in the EU, an association of states framed, purportedly, on the principles of concerted action, collaborative effort, common policy tools and a shared ethical stance in accordance with post-national cosmopolitan logics (Beck & Grande, 2007). The lack of response from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to the 2015 EU’s Relocation Programme is a telling example of how current nationalist interests contribute towards corroding the spirit of solidarity that framed the Union’s social and political construction. It also illustrates how this, often unilateral, xenophobic and nationalist policy tends to prevail over the humanist multilateralism that marks the decades-long established international legal frameworks referred to above.

Even countries that are committed to international legal frameworks of protection and have displayed willingness to receive refugees are not immune to the refugee crisis, including those with a long-standing tradition of refugee reception and well-established asylum protection systems. These countries are susceptible to a sort of political schizophrenia as a result of a gap between “law in books” and “law in action” (Nelken, 1984). On the one hand, states legislate and plan according to international recommendations on refugee protection, on the other hand, they tend to confine their action to this structural and purely formal level of policy making, transferring their implementation to the NGOs and regional/local public authorities (such as municipalities or regional governments), when not fully private organisations, as seen in the United Kingdom (Darling, 2016b). States tend to limit their actions to the bureaucratic and economic managing of the process, often unconcerned with the availability of resources and technical competence in the institutions that become responsible for refugee reception. The neoliberal turn and its influence on state governance emphasized the emergence of the state as a seemingly indifferent managerial structure (Turtiainen, 2018). Thus, a war of appearances regarding refugee reception occurs, in which the rights established in law and acknowledged in political discourses seem to become lost in translation, when it comes to their implementation. This is particularly evident, for example, in the Spanish case, in Olga Jubany and

3. In <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1252418369170501639>.

Alèxia Rué's chapter in this book, which conveys the notions of a *politics of non-doing* and of *chaos within a clockwork design* to address the incoherence between the appearance of efficiency and efficacy and the actual chaotic practices on the ground.

Mirroring tendencies in other spheres of social protection, the outsourcing of refugee settlement responses to the third sector and to private initiative constitutes a common international practice even in nations known for their “strong” welfare states, such as the Nordic countries (Jönsson & Kojan, 2017; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Östman, 2019; Sacramento et al., 2019).⁴ In many countries, this, in turn, has required the dispersal of refugees throughout the national territory (Ambrosini, 2015; Cabot, 2013; Challinor, 2018; Darling, 2016a, 2016b; Dedotsi et al., 2019; Galera, Giannetto, & Noya, 2018; Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, & Beckmann, 2017; Jentsch, 2007; Lethbridge, 2017, Mayblin & James, 2018, Robinson, 2013; Schech, 2014, Turtiainen, 2012). Sözer (2020) argues that the decentralization of refugee reception provides states with flexibility whilst making them immune from responsibility; a phenomenon which cannot be separated from contemporary austerity policies (Darling, 2016a; Robinson, Andersson, & Musterd, 2003).⁵ This is why many NGOs end up exposing the frailties of the settlement systems and policies, demanding a more substantial involvement of the state. This was particularly evident in Portugal following the Covid-19 pandemic: the Portuguese Council for Refugees (CPR), in reaction to public criticism around alleged negligence and inappropriate housing of refugees in hostels, issued a statement, signed by all board members, which claimed that “one cannot expect a single non-governmental organization to bear the burden of the entire reception system of asylum seekers”, stating further that “the safeguarding and coordination of international protection is primarily the responsibility of the Portuguese state” (Farinha, Matos, Mesquita, Morais, & Malheiros, 2020, our translation).

4. Often, in the absence of immediate or working social responses, refugees and asylum applicants organise themselves, constituting the so called refugee community organisations (RCOs) in order to tackle the challenges and overcome the vulnerabilities felt as they settle (Griffiths, Sigona, & Zetter, 2005; Lacroix, Baffoe, & Liguori, 2015). These RCOs can assume an important role when it comes to building interpersonal ties and belonging, countering the risks of social isolation (Barou, 2013).

5. Such a strategy is often – and officially – presented as a way to prevent the creation of ghettos and to promote rural development in regions facing accelerated demographic decline (Galera, Giannetto, Membretti, & Noya, 2018; Membretti, Kofler, & Viazzo, 2017; Perlik, Galera, Machold, & Membretti, 2019; Schech, 2012, 2014).

The involvement of the state does not automatically guarantee the upholding of rights. This often depends on how state agency staff – labelled as “street-level bureaucrats” by Lipsky (2010) – use their discretionary power at the local level. In the provision of youth care services to unaccompanied refugee minors in Germany, for example, examined by Kilian in this volume, social workers from the same social services unit may differ in their orientations: some focus on upholding rights whilst others on public management and efficiency. The outsourcing of services to the third sector increases the potential for the use of discretionary power. In some cases, refugees’ rights may be ignored, or patronising humanitarian approaches may be adopted (Sözer, 2020), as often occurs in interventions with refugee populations (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014; Calvo, Rojas, & Waters, 2014; Oliveira, Duarte, & Ribeiro, 2018). In other cases, discretionary power offers practitioners, and other agents dealing with refugee settlement, opportunities to counter the system’s own frailties and create alternatives to highly statutory intervention mechanisms.

The dilution of protection mechanisms, especially those based on entitlement to social rights, may derive from the demeaning attitudes embedded in charity and voluntary work where the refugee is taken as an “ideal victim” (Christie, 1986) – dispossessed, frail, marooned, passively vulnerable – in the hands and (good) will of devoted (frequently volunteer) engaged helpers, rather than recognized as a potentially active citizen and bearer of rights (Demetriou, 2019). Sözer (2020) refers to these short-term interventions as “humanitarian engagement”, focused mainly on supplying emergency needs and dictated by managerial or eleemosynary objectives with insufficient vision to work towards securing processes of social, cultural, educational and labour inclusion in the long run. This kind of humanitarian engagement, described by Sözer (2020, p. 2166) as “the aggregation of short-term, time limited, specialised ‘projects’”, hindering the possibilities to develop “long-term, systematic, and holistic policies”, is evident in the case of Portugal (see Silva and Sacramento, and Challinor in this volume).

4. Indefinite settlement

The dilution of protection measures discussed above is an expression of the extraordinary power of borders and boundaries to represent the “other” as a potential source of socio-cultural disturbance and danger (Douglas, 2001;

Linke, 2010). The outcome of this is the production of a mere simulation of asylum. Refugees and asylum seekers may get to arrive to the destination countries, nevertheless they end up being trapped in the multiple exclusions which derive from the ever-present borders and their economic, identity, and, above all, security logics. In the fortress-geographies of the Global North, policing became “the principal instrument to govern those who were increasingly viewed as aliens” (Fassin, 2011, p. 221). Such police governance is more and more of a digital nature, carried out panoptically through agencies legitimised to manage and monitor the borders, upheld by various systems of biometric record, information and control (Dijstelbloem & Meijer, 2011). Through these sophisticated technological means that give form to actual digital borders (Broeders, 2007), states today, are able to oversee and control transnational flows. This capacity has guaranteed a thorough monitoring not just of the physical borders, but also the internal vigilance of foreign citizens as well as the control of migratory pathways.

Unsurprisingly, the limitations imposed on the circulation of asylum claimants, refugees and other migrants do not happen only when they are in liminal confinement “archipelagos” (Ferrer-Gallardo & Albet-Mas, 2016), e.g. in the camps of temporary settlement (Agier, 2002; Harrell-Bond, 2002; Tazzioli, 2018). These restrictions are extended to the destination countries, where they risk, once again, though at another scale, becoming geographically and socially confined. In the European case, even for refugees leaving the Mediterranean hotspot system to be relocated in EU countries, the camp and all the material and immaterial borders with their discretionary demeaning logics do not cease to exist (see the detailed case study by Challinor in this volume). Given the enduring undefinitions, exclusions, bureaucratic entanglements and citizenship deficits, refugees seem to carry on living under the spirit of the hotspot system, in a continuous regime of *encampment* (Harrell-Bond, 2002), enshrouded this time in a wordy system of settlement and integration infused with paradoxical dynamics of repression and compassion (Fassin, 2005). Agamben’s (1998, p. 181) words seem, more than ever, relevant here: “today it is not the city [in the sense of *polis*] but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West”.

Many refugees and asylum claimants in the Global North live a sort of indefinite settlement, in an *atopos* condition (Bourdieu, 1998), unable to find a dependable place or space in which to build social spaces of citizenship. The experience of living “on the margins of the world” in an “endless

present” (Agier, 2002, 2008), begins for many refugees during their passage through the camps along their migratory route. According to Agamben (1998) refugees personify a kind of *homo sacer* consigned to a state of exception, abandonment and discretion, politically deprived of the possibility of assuming full citizenship. Refugees are relegated to liminal spaces of indifference by this biopolitics of borders and by the lack of recognition, both of which deny crediting them competences while lessening their guaranties and basic rights; in sum, reducing them to *bare life* (*zoē*) (Agamben, 1998).⁶ For Agier (2008), refugees are *victims twice* over: of the profound instability that forces them to leave their countries of origin and of the sovereign power exercised by humanitarian organisations in the camps often involving policing control instead of social protection. To these we could add a third form of victimisation, this time, prompted by the way they are received in many of the destination countries (following the encampment experience). Once there, refugees become, in Jubany, Pasqualetto and Ruè’s (2019) words, “vulnerable to the system”, namely due to multiple uncertainties and flaws present in the settlement systems, which fail to provide the adequate responses to the refugees’ expressed needs and life projects (Santinho, 2013). The failure to meet healthcare needs is also common, which is particularly disturbing considering the traumatic experiences produced by forced migrations and processes of (re)settlement (Martin, 2019; Santinho, 2016).⁷

Despite efforts to create a common system of protection and common settlement frameworks for forced migrants in the EU, countries still act independently. De Vries and Guild (2019) argue that this absence of a concrete common policy and of a clear rights-based frame for action constitutes a form of structural violence against refugees. It produces what they call a “politics of exhaustion”, referring to the “felt effects of the stretching over time of a combination of fractured mobility, daily violence and fundamental uncertainty” (de Vries & Guild, 2019, p. 2157). Leaving refugees in a constant state of uncertainty (either in camps or when they are relocated to destination

6. Dialoguing with Arendt and Foucault, Agamben’s (1998) political philosophy establishes a distinction between *zoē* (a bare, naked life suspended in a liminal state of exception and predominantly reduced to its biological condition) and *bios* (a full life marked by rights and guaranties).

7. In Portugal, two recent examples (from April 2020), widely disseminated by the media, related to the Covid-19 pandemic help to elucidate these failures in health system protection: of the 171 refugees and asylum claimants confined to a hostel in Lisbon, 136 tested positive; in the Northern city of Braga, a local public healthcare centre refused to test a refugee woman for Covid-19.

countries which were not of their choosing and lack the structured mechanisms to facilitate their social insertion) corresponds to Agamben's notion of a constant state of exception: a liminality prompted by policy (in)definition and inaction (Davies et al., 2017).

Though there are, at least formally, systems of refugee settlement, not all contribute towards integrating refugees (Iglesias-Martínez, Villaseñor, Asua, Fuster, & Vicente, 2018). In fact, a settlement system merely focused on ensuring statutory access to basic services and to a provisional status of protection is not, *per se*, sufficient to ensure integration. As Tazzioli (2018) showed, mere initial statutory measures can contribute towards keeping people in a state of exception, suspended and cut off from the possibilities for wider and deeper civic participation and for a long lasting self-acknowledged life-project in the countries of reception, where their freedom of movement is sometimes also curtailed. Settlement alone is not sufficient to ensure a broader level of social, political and cultural participation and the respective consolidation of social rights entitlement. This is what we understand to constitute integration which is not the same as assimilation.

Gender, social class, religion, age and other variables also affect integration; hence the importance of adopting an intersectional perspective. This is highlighted in the chapters in this volume by Östman and Jönsson on unaccompanied refugee minors in Sweden, and in Turtianinen's study of integration processes in Finland. Barou also highlights the importance of social class, in his discussion of how loss of social status in the host society is very common. But Turtianinen makes the point that pre-existing inequalities between different social groups in the host society also impact upon refugee integration outcomes. Moreover, the distinction between refugee and migrant at the local level can also become blurred (Challinor, 2019): an issue raised by Schech in this volume, in her discussion of the significance of place-making and belonging in the case of Australia. The case studies in Italy by Membretti and Lucchini, in this volume, demonstrate how the quest for refuge can evolve into a sense of local belonging as refugees work together with communities to contribute towards local development initiatives. However, as Turtianinen's chapter reminds us, translocal and transnational networks play an important role in facilitating refugee integration: we should take this as a reminder of how global interconnectedness shapes everybody's lives.

5. Overview of the book's chapters⁸

In the first chapter of this volume, Michelle Martin poignantly illustrates the power of geopolitical borders to withhold international protection from asylum seekers. She discusses the case of Central Americans crossing the U.S. southwest border to seek political asylum within the context of the history of the politicization of immigration in USA immigration law, elucidating how the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" of undocumented ("illegal") migrants has reached unprecedented levels of cruelty in the treatment of asylum seekers who are denied legal protection as their unauthorised entries are treated as a criminal offense. Their conflation with undocumented migrants is a common practice in the United States even though U.S. legislation does distinguish between these two groups. This is due in part to the complex ambiguous nature of U.S. immigration and asylum legislation, lack of knowledge of the law and the failure of Customs and Border Protection to collect asylum statistics. Administrations have consequently failed to treat asylum seekers in accordance with national and international laws, serving to boost the interests of protectionist political ideologies, including the current surge of right wing populism. Careful to illustrate how the Bush and Obama-era policies regarding the treatment of asylum seekers and their children, violated the national regulations established for minors (through the Flores Settlement Agreement), Martin demonstrates how "zero tolerance" was used by the Trump Administration to go even further and justify the forced separation of children from their parents in jails and detention centres. Questioning not only the future reliability of U.S. legislative commitments towards the provision of international protection, Martin also raises the important issue of how, when the law remains unchanged, such a major shift in immigration policy is able to occur.

In the following chapter, Jacques Barou introduces a diachronic perspective, exploring the origins and history of asylum laws and practices in France and of how they were affected by the wider international context. He illustrates how religious asylum was never an absolute right and that asylum granted by civil authorities was not initially based on moral obligation or political principle. This changed when asylum was established as a right in the 1793 Constitution. The distinction between refugee and migrant during

8. The editors have respected the country specific variations of the English language in each chapter.

the 19th Century entitled the former to public aid but since it was according to social rank, the vast majority had to fend for themselves. With the help of their solidarity networks, they nevertheless managed to integrate into a generally welcoming society. The 20th Century saw a dramatic increase of refugees and the global economic depression of the 1930s began to turn the tide of public opinion against them. Republicans fleeing from Spain and Jews from Germany, for example, unable to acquire refugee status, nonetheless settled in France. Many Spaniards were granted refugee status years later due to a more favourable policy environment. The year following the Geneva Convention of 1951, France established its own refugee protection agency which granted asylum mainly to Europeans. However, over the following decades it became overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of asylum requests worldwide. The numbers of unsuccessful asylum seekers, remaining in France as undocumented migrants rose sharply, which served to undermine the prestige of refugee status and to blur the distinction between migrant and refugee. Public opinion consequently became more hostile. Those who obtained refugee status in the first decade of the 21st Century, faced more obstacles than those who became refugees in previous decades although they all shared the same plight of employment at a lower skill level and the consequent loss of social status. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings of a small case study in the Lyon region that exemplifies how the trajectories of refugee integration have become more difficult in recent times.

Crossing the Atlantic, Marie Lacroix discusses the issue of refugee integration within the context of the emergence and development of Canada's multicultural and integration policies for refugees. She argues that since Canada has always seen itself as a country of resettlement – rather than of first asylum – refugee policy has been closely tied to immigration policy. Before the mid-1970s, refugee reception occurred on an *ad hoc* basis. This changed with the 1976 Immigration Act which created categories of individuals in which refugees became admissible as landed immigrants under the humanitarian category. This period also marked a shift in Canada's ethnocentric and exclusionary model of immigration policy towards one that promoted multiculturalism to address the relationship between individual freedom and cultural belonging, while ensuring the protection of minority rights. However, in the post-9/11 era, multiculturalism became increasingly under fire as too accommodating, deemed by public opinion to have failed to sufficiently encourage immigrants to integrate “successfully” or adopt

“Canadian” values. With employment as the government’s focus, funding for multiculturalism declined and in the last decade provincial funding to non-governmental organisations which do much of the refugee settlement work was also reduced. The ousting out of Canada’s anti-immigration Conservative government with the election victory of a Liberal government in 2015 marked a new major shift in policy. By appealing to the country’s unique humanitarian history of the sponsorship of refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s, the government involved civil society in the resettling of 30,000 Syrian refugees by December 2016. In her description of the sponsorship programme in which groups such as churches, university faculties or individuals help settle refugees Lacroix argues that bonding networks were more readily mobilized than bridging and linking networks and that private sponsors needed more information on the integration processes, training to accompany refugee families and knowledge of services and how to access them. Access to housing, employment and language courses also constituted an ongoing challenge. Welcoming refugees must come in hand in hand with ensuring that resources are available to facilitate their integration process.

The first of two cases to discuss refugee integration in the Nordic countries in this volume is by Kati Turtiainen who offers a detailed examination of refugee and migrant experiences of integration in Western Finland. She adopts an intersectional perspective in her discussion of how individuals’ integration plans are affected not only by gender, social class, age, religion and education but also by their translocational and transnational networks. These may provide support from a distance when services are unable to meet specific needs. Although Finnish legislation refers to integration as a two-way process, in which the hosting society adapts to accommodate newcomers, her research findings suggest otherwise, bringing to light the structural barriers in place through the normalization of divisions such as gender, race and class. Differences in education and qualifications, for example, are overlooked when dealing with refugee women, all treated as a singular category, resulting in a loss of social status for the more educated women whilst the opportunity to study for the first time is offered to women with no education. Although transnational networks may serve to maintain a sense of social status, the difficulties in family reunification also impact negatively on wellbeing. Citizenship, family life and other social relations constitute important factors of integration. Turtiainen makes the important point that paying attention to the heterogeneity of refugees alone is not enough, since

pre-existing social divisions in the receiving context will also impact upon their experiences of integration.

Focusing in particular on South Australia, Susanne Schech highlights the relevance of place-based approaches to refugee reception and denotes the importance of lower-levels of governance in acknowledging social rights and creating opportunities for social, economic and cultural participation, in short, contributing to developing a sense of belonging to the host communities, which necessarily implies access to rights. Place based models or processes of settlement and integration open the door to think the framing of citizenship beyond the exclusive realm of the nation-state, built by the intertwined action of institutional and individual actors in multiple spatial levels. She argues that practices of settlement and integration also bring to light the theoretical shortcomings of distinguishing between refugee and migrant settler at the local level, where commonalities such as class, gender, religion and the shared motivation to strive for a better life in a foreign country, serve to blur distinctions between economic and forced migrants. Despite these commonalities Schech argues that sub-state governments in Australia have been slow to take initiatives to support the integration of “humanitarian entrants”. Schech also questions the distinction between asylum seeker and refugee; the former who have travelled to Australia without a valid visa are either sent to off-shore processing centres, or may be given temporary protection visas in Australia but remain excluded from the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP), examined in this chapter. Whilst Schech includes asylum seekers and refugees in her definition of “humanitarian entrants” as a means of side-stepping the politicized distinction of those whose “refugeeness” is recognized or denied by the state, the only “humanitarian entrants” eligible for HSP programme services, are resettled refugees. Australia has attracted attention for its restrictive policies designed to block access to protection and outsourcing detention and processing of asylum seekers to poorer neighbouring countries. Beyond the HSP, much of the work of settlement at the local level involves local governments and civil society organisations and they play an important role in the politics of belonging by delivering services related to housing, education, health all of which are key to migrant settlement and integration.

Olga Jubany and Alèxia Rué take us into the heart of the debate on the causes of the asylum crisis by demonstrating how the Spanish state has become marginal in refugee reception, outsourcing reception responsibilities

to a proliferation of organizations, many of which had no experience in the fields of asylum or migration before 2014. Their detailed documentation of the failures of the official reception system, illustrate how asylum seekers are treated like ping-pong balls, sent from one end of the country to another, granted and then withdrawn rights according to different policy categorizations – in which, for example, asylum seekers are labelled as homeless – that have nothing to do with their individual circumstances, but are dictated by the inherent ambiguities and constantly changing rules regarding public subsidies for asylum reception. The overall effect is an “asylum lottery” of severe inequalities in the treatment of people, whose fate is left to chance and the agency of individuals. The authors argue that whilst the large increase in asylum claims since 2015 has undoubtedly overburdened the system this alone does not account for these failures. Rather, it is due to a lack of political will and resources, described by the authors as a politics of “non-doing” that has long defined Spain’s asylum policy. This is evident in the Asylum Law; passed over a decade ago and not yet regulated which accounts for the constant shifts in asylum reception rules, producing a bureaucratic maze that substitutes a framework of protection for one of neglect. The asylum reception programme goals of integration and autonomy are only attainable for the “ideal type” of asylum seeker considered sufficiently vulnerable to be deserving of resources. This leads to chronic situations of vulnerability and exclusion. The inability to qualify as “vulnerable” in accordance with changing administrative criteria, for example, leaves asylum seekers in the street simply because they are men, placing further strains on general welfare services. Although local and regional authorities have consequently created specific programmes for asylum seekers that are no longer eligible for the state reception services, these programmes are not nationwide, and they vary considerably from one another. Assistance is then coached in terms of charity instead of rights which further erodes the state’s responsibility to provide international protection, leaving the fate of an asylum seeker in Spain dependent upon fate.

Pedro Silva and Octávio Sacramento examine the roles of municipalities, local third sector organisations and their staff (mostly social workers) unaccustomed to working with refugees in the implementation of the refugee relocation programme in rural municipalities and peri-urban contexts in Portugal. They discuss how informal arrangements, reliant on inter-personal and inter-professional connections sustained by “good will in the system,

within the services,” may be seen to transform social work into creative artistry. Creativity, however, is not the only consequence of the state’s dependence upon civil society and municipalities. Whilst it may help to compensate for design flaws and to fill implementation gaps, their data also sheds light upon the workings of power at the local level, since local social responses may determine to what degree the rights and entitlements of refugees, enshrined in law, are guaranteed in practice. Although the policy of dispersing refugees throughout Portugal prevents ghettoization, the authors draw attention to a range of structural constraints in local service provision for refugees in rural inland municipalities already adversely affected by 2011 austerity policies. These include: a failure to match refugee profiles with local destinations; time constraints and lack of resources and know-how; severe deficiencies and, in some cases, lack of services for translation, language acquisition and labour insertion as well as difficulties in securing an integrated response from different public services. These constraints undermine the potential for providing effective social protection and integration in terms of a rights-based policy that strengthens social rights entitlement as already discussed above.

Still focusing on the case of Portugal, Elizabeth Challinor invites the reader to accompany the anthropologist who follows the steps of Karima – a refugee woman’s experiences of reception services in Portugal, on a winding path through the relocation programme, that involves engaging with social services and hosting institutions in two towns, as a result of the application of the Dublin Regulation which obliges the woman and her family to return to Portugal from Germany against their will. Challinor’s narration of events focuses mainly on Karima’s perspective and provides a window into the fraught relations that can develop between refugees and institutions within an ambiguous policy context in which regulations, rights, entitlements, responsibilities and accountabilities are not always clear, moral judgments are passed on ungrateful “runaway” refugees, different conceptions of autonomy clash with each other and equality is conflated with equity. As these experiences result in a growing sense of lack of trust in Portuguese institutions, Karima is also unable to solicit effective institutional support to separate from her abusive husband thus further limiting her sense of autonomy and freedom. Despite this, Karima refuses to take on the role of victim and goes even further than demanding her rights by engaging in what Challinor calls the “politics of demanding the good”.

Juri Kilian examines the challenges young adult care services in Germany face when unaccompanied minor refugees come of age and transition out of youth care, focusing on the role played by vocational education support not only in encouraging their independence but also in increasing their chances of remaining in Germany. This is because enrolment in vocational education allows them to apply for a deportation-protection status in case their asylum applications are rejected which continues valid into their first job placements, often leading to a permanent residency status. Kilian argues that transitioning from the youth care system into young adult care services offers more opportunities than those enjoyed by other young adults who enter the adult refugee system directly, often without any support by social workers. Apart from education, they also receive support related to health, housing, legal support with their asylum applications and administrative and institutional support for dealing with bureaucracy. Many continue to receive the kind of residential care services they enjoyed in the group homes of the youth care system when they move into training apartments for young adults, often provided by the same organisations. Drawing on detailed examples from a vocational education transition project for refugees from 2017 to 2019 in the city of Kassel, Kilian concludes that intensive social support for vocational education leads to a significant increase in successful transitions and that it should be extended to young adults who have never been in residential care. He also emphasizes the importance of establishing local networks and partnerships between the public and the private sectors and that the latter must also be prepared to practice positive discrimination when it comes to hiring young adult refugees in the labour market due to the range of additional barriers they face compared to the local German population. Social work policies in Germany have been highly influenced by rights-based and anti-oppressive perspectives as evident in the pressure exerted by social work associations upon the government to resist political pressure to reduce the rights to services established in the legislation of child and youth care, especially for young adults.

The second Nordic country case study also focuses on unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs). Caroline Östman and Jessica Jönsson examine their expectations and experiences in the Swedish reception system within the broader context of the growth of right-wing political networks that promote economic and political nationalism, racism and xenophobia, resulting in a more restrictive migration policy and in the demonization of migrants and

refugees as a major threat to the countries' welfare and security. The authors look at how URM from Afghanistan perceive the support available to them, particularly in relation to social benefits, opportunities for education and work prospects. Whilst some embrace educational opportunities, structural factors within the Swedish reception and educational system combine with the social positioning and transnational family relations of some URMs resulting in educational disincentives. The authors contrast the views of URMs with those of municipal social workers, carers working in residential homes and adoptive parents in "family-homes," some of whom, criticizing URMs for their welfare dependency, have not received preparation or any specific education or training for working with URMs. Treating them as blanket categories, they also fail to recognize their agency. This shortcoming is characteristic of the broader social care context of lack of adequate knowledge about migration and migrants in Sweden and insufficient guidelines on how to promote their integration from an intersectional perspective. The authors illustrate how differences in attitude towards schooling and education, for example, cannot be reduced to gender since social class and other variables also come into play. The results of their research point not only towards the need for social workers to acquire critical knowledge and professional training for working with URMs but, given the current hostile climate towards migrants, to take on an activist stance against racism and xenophobia.

Finally, Membretti and Lucchini's discussion of three case studies of social innovation in the Italian Alps brings to light the importance of recognizing the active role that asylum seekers and migrants play, not only in their own integration, but also in contributing towards local development in remote underpopulated localities. Their case studies reveal the importance of paying attention to the diverse ways in which the challenges posed by the adoption of a dispersal policy promoted by a national government can be managed at the local level. They demonstrate how the forging of innovative relationships between actors may give rise to new institutional roles, governance arrangements or networks that co-create the conditions for economic and socially beneficial outcomes for newcomers and locals alike. In the case of Italy, the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) is made up of a network of local institutions that implement reception projects for forced migrants, in partnership with the voluntary sector, financed by the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services. The first case study describes a strategy of diffused micro-hospitality aimed at the socio-economic integration of

migrants and asylum seekers across local mountain communities in Camonica Valley by housing individuals in vacant private or public apartments. The abandoned hotel where they had originally been housed together was then renovated and reopened by the Cooperative K-Pax as an eco-hotel to promote local products, employing both locals and asylum seekers. In the second case study, the municipality of Pettinengo handed over the management of Villa Piazza – a XIX century palace intended for public use to the association Pacefuturo which used it to host cultural and social activities and following the events of the Arab Spring, in 2011, agreed to temporarily host 50 asylum seekers from Africa in the building. The authors emphasize the importance of the mediation and participatory community-building promoted by the association, in overcoming the initial suspicions of the local population, protective of its Alpine identity and autonomy. That solidarity towards asylum seekers developed amidst locals, became evident by 2107 when a total of 155 asylum seekers had been welcomed in the municipality. They were housed in old buildings in the village, renovated or previously underused, and some residents offered their homes without remuneration. The Villa Piazza became the hub of intercultural social encounters and the association promoted further initiatives involving asylum seekers and locals in the preservation of the village's historical memory. The third case study describes how Cadore, a community cooperative, implemented a decentralized housing strategy to welcome a limited number of asylum seekers that eventually brought about spontaneous collaborations with local inhabitants, which in turn developed into work relations with local enterprises. These case studies elucidate the importance of continued funding for community-based initiatives within a wider context of increased hostility towards forced migrants, which is spreading not only in Italy but across Europe.

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CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICIZATION OF CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION: THE CASE OF CENTRAL AMERICANS SEEKING POLITICAL ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES

Michelle Martin

1. Introduction

On June 13, 2018 MSNBC journalist Jacob Soboroff broke a story of migrant children from Central America who were being separated from their parents and detained alone in a converted Walmart store in a small Texas border town. Soboroff described a shocking scene at the border where Central American families, primarily single mothers with small children, attempting to seek political asylum in the United States at the southwest border were confronted by border patrol officers who forcibly took their children and placed the parents under arrest. According to Soboroff, about 1,500 boys, ages 10 to 17 years old had been bussed and some flown to detention camps throughout the country without their parents' knowledge. Several of the children ended up in the large prison-like detention center in rural Texas with a larger-than-life mural of Donald Trump encased in an American flag at the entrance (Soboroff, 2018).

Within days of this initial reporting, the media was dominated with photographs and video of children being ripped from their parents' arms, children housed in what appeared to be large cages with aluminum blankets for warmth, and audio recordings (taken by advocates) of detained children screaming for their parents (Thompson, 2018). These reports led to immediate and sustained outrage on a national and even global level. The response from the Trump administration to mounting criticism included a series of shifting explanations, ranging from outright denials of a family separation policy to emphatic justifications based primarily on a "this is what happens when immigrants break the law" narrative (Hirschfield-Davis, 2018; Rosenberg, 2018).

The Trump administration's ability to defend the family separation policy was made easier by the complex nature of U.S. immigration legislation, which is easily misunderstood. Immigration policy in the United States is comprised of a complicated and often conflicting array of federal legislation, presidential Executive Orders, and policy priorities. Many Americans, including politicians, have little understanding or knowledge of how immigrants can legally enter the country, which allowed the Trump administration to more effectively defend its immigration policies by alleging that there was a "right way" and a "wrong way" to enter the country, and that the Central Americans crossing the border without documentation did things the "wrong way" (Guild, 2018). While advocates disputed this argument citing several ways that Trump's immigration policy shifts violated federal legislation, the Trump administration's "rule of law" narrative struck a chord with many Americans, aided by right-wing social media campaigns depicting the Central American asylum seekers as criminal invaders bent on destruction (Donovan & Redlawsk, 2018).

This chapter explores the politicization of immigration in the United States by examining the case of Central American migrants crossing the U.S. southwest border to seek political asylum, without legal documentation. While the treatment of Central American asylum seekers under the Trump administration may seem extreme, it is by no means unique. The treatment of migrants crossing the U.S. southwest border, whether documented or undocumented, has been politicized under most U.S. presidential administrations, to a greater or lesser extent. What is unique though about the present case is the harsh manner in which the Trump administration has treated both accompanied and unaccompanied undocumented immigrant youth, and the government's non-compliance with many federal court orders in cases filed by immigration advocates challenging the legality and constitutionality of the Trump administration's new immigration policies (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, 2018).

2. The politicization of immigration in the United States

Immigration policy in the United States is primarily developed in three ways—the passage of new legislation, presidential Executive Orders, and judicial decisions and settlement agreements in response to lawsuits filed

against the government and its representatives. Essentially, federal legislation establishes a legal framework, with executive orders and federal court decisions determining how federal law is to be interpreted and implemented. The laws governing who can come into the United States have changed over the years, depending on the country's economic needs, humanitarian conditions abroad, and the country's foreign policy stances. Immigration law is also influenced by the extent to which its politicization can cull votes during national elections (D'Amato, Ruedin, & Van der Brug, 2015; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Sanchez, 1997).

Despite popular contention that the United States government has always offered a safe haven for the world's most vulnerable and persecuted, a basic survey of the evolution of U.S. immigration law tells a different story. It is important to understand historic trends and general immigration legal frameworks, including how the politicization of immigration has impacted both the goals of various federal immigration laws, as well as the ideology behind them. One of the first federal laws focusing exclusively on immigration was the *Immigration Act of 1924* (the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act). The intent of this legislation was to preserve the "ideal of American homogeneity" out of concern that too many "non-white" immigrants were immigrating to the United States (Immigration Act, 1924; Sagarra, 2007). This legislation was the first to set quotas on immigration from non-English speaking countries. It also provided funding for banning primarily "non-white" immigrants, such as Italians, Arabs and Asians. Ironically, this legislation allowed essentially unlimited immigration from Latin American countries, primarily due to economic need and the low cost of Mexican labor.

The *Nationality Act of 1952* (the McCarran-Walter Act) was a bipartisan bill that continued the national origin quotas prioritizing immigrants from northwestern Europe, while excluding immigrants from non-English speaking countries. It was also the first federal law to criminalize unauthorized entry into the country by making such entries a criminal misdemeanor (Nationality Act, 1952). Although the Nationality Act was sponsored by Democrats, President Truman (also a Democrat) tried to veto it because he believed the purposeful exclusion of some immigrants, primarily Eastern Europeans, was un-American (Wasserman, 1953).

The *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* amended the 1952 act with the intention of righting the wrongs of the previous legislation by ending the national-origin quota system. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the

legislation into law, he noted that the new legislation would correct the cruel and enduring wrongs of the previous act (Gjelten, 2015; Immigration and Nationality Act, 1965). The *Refugee Act of 1980*, bipartisan legislation signed into law during the Carter administration, amended Title IV of the *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* by creating a systematic way of admitting refugees. The legislation also codified the definition of a refugee, placed a cap on annual refugee admission, and created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a government agency that provides assistance to incoming refugees and asylum seekers. While this legislation has had an impact on political asylum seekers, it pertains more to the refugee resettlement program facilitated by the UN Refugee Agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Refugee Act, 1980).

The *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* (IRCA), a bipartisan bill passed during the Reagan administration, was one of the first legislative attempts to address unauthorized immigration through the southwest border. The IRCA increased border security, provided a legal avenue to criminally prosecute employers who knowingly hired unauthorized immigrants, created temporary visa programs for agricultural workers, and granted one-time amnesty for approximately three million unauthorized immigrants who entered the country before January of 1982 (Immigration Reform and Control Act, 1986). The *Immigration Act of 1990*, drafted during the Kennedy administration and passed during the Bush administration, majorly overhauled the entire immigration system in the United States by increasing immigrant quotas, establishing a family-based immigration visa program, creating an employment-based visa program that prioritized the country's future economic needs, and creating the lottery system to admit immigrants from "low admittance" countries (Cooper & O'Neil, 2005; Immigration Act, 1990).

The *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996* (IIRAIRA), passed during the Clinton administration, also made significant changes to U.S. immigration law, with a primary focus on fighting undocumented immigration. The IIRAIRA broadened the list of deportable offenses for undocumented and documented immigrants to include non-violent minor offenses, such as marijuana possession and shoplifting. The IIRAIRA also increased border control, including increasing interior enforcement and increasing monitoring of visa applications and visa overstays. It also required employment eligibility verification, establishing sanctions for employers who failed to comply with regulations and restrictions on hiring immigrants

(including unauthorized immigrants). The IIRIRA had a significant impact on asylum law by requiring political asylum seekers to apply for asylum within one year of arrival, creating an interim screening process involving a “credible fear interview” for certain categories of asylum seekers, and establishing summary deportation procedures, including a process called “expedited removal”, which allows the U.S. government to fast-track the deportation of unauthorized immigrants with limited due process (IIRIRA, 1996).

One of the strictest U.S. immigration laws to pass in recent years is the *Homeland Security Act of 2002*, which was passed during the Bush administration in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. This legislation increased penalties for unauthorized entry and led to the development of two new federal agencies – the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which replaced the INS. This legislation also moved the ORR under the umbrella of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (*Homeland Security Act, 2002*).

In summary, with the exception of the *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*, U.S. immigration law has become increasingly strict over the years, with a growing focus on increased border control (whether needed or not) and the controlling of unauthorized immigration, particularly across the southwest border. The U.S. government’s approach to refugee admission and political asylum has experienced a similar trajectory, with some fluctuation depending on humanitarian need, foreign policy interests, political will, and the political leadership’s prevailing ideology (Oyamot, Fisher, Deason, & Borgida, 2012). The politicization of immigration is fueled in large part by racial narratives and xenophobia (an irrational fear of immigrants), as well as protectionist political ideologies that tend to frame immigration of non-English-speaking migrants (particularly laborers) as a threat to national sovereignty and American culture (Alvarez & Butterfield, 1997; Bonikowski, 2017; Ybarra, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2016; van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie 2000).

3. Current refugee resettlement and political asylum policy

In 2017 approximately 44.5 million immigrants were residing in the United States, with one in seven U.S. residents having been foreign born (Zong, Batalova, & Burrows, 2018). If one were to ask each U.S.-residing immigrant how they arrived in the country, it is quite likely their responses would reflect

a wide range of paths, including family or employer sponsorship, the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (commonly referred to as the “lottery”), a special immigrant visa program, or political asylum. In fact, there are several ways an immigrant can legally enter the United States, obtain permanent residency and ultimately citizenship.

One path of entry into the United States that has garnered considerable attention recently is refugee resettlement and political asylum-seeking, particularly when those seeking entry are from non-English-speaking countries. There are two primary ways persons can obtain refugee status in the United States. The first is through the U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP), and the second is by entering the country through another path (e.g., visitor visa, student visa, crossing a U.S. border without documentation) and then requesting political asylum. The USRP works in coordination with the United Nations (UN), and U.S. embassies, both of which identify individuals (usually large groups of people) who are unable or unwilling to return to their countries of origin because they have a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, social group, political perspectives, religion or national origin (as referenced in international law and U.S. federal legislation). A very small percentage of the world’s refugees (about five percent) are resettled to host countries in the Global North, such as the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States (UNHCR, 2019). In sum, UN-designated refugees have refugee status prior to entering the United States, whereas political asylum seekers are granted refugee status once physically inside the country.

It is important to note that there is a legal distinction between refugees and migrants according to both U.S. legislation (e.g., *The Refugee Act of 1980*) and international law (*the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention* and the *1967 Protocol*). The term “refugee” refers to persons who cross an international boundary while fleeing persecution or armed civil conflict, and then cannot safely return home. Refugees are subject to international protection, which includes safe sanctuary until a durable solution is available (i.e., return home, resettlement in another country). Migrant is the preferred term for persons who voluntarily relocate across international borders for employment, educational, family reunification or other reasons. The UNHCR discourages the conflation of these two groups to avoid intimating that refugees (including political asylum seekers) are crossing an international border voluntarily, when in fact they are being forced to flee in response to life-threatening conditions (UNHCR, 2016). The common practice in the United States of conflating

political asylum seekers and voluntary migrants is highly problematic and is discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section.

4. Refugee resettlement and political asylum during the Trump administration

The approach to immigration, particularly refugee resettlement and political asylum, shifted considerably under President Trump, who has become widely known for his anti-immigrant stance and inflammatory rhetoric about immigrants of color (Donovan & Redlawsk, 2018). For instance, during Trump's presidential tenure, the refugee admission ceiling (the number of UN-designated refugees resettled in the United States) has been consistently lowered each year, from 84,995 in 2016 (under the Obama administration); 50,000 in 2017; 45,000 in 2018 (with only 22,491 refugees admitted); and 30,000 in 2019 (with only 14,808 refugees admitted) (Blizzard & Batalova, 2019). Additionally, the Trump administration banned refugee admissions from several primarily Muslim countries through Executive Order 13769 (2017), a policy stance referred to by critics as a "Muslim ban." Executive Order 13769 included, among other things, extreme vetting based on the Trump administration's contention that refugees from these countries posed an increased risk of terrorism (Beydoun, 2016).

The Trump administration has also made statements and implemented policies representing a significant shift in priority and stance on political asylum, particularly with regard to immigrants coming across the southwest border (Heuman & González, 2018; Rivas, 2019; Woodward & Yen, 2019). The rationale for these shifts, often couched as immigration reform necessary to "make America great again", are consistent with right-wing populism, a political ideology that most often has at its core an anti-immigrant stance (van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000). Right-wing populism is also by definition anti-establishment, protectionist, and nationalist (Greven, 2016; Mudde 2017; Salmela & Scheve, 2017). A narrative that most often appeals to right-wing populists is the need to return a country to its rightful roots and its traditional foundation, which inherently involves expelling all those perceived as outsiders, particularly immigrants from different cultures who have the potential to significantly alter a country's traditional way of life (Bonikowski, 2017; Ybarra, Sanchez & Sanchez, 2016; van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2000).

5. The case of the Central American asylum seekers and the U.S. response

The northern flow of Central American forced migration to the United States has been cyclical for decades, depending in large part on regional dynamics, including levels of organized crime and gang violence, sexual violence, homicides, drug trafficking and the persecution of indigenous populations (Eguizábal et al., 2015). Northern migration waves began in the 1970s when the region experienced significant instability, including civil wars and coups, often fomented by international interference that exacerbated regional insecurity (Massey & Constant, 2018).

Destabilization in Central America began in the mid-1950s when the United States contributed to the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz. The United States continued its political interference in Central American politics and governance throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, contributing to the regions increasing and fluctuating instability. For instance, during the Reagan administration the United States provided substantial financial and material support for the Contras, an anti-Communist right-wing rebel group operating in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.¹ The Contras were fighting the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua, which was in line with U.S. anti-Communist foreign policy (Brody & Shapiro, 1989).

Central American scholars cite U.S. intervention in the Nicaraguan Contra war and other regional involvement, such as a U.S.-backed coup in Honduras, as well as changes in U.S. immigration law as contributing factors in the regions' increasing instability (Kaiser, 1994; Pérez, 2013). Ultimately a vacuum was created when Central American governments were toppled and international allies, including the United States, withdrew. In response, civilian crime, including gang activity, organized crime, mass secular violence and political corruption, filled the gaps. As the civilian violence in Central America intensified, unauthorized immigration to the U.S. increased as well.

1. U.S. support for the Contras is commonly referred to as the "Iran-Contra Affair" because funds from arms deals with Iran were secretly and illegally diverted by the Reagan administration to support the Contras during the 1980s.

6. U.S. response to waves of Central American political asylum seekers

Each administration dating back to at least President Ronald Reagan has responded to the waves of Central Americans seeking political asylum at the southwest border in somewhat different ways. A purposeful caveat in U.S. asylum law is that immigrants wishing to seek political asylum must be physically in the country without legal status in order to apply for legal protection. This stipulation is based on the understanding that those fleeing political violence and persecution are quite likely unable to escape through legal avenues, thus may need to enter the country any way possible prior to seeking legal protection. In fact, U.S. asylum law clearly states that how immigrants enter the country has no bearing on their ability to apply for asylum (8 U.S. Code § 1158).

Unauthorized border crossings have generally been on the decline since 2007, while visa overstays have steadily risen, exceeding the former in the last decade (Warren, 2019). And yet despite this pattern, it is unauthorized immigration that has garnered the most negative attention, both among politicians and the general public. Since most Central Americans seek political asylum in the United States by crossing the southwest border without documentation, they are often grouped into the larger demographic of unauthorized (“illegal”) immigrants. The conflation of these two groups (political asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants) has meant that many administrations have failed to treat the former in a manner that aligns with international humanitarian law, or even U.S. asylum law (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, 2018).

While there is no official measure of how many people succeed in crossing the U.S. southwest border without legal documentation, border patrol authorities use the number of apprehensions to gauge changes in undocumented immigration. Border apprehensions peaked in 2000 at 1.64 million and have generally declined since (with some year-to-year variability), leveling out at 396,579 apprehensions in 2018. Broken down by month, between 30,000 and 60,000 people are apprehended per month attempting to cross the southwest border and enter the United States without the legal right to do so (Singer & Kandel, 2019). The table below reflects the general downward trend of unlawful entry apprehensions at the southwest border, with a slight uptick in 2018 (likely due to new governmental policies).

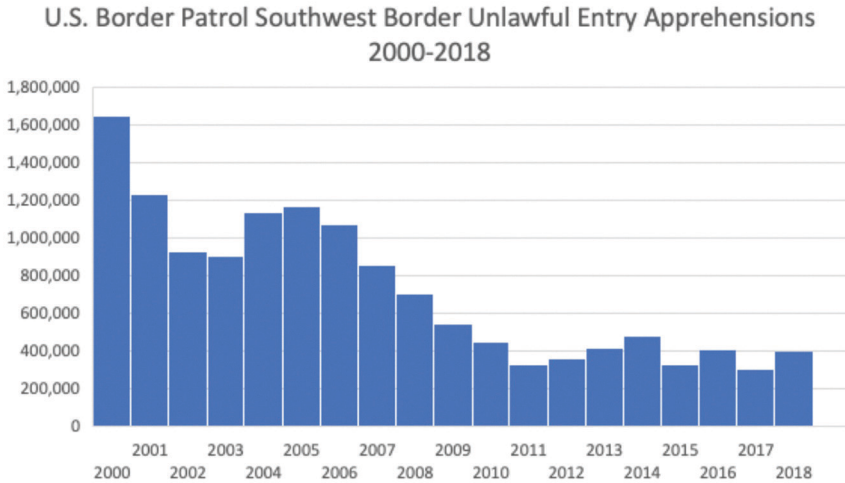


Table 1: United States Border Patrol, Total illegal alien apprehension. Retrieved from <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2019-Mar/bp-total-monthly-apps-sector-area-fy2018.pdf>.

While many of these immigrants are crossing the border to seek political asylum in the United States, delineating undocumented laborers from political asylum seekers is difficult, if not impossible since U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) does not include asylum statistics in its border apprehension data. This is highly problematic and leads to the conflation of these two distinct groups.

Expedited removal proceedings – a process established with the passage of the IIRIRA of 1996 – permits the immediate deportation of certain categories of undocumented immigrants who enter the United States without authorization. Immigrants who cross the southwest border or a U.S. Port of Entry without a visa, border crosser card, passport or some other form of legal documentation are included as one of the categories. The decision to place an immigrant in an expedited removal process is made by low level CBP officers who have complete decision-making authority. In other words, their decisions are not subject to review or appeal, which means that immigrants can be deported immediately without a legal hearing (ACLU, 2014; Grant, 2019). The categories of immigrants not subject to expedited removal include refugees and asylum seekers, as well as some unaccompanied minors

(IIRIRA, 1996). Thus, once unauthorized immigrants placed in expedited removal proceedings declare an intention to seek political asylum, CBP is legally required to remove them from expedited removal proceedings and initiate a different process that ultimately leads to an asylum hearing before an immigration judge.

7. The process of seeking political asylum for cross-border migrants

According to U.S. immigration law, immigrants slated for expedited removal who have requested political asylum must be immediately removed from deportation proceedings and transferred to an asylum officer for a “credible fear interview” – an interim step before having their asylum case heard before an immigration judge. The credible fear screening process (also implemented as a part of the IIRIRA of 1996) was created to ensure that immigrants claiming political asylum had a viable case, and that those with a credible fear of persecution weren’t wrongfully sent back to their home country. Immigrants requesting political asylum are permitted 48 hours to prepare for their credible fear interview with an asylum officer employed by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Comprehensive vetting is also a part of the screening and review process.

Immigrants who pass their credible fear interview are then referred to immigration court for a full asylum hearing where an immigration judge will render a determination on whether they will be granted or denied political asylum. As of January 2019, there was a backlog of approximately 850,000 cases, and with only 450 asylum judges, most cases are scheduled two to three years after the credible fear interview (Miroff & Sacchetti, 2019). Immigrants who fail their credible fear interview can appeal to an immigration judge who is required to hear the case within one to seven days. If the appeals process is unsuccessful, the petitioner is immediately referred back to an expedited removal process, and promptly deported.

As previously referenced, international law and U.S. federal legislation makes legal distinctions between refugees, political asylum seekers and voluntary migrants, but political asylum seekers and unauthorized voluntary migrants, particularly those crossing the southwest border, are often conflated due to the politicization of cross-border migration, concerns over

undocumented immigration, ambiguity in U.S. immigration law, and the uncertainty of asylum seekers' legal claims of persecution pending a legal process that can often span several years. As noted by Soltis and Walters (2018), Central American political asylum seekers crossing the U.S. southwest border without legal documentation have been consistently conflated with unauthorized voluntary migrants due to concerns about undocumented immigration and other factors, including ambiguity in U.S. immigration and asylum law (Soltis & Walters, 2018).

Thus, while U.S. law does grant refugee status to persons who have been granted political asylum, the lengthy legal process leaves these individuals in a sort of legal limbo until their petition for asylum has been granted. While previous administrations have been accused of treating political asylum seekers as unauthorized voluntary migrants, opting for legal detention pending their asylum hearing (rather than community monitoring), the Trump administration has been the first to flagrantly deny legal protection and due process rights of Central American political asylum seekers, consistently referring to them as "illegal aliens," and treating their entry into the United States as a criminal offense (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, 2018).

8. The legal rights of unaccompanied migrant children

In July 1985 the ACLU and other immigrant rights groups filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of four unaccompanied minors from Central America (*Flores v. Meese*, 1985). The named defendants included then-U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS, now the Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE]), and detention facilities in California and Texas. Since the case received class action status, all court decisions and settlement agreements established national policy. The first named plaintiff in the case, Jenny Lisette Flores, was a 15-years old girl who fled civil war in El Salvador and requested political asylum at a U.S. Port of Entry in San Diego, California. Flores was arrested on an administrative immigration violation and transferred to a for-profit detention facility in Pasadena, California. Another named plaintiff was at the same detention center as Flores, and the third was detained at a for-profit facility in Laredo, Texas.

The ACLU challenged a recently implemented INS policy stipulating that unaccompanied migrant children could only be released to a biological

parent living in the U.S. who agreed to surrender to INS for interrogation (and possible deportation). The ACLU accused the INS of holding immigrant children captive if they believed their parent(s) were undocumented. The ACLU argued that if the parents were unable or unwilling to personally appear before the INS, the minors were then detained indefinitely. The ACLU noted that this policy violated the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. sections 1101), the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. sections 552), the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fifth Amendment, the First Amendment and federal constitutional privacy rights, and the UN 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (of which the U.S. is a party). The ACLU asked the court to order INS to release the unaccompanied minors to a parent, relative, or designated non-relative, who could ensure their attendance at an administrative immigration hearing.

The ACLU also alleged that the conditions of the detention centers and treatment of detained minors (ranging in age from three to 17 years of age) were deplorable. Some specific allegations contained in the lawsuit included minors being forced to remain in jail-like cells for up to 12 hours per day with little to no outdoor time, the denial of education and educational materials, the denial of family visits, lack of medical and mental health care, forced sleeping arrangements with unrelated adults also being held in immigration detention, lack of running water and working toilets, substandard food, and minors being subjected to frequent and random strip searches, including young girls who were forced to endure repeated body cavity searches. Between 1987 and 1997 there were several federal district court rulings in the *Flores* case, including that the minors be immediately released in accordance with federal law. Some decisions were appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which supported most of the Plaintiffs' arguments (*Reno v. Flores*, 1993).

The *Flores* case settled in 1996, during the Clinton administration. Among the many agreed stipulations each party agreed that unaccompanied minors could not be detained for an extended period of time and must be released "without delay" (defined in a 2007 case as not more than 20 days), and must be released to a licensed non-secure facility in less than 72 hours. The court also stipulated that INS (now ICE) had the discretion to release a detained relative adult (preferably the parent) along with the child, to facilitate the child's prompt release. The agreement also included other stipulations, such as a requirement that detention centers provide a "safe and secure" living

environment, including essential benefits, such as nutritional food, water, medical care, mental health care, and educational services (*Flores v. Reno*, 1996).

The ACLU, along with other immigrant rights groups, have sued every presidential administration since the *Flores* case was settled for violating the settlement agreement. The result of these cases has continued to define case law regarding how asylum seekers, particularly children, are to be treated. For instance, in 2007, during the Bush administration, the ACLU filed 10 separate class action suits on behalf of 20 primarily Central American asylum-seeking children being held with their parents at the Hutto Residential Center, a prison converted into an immigrant detention center in Texas (Hawkes, 2008). The suit alleged that conditions at the Hutto detention center violated every provision of the Flores Settlement Agreement. The government argued that Flores didn't apply because the children were not unaccompanied as they were being detained with their parents, alleging that Flores pertained only to unaccompanied children.

The U.S. District Court hearing the case sided with the ACLU in most of its arguments, including ruling that the Hutto Center violated the Flores Settlement Agreement, which it ruled applied to both unaccompanied and accompanied minors. This meant that immigrant children must be released from detention without delay, defined in this case as 20 days. The court also found that the conditions at Hutto were "deplorable", thus, not at all meeting the requirements set forth in the stipulated agreement. The Hutto case settled in August of 2009, during the Obama administration, and the government agreed to abide by all stipulations in the Flores Settlement Agreement for accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children (ACLU, 2009).

In 2014 there was an increase in the number of undocumented Central American mothers and their children crossing the U.S. border to seek political asylum. In response, the Obama administration continued the Bush administration's policy of keeping families detained after their credible fear interviews. The ACLU accused the Obama administration of adopting a blanket "no release" policy as "an aggressive deterrence strategy," arguing that this policy violated the Flores Settlement Agreement's "general policy favoring release". According to the ACLU the agreement stipulated that political asylum seekers who passed their credible fear screening should only be detained if they were determined to be dangerous or a safety or flight risk. The ACLU also argued that the Obama administration's new "no release"

policy was being applied solely to Central Americans, which was unfair and arbitrary (ACLU, 2015; *Flores v. Jeh Johnson*, 2015).

In two class action lawsuits filed on behalf of several Central American detained minors, the ACLU argued that the Obama administration's mandatory detention policy of Central American asylum seekers was being used as a deterrence strategy, which was in violation of the Flores Settlement Agreement (*Flores v. Holder*, 2014; *Flores v. Jeh Johnson*, 2015). The Obama administration repeated its claim that the Flores Settlement Agreement pertained only to unaccompanied children, thus the Settlement's "preference to release" did not apply to families. The government also argued that the "no-release policy" was necessary to manage the humanitarian situation occurring at the border, and that it was not feasible to release tens of thousands of Central American asylum seekers into the country every month pending their asylum hearings. The Obama administration warned that if the ACLU's case was successful the government would have no choice but to separate families, something it did not want to do.

The case settled in May 2015, with the federal District Court ruling that the Flores Settlement Agreement applied to both accompanied and unaccompanied minors. The court also ruled that the Obama administration's no-release policy was a material breach of the agreement, and ordered minors be released to a family member without delay (preferably the apprehended parent, meaning they both should be released). The court also ruled that the Obama administration breached the Flores Settlement Agreement by detaining families with children in sub-standard, non-licensed, locked facilities that were overcrowded, had substandard food and lacked medical care. The court also issued an injunction against the Obama administration, barring the government from using deterrence as a factor in how it treated asylum seekers.

In July of 2015, the court held that the Obama administration must release a minor's accompanying parent along with the child, as long as they did not pose a flight or safety risk. In August 2015, the same court clarified the Flores Settlement Agreement by ruling that migrant youth could only be detained an average of 20 days from the date the family was placed in ICE custody (*Flores v. Johnson*, 2015; *Flores v. Holder*, 2015). The Obama administration appealed the district court's decision, and the case was heard by the Circuit Court of Appeals in July 2016 (*Flores v. Lynch*, 2016). The Appeals court affirmed the lower court's ruling, stating that migrant youth should be released without necessary delay (20 days) unless ICE determined them to be a flight or safety

risk. The Appeals court also ruled that while the children were not entitled to have their parents released along with them, that was the preference.

In summary, the Flores Settlement Agreement requires that unaccompanied children cannot be detained in detention facilities indefinitely, and must be released without necessary delay, which was later defined as no longer than 20 days. A U.S. District Court later ruled that the Flores Settlement Agreement applied to all immigrant children – accompanied and unaccompanied, and that family reunification must be a priority. While the family reunification priority does not mean that an apprehended parent has an absolute legal right to be released with the child, the court ruled that ICE can release the apprehended parent if it deemed release appropriate, a standard typically defined as the parent(s) passing a credible fear screening and not being a flight or safety risk. And finally, the government and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) cannot use a blanket no-release policy as a deterrence strategy.

9. The rights of unaccompanied migrant children under the Trump administration

On January 25, 2017 President Trump signed an Executive Order increasing border security and immigration enforcement. Executive Order 13767 (2017) required the Attorney General to issue new policy guidelines to DHS regarding the legal detention of unauthorized immigrants under the *Immigration and Naturalization Act* (INA), rather than the previous policy of releasing them pending the adjudication of their immigration hearings (a practice President Trump referred to as “catch and release”). On April 6, 2018, then Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in a press release the agency’s new immigration policy, subsequently referred to as “zero tolerance.” This new policy significantly expanded the use of expedited removals of unauthorized immigrants crossing the southwest border. Among other changes, unauthorized border crossings were no longer treated as administrative violations, but as criminal violations with mandatory detention. It was this shift in policy – the mandatory detention of all unauthorized border crossers, that was used by the Trump administration to justify separating families since children cannot be detained in adult jails or prisons.

The standard for passing the credible fear interview was increased significantly after the implementation of the “zero tolerance” policy, and as a result, pass rates have dropped considerably. In some regions, such as Texas, advocates have claimed that credible fear interview pass rates have dropped from 97 percent to 10 percent (*L.M.-M. v. Cuccinelli*, 2019). Additionally, despite the credible fear screening process being implemented as an interim measure to ensure the protection of legitimate asylum seekers and limiting the backlog of asylum cases in immigration courts, President Trump has consistently referred to this screening process as a “loophole” in the law because previous administrations have allowed asylum seekers who passed a credible fear interview to remain free in the United States pending their immigration hearing, in compliance with federal case law and Congressional intent.

In inflammatory speeches and tweets, Trump defended his executive orders shifting DHS policy from release to detainment, alleging that only a small percentage of asylum seekers showed up for their asylum hearings, only to be caught years later when they committed serious crimes. And yet, the U.S. Department of Justice Statistics Yearbook (2017) reveals that asylum seekers as a whole (not solely those crossing the southwest border) have generally low absentia rates. In fact, an audit of a pilot program established during the Obama administration for asylum seeking mothers and children released into the community with monitoring and case management, reflected an absentia rate of 1 percent (Department of Homeland Security, 2017).

The Trump administration not only duplicated the Bush and Obama-era policies (found to be in violation of the Flores Settlement Agreement), but the administration’s “zero tolerance” policy went much further by forcibly separating Central American families seeking political asylum at the border and subjecting both, the parents and the children, to long-term detention. Trump has publicly decried the Flores Settlement Agreement in speeches and on Twitter, referring to it as a “loophole” and a “bad Dem law.” Adding that DHS had no choice but to separate parents from their children, since crossing the border without documentation was now a criminal violation and detaining children with their parents on a long-term basis was prohibited (Woodward & Yen, 2019). Essentially, what the Obama Administration threatened to do – separate parents and children to avoid releasing parents pending the final adjudication of their asylum case – the Trump administration did.

In February 2018 the ACLU filed a class action suit in response to the Trump administration’s family separation policy and the indefinite detainment

of the parents and children in separate facilities (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, 2018). The class action lawsuit alleged that the Trump administration's policy of forcibly separating thousands of asylum-seeking parents from their young children violated the federal asylum statute (8 U.S.C. § 1158) by interfering with non-citizens' rights to pursue their asylum claims, the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees that no one on U.S. soil (citizen or noncitizen) shall be "deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of the law", including family liberty (U.S. Const. amend. X), and the Administrative Procedure Act, which prohibits the government from acting in an arbitrary and capricious manner (Administrative Procedure Act, 1946).

The threshold for determining whether the government has violated the due process standard by exercising power without reasonable justification is called the "shock the conscience" standard. In order for the class action suit filed by the ACLU to move forward, the plaintiffs needed to prove that the behavior of the Trump administration was so egregious and outrageous, that it shocked the contemporary conscience by violating the "decencies of civilized conduct", interfering with the rights of liberty and is so "brutal and offensive that it does not comport with traditional ideas of fair play and decency" (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, 2018, p. 17).

The government filed a response seeking to have the class action suit dismissed on several grounds, and the court's response in regard to whether the government's actions constituted a violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment was to rule in the plaintiff's favor, stating:

These allegations sufficiently describe government conduct that arbitrarily tears at the sacred bond between parent and child and is emblematic of the "exercise of power without any reasonable justification in the service of an otherwise legitimate governmental objective[.]" [...] Such conduct, if true, as it is assumed to be on the present motion, is brutal, offensive, and fails to comport with traditional notions of fair play and decency. At a minimum, the facts alleged are sufficient to show the government conduct at issue "shocks the conscience" and violates Plaintiffs' constitutional right to family integrity (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, Amended Complaint, 2018, p. 23).

The total number of children separated from their parents has not been definitively determined and will likely never be known due to the government's poor record-keeping and tracking. The government initially estimated that 2,654 children were forcibly removed from their parents and placed in ORR

custody between July 1, 2018 and November 2018, and this was the number of children initially included in the class action. The separated children were sent to 121 different detention centers throughout the country, without consideration to where their parents were being held. According to government disclosures in court pleadings, 1,033 of the children were under 10 when they were removed from their parents, and 103 of the children were under five, with some being toddlers and infants. The separated families were primarily from Central America, with 1,423 being from Guatemala, 848 from Honduras, 179 from El Salvador, 43 from Brazil, and 30 from Mexico (ACLU, 2018).

On June 26, 2018, a U.S. District Court judge ordered the Trump administration to stop separating families and reunite all families. Children under the age of five were to be reunited with their parents within 14 days, with the remainder being reunited within 30 days (ACLU, 2018). The government did not meet these deadlines and in fact, in a court hearing argued that they never had a plan for reuniting the Central American families, and to do so was exceedingly burdensome, and in some situations, not in the best interest of the children (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, 2018). The judge responded strongly, rejecting the government's argument and reasserting the ruling that all of the families must be reunited.

There are strong indications that the actual number of children forcibly taken from their parents at the border was actually far higher than government estimates. In January of 2019, an Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigation found that there were quite likely thousands more migrant children who had been separated from their parents. The OIG report noted that the initial estimate provided in court had been low because of challenges the DHHS faced in identifying separated children due to the lack of a centralized system to identify, track and then reunify the children. The OIG investigation reported that ORR initially identified 3,600 children who had been separated from their parents, but the agency made an internal decision to reduce that number by about 1,000 children for a variety of reasons (Office of Inspector General, 2019).

Ultimately, the OIG investigation found that the total number of migrant children forcibly separated from their parents from July 1, 2018 to November 2018 was actually 17,139 (Office of Inspector General, 2019). Children not included in the certified list covered by the class action suit included those with parents with criminal records or communicable diseases, as well as children who crossed the border with an extended family member or a

nonrelative. Despite the OIG findings, the U.S. District Court judge hearing the class action case increased the number of covered children to only 2,737 by expanding the timeline to July 1, 2017 through November 2018 (*Ms. L. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, Order Granting Plaintiffs' Motion, 2019). Most of the children included in the class action suit have now been reunited with their parents, and the parties are still negotiating how they will reunite the children with parents who were deported through the expedited removal process.

10. Conclusion

The Trump administration has continued its harsh treatment of Central American asylum seekers despite being challenged in several court cases. For example, a group of journalists and immigration attorneys recently reported appalling conditions at several detention centers, describing clearly distressed migrant children ranging in age from infancy to 17 years in crowded and unsanitary living conditions. Children were reported to not have sufficient food or water, and were deprived of basic necessities, such as toothbrushes, soap, and feminine sanitary products. A justice department attorney attempted to argue before a federal appeals court panel that the detention centers in question were providing "safe and sanitary" conditions, as required by the Flores Settlement Agreement, but the Appeals panel "emphatically" disagreed, noting in particular that the children:

1. were "not receiving hot, edible, or a sufficient number of meals during a given day,"
2. "had no adequate access to clean drinking water,"
3. experienced "unsanitary conditions with respect to the holding cells and bathroom facilities,"
4. lacked "access to clean bedding, and access to hygiene products (i.e., toothbrushes, soap, towels)," and
5. endured "sleep deprivation" as a result of "cold temperatures, overcrowding, lack of proper bedding (i.e., blankets, mats), [and] constant lighting" (*Flores v. Barr*, 2019, Opinion, p. 13).

The Trump administration has also barred new asylum seekers from entering the United States through the southwest border, requiring them instead to wait in migrant shelters in Mexico until their assigned number is

called. The government has also barred all Central Americans, including unaccompanied children, from applying for asylum in the United States through the southwest border, unless they can prove that they've been denied asylum in another country, a rule temporarily upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. In Justice Sotomayer's dissenting opinion, she stated that the government's new rule "topples decades of settled asylum practices and affects some of the most vulnerable people in the Western Hemisphere – without affording the public a chance to weigh in" (*Barr v. East Bay Sanctuary Covenant*, 2019, p. 4).

The humanitarian crises at the southwest border – involving both unauthorized immigration and asylum seeking, have presented significant challenges to the U.S. government for decades, and will likely continue to do so for decades to come. Every administration has responded to waves of Central American immigrants seeking political asylum in the United States in somewhat similar ways, involving some politicization of the crises, while ultimately yielding to federal court orders. Yet, the consensus among immigration legal scholars and human rights advocates is that the Trump administration's response to refugees and asylum seekers is uniquely cruel and not in keeping with federal or international humanitarian law (Ibe, 2019; Tan, 2019). In fact, some scholars have noted that the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy is more a product of a solid swing toward right-wing populism than a reasoned and evidence-based policy approach (Donovan & Redlawsk, 2018). The case of the Central American asylum seekers prompts several questions for further analysis related to the long-term reliability and consistency of U.S. policy and legislative commitments. Chief among these questions, which has yet to be answered, is how such a dramatic shift in immigration policy could occur without the passage of any new immigration legislation.

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CHAPTER 3

THE DIFFERENT INTEGRATION PROCESSES OF REFUGEES IN FRANCE

Jacques Barou

1. Introduction

The growing number of asylum-seekers in France over the past few years has focused academic attention on the problems of recent arrivals who do not have (and most of whom will never obtain) refugee status. Although many refugees from different parts of the world have come to and settled in France for a very long time, few works have analyzed their paths of integration. We consider integration as the ability of immigrants to participate in the general life of the society that receives them – essentially, in the fields of economic and social relations (Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, 2005). In France, integration does not mean forgetting one's country of origin or renouncing its culture. Assimilation is the result of abandoning and forgetting one's origins, even if this occurs against the will of the migrants. It is the result of a process that happens, above all, in the field of education and culture (Barou, 2014a). The integration of refugees is a specific issue separate from the integration of other types of migrants. Whatever differences there are among the refugees, they all share complex trajectories, have experienced specific structures of reception, and benefited from a particular system of care. Their trajectory has also been influenced by the political context and the public debates around asylum happening at the time. The different issues linked to the trajectory of refugees' integration have never been studied in large national studies by means of relevant and representative samples of persons from different generations and countries and living in different places.

However, we are able to use numerous data points collected by the public services and associations involved in caring for refugees. Since 1954, all applications for asylum have been handled by an autonomous public

establishment that studies the files they have built up with the help of specific associations to decide whether to give refugee status to those seeking it. The *Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides* (OFPRA) has access to major statistical archives stretching back to the 19th century, and researchers can access this data for free. However, while there are very few qualitative documents, there have been some interesting sociological and anthropological surveys concerning small groups of refugees living in different areas: specific centers for asylum-seekers and migrants, private or public housing in rural or urban areas and in small towns or large cities (Barou, 2008a; Cambrézy, 2001; Khoa, 2000).

These are also studies carried out by academics, some of which are published in scientific journals. There is also unpublished literature on the issues concerning refugees, including master's theses and doctoral dissertations by students and research reports financed by local authorities, NGOs, or associations involved in taking care of asylum-seekers and refugees (Barou & Moro, 2003; Forum Réfugiés, 2005; Blanco, 2009). While these works contribute to the scientific analysis of the issue, they investigate specific aspects and generally deal with a narrowly limited and localized population. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize their analyses and conclusions to the refugee population as a whole in France.

Given the lack of a large-scale examination of refugees, this paper will use the different data and existing studies to analyze the integration process of refugees in France by considering the different historical periods and asylum policies that may have influenced this process. Having refugee status gives administrative protection to those who have obtained it. These refugees have the same rights as French citizens in the domains of social benefits, schooling for children, professional training for adults, health care, and housing. They do not have the right to vote, but can become French citizens after residing in the country for a minimum of five years. However, despite these advantages, the paths taken by a large number of these individuals have often not translated into a successful integration process. We hope this short paper will shed light on this paradoxical finding. At present, given the rise in the number of asylum-seekers, it is important to analyze the difficulties that future refugees will be just as likely to face.

2. History of the asylum policy in France

Political asylum is an old tradition not only in France but also in most nations in Europe. There are two kinds of asylum. The first is religious. In antiquity, people suffering persecution for crimes, debt, or other reasons could obtain asylum in specific places devoted to some divinities, like the “god asylum” in Ancient Greece, whose name inspired the word “asylum.” In the Middle Ages, the notion of asylum was Christianized. People persecuted for committing common law offenses could ask asylum from a certain number of cathedrals, including the Notre-Dame de Paris. However, religious authorities could also refuse to grant them asylum. In the 13th century, Pope Innocent III and Pope Gregory IX decided to deny asylum to a growing number of people, including Jews, heretics, and criminals. Even from a religious point of view, asylum has never been an absolute and sacred right. As the years passed, religious authorities became less and less concerned with asylum (Barou, 2005).

Around the same time, civil authorities began to deal more and more with the topic. In the *Ancien Régime*, the king had the discretion to hand out asylum to anyone. In 1737, King Louis XV granted asylum to his father-in-law, Stanisław Leszczyński, the former King of Poland. The right to give asylum to an allied prince was a tool in service of France’s foreign policy. By contrast, the authorities avoided granting asylum to an enemy of their allies. Asylum was a high-handed government action and not a moral obligation or a political principle.

Things changed after the French Revolution. In 1793, the right of asylum was inscribed in the Constitution. Article 120 declares: “The French People grant asylum to foreigners banned from their homeland because of their fight for freedom. They refuse to grant it to tyrants”. After the revolution, France became a refuge for many foreigners persecuted at home who could obtain benefits from the public authorities. The law of 22 April 1822 made a distinction between refugees, who could enjoy public aid, and migrants, who could not (OFPRA, 2008).

In the 19th century, refugees came mainly from the little kingdoms of Italy, from Spain because of the Carlist Wars, and from Poland, a country that was shared, at the time, between Prussia, the Austrian Empire, and Russia. The financial aid that these refugees received was calculated according to their social rank. An aristocrat, a former minister, or an officer received enough money to live without working. By contrast, the public authorities helped

soldiers or ordinary people to a much lesser degree, and, therefore, they often needed to work to earn their living. Those who had a good education and spoke French often successfully integrated into French society. Those who did not faced greater difficulty and were frequently rejected by French workers, who saw them as competitors on the jobs market. They hoped for a political change in their own country that would allow them to return home. Generally, French authorities encouraged them to do so and helped them to return (Gerbet, 1943).

However, the French people sometimes expressed solidarity with the refugees. This was the case, for example, among the liberal bourgeoisie during the first half of the 1800s and among the workers' trade unions during the second half. Because of a relevant public policy concerning refugees and the relatively good acceptance of them by the society, many of their trajectories were successful in the 19th century when the democratic ideals of the French Revolution still imbued society in general (Godineau, 2018).

3. The problem of asylum at the beginning of the 20th century

In the 20th century, the number of asylum-seekers started to increase dramatically. The First World War and the redrawing of the boundaries decided by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 led to the migration of many groups of people. Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, who had been victims of violence in the former Ottoman Empire, fled to Western countries. Later, many Russians escaped the Bolshevik regime. Around 1.5 million Russians and 1.7 million Armenians arrived in Western Europe within a few months. This large number of people was too heavy a burden for one nation to bear. Thus, the European states entrusted the League of Nations (LN) – the forerunner (1919-1946) to the United Nations – with the responsibility of taking care of the asylum-seekers. France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia proposed the creation of a specific organization inside the LN to deal with exiled people whose former homelands often no longer considered them as citizens. The High Commission for Russian Refugees was founded in 1921 and the High Commission for Armenian Refugees followed in 1924. Headed by Norwegian diplomat Fridtjof Nansen, these organizations created a refugee status that had previously not existed in national and international legislation. Asylum-seekers who became refugees obtained a “Nansen passport” giving

them an administrative document accepted by the welcoming countries (Forcade & Nivet, 2007).

In France, organizations were established to help manage specific groups of refugees: the *Office Central des Réfugiés Russes*, founded in 1925, dealt with the protection of Russians exiled in France and had the right to give them refugee status, as per the LN definition. Two different offices played the same role for the Armenians. The first dealt with the protection of Armenians coming from the Ottoman Empire and the second with the protection of Armenians coming from the Caucasus region. These two offices were headed by a LN representative in France who was appointed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This organization, connected with the LN, empirically managed the problems faced by refugees. In France, around 350,000 people could get the Nansen passport, which was the equivalent of having refugee status during the 1920s (OFPRA, 2008). Most of them could enter the labor market because of the booming French economy at the time. Despite the high degree of education that some refugees had, the main way for refugees to integrate into French society was to get a job working in industry or construction. Many people were socially marginalized. The case of Russian grand dukes working as taxi-drivers in Paris gives a folkloric but very real idea of the marginalization experienced by many refugees in the 20th century and still today. However, upward social mobility has often been observed among the children and grandchildren of refugees, even when the first generation was not particularly skilled. The Armenians, for instance, mainly came from rural areas and faced economic difficulty after arriving in France. Between 1922 and 1928, 60,000 Armenians arrived in Marseille – almost 10% of the city's entire population at the time. They struggled amid very bad conditions in terms of housing and working. Little by little, because of strong internal solidarity, they improved their living conditions. For instance, they succeeded in building better houses in some districts by working together on vacation (Témime, 2007). Today, their descendants have socially been largely integrated and culturally assimilated. The same is true of descendants of economic migrants who arrived during the same period. The tragedy that all the refugees had experienced created a collective feeling of international solidarity towards Armenians in the world. After the dissolution of the USSR, the independent Republic of Armenia was able to benefit from financial and political support from French people of Armenian descent, like well-known singer Charles Aznavour.

The situation changed in the 1930s. The global economic depression created numerous conflicts between French citizens and foreigners. In the years before the Second World War, as a result of the growing strain between Western democracies and Fascism in Italy; Nazism in Germany and other dictatorships in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, asylum-seekers arriving in France were mistrusted. German-speaking people coming from these lands were regarded as potential spies, and very few of them managed to secure refugee status, even though many were Jewish and political opponents of the dictators. Some of them were even interned in military camps (Peschanski, 2000).

After the Spanish Civil War, around 300,000 Spanish Republican men, women, and children crossed the Pyrenees to seek asylum in France (Rubio, 1977). However, the French authorities considered them dangerous communists, and none of them obtained refugee status. They spent the whole wartime in camps without any administrative status and were sometimes placed in groups of forced workers used by the French administration (and, after their defeat, by the German army). Some of them took an active part in the Resistance movement (Barou, 2008b).

They hoped the democracies, after their victory against the Nazis and the Fascists, would overthrow the dictatorship in Spain. They were very disappointed when the winners decided to recognize the regime of General Franco instead.

In France, the offices for refugees had been scrapped by the Vichy government. After the war, there were many displaced people all across Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe, communist dictatorships supported by the USSR came to power. So, the Western democracies still had to tackle the problem of asylum. In 1946, the International Refugee Organization was founded, whose function was to resettle refugees in Western countries or abroad. It developed a new definition of a refugee that took into account individual criteria of having a justified fear of being persecuted on political, ethnic, or religious grounds. In December 1950, the United Nations created the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UN member states also negotiated new international legislation concerning the protection of refugees and stateless people. In July 1951, they adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (or 1951 Geneva Convention), which continues to govern the status of refugees to this day. The 1951 Geneva Convention considers refugees as people who have been recognized as such by earlier conventions and

all the people with a serious fear of persecution based on their race, religion, political opinions, ethnic or social affiliation either in Europe or elsewhere. UN members could choose between Europe only or Europe and elsewhere. France chose the first formulation. In July 1952, a law established OFPRA, a public agency under the supervision of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in New York in 1967, removed the 1951 Geneva Convention's temporal and geographical restrictions, thereby making it applicable to the present day.

4. Paths followed by refugees after the Second World War

Throughout the first 20 years of its existence, OFPRA had to consider numerous applications made by people who had entered France in earlier years. Many Spanish Republicans who had been unable to seek asylum before became refugees many years after first arriving in France. The case of the Jews from Central and Eastern Europe was similar. During that time, OFPRA gave them documents that allowed them to remain in France. Thus, around 350,000, including a large contingent of Spaniards, obtained refugee status after living in France for many years (Rubio, 1977).

Other asylum-seekers came to France in the 1950s and 1960s. They came mainly from Hungary in 1956 after the Soviet invasion of their country and from Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968. Most of them rapidly obtained refugee status. Some political opponents, academics, and artists came from Portugal, Greece, and the USSR. However, these cases were mostly individual in nature and very limited in number.

One can explain the low importance of asylum-seekers during this period within the context of France's economic situation. The employment market was very dynamic, and all migrants were welcome, even those who were undocumented. After they found a job, their status was resolved by the administration. Many Portuguese opposed to the Salazar regime could come to France without seeking asylum and could easily integrate into French society as immigrant workers. These years of prosperity gave the refugees a good opportunity to enjoy a social rise in France without breaking any link with their communities. Spanish refugees who had spent the entire wartime in camps and had suffered because of hunger and a lack of care remained politically inclined and wanted to continue pursuing the fight against fascism.

Little by little, however, they realized they could no longer go home as the Franco dictatorship was gaining strength. So, they used their energy and their talents to succeed in France through their work. Many established small businesses and shops, and their children often received high-level diplomas. But they continued their political activity through associations and cultural exhibitions until the 1970s, which suggests they were not fully assimilated but well integrated (Barou, 2013). Some political movements, like the Spanish Communist Party and the CNT libertarian trade union, were reorganized in France (Duboisset, 1998).

With the passage of time, there were fewer and fewer people who had lived through the Spanish Civil War, and interest in the Spanish situation began to decline. When Franco died in 1975, just a few first-generation refugees in France returned home. Most of them had their business, family, and social life in France. Returning in Spain would have been another kind of exile.

Their case shows how integration is possible despite the bad conditions of welcome. Moreover, many Spanish refugees' participation as French fighters in the Resistance movement contributed to creating strong links between the French and the Spanish. Today, this population is completely assimilated because of inter-weddings and a way of life similar to that of the French middle classes. Some of their children and grandchildren – even though they were born in France – are interested in the history of the brief Second Republic of Spain (1931-1939) and affirm their pride in being descendants of Spanish refugees. But most of them are indifferent about their family's past and share the same interests as their fellow French peers (Dreyfus-Armand, 1999).

Fewer refugees arrived in the 1950s and 1960s than before and during the Second World War. They came mainly from Central and East European countries led by communist governments. Some of them were well-known artists or scientists who had no problem finding a job corresponding to their skill. Their trajectories were more individualistic. Some of them integrated successfully, like the Soviet dancer Rudolph Nureyev, who became the choreographer of the Paris Opera Ballet. They rapidly obtained refugee status after seeking asylum. During the Cold War, the welcome that these refugees who had *chosen freedom* received was a way of engaging in anti-communist propaganda. Behind this generous asylum policy, the French government pursued objectives corresponding to its interests in the international arena. It was not expensive to take care of refugees. OFPRA was a little agency employing around 50 people. The office was based in a smart mansion in

the 16th arrondissement in Paris. At the time, refugees were considered elite migrants (Guillon, 1992). Things would change dramatically some years later when asylum became a global challenge involving swaths of people from all five continents.

5. From Europe to the wider world: the new challenges of asylum policy

Until the beginning of the 1970s, OFPRA essentially had to consider applications from European asylum-seekers. There were fewer and fewer of them, and they often belonged to well-educated middle classes. They easily obtained refugee status and found good opportunities for integration, mainly because of the economic situation at the time. Things changed because of a variety of factors. The number of asylum-seekers grew as political conflicts emerged – first in Latin America and South-East Asia, and then in Africa and the Middle East. In addition, the economic situation in France was deteriorating because of a global crisis sparked by the rising cost of petroleum. In 1971, France had confirmed the Bellagio Draft, which committed the signatories to consider asylum applications from around the world. The first people who benefited from this expansion of asylum came from Chile after the military coup in 1973. Later, communist dictatorships came to power in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos – three countries covered by the former French Indochina. Because of this historical dimension, the government considered France as having a particular responsibility concerning this region and the people fleeing it to secure their freedom and sometimes to save their life. There were large numbers of South-East Asian asylum-seekers until the mid-1980s. Most of their applications were successful, even though some of the cases appeared rather ambiguous.

By contrast, there were far fewer Chileans, whose applications were viewed with a great deal of suspicion. Chile had no particular historical link with France, and OFPRA's officers did not want to grant refugee status to people who had an economic motivation or perhaps had even taken part in political repression. Thus, on 21 February 1994, OFPRA decided to give no more Chilean asylum-seekers refugee status, basing its decision on Article 1C(5) of the 1951 Geneva Convention: "He can no longer, because the circumstances in connection with which he has been recognized as a refugee

have ceased to exist, continue to refuse to avail himself of the protection of the country of his nationality". Consequently, such an individual could no longer benefit from the protection of the French state.

The two groups enjoyed strong support among French public opinion. However, the Chileans were mostly supported by the left wing, which considered them victims of an extreme right-wing military dictatorship. They were welcomed in towns governed by socialist or communist parties and benefited from militant solidarity. They could pursue their political activities with the support of French organizations and trade unions (Barou, 2014b).

By contrast, people coming from South-East Asia were considered victims of communism and were supported by the Catholic Church and conservative parties (Barou, 2008a). Whatever people's political motivations may have been, the support from different strands of the general public in France and the commitment of voluntary organizations had a very positive impact on refugees when it came to housing and employment after they had left the specific structures intended for asylum-seekers. The integration of the South-East Asians was more or less successful. The first ones to arrive were generally members of the elite, who had a high level of education and spoke French. They rapidly became autonomous. However, their diplomas were not always recognized in France. Many of them were willing to accept a lower social status. Former physicians worked as male nurses, former teachers as employees, former engineers as craftsmen or industry laborers. However, their cultural capital helped their children to succeed at school. The latter preferred to study science, medicine, pharmacy, computing, technology, and so on. They generally became professionals, contractors, or executives. One generation later, they often found themselves in a high social position again (Khoa, 1987). Their trajectories were similar to those of the children of highly educated European refugees from earlier periods. This case illustrates the importance of social capital in the process of integration (Putnam, 2002).

However, this kind of trajectory was essentially observed among Vietnamese elites. Other refugees from South-East Asia had different trajectories. People of Chinese ancestry had traditionally been shopkeepers in Indochina and also pursued this activity in France by becoming tradesmen in different places. The most famous one is a district in Paris's 13th arrondissement, where almost all the shops belong to Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian refugees of Chinese ancestry. Other people who had a low degree of education or were members of ethnic minorities living in rural

areas belong to the working class today, and their children have limited social mobility (Hassoun, 1997).

The refugees who came to France in the 1970s and 1980s and were mainly from South America and Asia represent a transition between the European refugees of earlier periods and those who came during the 1990s and since the beginning of the 21st century. They still had the opportunity to benefit from public support and OFPRA's efficient management. Those who came after them did not enjoy such conditions, and their paths were consequently influenced by the public's gradually more negative stance regarding migrants. Refugees have also been affected by the growing difficulties inside OFPRA. The number of people working for this institution has not been sufficient, and the employees are often not skilled enough to tackle the growing number of asylum applications and analyze ever more complex situations. Consequently, OFPRA has taken more and more time to respond to asylum claims. During that time, the asylum-seekers have struggled with a precarious situation at both the administrative and the economic level and have to live in specific centers with few financial benefits for a longer time than before.

6. From one crisis to another

The following table shows how the refugees protected by OFPRA changed between 1973 and 2016. Except for a slight decline in the early 2000s, the table shows a constant rise over time. Since that small dip, the number of refugees has risen very fast. In 2016, the number of people benefiting from refugee status was twice as high as in 1973. This growth is mainly caused by the number of people coming from Africa, which has increased rapidly since 2001. Over the same period, the number of Asians declined before picking up again and has continued to grow. The same can be said of the number of Europeans and Americans. These developments are the result of new conflicts in these parts of the world. In South-East Asia, the situation had improved, but in 1983 a violent civil war broke out in Sri Lanka causing the departure of many asylum-seekers until 2009. At the beginning of the 2000s, the Middle East was destabilized by the fall of dictatorships and US interventions in the region. The increase in refugees coming from Europe was caused by the conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the USSR. South American asylum-seekers gave way to Haitians. Whatever

the countries of origin and the reasons for their claims, all the refugees have been affected by the difficulties facing OFPRA, which has had to manage more and more (complex) demands for asylum with the same number of employees (Legoux, 1995).

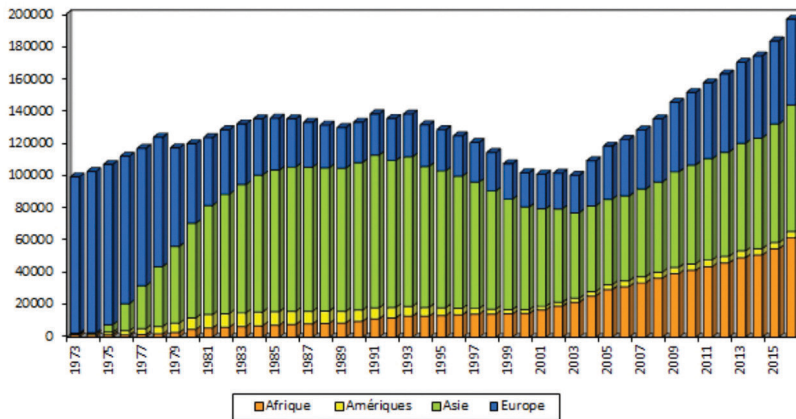


Table 1: Evolution of the number of refugee files handled by OFPRA (2017, p. 54).

Some asylum-seekers have economic rather than political motivations. In the early 1980s, a vast system of fraud involving Zaire's embassy in Paris was discovered. Many people with refugee status were not at all opponents of the Mobutu regime, which they had alleged they were escaping, but had bought documents sold by diplomats from their embassy in Paris that explained how to pass for political refugees. Of course, this system was very particular due to the high degree of corruption in the different institutions of the then-Zaire, but it contributed to making the public suspicious of the persecution suffered by asylum-seekers.

As asylum-seekers' documents became longer and longer and more difficult to study, OFPRA lacked the employees required, and its premises were not able to receive the growing numbers of applicants. Consequently, the asylum-seekers had to wait a very long time for reception centers, sometimes up to five years. The number of negative decisions rose sharply. A few unsuccessful asylum-seekers were expelled from France, but most of them remained in France as undocumented migrants. Between the end of the 1980s and the 2010s, around 20% of applicants received refugee status (OFPRA, 2012).

OFPPRA was unable to manage such a challenging situation. The asylum policy, which the general public had traditionally viewed rather favorably, was being criticized more and more because of its cost and inefficiency. It was accused of being responsible for the rise in the number of undocumented migrants living in France. In 1991, OFPPRA was deeply reorganized: The number of employees trebled, and the office was rehoused in new and functional premises. The files were managed more rapidly, but the rate of refusals remained very high.

With the arrival of people displaced because of civil wars in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Africa, a new crisis appeared in the 2010s, when the number of asylum-seekers reached around 100,000 a year (OFPPRA, 2012). Their applications were conforming less and less to the conditions of the 1951 Geneva Convention. It was impossible to expel them and send them back to their countries in wartime. New concepts were developed to accept some of them under territorial asylum. Later, there was the concept of subsidiary protection, which gives people a document that is renewable on an annual basis depending on the development of the situation in their country of origin. New factors were being added to the convention, including women's rights (1991) and sexual orientation (2004). People who were threatened by criminal organizations but did not receive efficient protection from their state could also ask for asylum. Consequently, the files became more and more difficult to study, and the risks of dramatic errors increased. Some applications were made by persons who had taken part in genocides and massacres, and it is difficult to identify them.

In this context, refugee status has lost much of its prestige, and the trajectories of refugees are starting to look more and more similar to those of any migrant. In 2015, the massive arrival of asylum-seekers from the Middle East via Turkey and the Balkans provoked contradictory reactions among the public. Some small groups of activists took the initiative to help the migrants, even with illegal means in the name of humanitarian values. They criticized the government for its alleged lack of generosity. By contrast, many people were afraid after seeing pictures of masses of people trying to enter Europe. This provoked a fear of invasion, which was exploited by some politicians on the far right. The terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 increased their fear. There is no available evidence of any direct link between the two phenomena. However, police investigations established that two people killed in the attacks had come from Syria and were part of a wave of migrants in July 2015.

Two other men involved in organizing the attacks had also joined the flow of migrants. They were later arrested in a center for asylum (Seelow, 2016).

According to a recent poll (IPSOS, 2019), the French population has mostly had a negative view of refugees since 2017. Only 50% of those polled think the people arriving in France are real refugees. In their opinion, migrants are looking for a better economic and social situation and are not seeking refuge. Only 18% think the new refugees will be able to integrate into French society.

7. Paths followed by recent refugees

It is too early to know whether this pessimistic point of view reflects reality. It is true that the integration of refugees has been more difficult over the past few years or even decades than it had been before. The hostile environment is one of various factors explaining the difficulties of integration. These difficulties have been growing for 10 years. Probably they would be more dramatic in the future if we take in account the evolution of the public opinion about refugees. For those who obtained refugee status in the 2000s and 2010s, it is more difficult to integrate than it was for those who became refugees in previous decades. Their main challenges involve employment. Like their predecessors, they have to accept jobs that are at a lower level than their skills and they have to take a hit to their social position. In addition, a significant percentage of them remain unemployed, many years after they first received the status. How can we explain such difficulties? Of course, the circumstances vary slightly by generation, gender, and origin. Children arriving relatively young in France can succeed at school, but it is more difficult for teenagers, who need more time to master the French language. Women find employment more easily than men because there are many jobs available, for example, to take care of children, old, or sick people, which are often considered feminine activities (Heidenreich et al., 2005). The work allows them to forge social interactions with different kinds of people, while men who are unemployed remain isolated. It is difficult to measure the effect of ethnic discrimination on the process of integration because there has not been a study specifically targeting refugees from this point of view. However, polls and studies concerning the discrimination experienced by all migrants show that some groups – Roma, Africans, and Muslims, especially – are more

affected by this phenomenon than others. These groups make up a relatively large percentage of recent refugees coming from Central Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East (IFOP, 2013; Simon, Beauchemin, & Hamel, 2015).

In order to give a more precise description of the different paths of refugees, we can use the results of a study conducted with people who had obtained their status at least five years ago. This study of qualitative research undertaken in the Lyon region involves around 30 individuals (Blanco & Barou, 2011).

Of course, this number is too small to reflect the situation of all the refugees in France. Nonetheless, the results of this research seem to be relatively representative of the situation of refugees across France in 2010, if we compare them with the data gathered by larger research studies concerning the same population during the same period (Halluin-Mabillot, 2012; Kobelinsky, 2010).

The difficulties of integration that many refugees encounter are linked to different factors. First, since the asylum policy was reorganized at the beginning of the 1990s, asylum-seekers have been prohibited from working until they obtain a positive answer. Some years after, the number of applicants is still increasing dramatically and, despite the increase in the number of workers at OFPRA, the applications are taking longer and longer to process. In addition, European legislation has complicated the management of the asylum requests. The Dublin Convention declares that asylum-seekers must make their claim in the first EU country they reach after leaving their country of origin. It takes time to determine which EU country is appropriate for this purpose. During these slow and complex proceedings, the potential future refugees must live in specific centers, hotels, or shelters and suffer forced idleness. It is not a context conducive to them taking any personal initiative. In addition, to wait a long time for an uncertain answer to their request for international protection leads to anxiety. Some of these applicants suffer mental health problems. Many of them lose part of their autonomy, which could explain their difficulties finding a job once they become refugees. This situation of unemployment is all the more difficult to endure because they absolutely need a job, not only to satisfy their daily needs but also to recover their self-esteem and to symbolically thank France by taking part in its economy. Before leaving their countries, refugees were often dynamic individuals involved in different activities. In France, they feel they are becoming unproductive.

Around one-third of our sample – nine (six women and three men) out of the total of 30 – were unemployed. Most of the others experienced the classic loss of professional position that is often observed among refugees. An engineer became a bus driver, a pediatrician became a nurse, a math teacher became a cook, and so on.

Only two respondents said they found a job corresponding to their level of skills. One returned to university to study in order to improve his chances of finding a better job. Furthermore, the situation regarding unemployment and unskilled jobs does not help to improve the housing conditions. All the households we interviewed for this study live in public housing in popular districts. The precariousness of the employment situation is tied to health concerns. Many of the refugees have had mental and physical problems. Their social life is relatively poor. Many people say they feel isolated and show symptoms of a nervous breakdown. Only one community looks dynamic and can offer solidarity with refugees, namely the Christians coming from Iraq. They have managed to build a Nestorian Church in a suburb of Lyon, which has become a meeting point for all the members of the community living in the region. They live in large extended families and often help their fellow congregants to find a job or a flat. The religious fairs provide an opportunity to exchange news and to strengthen the solidarity inside the community. In this case, community life is a factor in integration. Some people we interviewed said they have successfully improved their situation in France thanks to the community. Other people seem to be satisfied with their individual path. They could have freedom and save their life and have also found a social situation that may not be the same as the one they had in their country but is relatively satisfactory, nonetheless.

However, most of the respondents consider their exile unsuccessful. After many years in France, they don't feel they have fully integrated. They would not envisage going back home, even if the political situation in their country changed and was no longer threatening to them. Their children have been educated in France, and they cannot imagine a future in the country of their ancestors. Those who used to be involved in political activity say they did not take any part in improving the situation in their home countries. They do not consider themselves to be of any use in France nor in their countries of origin. Ultimately, their exile was in vain and lost all meaning. Their refugee status did not enable them to improve their lives and, because of their employment situation, they do not have any real opportunity for social mobility in French

society. They do not have much hope for a serious improvement in the future and sometimes regret having left their country. One man explains how he answered a question that was posed at a meeting organized by associations taking care of refugees: “The question was: ‘What has France given you?’ First, I said, ‘nothing at all.’ A little later, I added, ‘it gave me the opportunity to meet kind people’” (Blanco & Barou, 2011, p. 67).

Despite the bitterness they feel about an unsatisfying path, they have generally appreciated the help of different people: public servants, members of associations, and activists who have taken care of them during their trajectory. Exile remains an opportunity to experience human solidarity.

8. Conclusion

For a long time, refugee status was prestigious enough to ensure people had numerous paths to integrate in France. Asylum-seekers who came individually could easily obtain this status and rapidly join the upper classes of society because they had significant social capital. When people started arriving in large numbers, things changed. They could no longer rapidly obtain this status and had to accept a social downgrading. However, they generally improved their situation over time. Their children or grandchildren often recovered a social status similar to that of their ancestors in the country of origin. Assistance from their compatriots, with whom they shared a link to a common tragedy, was also an important asset. The community was a place of solidarity that did not obstruct their integration into the new society. On the contrary, the regular interaction with their fellow countrymen and women gave them a feeling of belonging and helped to prevent them becoming lonely. By taking part in fairs and demonstrations organized by the community, they could preserve a link with the culture of their forefathers and enrich their personal identity. The hope for a rapid return to their country of origin was not as present among refugees as it was among economic migrants. Thus, people became aware of the importance of finding their place in France by mastering the language and broadening their social circle. The integration of refugees was considered exemplary. Things changed at the end of the 20th century. As there were more and more asylum-seekers, and the reasons for their exile became more and more complex, the civil servants who had to study their files were perpetually overwhelmed. Despite the reorganization

of asylum policy, the waiting period to obtain refugee status became longer and longer. During this long period, asylum-seekers have no right to work and are overseen by specific structures. They lose some of their autonomous initiative, and once they obtain the status, they encounter housing and employment difficulties. At the same time, they are regarded with suspicion by the general public. The different instances of fraud contribute to an ambiguous perception of refugees. Are they really the victims, or are they liars or even torturers who use their good knowledge of the conflict and repression in their countries to apply for refugee status?

Thus, the trajectories of refugees are less successful than before. Refugees appear as one type of migrants among others, without any essential difference. The recent refugees are aware of these difficulties and struggle because the advantages and, above all, the prestige that their status used to entail have disappeared.

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CHAPTER 4

REFUGEES AND INTEGRATION: THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

Marie Lacroix

1. Introduction

In a context of economic and social instability where unemployment rates continue to climb, migrants of all categories – immigrants, asylum seekers, temporary workers, students – have become scapegoats for many of society's ills. Nation States are struggling, on the one hand, to maintain some semblance of social cohesion and social peace, while, on the other, feeding popular perception that certain categories of migrants who want in should be kept out, and that those who are already in should conform. Paradoxically, many States are also encouraging anti-immigrant sentiments by fuelling the debate with discourses and images of what has been called “illegal” or irregular migration, blurring the categories of migrants and inciting fears that countries are being invaded, and that security measures need to be put in place to protect the citizenry. This legitimizes ever more restrictive immigration policies and practices that are seriously testing the international human rights regime. Increasingly, since the events of September 11th, 2001, the dominant discourse has been framed within concerns for security, terrorism and smuggling (Huysman, 2000). Central to these debates is the question of States' sovereignty over their borders and the impact of migration on the identity of societies, their culture, values, religion and social cohesion.

At the heart of Western nation States' attempts to control their borders the issue of citizenship rights has become central and they are being redefined, broadly by some, as rights related to personhood (Bloemraad, 2000; Soysal, 1994), that extend beyond citizenship tied to nationality (Levanon & Lewin-Epstein, 2010). Citizenship rights conceived of in this way has far reaching implications for pluralistic societies in their attempts to incorporate

migrants. Incorporation is conceived of as becoming part of a polity – gaining access to rights and privileges (including those of citizenship), participating in a society’s legal, organisational and political structures, and policy measures to assist this (such as encouraging membership in work councils and trade unions, supporting the creation of ethnic associations, establishing forums for consultation, and so forth) (Castles et al., 2002). The concept provides a broader understanding of State-driven policies and practices that are either parallel or alternative on the part of civil society to fill gaps or complement State inadequacies, and introduces State responsibility for the incorporation of newcomers. It allows us to look at structural issues that make up not only the migrant’s experience, but also the mechanisms put in place by the incorporation regime to facilitate incorporation. We argue that any attempt to facilitate the integration of newcomers needs to take into account the longer-term process of incorporation into the host polity, that is, ensuring full access to citizenship rights.

This is the international context within which countries that have been built on immigration, such as Canada, are trying to balance the need for immigration to sustain their demographics and comply with international obligations while maintaining a hard line on who is allowed in. This chapter gives a broad introduction to the Canadian governance over immigration as it concerns refugees. We introduce here two central elements of Canada’s incorporation regime as they relate to the reception and integration of refugees: multicultural policy and integration policy. We briefly present the historical context in which both of these policies emerged and follow with salient debates and developments. We then address the re-settlement of Syrian refugees who began to arrive in Canada from 2015 as a recent example of how the country welcomes refugees.

2. Historical context to the emergence of immigration and refugee policy in Canada

Any discussion of refugee policy in Canada needs to be understood within the parameters of general immigration policy since Canada has always seen itself as a country of resettlement – where individuals apply from abroad to come to Canada as permanent residents –, and not as a country of first asylum – where individuals flee their country because of persecution and arrive

in Canada to seek asylum. As such, refugee policy has been inextricably tied to immigration policy (Hawkins, 1989; Knowles, 1997). Seen as a source of nation-building, immigration in Canada has always been a controversial political question (Knowles, 1997) and the main concern has always been the selection of its immigrants and refugees (Adelman & Lanphier, 1990; Creese, 1992). The Immigration bureaucracy has had a central role in controlling admission to the country and has been the central apparatus for the reception of refugees. As such, the Immigration Department has been one of the major contributors to the production of discourse on refugees in Canada.

The selection of immigrants has always been at the core of immigration policy in Canada and this has led career officials to play a central role in imposing a “gatekeeper” mentality through administrative procedures (Dirks, 1995). As front-line bureaucrats “their job involves matching immigration rules to individual cases and assessing the eligibility and intentions of those who wish to enter a country, to visit, study, work temporarily or settle permanently” (Satzewich, 2014, p. 1451). It is this “gatekeeper” mentality that has, to some extent, conditioned Canada’s refugee policy in terms of reception and integration of refugees.

Historically, there have been three main objectives of immigration: first, as a tool of economic growth (labour market considerations); secondly, social (family reunification); and third, humanitarian (the admission of refugees and people in refugee-like situations). As well, there is an overriding demographic objective which is to stimulate population growth and delay population decline. Underlying these objectives has been the question of what type of immigrant is best suited for Canada. Until the 1970s acceptance of refugees, as with those following WWII, had been done on an *ad hoc* basis. This was changed with the 1976 Immigration Act which instituted for the first time a refugee determination process within immigration policy. The 1976 Immigration Act constitutes the “cornerstone of present-day immigration policy” (Knowles, 1997, p. 169). The Act outlined three categories of individuals admissible to Canada as landed immigrants: (1) *family class*, which included immediate family and dependent children; (2) *humanitarian class*: the Act instituted a refugee determination program that included two streams – designated classes and standards for refugees who were selected overseas, and a refugee determination process for inland claims (Creese, 1992); and (3) an *independent class* for individuals selected on the point system.

According to the Canadian Constitution, immigration is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial governments. Certain provincial governments have signed agreements with the federal government which give them more legislative power over immigration in their province. These include Quebec (1991), Manitoba (1996), British Columbia (1998), Ontario (2005), Alberta (2007). Signed in 1991, the Canada-Québec Accord makes Québec the only province to be fully in charge of setting immigration levels and selecting its immigrants to the province. Asylum seekers in all provinces remain a federal responsibility. Since the early 2000s the provinces have increasingly taken an active role in the governance of immigration, what Paquet (2014, p. 519) calls the “federalization of immigration and integration” in Canada, meaning that, through the provinces, the federal government maintains its core objectives.

The creation of immigration categories is only one part of provincial involvement in the immigration process. Provinces also differ in the organizational structures and resources they dedicate to immigration. In Quebec, there is a separate department dedicated to immigration, while in other provinces there are units of varying sizes within other departments. Staffing levels and financial resources also differ. The budgets devoted to immigration tend to vary, with staffing levels ranging from hundreds of thousands to several million for provinces with large administrative units.

A number of representatives within the settlement provider community have indicated that settlement services improved immediately when provincial governments took over the management of services (Leo & August, 2009). However, the trend in many provinces over the last decade has been to cut financing to non-governmental organisations who do much of the settlement work. They have decried the devolution of settlement work to non-governmental organisations and immigration communities. This has put undue pressure on organisations and immigrant communities alike, and limits the capacity to do more outreach with wider communities (Lewis, 2010).

Immigration policy is only one aspect of a State’s incorporation regime that defines how all categories of people within its territory are treated and the extent to which citizenship rights are respected. One of the main challenges for pluralistic liberal democratic States is to reconcile unity and diversity by creating culturally yet socially inclusive societies without compromising national interests (Fleras & Elliot, 2002). States must thus establish political and cultural arrangements that foster national unity without

suppressing cultural differences. Multiculturalism is one policy solution that aims to promote a cohesive society and incorporate diversity without negative repercussions on a society's core values or constituent parts (Fleras & Elliot, 2002), while integration policy purports to facilitate the manner in which newcomers become members of the receiving society (Li, 2003). Since the 1970s, Canada has shifted away from an ethnocentric and exclusionary model of immigration policy, that was in effect until 1978 (George, 2002; Sakamoto, 2007), to become one of the countries whose immigration policies promotes multiculturalism.

3. Multiculturalism in Canada

The concept of multiculturalism corresponds to a need brought about by parallel processes of globalization and regional integration to rethink the relationship between individual freedom and cultural belonging, while ensuring the protection of minority rights. It is “a conception of integration that establishes that it is the democratic State's duty to recognise, on the one hand, the multiplicity of ethnocultural groups that significantly make up its population, and to accommodate, on the other hand, on the basis of clearly identifiable principles, this cultural diversity” (author's translation of Savidan, 2009, p. 17). As Winter (2014, p. 10) points out:

According to the Multiculturalism Act section 3. (1) (a), “multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society”. Among other things, the act “acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” and requires the government of Canada to “promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins” (section 3. (1) (c).

Multiculturalism is increasingly being discussed in terms of “diversity” and the need to “manage” diversity (Rodríguez-García, 2010) embedded in the discourse on globalization. Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002) contend that the relationship between diversity and globalization is that multiculturalism is emphasized as a way not only to foster attachment to Canada, but also to deal with global markets and global competitiveness. Multiculturalism “is first and foremost a normative framework for society-building” (Winter, 2014, p. 10). For Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002), the evolution of multiculturalism policy starting in the 1970s until the contemporary period is

linked to building the Canadian nation and creating a “Canadian identity” inclusive of ethnocultural and racial minorities, giving explicit recognition at the federal level to Canadians whose origins are non-French, non-British and non-Aboriginal. For some, official multiculturalism was introduced as a political exercise, particularly to strengthen national unity and neutralize Canada’s French-English rift.

By the 1960s, the re-emergence of Québec nationalism led to the creation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, whose mandate was to examine relations between the “two founding peoples” and how to involve Canadians of other origins in the society. During the same period, Porter published *The Vertical Mosaic* (1965), which described the socio-ethnic stratification of Canadian society and the socio-economic difficulties experienced by francophones and non-British immigrants. Helly (2000) argues that given the circumstances, it was impossible for the government to remain silent on these issues. Multiculturalism was seen by the government of the time as a way to bring together all Canadians from coast to coast within a unified polity. Fleras and Elliott (2002, p. 62) argue however, that “official multiculturalism made a virtue out of a necessity; it parlayed a potential weakness (diversity) into a strength (unity), and it did so without necessarily revoking a commitment to social cohesion, national identity, domestic peace, economic growth, and global respect”. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s multiculturalism policy rested on four principles:

1. Equality of status: as Canada does not possess any official culture, all ethnic groups including the English and the French are equal to the other;
2. Emphasis on Canadian identity: ethno-cultural pluralism constitutes the very essence of Canadian identity;
3. Possibility of choice: a greater choice of lifestyles and cultural traits is a positive factor in shaping a society;
4. Protection of civil and human rights: no Canadian citizen or resident should be discriminated against, for any reason (Dorais, Foster, & Stockley, 1994).

The societal project that begins with the proclamation of the multiculturalism policy in 1971 was completed by its inclusion in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom in 1982 and the Multiculturalism Act in 1988, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom specifies that the charter “shall be interpreted in a

manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians”. The Multiculturalism Act was adopted as the first text in the world that enables a policy that goes beyond the respect for human rights and promotes a pluralist and open society. The Act confirms the policies in place since 1971 (official language instruction and promotion of other languages, the right to identify with the cultural heritage of one’s choice, the recognition of the existence of collectives with common ethnic origins), but it brings in new areas of work: combating discrimination, supporting understanding between individuals and groups of different origins, full participation of ethnic minorities in public institutions, employment equity among all Canadians. The Act was further supported through the creation of the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

However, despite the evolution of the policy’s focus, Fleras and Elliott (2002, p. 69) contend that “the core of Canada’s multiculturalism policy has not changed much over the decades” and that even though it was based on consensus and promoting integration, “the *means* for achieving these ends have fluctuated, in response to demographic shifts and political developments”. Thus, while the Canadian government’s discourse is still committed to multiculturalism in theory, its support (in terms of funding) is mainly symbolic and has weakened among the general public as well. In her study on multiculturalism in Canada, Vorobyova (2006, p. 138) concludes that:

The official discourse of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism seems to reveal that the underpinning motivation of this policy is not simply to integrate immigrants or to facilitate an understanding between various ethnic groups but rather is to conform the immigrants and ethnicities into the mainstream Canadian way of socioeconomic, political life and, most important, of attitudes and values with only superficial cultural expressions of ethnic identities (food, festivities, garments).

Currently, the multiculturalism program has new objectives that include building an integrated, socially cohesive society by building bridges to promote intercultural understanding; fostering citizenship, civic memory, civic pride, and respect for core democratic values grounded in our history and promoting equal opportunity for individuals of all origins. The program seeks to assist institutions in addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse population by providing federal and other public institutions with a framework to integrate multiculturalism into their policy and program development. It

actively supports discussions on multiculturalism and diversity at the international level by promoting Canadian approaches to diversity as a successful model, while contributing to an international policy dialogue on issues related to multiculturalism (Tunis, 2010).

4. The concept of integration

It is widely accepted that the concept of integration no longer reflects the complexities of western societies in a globalised world. The meanings attributed to the concept vary over time and from country to country which leads research in the field to be based on a set of assumptions, concepts and definitions that are implicit rather than explicit. Further, the concept of integration leads to the expectation that people are integrated “in a prescribed way and that this varies from one nation-State to another” (Castles et al., 2002, p. 124). It has been argued that problems of integration are both conceptual and practical: conceptual in that a “top-down” approach exists in which governments and policy makers define integration goals and impose them on immigrant and refugee populations in receiving countries (Korác, 2003; Li, 2003) and practical in that the social capital refugees arrive with should contribute to the economic development of the host society. As Li (2003) points out, within Canada’s discourse “there is a strong expectation that immigrants should accept Canada’s prevailing practice and standard and become similar to the resident population” (p. 316).

While it has been amply documented in studies around the world that employment may facilitate broader integration into a host society, economic integration is only one sphere of a broader process (Krahn, Derwing, Mulder et al., 2000; Lamba, 2008; Marbach, Hainmueller & Hangartner, 2018; Verbunt, 2004). Integration policy in Canada has, to a great extent, focused on the economic dimension of integration and this is reflected in discursive elements of our studies with newcomers. Our research with asylum seekers who had been granted refugee status in Montréal, Canada (Gauthier et al., 2010; Lacroix, 2004, 2006), has shown that they have integrated the dominant discourse on integration and the strategies they put in place to ensure their long-term integration focuses mostly on education, retraining and employment, the functional aspects of the process. Through their social and

community networks they do volunteer work, take classes that may help in finding employment, focus on finding work.

In order not to belabour the on-going debates on integration, we refer here to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles' (ECRE, 1999, p. i) definition of integration as a multidimensional and interactive process relating "to both the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of durable asylum as well as to refugees' own perception of acceptance by and membership in the host society". Integration, therefore, places demands on both receiving States and individuals concerned. Moreover, it is a long-term dynamic process, occurring over time and concluded when newcomers become active members of the host society in the legal, social, economic, educational and cultural spheres (ECRE 1999; Hollands, 2001), leading to a state of inclusion versus one of exclusion. It implies that immigrants and refugees face the same playing field as other members of the society, that they have the same opportunities to mobilize resources in order to deal with challenges and overcome barriers and obstacles. The resources – material, emotional, social, cultural and organizational – to be mobilized will be found in the individuals, in the families, in their social networks, in their community (both ethnic and non-ethnic), and in the larger society (in religious, social, governmental, and other institutions). Many of these opportunities and barriers are the same as those experienced by other (non-immigrant/refugee) vulnerable groups in the society. Some opportunities and barriers affect all immigrants and refugees and still others affect more specifically immigrant and refugee women.

5. Canada's integration policy

Canada's integration policy is never clearly articulated nor defined (Li, 2003). However, it can be summarized by the following objectives as stated by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the ministry responsible for immigration, programs, immigration services, settlement, re-settlement of refugees and citizenship, as outlined below. Citizenship and Immigration Canada's mission to build "a stronger Canada" by developing and implementing policies, programs and services that facilitate the arrival of people and their integration into Canada in a way that maximizes their contribution to the country, while protecting the health, safety and security of Canadians;

maintain Canada's humanitarian tradition by protecting refugees and people in need of protection; enhance the values and promote the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship; reach out to all Canadians and foster increased intercultural understanding with equal opportunity for all, regardless of ethnicity and religion (IRCC, 2019).

IRCC administers three main programs to support the success of newcomers, namely the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), the Host Program, and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC), as well as one resettlement program for refugees called the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). This program is designed to meet the needs of refugees who have been selected overseas, in refugee camps, and who arrive in Canada as permanent residents. The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program assists immigrant settlement and integration through funding to service providers to deliver direct services to immigrants such as orientation, information, translation and interpretation; referral to community resources; solution-focused counselling; and employment-related services. Service providers have been identified by the provinces and funding is earmarked by the federal government and then transferred to the provinces. These services are delivered based on a needs assessment administered by the service provider with each client at the outset of service delivery. The program also funds service providers to undertake service-bridging activities (including workshops, information sessions and one-on-one training related to the unique needs and contributions of newcomers) with mainstream community organizations, as well as special projects on an ad hoc basis.

As mentioned previously, there is no clear definition of what constitutes integration. In Canada the focus has been on employment (see Council of Europe, 2020). As such, indicators of integration that have been suggested by government discourse include adopting a Canadian identity, participating in Canadian institutions, learning an official language, and having inter-ethnic friendships (Reitz, 2009). The official policy states that the integration of racial and ethnic minority groups is encouraged, not their assimilation" (James, 2005, p. 14). In the policy, "racial" and "ethnic" minorities are constructed as "foreigners", irrespective of their citizenship or length of time in Canada, and it establishes the charter groups (English and French) as the reference groups; and, in turn, diversity is conceived of in relation to them (James, 2005). However, the concept of integration remains vague and newcomers should be recognized as more than "ethnic minorities" and need recognition

of who they are as people, with the strengths they bring to the country. As Reitz (2009) suggests, there are other factors involved in integration other than multiculturalism, including the skills-based immigration policy that was implemented just a few years prior to the proclamation of the multiculturalism policy, which resulted in an influx of highly skilled immigrants who seemed to fare better than their counterparts in the US and Europe (Reitz, 2009). Government funding for official language learning is also thought to promote integration, as well as other settlement programs. Reitz (2009) cites another factor thought to have an impact on the integration of minorities, namely the diversity of immigrant groups who have settled in Canada since the 1970s, with no one group dominating as is the case in some European nations.

Discussions of integration are often related to the notion of social cohesion, which “refers to the capacity of a society to set goals and implement means for attaining them” (Reitz, 2009, p. 20). In public opinion, “unsuccessful” integration is often blamed for eroding social cohesion and manifestations of conflict, whether violent or not. In a post-9/11 era, multiculturalism has come under fire in public opinion because it is seen as being *too* accommodating and that it has not encouraged some immigrants to integrate “successfully” or adopt “Canadian” values. As Reitz (2009, p. 9) explains, “although the threat of terrorism is in the background, there has been a significant and growing Canadian debate about the social integration of new minorities”. Reitz (2009) goes on to explain that debates in Canada have focused on whether certain religious minorities have values, beliefs or practices that may be incompatible with Canadian ideas on gender equality or secularism in public institutions. Debates have thus shifted from cultural differences to religious differences, which some have referred to as the “racialization” of religious status (Joshi, 2006).

Finally, while these controversies and debates are on-going, there are attempts in the country to develop programs that would better serve newcomers. The question remains, however, as to policies and practices that will ensure full participation and citizenship rights within the polity.

6. The re-settlement of Syrian refugees in the province of Québec

Sponsorship is unique to Canada (see Enns, 2017; Labman, 2016 for a historical perspective). Sponsorship allows for groups such as churches, university faculties or individuals to sponsor refugees and help them settle in during the first year. The sponsoring of refugees was popularised with the arrival of 60,000 refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s (Molnar, 2016). Since then the government has amplified the sponsorship program and made it possible for groups of people, churches, to sponsor refugees. The Syrian crisis and the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada, in 2015, has brought into the spotlight Canada's humanitarian tradition in terms of refugee resettlement and how the policy developed. The three main ways that a Syrian refugee can be resettled to Canada are Government Sponsorship, Private Sponsorship, and Blended Visa Office-Referred cases:

- 1) Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR): GAR are persons who have been assessed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to meet the definition of a refugee as set out in the Refugee Convention, and whose initial resettlement in Canada is entirely supported by the Government of Canada for up to one year. This support includes accommodation, food, clothing and assistance with employment.
- 2) Privately Sponsored Refugees: the Canadian private sponsorship regime is unique in the world. Private sponsorships can occur through two streams: sponsorship by one of the Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) in Canada, or through the Group of Five Program:
 - a) SAH are incorporated organizations that have a signed agreement with the Canadian government to sponsor a refugee or to assist other sponsoring groups and individuals with their applications. These can include non-governmental organizations, religious institutions (such as churches), and universities. SAH are entirely responsible for the refugee for one year.
 - b) The Group of Five Program allows any five (or more) Canadian citizens or permanent residents to engage in refugee sponsorship. They must demonstrate that they have the necessary financial means and ability to fulfil the terms of the sponsorship and to fully support the refugee for a year.

- 3) Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR): UNHCR-identified Convention Refugees are matched for resettlement with private sponsors in Canada. The government and the private sponsor split financial responsibility for the refugee. Canada's resettlement programs have been hailed as some of the most progressive and welcoming in the world and have been used as pilots for similar programs in other countries (Molnar, 2017).

The election of a Liberal government under the leadership of Justin Trudeau on October 19th, 2015, brought a major shift in the welcoming of refugees to Canada. Between November 15th 2015 and December 2016, the government of Canada brought in 30,000 Syrian refugees; a stark contrast with the former anti-immigration Conservative government (Labman, 2016). Between 2015 and 2017, the province of Québec received 11,251 Syrian refugees; 81% of these were sponsored and 2,187 were taken in charge by the State (Blain et al., 2020). Also called "collective sponsorship", the program has become a model throughout the world, especially in terms of mobilizing the community (Minsky, 2016). Blain et al. (2020) point out that the new orientation in Québec policy rests on the shared commitment between society as a whole and newcomers. This requires the involvement of civil society, community-based organizations and religious organizations. This leads to extended support networks and actors in the integration processes.

According to Swing (2017, p. 5), successful re-settlement programs "are refugee-centric, have protection as their main driver", and are carefully planned before departure: "Careful programming before departure lays the foundation for successful integration". Teshome (n.d., p. 17) argues that "effective integration policies will also have the benefit of fostering social harmony, inter alia. Accordingly, effective integration policies and programs should be the parameters through which the success of resettlement should be measured. In this regard, the UNHCR remarks that 'the success of integration program remains mostly dependent on the political will and commitment of the resettlement country, and the availability of human and financial resources governments allocate to such program'".

There was an outpouring of support on the part of Canadians for the policy. Churches and private groups organised to sponsor refugees. For example, the Social Justice Matters (SJM) sponsorship group put in place at the Faculty of Social Work in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (Drolet et al., 2018, for details on how the process works). Private sponsors sign a 12-month

agreement of engagement, while the State ensures services such as language courses, access to health services and education. There is also a broad network of community organisations in Canada, many of which have the mandate to assist refugees in their re-settlement process. The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) is a national umbrella organization “committed to the rights and protection of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in Canada; it promotes rights for refugees and acts as an advocate for refugee rights with the Federal government”. The CCR has a fundamental role in providing information to individuals and community-based organisations throughout the country (see <https://ccrweb.ca/>).

The federal government also made available research funds for those researchers presenting proposals to study the situation. Although it is still early to evaluate the outcomes of different resettlement experiences, initial research results indicate the prominence of key elements in the integration processes. As Silvius (2016, p. 28) argues, “obtaining adequate housing is at the centre of refugees’ resettlement experiences”. Hanley et al. (2018), for example, found “that, in this early stage of Syrians’ integration into Canadian society, there is strong evidence of bonding networks that are mobilized to find housing, employment and provide emotional support, but bridging and linking networks are in the early stages of development” (p. 124). Bélanger-Dumontier (2018, p. 20) also notes the importance of work, that allows refugees to “feel connected to others”. Dubus (2019, p. 2) stresses that due “to the forced nature of the relocation, forced migrants often have suffered trauma and loss of family, resources, and social capital”, which underlines the need for specialised services.

However laudable the effort, the re-settlement program has had its detractors and its criticisms, some of which emerge from recent studies. For example, that private sponsors need to be accompanied in their support efforts, they need information on the integration processes, need more training to accompany refugee families, knowledge of services and how to access them (Blain et al., 2019). Criticism has raised issues that are central and ever-present when we talk of refugee re-settlement, namely, the access to housing, employment and language courses, the pillars of integration.

7. Conclusion

Canada's incorporation regime began to take shape in the 1970s, when western governments took notice of the magnitude of the Third World refugee problem. Millions of Indochinese refugees had fled Vietnam, Afghan refugees flooded into Pakistan and Iraq, Somalian and Ethiopian refugees were displaced into Sudan (Ferris, 1985; Loescher, 1989, 1993; Rogge, 1987; Zolberg, Shurke & Aguayo, 1989). New refugee movements were drawing the world's attention and Canada, under international pressure, became involved. New immigrants were increasingly non-European and non-white, and have since experienced economic and social insecurity, discrimination and systemic racism.

As part of the incorporation regime, integration policies in Canada, were, until recently, conceived of in a linear fashion, where a process could be analysed in various stages, starting with initial fascination for the host country, to culture shock, to acceptance and finally to integration, mostly understood as assimilation – taking on the way of life of the host country in all its dimensions: political, economic, social and cultural. However, there is a wide gap between the discourse and practices. In spite of a set immigration policy, a multicultural policy and, to some extent, a broadly and somewhat imprecise integration policy, important gaps remain on the part of the State-driven policies to facilitate the long-term incorporation of newcomers of all categories. As Grillo (2007) suggests, the conceptualisation of integration and multiculturalism is an on-going process and multiculturalism remains a “fuzzy concept”.

Multiculturalism policy categorizes these newcomers as “visible minorities”, yet it is important to note that they differ greatly from group to group and within groups and vary in terms of institutional structure, economic and social status, educational level, aspirations, or problems they are confronted with. For racialized groups, mobilization efforts have focused on the elimination of prejudice and discrimination to ensure equal access to jobs, housing, and education, key factors that have been widely documented in research as being central to the integration processes. As Troper (1999, p. 1006) points out, “for many of the newer arrivals, maintaining cultural identity is far less important than accessing the promise that Canada represents. When one faces prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, in housing, or in school, it is easy to become contemptuous of the gulf between the rhetoric

of State-sponsored multiculturalism and the realities of day-to-day life”. The multicultural discourse, analysed by Vorobyova (2006, p. 138), leads her to comment:

Overall, the idea of “integration” is expressed in the official discourse on multiculturalism as a result of immigrants or members of ethnicities to conform to the “Canadian values”, which are claimed to be “tolerance, equality, justice and diversity.” “Integration” occurs not as a result of a deeper cross-cultural partnership and understanding but rather through the “inclusion” or “active participation” of the members of various diverse groups into a standard North American culture. This idea is reinforced in the discourse which juxtaposes “Canadian society” to “ethnic, racial, cultural, religious minorities” that reoccurs as a major theme in all the reports on the operation of the Multiculturalism Act in Canada.

Re-settlement of refugees needs to be planned and resources need to be put in place to ensure health, education, housing, language classes, employment opportunities, are met. This puts the onus on the government to commit to the long-term process of integration. Research across the world has shown that “successful” integration starts from the moment refugees arrive. Not only does the government need to commit to selecting refugees, thus complying with its international obligations, it needs to ensure resources are put in place to facilitate the transition. As is occurring in other countries applying neo-liberal policies, Canada has also imposed cutbacks to social and health services destined to newcomers. Community-based organizations with a mandate to assist refugees in their re-settlement and integration processes are also suffering and denouncing lack of support on the part of the government.

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CHAPTER 5

AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON RURAL REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION IN FINLAND

Kati Turtiainen

1. Introduction

Finland is considered as a long-standing and solid refugee resettlement country by the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) among the other Nordic countries. Finland started the resettlement of refugees by taking in a small group of Chileans in the 1970s. Other than this, since the Second World War, Finland has been a country of emigration. However, this situation has changed during the last three decades with the numbers of forced and voluntary migrants increasing. By the end of 2018, the proportion of foreign citizens is 4.7 percent of the population (5.5 million) living in Finland. The number of foreign citizens was about 258,000 (Statistics Finland, 2019). In the same year, around 27,000 residence permits were granted to new migrants based on family ties in Finland, international protection needs, students, quota refugees, return migrants, and work-related reasons (Finnish Immigration Service, 2019).

Finland, like other Nordic countries, was affected by large scale migration to Europe in 2015. This year was exceptional in terms of the increase in the number of asylum seekers in Finland. This created a need to establish reception centres for asylum seekers and also habitations for resettled refugees in rural areas. For refugees, rural areas are very different compared to big cities, and especially the capital area, in terms of work and education opportunities, and services. However, recently there have been programmes aimed at attracting migrants to rural locations where companies have a shortage of employees. Yet, the arrival of asylum seekers and new asylum centres have been objected to by residents and politicians in these municipalities where no asylum centres or refugee resettlement previously existed. In 2015, the

debates for and against asylum were extensive; for example, accusations were targeted at asylum seekers claiming that they posed a security risk and there was a mood of moral panic that Finland could not afford such “social benefits shoppers”. However, there were also examples where, after an initial strong political opposition, the situation turned positive and local residents, authorities and entrepreneurs insisted that the asylum centres should not be closed down, and that people should be granted asylum since they could contribute to social life and were starting to work for the companies in the area (Yle, 2016).

As a consequence of the strengthening societal climate against refugees and asylum seekers, Finnish politicians made amendments in the Aliens Act (Migri, 2020). For example, the possibility of getting a residence permit on humanitarian grounds was no longer feasible for those who did not meet the requirements for being granted asylum. Also, the opportunity to bring family members together is much harder than before (Fingerroos, Tapaninen, & Tiilikainen, 2016; Pellander, 2016). For example, family members of a person who has been granted international protection are required to have secure means of support in Finland from sources other than benefits paid by the state (Finlex, 2016). This does not impact refugees who request family reunification within three months of being issued with their first residence permit in Finland, provided they lived as a family (spouse or children) before coming to Finland. The income requirement also does not apply to the family members of Finnish citizens, either native-born citizens or refugees (and other forced migrants), who attain citizenship through application after living in Finland for 4 years.

By using the term refugees, I follow the legal definition set out by the UNHCR (1951), that is: “people who leave their country of nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political orientation, and who are unable or, due to being fearful of persecution, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection offered in their original countries”. Some asylum seekers can meet the criteria for being refugees. However, usually asylum seekers in Finland are given a residence permit based on subsidiary grounds without having refugee status. For the purposes of this study, migrant is an umbrella concept meaning both forced migrants (refugees and asylum seekers) and voluntary migrants (for example people coming to work or having family ties).

The Finnish Act of Promoting Integration concerns all migrants, regardless of their legal status.

In this chapter, I examine how mainly refugees (also some voluntary migrants) narrate their integration and wellbeing in a rural municipality and small town in western Finland. My aim is to show how contextual and complex the understanding of the integration of refugees is. Therefore, the concept of integration is approached from an intersectional perspective, where different statuses, elements of wellbeing and trans-localities intersect each other (Anthias, 2012). An intersectional view on integration is needed, because integration is connected, for example, to gender, social class, age, religion and education (Erel, 2010; Nordberg, 2015; Nordberg & Wrede, 2015), transnational networks (Levitt, 2009) and power relations (Peltola, 2014). I begin by explaining the resettlement programme for refugees to municipalities. Next, the intersectional and trans-local approaches to integration are described with the relevant research of the topic. Before the results, the data collection and analyses are presented. The results are then discussed with the research and reports from the area of integration of migrants.

2. Refugees' resettlement and asylum seeking in Finland

There are two possibilities for acquiring refugee status in Finland. First, refugee resettlement in co-operation with the UNHCR and, second, obtaining a residence permit based on refugee status after applying for asylum. People coming to Finland through the European relocation system (Asylum Information Database, 2018) are considered asylum seekers and, therefore, their applications are processed in the same way as other asylum seekers.

Finland is among the countries worldwide that resettles refugees directly from refugee camps or other stalemate situations in co-operation with the UNHCR. In 2018, the UNHCR sent 81,300 refugees to different states for resettlement. During the same year, about 55,000 refugees were accepted for resettlement with or without the UNHCR's assistance across 29 countries (UNHCR, 2019). These resettled people are so-called quota refugees. Around half of the resettled refugees are children. Finland started refugee resettlement with Chilean refugees in the beginning of the 1970s, followed by Vietnamese refugees, the so-called boat people, in the 1980s. Currently, the refugee quota is in the Finnish Aliens Act (2010, 1152, 90§):

Under the refugee quota, Finland may admit for resettlement persons considered refugees by UNHCR or other aliens in need of international protection. The refugee quota means admitting into the country, in accordance with the grounds confirmed in the State budget for each year, aliens who need international protection and are to be resettled.

Every year the Finnish Parliament decides on the size of the refugee quota during the budget negotiations. Since 2001, the yearly quota of resettled refugees has been 750 persons. Exceptionally, in the years 2014 and 2015 the quota was 1,050 due the war in Syria (Finnish Immigration Service, 2019). The team of ministries also decide which nationalities the refugees will represent and the geographic areas from which they are chosen. The decision of the Finnish Government is based on the information given to them by the UNHCR, which has gathered details about the existing resettlement needs from its regional offices. In recent years, the main groups of refugees have been Syrians and Congolese (EMN, 2017). All the refugees selected by the Finnish selection mission have legal and physical protection needs. They are, for example, survivors of violence and torture, women at risk (widows, single mothers, single women) and they have medical needs. These criteria are considered to represent refugees in the most vulnerable situations.

Another possibility for attaining a residence permit based on refugee status is by claiming asylum. During the last three decades, the number of asylum applications has varied from hundreds to a couple of thousand. In 2015, there were 32,150 new first-time asylum claims in Finland, which was a 0.4 percent share of the total number of asylums claims in the EU in that year. After claiming asylum with border control authorities or the police, asylum seekers are placed in reception centres where they wait for an asylum interview and the decision on whether to grant refuge.

After resettlement in Finland, refugees go directly to municipalities, which have a political mandate to host refugees. Recently, small rural municipalities have also started to take resettled refugees who have been selected to be sent to Finland. Asylum seekers are also assigned a residency in towns or rural municipalities after being granted asylum. All migrants (forced and voluntary migrants irrespective of their status) have a right to an integration plan if they are an unemployed jobseeker, receive income support, or are under 18 years old and do not have a guardian. The integration plan will be prepared on the basis of an individual initial assessment. This initial assessment is based on migrants' skills and educational background. The maximum period entitling

the immigrant to an integration plan is three years from the signing of the first integration plan. An integration plan is a strategy specifying measures that will aid integration into the new society. The integration plan can include Finnish language studies, and other education or practical training in workplaces. The integration period can “be extended by a maximum of two years, if there are grounds for doing so, because the immigrant needs special integration measures” (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, 1386/2010). The responsibility for promoting integration is divided between the state and municipalities. State authorities, which means the public employment and business services, draw integration plans together with migrant and offer integration services – basically language training, and work practice and integration courses – to unemployed jobseekers. Municipalities are responsible for promoting integration to all the other migrants (also irrespective of their status), such as children, elderly people, people suffering chronic illnesses and parents taking parental leave. Central government covers the costs of reception incurred by the receiving municipalities in accordance with agreements between the government and the municipalities concerned. The compensation is paid to the municipalities for arranging integration measures, such as income support for the refugees, expenses resulting from any special needs such as chronic illness, child protection or disabilities (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, 1386/2010).

3. Intersectionality as a theoretical frame of integration

Integration is a multifaceted and even contested concept. Traditionally scholars have defined integration as an acculturation to a new society (Berry, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Integration has also been divided between structural and cultural integration. However, if these dimensions of integration are not considered together, but a so-called cultural aspect is located only in the private sphere of life, it leaves structural discriminatory and racialization mechanisms unnoticed. For example, research shows that the labour market and education have exclusionary mechanisms (Anthias, 2013; Forsander, 2013, 2004). In political debates, integration is often connected to employment, education and language training. However, in the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) integration is defined as a two-way process. This means that integration consists of two-directional

dialogue and cooperation between newcomers and local people, as well as service providers, in daily life. Consequently, the whole society is changing towards respecting diverse identities and lifestyles.

Integration is also a highly ideological and political concept, and its aims are defined in laws and policy programmes. Even though Nordic welfare states are often considered to extend equality and social justice to all, according to Suvi Keskinen's research (2014, 2016), as she conceptualizes nationalistic political strategies of social political systems, welfare in Finland has nationalistic features. Welfare nationalism refers to discourses that intertwine welfare provision with national membership, whereas welfare chauvinism refers to the strategies that categorise and define citizenship with (ethno)nationalist and racializing criteria and non-citizenship as "otherness". The far right movement, rising on a wave of populism, has strengthened this kind of political rhetoric, even though basic human and social rights have remained equal to all people having a residence permit in Finland. Thus, this rhetoric creates antagonistic divisions between imagined homogenous national identities and minorities (Keskinen, 2014, 2016).

In this chapter, integration is understood as a holistic wellbeing of migrants as autonomous agents in society (Sotkasiira, 2018a,b). Many scholars (Heino & Veistilä, 2015; Intke-Hernandes & Holm, 2015; Norberg & Wrede, 2015) show that the Finnish welfare state to some extent provides income redistribution to refugees and as well as to other categories of migrants, while the redistribution of power and knowledge as a basis of autonomous citizenship remains weak. In addition, it is illustrated in research literature (Hiitola & Peltola, 2018; Sotkasiira, 2018a,b; Turtiainen, Kokkonen, & Viitasalo, 2018) that integration work identifies the needs of migrants, but it does not sufficiently manage to improve their wellbeing as critical and autonomous citizens. I follow Floya Anthias' (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) understanding of integration as an intersectional and translocational approach. According to Anthias (2014, p. 156) intersectionality means "the way in which different social divisions inter-relate in terms of the production of social relations and in terms of people's lives". Here I follow Anthias' (2014, p. 156) idea that intersectionality can be used as "a heuristic device that allows a set of approaches for furthering the understanding of social relations; relating to boundaries and hierarchies of social life". Therefore, "an intersectional framing" is possible, rather than there being an intersectionality theory.

In addition, a translocational framework is important here. Traditionally, migration researchers use transnational approaches in order to correct a nation-based lens. A translocational approach moves away analytically from the focus on difference (Anthias, 2015). In the current political climate in Finland, as it is seen in Keskinen's (2013) studies, it is important to note that a translocational lens moves away from the governmentality of difference. Anthias shows that "the idea of translocations focuses on social locations, rather than on cultural difference and boundaries" (Anthias, 2015, p. 186) where the context and the broad landscape of power is important.

Anthias (2015, p. 186) summarizes a translocational intersectional position in the following way:

it is able to recognize diversities on the basis of shifting combinatories of location and positionality within a time and space framework. This involves the recognition of the global and intersectional nature of social bonds and interests and the need to move away from an ethnocentric and national based lens for achieving inclusion and social justice. Such an approach is not focused on cultural difference but on inequalities and subordinations that are produced intersectionally; it therefore moves beyond culture and ethnicity, and considers material struggles over resources of different types.

4. Data collection and analysis

I analysed two data sets, which were collected 2016, 2017 and 2019. The first data-set are interviews with five refugees resettled in one small rural municipality in western Finland. These people were the first refugees in that area. I interviewed all the adults who came to the municipality that year. I arranged the thematic interviews (Gillham, 2000) with the help of the labour office and a social assistant. The interviews took place in the language training venue. The consent notes were signed before starting the interviews. All the interviewees expressed that they were happy to participate in the interviews, and some of them expressed that they felt themselves considered as special persons because I was interested in their life and wellbeing. I explained about the anonymisations of the interviews even if they said that this was not necessarily needed. We did not share a common language, so I had an interpreter who was in another city during the interviews. Therefore, the interviews were interpreted using a smartphone. The interviewees knew the interpreter beforehand, and they also expressed trust in him. I interviewed

the same people again after six months with the help of the same interpreter. This time the interviewees already knew a little Finnish and an interpreter was available when needed. Later we exchanged some phone calls regarding how they were doing. The last interviews were conducted in a small town after they had been living in Finland for almost three years. They moved to that town after living in Finland for one year. I do not provide more information about the interviewees for confidentiality reasons.

The second data-set consist of group interview (Gillham, 2000) in a small town in western Finland. The group consisted of 13 forced and voluntary migrants, almost all of whom had refugee backgrounds. These people took part in the integration training programmes (language classes and short work practice in different workplaces) as part of their integration plans, which were agreed by the labour office. Since all migrants have the right to an integration plan, it was not reasonable to interview only refugees and leave other migrants out of the group. All together there were seven women and six men interviewed. Their nationalities were Syrian, Burmese, Ethiopian, Sudanese, Ukrainian and Gambian. I do not offer more detailed information in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. In addition, there was one language assistant and two workers from the NGO, which provided language training and work internships. There were no official interpreters present. We spoke partly in Finnish, and partly in English and Russian with the help of the assistant. The group interview took place in the yard of an old language training venue. The atmosphere in all interviews was positive and open. It seemed that people wanted to share their opinions and situations in Finland. I tried to avoid asking questions that were too personal, for example, concerning their possible traumatic backgrounds, if they did not choose to talk about their experiences themselves. However, some traumatic situations were disclosed leading to grieving and crying, but within the supporting and comforting atmosphere of the group. Interview questions were the same for the individual and group interviews. The thematic interview questions included the topics of integration and wellbeing in local and transnational networks and places. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and anonymised. The original recordings were deleted immediately after transcribing.

Since I use intersectional and translocational framing (Anthias, 2012), I consider the themes where people speak about their social positions (such as parenthood, gender, occupation, minority position) and how these positions are affecting their integration and wellbeing. Next, my main concern

is how these social positions intersect each other. Further, I examine what the consequences are of these social and possible translocational positions (situated in many places, e.g. different countries). In practice, I started by analysing the interview material, where the lack of protection of nation states, the Finnish Alien Act and UNHCR affects the life of interviewees. Second, I grouped and analysed the translocational activities (such as contacts with relatives or friends living in the other country), which are connected to the everyday life of interviewees. Lastly, the local activities, such as social relations to integration workers and local people, were analysed. I provide some direct quotations in order to give a richer picture for my data. In quotations, “I” means Interviewer, “W” is woman and “M” is man.

5. Transnational power in the refugees’ lives

I separate transnational from translocational in order to refer to the activities of the international community, where nation states are a central stakeholder with the UNHCR. Here, transnational means the resettlement decisions and possibilities of family reunification. Basically, the situation of refugees and asylum seekers is transnational, because they have had to leave their habitual residencies. In the lives of quota refugees, the power of nation states and the UNHCR is enormous because refugees are not able select the country of resettlement themselves even if they have relatives in a particular country. The next quotation is typical in my data: “W: We have many relatives in Europe and in Asia, I have a brother in Sweden, whom I’ve not seen for 6 years. I’d like that we all could live in the same country. This is the most difficult thing in my life”.

This quotation is typical of the situation for refugees whose family members live in different countries and who cannot get residence permits to the same country. It was also told that if they are selected for resettlement in Finland they could not refuse to go to, although they might want to wait for the possibility of being resettled in countries where they already have relatives living. They are denied freedom of movement and this limits their agency. Here we see how refugee status does have a different effect to that of the status of voluntary migrants, since they were selected and could not refuse to go. On the one hand, interviewees expressed their gratitude towards the Finnish state, that they have been selected to be here, and that now they

are in a safe place. This was repeated many times, that “we are safe, which is important”. However, on the other hand, the fragmented social relations remain unchanged, which was expressed as sadness and the most difficult thing in their current life situation. The state also has an impact on their possibilities for travelling before getting a travel document, which can take from several months to a year. It was noted in one interview that “the waiting continues and continues”. In the quotation above, the family member outside of Finland could not come to visit their relatives due to the precarious residence permits in their country.

My data shows that some of the family members have come to Europe during the large-scale migration in 2015. Unfortunately, not all of them were lucky enough to survive while crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The situation, when these stories were told, was so emotional and sensitive that I promised not to give detailed information. These tragic incidents are the consequences of inadequate protection for forced migrants. As Zetter (2015) notes, many forced migrants fall outside the recognized refugee and asylum apparatus. For example, if they do not get access to the UNHCR or find protection in the country where they have escaped to, the reasonable option is selecting a life-threatening journey and to try to find a refuge without waiting for years or sometimes for generations for the possibly of repatriation or getting selected for resettlement. The lack of international protection today affects forced migrants worldwide. As Zetter (2015) notes, they are people that never have the possibly even to apply for refugee status. A large number of asylum seekers globally is a sign that people cannot find durable solutions; for example, resettlement options. By contrast to globally increased protection needs, many European nation states, like Finland, have made amendments to their Aliens Acts in order to prevent people from getting asylum or other residence permits in their territory.

As mentioned in the introduction, changes in the Aliens Act make family reunification harder and often impossible for forced migrants. For example, if a refugee does not start the family reunification process within three months after resettlement, there is an income requirement for being granted a residence permit (Migri, 2020). Furthermore, from 2012 Finland introduced biometric residence permits, which include fingerprints. This means that migrants coming from non-EU countries have to apply personally for a residence permit at the closest Finnish embassy. For many refugees’ family members this is not possible, because the closest Finnish Embassy may be

located in a different country to where the family members reside. Many refugees do not have money for travelling to an Embassy or they cannot fulfil the income requirement. For example, Afghans living in Iran have to travel to India, where the closest Finnish Embassy is located.

Everyday family life and legal citizenship are connected to each other because of the interwoven nature of integration work and immigration policy. In the group interview, some interviewees mentioned that their family reunification was in process, but for reasons of sensitivity they did not want to share their individual situations with others. Research (Hiitola, Turtiainen, & Vuori, 2020) shows that one family member's precarious residency vitally affects the wellbeing of all family members. Their activities are limited to one-day-at-a-time without a positive future. This can be called just "enduring" (Honkasalo, 2008) without a sense of wellbeing. In addition, Hiitola and Vuori (2018) show that service providers treat fathers and mothers differently in those families where one family member is an asylum seeker. They do not necessarily perceive women as individuals who are capable of making their own choices. In a situation where a man is an asylum seeker, his fatherhood and care duties are not recognised. Thus, the nature of the treatment is gendered.

6. Translocational settings in everyday life

The positions of interviewees before and after coming to Finland has an impact on their wellbeing. The main things affecting their wellbeing are, firstly, the education which people have gained before coming to Finland, secondly, their social relations after resettlement, and thirdly, religion as a status and practice are visible in trans-local social relations.

Interviewees talked about the skills and professions which they had gained in their countries of origin. Many of them feel frustrated, because their know-how and skills are not useful in their new circumstances. This has a vital impact on people's everyday lives, wellbeing, and sense of integration. In my data, young educated people expressed that their education is totally useless because they are now being asked to study something else. The following extract illustrates one interviewee's situation:

I: What kind of education did you have before coming to Finland?

W: I studied my own language in the university for the couple of years.

I: So, wouldn't you like to continue these studies here in Finland.

W: But it is not possible to study Arabic here, they told me that I can study practical nursing or laboratory assistant or something like that.

I: No, no, it is possible to study Arabic and there are not so many Arabic teachers in Finland and also you could work as a translator or interpreter in the meantime.

I: Yes, yes, you can study Arabic (a long discussion with an interpreter).

W: But they say in the labour office that I have to study something else.

The local integration workers exercise power over newly arrived refugees by limiting information about the variety of future options. For example, they might not provide enough information about all the possible education and career opportunities available to them. This is because there might be a shortage of low skilled workers in the area, and therefore they only tell newly arrived refugees about education and training which may qualify them for these low skilled jobs that are lacking workers. In addition, integration workers may not be confident about refugees' capabilities to enter higher education. There were many expressions that people felt really frustrated because they were told they must start their education from the beginning, or that they felt humiliated because they have a high level of education but are not getting access to suitable jobs. Some of them also have many unpaid work practices as a part of their integration plan in Finland, but they do not have paid employment. However, even though migrants have higher education qualifications, it does not always guarantee better job opportunities. Research shows (Toivanen, Väänänen, Kurki, Bergbom, & Airila, 2018) that even though education improves the possibilities of getting employment, people who are over-educated for their job were clearly over-represented among immigrants, compared to other sections of the population. This directly affected the quality of life of over-educated people. It is significant that these results are not dependent on language skills or on the time when people came to Finland. Over-educated people reported discrimination in the workplace more often than those who had a job corresponding to their level of education (Toivanen et al., 2018).

It is obvious that being in a minority position has an impact on getting employment in Finland (Forsander, 2004, 2013). Based on the previous research (ibid.) the reason why migrants cannot get jobs is a lack of so called "Finnishness". This means that some employers define the homogenous

qualities of Finnish people, and if a person does not meet these criteria (e.g. hard working, goal-oriented, resilient, good language and social skills) they are not given employment. Also the integration workers in small towns say that many employers are not very willing to employ migrants (forced and voluntary migrants), because their customers are not ready to see workers from minority groups in visible positions, such as cashiers in shops (Turtiainen et al., 2018).

Toivanen's et al. (2018) results are similar to my data in that refugees talked about their frustration and depression because of wasted skills and education. From the intersectional perspective, it is also obvious that holding minority position as migrants intersects with education and employment in a way that highly-educated migrants lose their middle-class positions. Furthermore, educated people are not encouraged to continue their studies, but instead go on to vocational training and study professions determined by labour market demands. Wrede and Nordberg (2010) show that the arrival of immigrants into Finnish working life does not create inequality as a phenomenon, but rather it acts as a catalyst that makes visible the deep-seated inequality-producing processes and practices of working life.

As well as previous education as a marker of social position, everyday trans-local social relations are important for the wellbeing of the refugees. They maintain their relationships with family members, other relatives and friends by using Skype, WhatsApp and phone calls, often on daily bases. They also expressed that sometimes they just cry on Skype because they miss their family and friends or worry about the precarious live situations of relatives. The translocational community can also help in the new local community if their grasp of the Finnish language is limited. One example of this is from the local driving school where teaching is in Finnish. A local friend with some understanding of the language tried to help, but a friend from another Nordic country had a key role because he could follow the teaching material in Swedish and was able to translate it into Arabic. Translations were transmitted via the internet and, so, his friend was helping at a distance. This is an example of how creative practices are invented in translocational social settings.

Religion also operates in the translocational space. In addition, parents from Muslim backgrounds worry about how they will pass on the religion to their children without a community to support them. When asked "what is the most important thing about being a parent", one mother said "as a Muslim,

I hope that my children keep their hearts clean and beautiful”. When I asked the meaning of this, the mother said that it is first of all “respecting others”. However, religious communities can support integration because they share the global religious beliefs and practices with the new local community. A sense of belonging is created before people know each other and this is like a bridge between past and new life situations, enabling a sense of belonging and trust after resettlement (Turtiainen, 2012).

7. Local social relations in focus

The two-way integration, as it is expressed in the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010), takes place in local relations. According to my data, local integration is expressed in relationships and the availability of services, local community, and especially friendships and social relations in work practices based on their integration plans.

Local service providers have a key role in enabling possibilities for the future. Especially at the point of arrival, public authorities are in the front line for providing integration and other services. In rural areas, there are less services provided to migrants than in towns, but in rural areas, there are also some advantages which are expressed in my data: “there was one social assistant, who helped us in all practical issues”. Besides, the social assistant arranged some friendship families, who organised leisure time activities and taught everyday Finnish. Family friends also took newly arrived migrants into town to shop for food, because they had no proper ingredients to cook their “own food”. According to my data, this official social assistance was the main advantage in the rural municipality. The interviewees were the first refugees in the rural municipality and, during the first year, they did not find a sense of belonging there. The only meaningful relationships they had were with the official social assistant and a friendship family, which was arranged by the social assistant. It was also expressed that the most crucial thing improving integration was that the language course was arranged in the village. However, after one year this course ended and there were no possibilities to continue with other studies or get work. Therefore, the refugees moved to the town, where all the young people started to study in the vocational school.

The interview material shows that if the rural municipality does not manage to arrange enough integration services, besides practical social assistance

with everyday life situations, the refugees move out to look for education, networks and employment elsewhere. However, there are also rural municipalities where work, services and everyday activities are available and refugees will stay in these places (Mattila & Björklund, 2013). My findings are in line with the research (Sotkasiira, 2018a,b; Turtiainen et al., 2018), that public authorities do not always have enough time and co-operation with other experts and stakeholders to meet the needs of migrants. For example, sometimes a long-term rehabilitation is needed before refugees with a trauma background will be able to start planning their future. Traumatic symptoms also emerged in my data, but I promised not to write more details since these issues are so sensitive. The optimal situation is that, instead of deciding on behalf of the refugees, integration workers and refugees negotiate together what kind of integration measures are best in this particular life-situation and how these measures support their goals in the future (Turtiainen & Hiitola, 2015). If the needs of migrants are not met integration work turns paradoxically against itself because in these circumstances the integration work is based on governance, such as just filling out pre-prepared forms and guiding to education without careful individual assessment. Besides, ignoring or not acknowledging the needs of individuals and families risks, making migrants passive, because they do not have a sense of being involved in their own lives (Turtiainen et al., 2018).

Services also have an impact on parenthood. Single mothers especially are grateful for day-care services that enable them to go to language classes. However, parents find it challenging to maintain the mother tongues because there are no qualified teachers of these languages at schools in small municipalities. Parents also explained that after learning the language of the host country, they would like to go to work and earn a salary in order to support themselves and not be dependent on social benefits. The next extract illustrates the situation of a middle-aged woman:

W: When I came here [Finland] I felt like all dreams could become fulfilled. I can't read and write and here I can go to school and learn a profession. I have helped people all my life and here I can have a profession and continue helping others.

Here a mother expresses her gratitude for integration training and the possibility to have an education for the first time in her life. According to the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, mothers or fathers can stay

at home during their allowance for parental leave and after that continue integration measures, such as language training. Municipalities are responsible for arranging language training or other integration measures for stay-at-home parents as well. However, research shows (Nordberg, 2015; Turtiainen et al., 2018) that sometimes stay-at-home mothers are not identified as being active while they are at home, even if they undertake many social activities in the community. Particularly their activities in their own community are not recognized as improving their wellbeing and integration (Turtiainen et al., 2018; see also Putnam, 2002). In addition, Nordberg (2015) shows the intersecting of parenthood, gender and ethnicity can marginalize migrant mothers from active citizenship. She illustrates that in Finnish welfare services, there is a contradiction between neoliberal policy rationales of the productive individual and everyday institutional practice that seems to strengthen the position of migrant mothers as long time assigned to the private sphere.

After the large-scale migration in 2015, the hostile environment increased towards refugees and especially young men. In rural municipalities and small towns, these young men may feel lonely as expressed in the following quotation:

I: It seems that you speak good Finnish already, do you have friends with whom you talk?

M: The worst thing here is that the boys don't speak to me, I'm social, I'm used to being with friends and chatting with them. Girls say hello, but boys do not say anything, they just turn their heads away. Only this family friend goes to gym and plays floorball with me, that's it.

This young man suffers from being isolated from his classmates and other social relationships and he feels that the social climate is hostile. For him, the most important thing is to identify socialisation opportunities in everyday settings. This means, for example, spending time together and having hobbies: in the other words, being a young person among other youngsters. By contrast, he mentions family friends, which means that there are local families who would like to become "a friendship family" with refugees. These families are announced to integration workers who, in turn, "match" them with newly arrived refugees. Even though these arranged family friends are needed in order to have at least some local social contacts, young people would also like to have a spontaneous social life with local peers.

The same situation is expressed by many other young people who have refugee backgrounds. Based on Souto's (2011) research, discrimination at

school is the reason why the friendship opportunities for young migrants are limited. In addition, Harinen and Niemelä's study (2005) shows that young men are subject to threats in public places. However, according to Kääriäinen, Ellonen, Peutere, and Sariola (2010), there were no marked differences in the occurrence of violence and bullying between age peers. However, Kääriäinen's study was conducted prior to the changes in the political climate after the large-scale migration in 2015, since when hate speech has been targeted especially towards young men. The small towns, where some of the interviews were conducted, were among the three worst towns for recorded racist crimes. In the most common cases, prejudice or hostility was directed towards a member of an ethnic or national minority by a member of the majority population. The common suspected crimes were assaults and damage to property, such as breaking the windows of their apartments. Reports of offences of hate crime based on religion or belief were cases that targeted Muslims (Rauta, 2018). Besides the feeling of isolation, interviewed young people talked about their lives as any young people in Finland would – having hobbies, going to school, listening to music and dreaming of having a good education. Going to university constitutes a dream for many young migrants.

However, young migrants have different challenges to the youngsters from the majority group. According to previous studies (Turtiainen & Rezai, 2018; Turtiainen et al., 2018), young migrants need a lot of support of adults and a lot of time to negotiate their future possibilities. They may lack support from their parents or other relatives, who often live in their home country or face their own challenges in their lives. The identity formation of young people happens in specific contexts, in interpersonal relations, a sense of belonging, and in different local and translocational settings (Haikkola, 2012; Rastas, 2005). Thus, discrimination and racism may cause serious harm to young people's possibilities for positive identity formation (Turtiainen & Rezai, 2018).

Feelings of isolation are also expressed by the adults in their work practice and neighbourhood. In the next extract, the situation in work practice, which is based on integration plan, is expressed as following:

M: When my teacher is coming to my work practice place, I can say that it is like my father is coming. Finnish people have the same face appearance, I don't know when they are happy and when they are critical. When I ask them something, they just look at their watches, I cannot ask anything from my colleague.

In this quote, the interviewee expresses the close relationship to his teacher (like a father) from the integration course, who he has got to know over the previous months. Usually students have their work practices during the course, and their teachers come to the workplaces to assess their work together with the workplace managers. In contrast, another interviewee expresses that it is hard to establish communication with co-workers in order to know if they are satisfied with the quality of his work or to socialise with them. Looking at the watch is a sign that the workers do not have time to or do not want to talk. The same feelings are conveyed in many other situations, which also limits the possibilities to have social relationships with local people and opportunities to speak Finnish.

It is obvious that refugees need friends and other close relationships on a daily basis for maintaining their wellbeing. So, on the one hand, refugees need these “thick social relations” but also thin ones. “Thin social relations” can be fundamental in the feelings of belonging in the community, as Kokkonen (2010) has shown in her studies on the integration of refugees. Thin relations mean, for example, official contacts in services, shops or just saying hello to the neighbours. One male interviewee summarised that “it was a strange feeling when the social assistants [in small town] don’t express in the shop or street that she knows me. Interpersonal relations are everything we need”. This confusion arises from the need for thin social relations or the lack of any meaningful interpersonal relations. A social assistant’s behaviour may correspond to the need to separate work from private life, even though this kind of lack of communication may give rise to feelings of isolation.

8. Conclusions

Refugees’ social relations are fragmented, which affects their wellbeing before and after resettlement. Although the international community can solve their protection needs, it does not often solve the possibilities for family life in the same country. All family members cannot always get residency in the same country, and this also affects the wellbeing of those who already live in Finland (Hiitola & Vuori, 2018; Hiitola et al., 2020). In Finland, family reunification is often impossible for refugees and other forced migrants (Fingerroos et al., 2016; Migri, 2020; Pellander, 2016). However, Finnish citizenship enables an easier reunification process, because individuals do not need to meet the

income requirement, which is similar to, for example, asylum seekers, who have international protection, or refugees who have lived in Finland for more than three months after getting their first residence permit (Migri, 2020). Consequently, citizenship and the status of residency have a serious impact on family life for people living in vulnerable situations. In other words, possibilities for family life intersect with citizenship and financial deprivation.

The central finding concerns social class, which intersects with education in a way that educated refugees lose their position. This is connected to being in a minority position and especially the power of the integration workers, who do not assist refugees to continue their high-level education (Toivanen et al., 2018; Turtiainen et al., 2018). Instead, they are assisted to take vocational training, which is not necessarily based on their previous education but determined by a shortage of labour in certain fields in the municipality. In addition, many employers are not willing to give work to migrants. The latter outcome seems to be more common in rural areas where companies do not have a workforce shortage. However, Peltola (2014) shows that migrants' social statuses were not constructed only in relation to Finnish society – where a socio-economic and discursively produced status was rather weak – but were also based on their middle-class backgrounds in their former home countries. This means that despite the situation in Finland, their backgrounds enabled them to preserve a sense of social status and to engage in other activities (e.g. local cultural activities) that maintained this.

The way gender intersects with class is visible (and very interesting), since women who have never studied are able to do so for the first time whilst women of a higher class who have already studied are encouraged to study for lower skilled jobs, such as assistant nursing. This is interesting from an intersectional perspective as it suggests that they are all treated the same way irrespective of class and qualifications – i.e. the single category of the refugee.

Gender and age intersect in a way that young men suffer discrimination in everyday encounters at school and in leisure time (Harinen & Niemelä, 2005; Souto, 2011). It seems that the first refugees in rural areas may suffer discrimination and they find it hard to establish social relations. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the general societal and political climate of hate speech towards young Muslim men. My findings on discrimination are in line with previous research conducted in the small town Lieksa, where the first refugees were resettled and asylum seekers have moved after acquiring residence permits (Sotkasiira & Haverinen, 2016). Local people there have

actively protested against their presence. This has happened even though refugee community members were active; for example, forming associations and starting their own companies. However, local people tried to restrict their active “citizenship capacity” (Sotkasiira & Haverinen, 2016, p. 120).

My research results are not in line with the goals of the Act (2010) that integration is a two-way process, where the whole society is changing because of forced and voluntary migration. It seems that, especially in rural municipalities and small towns, refugees are distinctly not welcomed by the local community. However, there are also good examples, which show how newcomers that are welcomed contribute to the working and social life in the community (Mattila & Björklund, 2013; Yle, 2016). The basis of the two-way integration process is that refugees and other migrants are identified as individuals, bringing their knowhow and skills to contribute the local community and society (Turtiainen, 2012). One important issue is the recognition of past education at both vocational and higher level. Even though there are also projects in Finnish universities, and national level guidelines of recognising education gained outside Finland (Recognition Flow Chart, 2020), at the local level refugees are not assisted to continue in higher education.

My results show that the translocational and intersectional issues are present often at the same time and affect refugees’ wellbeing and integration in the new country. Intersections of social class, gender, age, citizenship, family life and other social relations turn out to be useful factors of integration, even if the interview material is limited. Charlotte-Anne Malischewski (2016) shows interestingly, in the context of Northern Ireland, that it is not only the heterogeneous group of refugees and asylum seekers but also the heterogeneity of host society and communities, which must be considered as bases of understanding the integration processes. This means that the societies where newcomers integrate may have their own pre-existing conflicting social divisions. Thus, not only does the intersectionality of newcomers need to be considered, but also the classes, religions, political parties, etc., of the places where they are to integrate. She suggests a modified version of intersectionality as a tool that can be used to explore and understand the complex nature of social divisions. Malischewski (2016) reminds us that even though sectarianism is widely condemned in modern democracies, the other divisions, such as gender, race and class are normalized and that these divisions do operate in a very similar manner.

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CHAPTER 6

BECOMING SOUTH AUSTRALIAN: SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND HUMANITARIAN MIGRANT PERSPECTIVES ON SETTLEMENT AND BELONGING

Susanne Schech

1. Introduction

Refugees and asylum seekers are almost invariably framed as a problem in academic, policy and public discourses (Agier, 2010; Haddad, 2008; Nyers, 2005). They are “the ‘wretched of the earth’, forced from their home countries and dependent on the goodwill of receiving countries” (McMaster, 2001, p. 8). Although wealthy countries host only a relatively small share of humanitarian migrants (UNHCR, 2019), they have struggled to find the right balance between the obligation to protect those who seek asylum within their borders, and the desire to protect these borders against unwanted strangers who might pose a threat to social, economic and/or political stability. Australia is a case in point despite being a nation of immigrants with a successful history of settling refugees (Crock, Saul, & Dastyari, 2006). In the past two decades, Australia has attracted attention mainly for its restrictive policies designed to block access to protection and externalise migration control through excising part of its territory from immigration law and outsourcing detention and processing of asylum seekers to poorer neighbouring countries (Frelick, Keyser, & Podkul, 2016).

The problematisation of refugees does not end with being granted refugee status or even citizenship in the host country. The “dichotomies and grey areas between the internal and the external” (Haddad, 2008, p. 3) extend into the space of the host society. Displaced people are placed outside the ordinary human law (framed by nation, state and society) by their “personal experience of destruction of places, goods and human beings” (Agier, 2008, p. 24) to which new wounds are added during flight and by post-migration stress. Much of the research on refugees in Australia has portrayed refugees as

victims with problems that require long-term attention and management by trauma specialists, resettlement case workers, social and community workers. The focus on refugees' problematic baggage has encouraged a deficit model in refugee settlement which "devalues people and reinforces the view in the mainstream population that refugees are a liability" (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013, p. 49). It has also impeded broader analysis of other factors in the settlement experience that refugees share with other migrants, such as class, gender, skin colour and religion (Neumann, Gifford, Lems, & Scherr, 2014). More recent research has challenged this prevalent view by positioning the refugee as a migrant with entitlements and highlighting their agency and what they bring and contribute to host societies, particularly if a longer-term perspective is adopted (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014a; Hugo, 2014a). Such research questions the division between refugees and economic migrants, and between humanitarian and national interest, which is so deeply ingrained in Australian public policy and discourse (Schech, 2012).

Building on this work, this chapter offers a different perspective to the deficit approach to settlement by examining settlement and integration through the prism of place-based processes of granting and claiming belonging. It argues that although immigration policy is a responsibility of the Australian federal government, lower levels of governments play an important role in granting belonging as they deliver services related to housing, education, health and law and order that are key to migrant settlement and integration. In many ways, the substantive rights of citizens and non-citizens depend on how laws and policies are interpreted, implemented and challenged at the sub-state level. It is here that humanitarian entrants claim and enact belonging through everyday practices that include home making, exercising their rights to services, working, and developing social networks. When focusing on practices of settlement and integration, the distinction between refugee and migrant settler loses meaning. The sociological reality is that voluntary and forced migrants alike are motivated by hopes for a better life, and thus, "voluntary and forced migration should be seen as two extremes of one long continuum" (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 56).

The second point of this chapter is that although migration is a responsibility of sovereign states, lower levels governments have interests in immigration and integration policies. Recent work on territorial politics shows this to be the case in multinational states with distinctive cultures and languages (Adam, 2018; Zapata-Barrero & Barker, 2014). But territorial interests in

migration also exist in federal countries like Australia where the historical and institutional establishment of the states within the federation has ensured the continuing significance of state-level politics and economic development (Aroney & Sharman, 2018). By examining the division of powers and responsibilities in granting entry and granting belonging, territorial perspectives on settlement and integration come to the fore which enable a more nuanced analysis of the economic – humanitarian migrant divide.

This chapter follows this vein of research by examining two interconnected sides of belonging – claiming and granting – through a range of data sources including research with humanitarian entrants, parliamentary archives and government reports in South Australia, one of eight states and territories in the Australian federation. In the following sections the chapter provides a background for humanitarian migration, settlement and integration in the Australian context and discusses how territorial interests in migration shapes South Australian government discourses and policies. The third section explores recent research on the perspectives of humanitarian entrants and their efforts to claim belonging in South Australia. The chapter concludes by arguing that although the division between humanitarian and economic migration is blurring in the settlement process, sub-state governments in Australia have been slow to take initiatives to support the integration of humanitarian entrants, and calls for more detailed research on the role of humanitarian migration in the development of lagging regions, such as South Australia.

2. Humanitarian entrants, settlement, and belonging

First it is necessary to clarify some key concepts. The term ‘humanitarian entrants’ is used in this chapter to refer to persons who have entered Australia as refugees or asylum seekers. Although “humanitarian” is a contested term (Every, 2008), it is used here to sidestep the highly politicised distinction between asylum seeker and refugee, and to highlight that the main difference is that the latter has been able to prove, to the satisfaction of her host, the forced nature of her flight and that her fear of persecution is well-founded. As the UNHCR notes, “[t]he formal definition, for instance through individual refugee status determination, does not establish refugee status, but confirms it” (UNHCR, 2008, p. 13). “Entrant” emphasises both the mode of arrival and the possibility of moving out of the refugee label.

Many researchers have pointed out that “refugeeness” (Malkki, 1995) or “refugeehood” (Haddad, 2008) is a label that confines those subjected to it to a depoliticized humanitarian space (Nyers 2005, p. xiv) and limits a person’s ability to renegotiate the terms of her identity and claim her right to belong (Kumsa, 2006; Zetter, 2007).

Settlement and integration are terms used interchangeably to denote the process of becoming Australian. The Australian government prefers the term “settlement” to refer to the first five years of permanent residence in Australia which it describes as “a time of adjustment as migrants and new arrivals seek to become oriented, established, integrated and independent in their communities” (Australian Government, 2016, p. 2). During this period humanitarian entrants and some other migrant categories are eligible for settlement services. Settlement resonates with ideas of Australia as a settler society in which immigrants are essential human resources and cultural ingredients for nation-building, and where “anyone can come from anywhere and emerge as ‘one of us’ within a generation or two” (Dauvergne, 2016, p. 81). At the same time, Australia’s history of immigration is also shaped by exclusion and fear of cultural others, and by strict government control that is facilitated by the country’s island position (McMaster, 2001).

Integration is a more complex term, which in Strang and Ager’s (2010) formulation encompasses not only measurable outcomes such as employment and housing but also processes of forming of relationships across multiple and overlapping identities, and institutions capable of serving a culturally diverse population. Nevertheless, like settlement, the concept of integration has been criticised for being too narrowly focused on empirical outcomes that can be measured, and for assuming a clearly defined, usually white, host society into which humanitarian entrants can integrate (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). While noting the limitations of both terms, this chapter will use settlement in reference to specific services provided by the Australian government, and integration to refer to longer-term processes of establishing belonging.

Although nation-states govern immigration, it is recognised that sub-state governments with powers over social, cultural, economic and political matters are important actors in the reception and integration of migrants (Strang & Ager, 2010). Divided powers regarding admission, reception/settlement and integration can lead to tensions “between who decides and who does” (Zapata-Barrero & Barker, 2014, p. 19). The ways in which sub-state

governments view migration may conflict with the interests of the national government on questions of identity, membership, culture and economy. In federal countries like Australia (also referred to as a Commonwealth), sub-national states have power over many aspects of government (Aroney & Sharman, 2018). The “prism of territorial interests” in migration (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014, p. 6) is shaped by economic and labour needs or by demographic concerns to secure a place-based future in a global economy. While admission and reception are driven by federal government policies and funding, settlement is mediated by locally based actors, including private sector or non-government settlement service providers, local governments, community groups and employers (Boese & Phillips, 2017). The decentralisation of responsibilities to lower levels of government and other local actors contributes to the creation of multi-layered citizenship. As Yuval-Davis points out, migrants’ “lives are shaped by their rights and obligations in local, ethnic, religious, national, regional, transnational, and international political communities” (Yuval-Davis, 2013, p. 57). Alongside the nation-state other political actors are granting, contesting and challenging these rights and obligations, often in pursuit of their own community building projects and territorial interests.

Research by Yuval-Davis and others (Anthias, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Yuval-Davis, Anthias, & Kofman, 2005) draws an analytical distinction between the individual sense of belonging and the politics of belonging, which allows belonging to be recognised as “mediated by relations of power as well as personal experience and affiliation” (Wright, 2015, p. 400). At the individual level, belonging involves inhabiting or being in place; it involves place-making through relating with humans and others including land, buildings, institutions, plants and food (Wright, 2015). As individuals perform belonging through repetitive practices that connect them to specific social and cultural spaces (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 203), they develop a sense of being part of the social fabric (Anthias, 2006, p. 21). Being legally and physically secure, sharing the language, practicing cultural traditions and material security through work are all factors that contribute to a migrant’s sense of belonging, as does the length of time spent living in a place (Antonsich, 2010). This highlights the close link between belonging and a person’s rights and entitlements to conduct a fulfilling life. Lacking these rights can conversely produce a feeling of not belonging, disconnection, exclusion, disenfranchisement or marginalization (Wright, 2015, p. 395).

Hence, individual belonging is not just an individual place-making; it also involves ethical, social and political processes of making and challenging the boundaries of communities of belonging. Migrant belonging has often been studied in relation to the nation-state through explorations of migrants' citizenship, ties to homeland and/or country of settlement (Ho, 2009; Staeheli & Nagel, 2006). By granting or withholding formal citizenship to immigrants, nation-states maintain the boundaries of the belonging to the national community. Nation-state-centred views of citizenship have been challenged by migration, globalisation and neoliberal economic worldviews, which has led to a broader concept of citizenship as the terms on which people "participate in the collective life and the forms of agency they are able to exercise" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 22). Such a rights-based notion of citizenship brings to the fore the ways in which people claim belonging at multiple spatial levels and the roles that sub-national actors play in granting rights that enable full participation in the community.

3. The Australian migration and humanitarian settlement regime

Immigration is centrally administered by the Australian government in pursuit of the goal of "Building Australia's future through the well-managed entry and settlement of people" (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2015). It uses a complex system of over 200 national and regional temporary and permanent migrant visas to fine-tune its decisions on who comes to Australia and under what circumstances. This exceptionally high level of control over immigration has been facilitated by Australia's island geography (Hugo, 2014b, p. 869). Separate targets are set annually for the Humanitarian Program and the Migration Program, where migrants are selected for their potential to contribute to the Australian economy. Between July 2017 and June 2018, 162,000 persons arrived Australia for permanent settlement under the Migration Program, which comprises two main streams – skilled migrants and family migrants (Department of Home Affairs, 2018a). In the same period, 16,250 places were set aside for permanent settlement under the Humanitarian Program (Department of Home Affairs, 2018b). For the major part of recent decades, Australia's refugee intake lingered below 10 per cent of the total immigration intake (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013). Asylum seekers who have travelled to Australia by boat or air 'illegally' – that is,

without a valid visa – are either sent to off-shore processing centres, or may be given temporary protection visas in Australia but remain excluded from the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP).

The federal government funded HSP aims to support humanitarian entrants in becoming self-reliant and active members of the Australian community. The HSP is the latest version of the federal support for initial settlement, following in the footsteps of the Humanitarian Settlement Services (2011-2017) and the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (2005-2010). While the program has been tweaked in each iteration to restrict access, adjust the timespan or improve the services, its fundamental aims, contents and mode of delivery have remained the same. The HSP is contracted to regional service providers who assist humanitarian entrants with refugee status in achieving outcomes in areas that are considered vital to successful settlement including employment, education and training, housing, physical and mental health and well-being, community participating and networking, family functioning and social support, justice and language services (Department of Social Services, 2018a). These areas of settlement align with the domains of integration in Ager and Strang's framework, which indicates that the HSP provides significant and comprehensive settlement support. The HSP is designed to cooperate with mainstream government services. However, the program tends to focus on case-by-case individualised assistance rather than on relational aspects of integration, for example, assisting humanitarian entrants in forming networks and a sense of belonging in the wider community. Even prioritised aspects such as employment, housing and English language acquisition continue to be a challenge for many humanitarian entrants after they exited the program (Fozdar & Hartley, 2013).

Beyond the HSP, much of the work of settlement at the local level involves local governments and civil society organisations. A Settlement Grants scheme, also federally funded, targets humanitarian entrants and other permanent migrants in their first five years of life in Australia (Department of Social Services, 2018b). It is a competitive scheme to which community organisations and lower levels of governments can apply for specific programs. As a mainstream service provider, the South Australian government exercises significant power over domains of integration such as education, health, employment, housing, security and justice. In addition, it has responsibilities for social inclusion and a sub-national ethnic affairs bureaucracy, the Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC), that contributes

to integration through their “community outreach, capacity-building, and the implementation of rights-based policies” (Hawthorne, 2012, p. 46). At this level, social cohesion and retention of migrants and refugees is considered at least as important as their potential economic contribution (Boese & Phillips, 2017, p. 389), and the distinction between the two migration pathways is becoming less relevant. However, the coordination between an array of actors in the settlement space and levels of government is complex, and there are overlaps and gaps in settlement services, as will be shown below in the South Australian case.

4. South Australia’s territorial interests

South Australia is one of six states and two territories in the Australian federation. For several decades it has occupied a peripheral position in the Australian space economy due to its small population (1.7 million in 2018) and low levels of demographic and economic growth. In 2004, the SA state government adopted a population policy with international migration at its core. South Australia has been one of the strongest users of the State Specific and Regional Migration scheme which is designed to direct skilled migrants to lagging regions (Hugo, 2008). The SA state government also adopted “a deliberate strategy to attract refugee-humanitarian settlers to the state as part of its attempt to lift immigration levels” (Hugo 2011, p. 115). As a result of this proactive role in immigration and settlement, 14 per cent of the more than 66,000 new migrants that entered South Australia between 2006 and 2011 were humanitarian entrants, compared with eight per cent nationally (Parliament of South Australia, 2013, p. 6).

Although the South Australia state has no power to decide who enters the country, it has exercised its interests in migration by negotiating with the federal government a larger share of both skilled and humanitarian migrants. Seen through the prism of territorial interests, the boundaries between humanitarian and other migrants are blurring. Analysis of the speeches presented in the South Australian parliament in the 2000s reveals an active interest in migration at a time of intense debate over restrictive asylum policies (Schech, 2012). However, these parliamentary “discourses and practices of socio-spatial in/exclusion” (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649) also reveal an ambivalent attitude towards state responsibility for new migrants which impacts on the

politics of belonging. Some South Australian parliamentarians challenged the assumption that humanitarian entrants came without social capital and pointed out that most had skills that are needed in South Australia. Others criticised the State Government's emphasis on recruiting skilled and business migrants and argued that humanitarian entrants would make better citizens and had more to work for than business migrants, who "basically can buy their way in" (SA Assembly 2002-03: 1744, cited in Schech, 2012, p. 66). This view is supported by research that humanitarian settlers in Australia are delivering a demographic dividend through their youthful age structure and the lowest rate of settler loss of all visa categories (Hugo, 2011, p. 99). Only 12 per cent of humanitarian entrants leave the state of South Australia, compared to 25-40 per cent of other migrant categories (Parliament of South Australia, 2013, p. 153). However, parliamentarians also alleged that the federally funded settlement program offered inadequate support to humanitarian entrants from places that are "culturally and linguistically more remote from life in Australia" (SA Assembly, 2006-07: 126, cited in Schech, 2012, p. 66). To avert welfare dependence and the formation of a "new underclass", they called for more significant and long-term investment from the federal government (Schech, 2012, p. 67).

The reticence of the South Australian state to take a more active role in the settlement of humanitarian entrants in its territory was pierced in 2008, when a violent altercation among teenagers of refugee background led to the death of Daniel Thongjang, described in the news as "Sudanese youth". Multicultural SA, the government's multicultural agency, undertook a survey of the services provided to humanitarian entrants to identify gaps that may prevent them from enjoying the same opportunities as other South Australians within 12 months of residency, or in other words, get "a fair go" (Government of South Australia, 2012, p. 4). Based on broad consultations with refugee and migrant communities and settlement service providers, the report found insufficient entitlements and support constrained humanitarian entrants' ability to learn English, enter employment, and meet their housing and health needs. This resulted in social exclusion and a sense of non-belonging, with the report noting that "almost all the settlement issues outlined in this report result in the isolation of the individual" (Government of South Australia, 2012, p. 31). As a practical outcome, an online Settlement Service Finder was established to assist new migrants find their way through the complex landscape of service providers and enable more equitable access.

More importantly, the report called for improvements in the accessibility and quality of services.

Relatedly in 2010, the Social Development Committee of the SA Parliament launched an inquiry into migrant integration, with the objective to “investigate the social, educational and economic participation of new migrants in South Australia, to understand their level of integration and adjustment to life in a new culture and to identify any barriers that may exist” (Parliament of South Australia, 2013, p. 1). This resulted in the New Migrant Report (NMR) based on submissions by new migrants, state government departments, non-government and community organisations involved in migrant settlement. The Report identified humanitarian entrants as “undoubtedly the most vulnerable of all new migrants” but acknowledged that some other migrant groups faced similar challenges in settling (Parliament of South Australia, 2013, pp. 104, 127). For example, the growing ranks of temporary migrants on work-related visas have been described as “precarious subjects” who are unlikely to be more than “spectators of the Australian multicultural project” (Koleth, 2017, p. 34). Echoing the Multicultural SA report, the NMR highlighted the diversity of migrants and the disparate array of services, stating that “systematic planning and co-ordination is necessary to respond to the complexity and diversity of needs” (Parliament of South Australia, 2013, p. 95). In its response to the report, the SA government acknowledged the importance of attracting and retaining new arrivals within South Australia. In 2016 the SA government announced an increase in funding to its multicultural affairs agency to implement a Multicultural Action Plan. Key actions related to NMR recommendations include the undertaking to build meeting places and facilities for culturally diverse communities, update government policy to make it more culturally inclusive, and improve the way government departments respond to cultural diversity in their service delivery (Government of South Australia, 2016).

5. Claiming belonging: the agency of humanitarian entrants

Shifting from the state perspective on settlement, this section explores the experience of humanitarian entrants and their efforts to claim belonging in South Australia. While the settlement discourse emphasises the role of governments in granting belonging, it is important to recognise the agency

of humanitarian entrants in creating spaces of belonging. Exploring humanitarian entrants' actions and perspectives in three key areas of employment, civic engagement and housing provides a counterbalance to stereotypes of refugees as passive victims who depend on social security provided by host governments (Nyers, 2005). This section discusses two recent studies conducted in South Australia that offer useful insights into the perspectives, experiences and agency of humanitarian entrants regarding three areas that are central to claiming belonging – work, civic engagement, and making a home.

In contrast to the prevalent focus of refugee researchers on the early phase of settlement, demographer Graeme Hugo's study provides a window on the longer-term experiences of people with humanitarian backgrounds (Hugo, 2011). Two arguments are highlighted here that are particularly relevant to the ways in which humanitarian entrants claim belonging. Firstly, the study uses census and survey data to mount a strong argument for taking a longer-term view on the economic contribution of humanitarian migrants by including their children. It acknowledges that humanitarian entrants have a more difficult start than other migrants and experience very high levels of unemployment in the first years of settlement, particularly if they face significant health problems, language barriers, discrimination in the labour market and difficulties in transferring their educational and professional qualifications. Over time, however, the difference in labour force participation between migrants of humanitarian backgrounds and other migrants and Australian-born people is steadily reduced, and within less than a generation it is completely erased (Hugo, 2011, p. 112). Humanitarian settlers are more likely to start their own business compared to other migrant groups or the Australian-born, and a significant minority bring entrepreneurial skills and experience with them (Hugo, 2011, p. 118). Humanitarian entrants also fill labour supply gaps by taking up lower skilled jobs in rural industries in Australia (Broadbent, Cacciattolo, & Carpenter, 2007; Hugo, 2011, p. 252). The strong desire to claim economic citizenship is illustrated by a study of humanitarian entrants who took the initiative to move from South Australia's capital city to a small town nearby that offered employment in a meat processing factory (Taylor-Neumann & Balasingam, 2013). Gainful employment resulted in higher satisfaction among the settlers with their income compared to their metropolitan counterparts. Living in a small town also brought positive experiences with the resident community which the refugee settlers found friendly, welcoming and accepting (Taylor-Neumann & Balasingam, 2013, p.

171). Research findings such as these contest the representation of humanitarian entrants as an economic burden and recast them as economic agents.

The second argument relates to social and civic agency. Studies have consistently found high levels of social interaction and civic activity among humanitarian entrants. A survey of 252 humanitarian entrants in Adelaide showed that the majority socialised with extended family and friends at least once a week. They made connections primarily through their ethnic community networks, government funded English classes and places of worship. One third also reported making new friends among their neighbours. The survey also found a high level of informal volunteer work by humanitarian entrants which in the early period of settlement tends to be “directed into assisting new arrivals from their own communities to settle” (Hugo, 2011, p. 217). In the Adelaide survey, more than half of the respondents were active members of a community organisation (Hugo, 2011, p. 238). The importance of ethnic community connections is reflected in local settlement patterns. Humanitarian entrants are attracted to parts of Adelaide where they can live close to fellow settlers who speak same language and have similar cultural & religious backgrounds. Such networks not only assist them in adjusting to life in a new country but to access “goods and services, including those provided by different levels of government, which will impinge on the speed and level of their adjustment” (Hugo, 2011, p. 83). Settlement service providers recognise the pivotal role played by ethnic community networks in integration and encourage community formation by strategically locating service hubs. The South Australian government describes its practice to achieve settlement outcomes as a “place-based approach” whereby settlement services are located in city areas of humanitarian settlement clusters (Government of South Australia, 2017, p. 7).

Housing and having a home are a critical aspect of refugee settlement and integration (Strang & Ager, 2010). Access to secure housing is considered “vital for the development of ontological security” as it assists “with the process of rebuilding trust in one’s surrounding and confidence in how to ‘be’ in the world” (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014b, p. 168). The authors of a recent South Australian study argue that a home is to establishing a new life and a sense of belonging: “a home is not just a physical dwelling” but also a source of security and safety that “people linked to health and wellbeing” (Ziersch, Due, Walsh, & Arthurson, 2017, p. 43). Based on a survey of 423 humanitarian entrants within their first seven years of settlement, the study found

that although housing in Adelaide is less expensive than in other Australian metropolitan areas, most survey respondents struggled to find and keep affordable housing. Over 85 per cent relied on social benefits for their income and the constant worry about the insecurity, high cost and poor quality of the housing they were able to access caused them stress and health problems. Short rental contracts exacerbate housing insecurity, with two thirds of the survey respondents reported that they were either looking for other housing, or were unsure if they would stay in their current home. Even in this challenging context, humanitarian entrants exercised independent agency in trying to improve their housing situation, as demonstrated by one asylum seeker quoted in the study: “I think now I am OK because it is three years later and I have lived in three houses and I have a good background and [I] am tidy and pay the rent on time, but at first it was really hard” (Ziersch et al., 2017, p. 42). While formal settlement service providers were instrumental in finding the first, usually temporary, accommodation, it was mostly the humanitarian entrants themselves who found subsequent housing through their social connections ranging from trusted local professionals to “a cousin of a friend” (Ziersch et al., 2017, p. 27).

Satisfaction with housing is closely connected with feeling at home in the neighbourhood. The study found that a large majority of humanitarian entrants were happy with their neighbourhood and only 10 percent expressed discontent due to feeling unsafe with their neighbours or in their local area. Key criteria for a good neighbourhood were feeling safe, having good neighbours and social connections, and being able to easily access good amenities (Ziersch et al., 2017, p. 20). People were prepared to put up with poorer housing conditions if they could be close to neighbours and cultural networks that they could turn to for help. As one humanitarian entrant explained, he coped with his housing problems “because of the peace of mind I have here”; what mattered was “to live in a suburb which is really good” (Ziersch et al., 2017, p. 24). By seeking out such “good suburbs” humanitarian entrants created the places in which they could feel at home and where they had family and friends. When asked about their sense of belonging in Australia, the overwhelming majority said they belonged to a moderate or great extent. Considering that only a small proportion of the survey respondents were in paid employment and many were experiencing housing problems, this indicates that most humanitarian entrants had settled well and were optimistic about their future. Least belonging was expressed by asylum seekers who

were excluded from formal settlement services. The report recommended that increased funding be directed to this group, arguing that “this would be money well spent given that many will eventually settle in Australia and providing the best start to their time here will maximise the chance of successful settlement” (Ziersch et al., 2017, p. 52).

In summary, research with humanitarian entrants in South Australia shows that they actively claim belonging through everyday practices such as home making, accessing services and engaging in paid and voluntary work. Research elsewhere in Australia confirms that refugees experience belonging first and foremost through their access to rights and services, that is, in civic or procedural terms (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014a). These everyday practices occur at the local level and in policy areas that fall under responsibility of state governments in Australia, such as health, education, urban affairs, transport, local economy and the administration of justice. Beyond the initial period of federal government assisted settlement, it is state and local governments that hold the keys to empowering people and encouraging their sense of local belonging. Inclusive, non-discriminatory services that meet the needs of a diverse population and active measures to increase ethnic diversity in South Australian institutions, workplaces and services will broaden the opportunity structures for humanitarian migrants and support their own efforts to achieve a place-based belonging.

6. Conclusion

The Australian nation-state, like other wealthy states around the world, has actively worked to discourage humanitarian migrants from entering its territory at a time of growing global demand for places of refuge. Unlike many wealthy states, Australia is also a settler colonial society that has been built on immigration. Like ships passing in the night, increasingly hostile and oppressive policies towards humanitarian migrants coexist with a migration policy that sets large annual migrant intakes to drive economic growth, meet labour needs and increase the population (Dauvergne, 2016). This chapter explored how the policy disconnect between humanitarian and economic migration plays out in South Australia, a small state in the Australian federation that has experienced demographic ageing and economic stagnation in recent decades. While immigration and initial humanitarian settlement services in Australia

are a federal government responsibility, sub-national governments control many services that are key to integration. The division “between who decides and who does” (Zapata-Barrero & Barker, 2014, p. 19) in Australia, where immigration and settlement policy are decided by the federal government and integration is the responsibility of lower level governments, can create a space in which the economic/humanitarian migrant divide is blurred. The chapter attempted to demonstrate this through a discussion of political and policy discourse in South Australia.

The South Australian political institutions have become more actively engaged in immigration and refugee debates in the 2000s. Using a territorial political lens, some South Australian policy and law makers have proposed an alternative view of the humanitarian entrant as a settler who contributes to the state’s future in the longer term. Portrayals of humanitarian migrants as productive, skilled and enterprising individuals have supported arguments that they should be included in South Australia’s efforts to improve its demographic and economic fortunes and enrich its cultural fabric through a pro-immigration strategy. This view also informed the SA parliamentary inquiry into “new migrants” which identified several areas of action by the state government that could facilitate their integration and retention in South Australia (Parliament of South Australia, 2013, p. 155). Given their greater propensity to remain in South Australia, successfully settled humanitarian entrants could play the role of “location leader” in the upturn of migration to South Australia (Hugo, 2011, p. 92). However, despite its distinctive socio-economic and demographic interests in migration, the South Australian state has been slow to recognise the skills, talents, and aspirations of humanitarian entrants, and reticent in adopting policies to create an enabling environment where they are encouraged to participate in the social and economic life of their society.

To explore the perspectives and agencies of humanitarian entrants in the South Australian space, this chapter employed Yuval-Davis’ (2006) analytical distinction between the individual sense and practices of belonging, and the politics of belonging that bring into focus the role of rights and entitlements to services. With the significant power that sub-national governments have over services that enable participation in the social and economic life of the local place, they hold the keys to integration and belonging. Beyond the first 12-18 months of federal funded settlement services, it is services provided by sub-national state and local governments that humanitarian entrants

access for housing, education, health, transport, justice and social connection. Humanitarian entrants in South Australia also claim belonging through their own actions (Hugo, 2011; Ziersch et al., 2017). Their efforts to achieve a place-based belonging through social, cultural and economic contributions and home making practices can be better supported by sub-national government action to enhance their entitlements, rights and social inclusion.

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CHAPTER 7

THE [DIS]ORDER OF THE SPANISH ASYLUM RECEPTION SYSTEM

Olga Jubany
Alèxia Rué

1. Introduction: from hospitality to abandonment

While Spain was for the most part of the first decade of the 21st century one of the main migration gateways to Europe, the number of asylum seekers in this state had always been below the European Union average (Ferrero, 2016). In a context of a growing economy, coupled with a relatively accommodating immigration law, during this decade refugees often opted for more accessible paths of regularisation even if they would have probably been eligible for asylum. However, the Venezuelan crisis, the increased difficulties to reach other ports of entry in the Mediterranean, and the hardening of immigration policies across Europe, among other factors, contributed to Spain becoming one of the main asylum receiving countries in the European Union in 2009 (Eurostat, 2019a).

During the last decade within the European Union the Spanish asylum reception system has tended to be perceived as particularly hospitable, mainly due to its focus on integration and autonomy (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2019). Common approaches to asylum reception in the EU have tended to promote direct provision and isolation for the duration of the administrative procedure. Conversely, on paper, the Spanish programme put great emphasis on the incorporation of asylum seekers into the labour and housing markets, prioritizing reception centres in urban enclaves over rural ones. However, the rapid growth of asylum numbers and reception schemes to accommodate the increase in the number of arrivals of the last five years, has aggravated chronic deficiencies of the reception programme, exposing its flaws and creating new ones.

This surge in applications has also raised academic interest in a historically under-researched Spanish asylum system (Jubany, 2006), although

ethnographic and qualitative studies of reception in general remain scarce (see, however, Gutiérrez Hernández, Carrillo Palacios, & Alboreca Fernández, 2018; Iglesias-Martínez & Estrada, 2018; La Spina, Vicente, Urrutia, & Morondo, 2018). To address this gap this chapter presents an analysis based on an original ethnographic research, focussing on the everyday reality of the reception system that asylum seekers and professionals experience in Spain. The investigation included 40 in-depth interviews with professionals working in reception, both from public bodies and NGOs in the state reception programme and additional reception programmes, across Spain. Drawing on the results of this research, the chapter exposes the paradox of such an apparently hospitable system, which has been rendered inhospitable by the state's abandonment of the duty of protection towards asylum seekers. The conjunction of the politics of “non-doing”, alongside the bureaucratic maze that has been created, and a meritocratic approach to social services, have contributed to this relinquishment of the framework of protection for one of neglect, grounded on the outsourcing of reception responsibilities to a wide array of actors. As the chapter shows, rather than offering protection to those in situations of special vulnerability, the current reception system in Spain fosters the exclusion of those who are unable to keep up with the requirements of the system and pass the barriers that the reception programme sets.

2. Chaos within a clockwork design

Whereas for two decades, from 1994 to 2014, the number of international protection applicants was consistently below 10,000 (Ministerio del Interior, 1989-2018), by 2015 there was a change of pattern and the number of applications has kept on rising since, resulting in Spain becoming one of the main countries of asylum reception in Europe in 2019. Whilst in 2014 there were 5,947 asylum applications, in 2019 there were 117,795 (Eurostat, 2019b). The response to such rapid growth was articulated by a reactive – rather than planned – approach to the asylum reception programme¹. In 2014, there

1. Called *Sistema de acogida e integración de solicitantes y beneficiarios de protección internacional* - SAI-SPBI [System for the reception and integration of international protection applicants and beneficiaries], the Spanish reception programme is managed by the Ministerio de Trabajo, Migración y Seguridad Social - MITRAMISS [Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security] Official information on the programme can be found here: <http://extranjeros.mitramiss.gob.es/es/ProteccionAsilo/informacion/index.html> and a visual explanation of it can be found here: <https://www.cear.es/persona-refugiada/proceso-de-asilo/>.

were barely 800 beds available in the first phase of the programme, whilst by the end of 2018, there were approximately 8,600 (Garcés-Mascareñas & Pasetti, 2019). This rapid expansion critically relied on the outsourcing of responsibilities and implied a proliferation of the number of organisations that work in the management of the programme.

From the mid-1990s to 2014 the management of the asylum reception programme was split half-and-half between three NGOs² and the state. By the end of 2018, there were more than 20 organisations involved³ in the reception program for asylum seekers, and the role of the state had become marginal, managing only 6% of the available reception slots (Garcés-Mascareñas & Pasetti, 2019). Before this expansion, there were already certain differences among the three organisations managing the state’s asylum reception programme, essentially due to different approaches to social work and to the role of the organisation in society. With the expansive transformation the diversity in approaches multiplied as the number of organisations in the system increased, many of which had no experience in the fields of asylum or migration prior to 2014.

A main intention in the initial design of the Spanish asylum reception programme was to encourage the asylum claimant to become autonomous, by progressively withdrawing social benefits and facilitating the claimant’s incorporation into the housing and labour markets. This was envisioned as parallel and synchronised to the gradual access to legal permits that could support this path towards autonomy. That is, the first residence permit would go hand in hand with access to a direct provision programme, giving asylum seekers time to settle and learn the language. In this framework, obtaining a work permit would concur with the abandonment of direct provision after six months and the start of a period of subsidised but independent living, including vocational training, internships and job seeking support. Within the context of the current asylum reception programme, however, these goals of “integration and autonomy” have lost their initial aim and are currently

2. The three NGOs are the Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR), Accem and the Spanish Red Cross (CRE).

3. The 2018 grant was given to 21 organisations, 18 of which provided full reception programme services whilst the other three provided additional services (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2018). Despite this, the three NGOs that have been involved in the reception programme since its creation, CEAR, Accem and CRE, still managed the vast majority of the reception places. By the end of 2018 CEAR had 1,727 (CEAR, 2020), Accem 1,026 (Accem, 2020) and CRE 2,593 (Cruz Roja Española, 2020) out of the approximately 8,600 total reception places.

understood through a narrow definition that refers mainly to achieving financial independence from public subsidies, which is to be attained by fostering incorporation into the labour and housing markets. Thus, as shall become evident below, the conjunction of a politics of “non-doing”, a bureaucratic maze and the outsourcing of reception responsibilities to a wide array of different actors, converted the seemingly welcoming system into chaos.

The first evidence of the chaos that reigns in the asylum reception programme in Spain comes precisely from the realisation that the synchronicity between the legal and reception procedures has never existed, except on paper. In June 2019, there was an accumulated backlog of approximately 120,000 cases at the Asylum Office (Martín, 2019), which created delays on first interviews and on permits’ renewals, leaving some asylum seekers without valid documents for periods of up to two months. In addition, the lack of accommodation in the direct provision phase implied that asylum claimants needed to wait for periods of six to seven months to access subsidised accommodation. This is coupled with a lack of emergency accommodation within the reception system, with the few available slots provided only to those identified as “extremely vulnerable”⁴:

To access certain resources, which are scarce, really limited, beyond being in a situation of vulnerability, they have to present a series of additional problems. 100% of people who come here are vulnerable; but beyond this situation of social or economic vulnerability you need to face additional problems, which are the ones that give preferential access to certain scarce resources. A family unit with minors, physical or mental health issues... (Social worker, reception emergency services – JA/B/SA/C/1/F0)⁵.

Within the asylum reception system the category of “vulnerability”, as mostly addressed by the debate of the category of “victim” (Christie, 1984), tend to be essentialised and generalised by cultural discourse often mediated by normative perceptions and stereotypes that contribute to the exclusion of those who do not fit within the hegemonic parameters (Mas Grau, Rué, & Roiha, 2020). This has direct repercussions in the development of asylum policies, with the granting of asylum increasingly presented as a charity

4. The inverted commas here are intended to acknowledge the debatable, complex and contested nature of this category. Its uses within the context of the Spanish asylum reception system are addressed in the paragraphs to follow.

5. All interviews have been codified to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees. Our own codes are included in reference to each quote for access and data management purposes.

granted by the host countries, rather than as a right of the refugees (Jubany, 2017). On the ground, this leads to high rates of homelessness and destitution of those who are not perceived as complying with specific parameters, yet do not have the means to provide for themselves (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2019). This is evidenced in the everyday work of social workers that receive asylum seekers, possibly more clearly than in the common categorisations established:

Getting access to emergency reception is a real tragedy. The requirement is for you to be vulnerable, but not only vulnerable from the vulnerability list, but also having minors in the family or being a single parent or having a recognised disability. Otherwise, you become homeless. So, what happens? A single man will never access emergency accommodation. [...] Yet, isn't a single man from Afghanistan travelling alone and who has suffered torture as vulnerable as a family? (Social Worker, programme NGO – CE/B/C/1/F13).

The consequences this has for local emergency and homeless shelters often means that general services are being mostly occupied by asylum seekers, especially in larger cities, where most applications are filed, putting these services under pressure:

They [asylum seekers] have not become homeless because the [local emergency services] have denied them a roof. [...] They are homeless because City Hall hasn't done anything to prevent it and, above all, because the Ministry hasn't done anything. When the Ministry does not comply, they [asylum seekers] become "homeless people", then it's the City Hall [who has to take responsibility]. But the City Hall cannot deal with everything, so they are sleeping in a church (Social Worker, NGO Local Reception Programme – KF/M/TS/1/FN).

In July 2019, authorities in Madrid decided to close an emergency facility that had opened just a few months before, to cope with the growing need for emergency housing. With no accommodation options, a few asylum seeking families ended up sleeping in the hall of the emergency service office. Unable to provide solutions, many of the emergency social workers joined in a three days protest until the City Hall offered a housing alternative to the families. This lack of an efficient and prompt response from the state and other public administrations to the rising number of asylum seekers in situations of destitution has led activists and charity groups to take over in providing emergency accommodation. Professionals in these public services, facing the impossibility of offering solutions to homelessness situations with the

existing public resources, have resorted to making informal referrals to these activist groups and charities. Conversely, the more actors become involved in covering up for the failures of the official reception system, the more the responsibility dissipates from the hands of the state.

In this situation, many asylum seekers arrive to the direct provision programme without having gone through the first asylum screening interview, whilst having spent time homeless. Often, they leave this direct provision period holding only provisional documents and without a work permit. With a limited time of 18 months before the public subsidies end, any delays will lead asylum seekers to abandon the reception programme without having achieved a minimum degree of autonomy, leading to a chronic situation of vulnerability and exclusion.

To address this, some local and regional authorities have created specific programmes that asylum seekers can apply for after having exhausted the state reception system. These programmes, however, do not exist everywhere, and when they do, they vary widely from one place to another. The Barcelona City Council, for instance, has a continuity programme for asylum seekers who have left the state programme but have not been able to achieve the expected level of autonomy. In Madrid, in contrast, the City Council launched a programme to provide short-term emergency shelter for asylum seekers who had not yet had access to the state reception programme. On the other hand, some smaller councils and institutions across Spain organise services such as access to subsidised housing for asylum seekers who have completed the state's reception system, whilst other municipalities with a significant presence of asylum seekers have not launched any specific services targeting this group.

In any case, the coordination between the reception and administrative systems is not only unsynchronised but also lacks homogeneity between how each case is dealt within the administrative procedure. This is not due to the diversity in the nature of the cases themselves but depends on factors such as where the application was filed, or the time spent in emergency accommodation. This means, for instance, that two persons in the same stage in the reception programme can have very different administrative situations, while two persons with the same administrative situation can be in different reception stages:

We have seen lots of people who only have a paper with an appointment for their interview, but this does not mean they have been accepted into the procedure. We had many people with this little piece of paper they were giving out in [National Police Station], just with the date of the appointment but it did not have an ID number, so they had not had their first screening interview yet. There is barely any of them left now really, but we had many and we have had many of them in the direct provision stage... many of whom left without having had the first screening interview. So yes, it's a time of chaos... (Coordinator, NGO State Reception Programme – JA/M/CC/1/F03).

As evidenced by the first-hand experience of the programme coordinators, the inability to cope with the increase in asylum applications has compromised the functioning of the whole system. What was designed to function with the synchronicity of a clockwork machine has become immersed in a systemic chaos. This general failure, however, has more to do with the consequences of a chronic lack of political interest, funding and resources, than with the surge in applications and needs.

3. Politics of “non-doing”

Following a long tradition of a “politics of non-doing”⁶ in regards to asylum (Estrada Villaseñor et al., 2018; Ferrero, 2016; Jubany, 2006), the reception system in Spain experiences a chronic lack of attention, funding and resources (López et al., 2016). The main evidence that a politics of “non-doing” defines the asylum policy in Spain is that although the Asylum Law⁷ was passed more than ten years ago, no subsequent regulation has yet been approved (García Vitoria, 2018), specifically with regard to family reunification, requests made at diplomatic missions, border processing time, the right to stay for humanitarian reasons, the protection of people in situations of particular vulnerability, legal assistance and freedom of movement for asylum seekers from Ceuta and Melilla to travel to the peninsula. Two types of situations are identified whose origins lie in the lack of regulatory development of the 2009 law. On the one hand, delays and difficulties have resulted in the application of certain legal dispositions, while in other areas divergent interpretations by different actors have occurred (the administration, courts, ombudsman).

6. By “politics of non-doing” we refer to those political approaches and policies that whilst reaching a high level of visibility are characterised by an intentional lack of action, as the many illustrations included in this section expose.

7. Law 12/2009 of the 30th of October.

This has had critical consequences on the legal asylum procedure but also on the asylum reception system, especially concerning the lack of definition of protocols of action regarding vulnerable cases as contained within the Law (Estrada Villaseñor et al., 2018). In this context, it must be noted that Spain is yet to transpose Directive 2013/33/EU on asylum reception conditions and, consequently, it has not introduced the substantial changes that this directive incorporates. Such lack of regulation means, as professionals recognise, that the “Management Handbooks” (*Manuales de Gestión*)⁸ have become an informal substitute for the development of the Asylum Law, at least for the concerns of the reception programme:

In truth they are not changing the concept [of asylum seeker in the Handbook] but they are using the Management Handbook as a Royal Decree and it is not... it is a Handbook that the Ministry creates for grant management... Then the NGOs, we are bound to the grant, so we are obliged to follow it because we accept the grant knowing that its regulatory framework is the Handbook. So, they use it as a Royal Decree, but it is not a Royal Decree... (Coordinator, NGO State Reception Programme – CE/M/CC/1/FN).

In addition to the Management Handbook further efforts have been devoted to trying to put some order in the chaos, without much success. Many rules, criteria and changes are created through regular coordination meetings between the ministry and the representatives of the organizations, who also make use of these occasions to ask for clarifications on the latest handbook or to push forward revisions of the system. In addition, there is an informal horizontal communication among frontline workers of different organizations in the same territory, or even in the same organization but in different regions across Spain, that promote the sharing of useful practices and strategies to answer the needs that arise within the framework of the programme. This constant change and ambiguity of rules makes the work of professionals even more challenging. Furthermore, it exposes not only the current lack of coordination and improvisation but also the lack of political interest to prove an effective framework to improve reception conditions:

8. The *Manuales the Gestión* are issued by the Ministry as a guide to the management of the public subsidy for asylum reception. The latest version can be found here: http://extranjeros.mtramiss.gob.es/es/Subvenciones/AreaIntegracion/proteccion_internacional/sociosanitaria_cetis_2018/documentos/1_Manual_de_Gestixn.pdf.

Our impression is that the programme is always lagging behind... [...] the number of asylum seekers keeps rising and we keep opening new facilities, but every time this happens the number of applications has risen again, and we feel we are not keeping up with the needs (Coordinator, NGO State Reception Programme – JA/B/C/1/F03).

The general situation of improvisation which, as the ethnography shows, all organisations in the reception system experience, extends to the Asylum Office and the legal procedure. In 2016, to cope with the ongoing increase in applications, the government called in a group of 94 temporary workers to the Asylum Office (Martín, 2019). In November 2018, the government failed to renew the contract of these workers, which amounted to 70% of the Asylum Office's staff. At the time, the backlog of cases was of nearly 80,000, while asylum seekers were spending days and nights queuing, under adverse weather conditions, to be able to get an appointment for their first asylum interview. Whilst the dismissed asylum officers were progressively substituted by 176 new recruits over the following months (Vargas, 2018), effectively raising the total number of workers at the asylum office, they were not trained to the duties of this particular office. The consequence of this was that the backlog of cases grew by 8% to 10% per month in the months from January to March that year (Eurostat, 2019c).

Also, along the lines of the politics of “non-doing” would be the practice of generating unnecessary delays on the managing of the cases to postpone asylum decisions. In this regard NGOs (CEAR, 2015-2017) have repeatedly raised concerns about the Asylum Office shelving bulks of cases without fully reviewing them, hoping that the situation in the country of origin would change to a point that decisions would be clear-cut in a dubious application of what has been known as “caution criteria” (*criterio de prudencia*) (Orejudo Prieto de los Mozos, 2016). Similarly, the Spanish Ombudsman confirmed that decisions on certain countries were being postponed by the Asylum Office arguing that not enough information was available for a founded decision. While this practice is within regulations, the Ombudsman noted that asylum seekers had to be notified about the delay and the reasons behind it (Defensor del Pueblo, 2016), which they were not:

[About Ukraine cases] It's very difficult to know if they have actually studied the claim duly [...]. They first explain the general situation of the country and then the reasons for the asylum seeker to claim, which are almost always forced conscription. Then they reject the claim with a form, they are all very similar... the quality... well... the resolution should be well founded

and express [...] but the lack of fundament is clear. They are not exactly the same, because they change the name of the asylum seeker and perhaps a Country of Origin Report they add or remove, right? But in the end, they are all the same (Lawyer, NGO State Reception Programme – JA/L/A/2/F03).

While the rise in the number of applications has certainly played a part in straining the asylum screening system and the reception programme, the precarious situation of asylum is not new. Before 2015, when there was the first large injection of funds by the European Union and applications started to rise, the Spanish reception system was close to breakdown. One of the three organisations working in reception at the time (the only one that had this as their main activity) had engaged in three layoff plans that dismissed 50% of their staff and closed several reception centres. From 2015 onwards, there has been a substantial increase of funds and resources, but it has continuously fallen short of meeting the needs of the increasing number of asylum applications: “Efforts are being made, they open new reception facilities and raise the number of civil servants, but it’s not enough for the number of applications we receive” (Lawyer, NGO state reception programme – JA/B/A/1/F03).

In this context, the Spanish government’s public demonstrations of “good will” towards refugees in accepting to harbour those rescued by the *Aquarius* and the *Open Arms*⁹ clearly appear to be more a political strategy to conceal the policy of “non-doing” and chaos, rather than an intention to provide effective policies. The debate on asylum seekers has assumed the narratives of “crisis” (Jubany, 2017) and, as Bauman argues, has become a tool for political advantage building on the increasing intolerance towards the other (Bauman, 2007). Beyond this political facade, however, both left and right-wing governments in Spain have implemented restrictive approaches towards migration and refugees, neglecting the international protection system (De Lucas, 2011; Sánchez Alonso, 2011). With the surge in applications, the chronic deficiencies of the protection system have deepened even more. At the same time, the continuous changes imposed by the system to address these weaknesses have created a bureaucratic maze and limited

9. The socialist Spanish government accepted to harbour migrants rescued in the Mediterranean by humanitarian vessels, which had been denied entry in Italian and Maltese ports. The first of these gestures, a few days after the socialist party had come to office, caused a political, public and media stir and more than 1,500 people, including translators, police, social workers and media, were mobilized to receive the 700 migrants.

asylum seekers' access to rights and social support, which are exploited by the system to promote deterrence.

4. The bureaucratic maze and practices of deterrence

Faced with this lack of planned development, the asylum reception programme in Spain has struggled to keep up with the growing numbers of applications of the last five years. The inability to manage the stress of the system has created a veritable bureaucratic maze with obstacles that set barriers to asylum seekers' access to rights and services, as well as professionals' ability to manage asylum applications effectively:

Another problem is the workload and incompetency of the National Police. Surreal things happen. Like someone who applied for asylum in Murcia but was sent to a reception centre here in Barcelona was told that they had to go back to Murcia for the interview. This is obviously not so. They make asylum seekers believe they are responsible for these situations, and they are not. Sometimes, when they have been there one, two or three times to no avail, we tell them, somewhat jokingly: "You need to be patient, the police are stupid". We need to work on this a lot, it's not your fault, it's the administration's fault (Social Worker, NGO State Reception System – JA/L/ES/1/F1).

A clear illustration of such a maze can be found at the very first step of the asylum process. Gaining entrance to the asylum reception programme is mediated by either one of the three historical NGOs in the reception programme (CEAR, Accem and the Spanish Red Cross) or by the Asylum Office in Madrid. Whilst the only formal criteria for deciding access to the asylum reception programme is not having enough resources to support the family unit for the duration of the administrative procedure, the "Management Handbooks" state that "projects are to prioritize vulnerable cases for the distribution of asylum reception places" (Ministerio de Trabajo, 2018b, p. 6). However, guidelines for the assessment of vulnerability are not legally defined nor harmonised due to the lack of development of the Asylum Law and the ongoing changes in management directives. This means that the methods for assessing vulnerability are left to the organisation's own protocols and to the official directives issued depending on the availability of reception places. This not only contributes to creating management differences among territories

and organisations, but also to the perception of obscurity and ambiguity of the system's rules and criteria:

Well yes, there are certain criteria, but they are quite general. What happens then is that if yesterday A was vulnerable tomorrow A may not be vulnerable anymore, but B is. [...] So, there are some people we see as vulnerable, who end up not being labelled as vulnerable. We have some room for evaluating vulnerability, but the Asylum Office takes the final decision. It's their money. So, yes, there are some criteria, but nobody truly understands them (Social Worker, State Reception Programme – BY/B/TS/1/F13).

Within this context, going through the programme “successfully” will be subjected to a number of factors that have less to do with the capacity of the reception programme to foster this autonomy, and far more with the asylum seeker's agency and the organisation's ability to guide them through the process. The system fosters autonomy and integration only for an “ideal type” of asylum seeker who is vulnerable enough to be deserving of the reception system resources:

The truth is, this is a programme that in general is quite good, it offers all the possible resources and which, well, a certain profile values greatly, but not everybody adapts to this programme. And the programme is not flexible enough to adapt to all profiles. [...] A single-parent family with a baby, well, even if the baby goes to a crèche, it's a full-time job, so often they cannot keep up with professional training. [...] And then, you have people in the street for four, five, six months because they are men and have no assessed vulnerability (Housing Officer, NGO State Reception Programme – CE/B/TS/3/F2).

This “ideal asylum seeker” (Jubany, 2017) also has to be proactive enough to follow the reception programme as expected in order to gain autonomy from public subsidies for up to a 24-months period after arrival, as this ethnographic data illustrates:

The system blames asylum seekers. You come here and you need to check some boxes. This means you are doing things right. “You've been to the Spanish lessons? Good”. “You've gone to events all week? Good”. But also: “They've been here for three months and haven't done a thing” (Social Worker, NGO Local Reception Programme – AH/B/TS/1/FN).

In addition, changes in the “Management Handbooks” have been common in the last five years, with a new handbook being issued approximately every six months. As the interviews show, these adaptations impose constant

changes to key aspects such as eligibility for services and resources or decisions on the entitlement to asylum benefits, amongst others:

They change paragraphs and articles [of the Handbooks] [...] We get like two or three versions per year, they are constantly changing the rules of the game. [...] You think you have certain rules and all of a sudden, everything changes. It's something else. Now there has also been a change in government and all the bureaucracy has changed, all the documents have changed. They have changed it all, the logos even. Everything that was one way yesterday is different today. Even simple things like the name of the Ministry, it used to be called Ministry of Employment and Social Security, now it's the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Lawyer, NGO State Reception Programme – JA/B/A/1/F03).

Clearly, this bureaucratic maze has an impact on every necessary step asylum seekers have to face, from making specific appointments to the final decisions. For instance, difficulties to get appointments at the Office of Foreigners has led to extreme situations. As the empirical evidence demonstrates this situation has generated a black market of appointments, with law firms amassing slots to later offer to clients to speed things up, and public officials issuing appointments and documents of unlikely validity¹⁰ to get rid of long queues and patch up bureaucratic inefficiency.

Moreover, the impact of administrative difficulties to access asylum and reception rights intensifies at the outer borders of Spain, particularly at the Mediterranean. The special status of Ceuta and Melilla regarding the Schengen agreement (European Union, 2000) has been used to restrict right of movement of asylum seekers who apply at the Spanish enclaves. Regardless of several rulings against the practice, asylum seekers who apply there are required to stay in the autonomous cities until their application has been processed, which can take years. This restriction is often recorded on the identity card that asylum seekers receive despite there being no legal

10. In November 2018, long queues formed at Aluche's (Madrid) National Police Station, at the time the only place in Madrid where an asylum claim could be filed. As each day, the office gave out a limited number of appointments, so people had to queue earlier and earlier to secure an appointment, and waiting lines extended for days. This situation drew up media attention and eventually all asylum seekers were offered hand-written appointments for December 2020 (more than a year later than the regular appointments that had been issued that same morning). Some abandoned the line with these unlikely appointments but most considered these were not to be trusted and kept queuing to get one of the following day's dates. Similarly, NGO professionals explain that often new identity documents fail to arrive on time for renewal from Madrid to the regional police station, for which police officers have turned to extending the validity of the asylum identity cards with a handwritten note on the back of the document or on a piece of paper.

grounds for such practice (Sentencia del Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid, 2020). This limits their access to the asylum reception programme and they are placed in Temporary Centres for Immigrants (*Centros Estancia Temporal para Immigrantes* - CETI). Although asylum seekers have the right to cross to the peninsula and access the reception programmes, this is a slow process and they are often not informed about it. This has meant that many asylum seekers refuse to apply in these enclaves in order to be eligible for humanitarian leave to reach the peninsula, a rare but open option for undocumented migrants (Tyszler, Julinet, Aguillon, Maire, & Nagy, 2016).

Clearly, the strict rules coupled with the one-size-fits-all system that remains unyielding to the diverse realities of asylum seekers, restricts the possibilities of reaching the programme's goal of autonomy. The constant unplanned changes to the system to try to address the growth of applications has created the perception that the rules of the game are constantly changing and difficult to grasp. In this scenario, the mediation of reception professionals becomes crucial for asylum seekers to find their way through the bureaucratic maze and interpret "new" rules. Yet, their access to resources and rights within the system greatly depends on where and when asylum seekers file their application and to which organisation they are assigned.

5. Asylum lottery

In addition to the bureaucratic maze and the politics of "non-doing" a further critical aspect of the externalisation of responsibilities and the increasing number of non-governmental organisations, without a solid regulatory framework, has been the creation of a system immersed in what has been known as an "asylum lottery" (Thomas, 2008) or "refugee roulette" (Ramji-Nogales, Schoenholtz, & Schrag, 2007). As has been argued and evidenced, whilst the system in Spain is envisioned as a single structured path towards autonomy and integration, the organisational and the territorial differences significantly alter the asylum seeker's access to rights and, as we will discuss, opportunities of gaining autonomy from public subsidies.

There is a wide margin of discretion for organisations to define the social programme that each one will offer to asylum seekers. Factors such as the organisation's approach to social work or the overload of cases and personal relations will influence how this set of rules is followed or how far it can be

bent or circumvented if needed. Debates on discretion have long highlighted the fine line between the professionals' freedom to take decisions crucial to their daily work beyond law enforcement, and the coming into play of discriminating practices (Evans, 2011; Jubany, 2011; Lipsky, 1971; Ticktin, 2011). In the Spanish asylum reception system these two aspects of the margin of discretion are evidenced in how different organisations approach "support reports"¹¹ are. NGOs have the possibility of providing "support reports" for asylum seekers, which will then be considered by the Asylum Commission for the decision over the asylum case. Whilst it is unknown to what extent these reports actually play a role in the final decision, all organisations and professionals place great weight on them. However, different organisations have divergent approaches about how often these should be completed and who are the specific applicants that "need" them. Some organisations, especially those that are more prone to taking a critical stance towards the state's management of asylum, tend to fill them out for as many cases as possible:

A: [...] we can do these reports for the legal case from the psychological and social departments. [...] So then when we consider that somebody is in a situation of vulnerability... which is most people really, most are in a situation of vulnerability... we do this.

Q: Do you write them often?

A: Yes, as often as we can. I mean, we have a lot of work and these we like to look at them carefully [...] as we are taking the time to write them, we do it thoroughly (Social Worker, NGO State Reception Programme – CE/B/TS/1/F2)

Contrary to this, other organisations prefer to write such reports only for "clear cases", "especially vulnerable cases" or "those who stand a chance". Professionals argue that this is done in order not to compromise their reputation and relationship with the State, and not to add to the already over-burdened workload they face:

The cases, you need to choose them, and right now we are being very selective because before we did lots of reports but what I cannot do is, as a psychologist, is support many cases and then my professional criteria... when they [the Asylum Office] see my number they will say, well, this one is saying the same thing again. So, they have to be cases you really believe in, cases you... you... can fight for (Psychologist, NGO State Reception Programme – JA/LL/P/2/F03).

11. "Support Reports" are documents written by social, legal and psychological professionals in the reception programme to support the asylum seeker's legal case.

The design of the system encourages the development of these organisational differences, generating problematic and detrimental margins for discretion. The underdevelopment of the regulatory framework generates a reception programme with a strict one-size-fits-all policy, which, due to the diverse territorial contexts within Spain, leads to severe inequalities amongst asylum seekers in the programme. For instance, while the monthly allocation for accommodation rental for asylum seekers is the same all across Spain¹², housing prices vary greatly from one area to another, having recently reached an average of 1005€ per month in Barcelona (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2020), while being less than 400€ per month in most predominantly rural provinces (Ministerio de Fomento, 2019).

In addition, it must be taken into account that, as in other European countries, in Spain practices such as dispersion are used as a means of deterrence (Perchining et al., 2012; Schuster, 2005) in order to discourage asylum seekers with means of livelihood to enter the reception programme. The rationale behind this policy is that when there is a “genuine” need of assistance, an asylum seeker will accept relocation to any reception centre in Spain. Thus, under this view, not accepting this relocation will be read as evidence that the asylum seeker does not need the protection programme:

I would allow people to stay where they have applied for asylum, because they [the Asylum Office] are not taking into account whether they [the asylum seekers] have family or not... [...] But I also understand them [the Asylum Office], if somebody does not have resources and the programme is the same all over, they shouldn't mind being in Madrid, Barcelona or Andalusia, right? (Social Worker, Local Emergency Services – JA/B/SA/TS/3/F0).

Decisions on direct provision placements across the Spanish territory are made by the Asylum Office based on availability and do not consider previous processes of settlement, existing support networks or asylum seeker's choices. Due to the increasingly long waiting times between the asylum application and the allocation of an accommodation placement, most asylum seekers spend several months living in the region where they first applied, to be then relocated to any reception centre or shared flat with availability in Spain. Consequently, an asylum seeker who applies in Barcelona can be sent to an accommodation centre a thousand kilometres away several months

12. From 376€ per month for family units of a single member to 717€ per month for family units of five or more members (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social, 2018a)

after, and will not be permitted to leave that area for the rest of the duration of the programme:

As there are so many people, filters to distribute direct provision places are very weak. You can get someone who had their placement interview four months ago, yet they have been in the street for the last two months, and during his time this person may have been suffering an addiction or a mental health problem, and this is not the place for them. Same way, you can't send someone with a high degree of autonomy to a reception centre where they are fed and cleaned for. But as the system is under stress they just send them wherever (Social Worker, NGO State Reception Programme, direct provision – CE/BL/C/1/F1).

To handle this disparity there are also contrasting approaches as different organisations will offer different types of accommodation (*e.g.*, reception centres, apartments), and will provide a diverse range of training and employment opportunities or will dedicate an uneven ratio of social workers per case. This impacts even those apparently simple decisions, such as whether organisations accept shopping bills or only invoices for financial justification, which can make a significant difference to asylum seekers' experience and finances¹³. Consequently, which organisation and region an asylum seeker is allocated to, will have a significant impact on their opportunities to reach and maintain a level of autonomy, having nothing to do with the actual case, generating the so called 'asylum lottery' situation.

6. Conclusion: the leftovers

Arguably, the externalisation of services to NGOs has allowed the Spanish state to relinquish responsibility over the asylum reception programme's goal of "autonomy" and "integration" of asylum seekers. These organisations are given not only the task to design their own programme within the budget and loosely defined guidelines of the grant, but are also expected to make up for the deficiencies and lack of investment by the state. The Spanish reception system relies heavily on the humanitarian approach of organisations, and professionals' volunteer work, to make up for the gaps in the state

13. Failing to provide the right shopping bills will mean that the asylum seeker's subsequent allowance can be reduced to compensate for the unjustified expense. Having to obtain invoices from shops, which are not used to providing them, whilst facing language barriers publicly highlights their dependency on state subsidies and their asylum-seeking status.

programme and offer the necessary services. Whilst the state has vested the management and responsibility of the asylum reception programme to a number of NGOs, in order to cope with this main charge, the organisations have had to externalise certain services to other NGOs, public bodies and enterprises, such as language courses, vocational training or psychological support. This situation is aggravated by the rigid design of a programme that creates a one-size-fits-all system. This excludes all those who are not able to keep up with the requirements of the reception programme, creating critical prejudicial inequalities for asylum seekers. In this framework, the fate of an asylum seeker in Spain will not depend on their case, rights or needs but rather on chance. In other words, the itinerary that asylum seekers follow will not have much to do with their personal situation, their backgrounds or their requirements. This will depend on the territory and the capacity of the organisation that deals with their application to go beyond the duties it has been assigned by the state.

This system of dispersed responsibility contributes to asylum seekers being left over by the reception programme. In a context of “chaos” and limited resources, those who do not have access to the tools and means to pass through the administrative maze successfully, are abandoned by the reception system, despite the best efforts of frontline professionals which is ill-equipped to address the complexity of the situation. As the analysis and empirical findings presented here have revealed, the reception system can be defined by the politics of “non-doing”, which has generated a framework of dispersion and neglect, contributing to the reproduction and chronification of asylum seekers’ social exclusion in Spain. What was once seemingly designed to encourage the integration and autonomy of asylum seekers has today become a main problem for their reception and incorporation. This has left asylum seekers in Spain to face an asylum system immersed in a bureaucratic [dis]order and a discriminating asylum lottery, with dramatic consequences for the future of both asylum seekers and for Spanish society as a whole.

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CHAPTER 8

CONSTRAINTS AND CREATIVITY: LOCAL RESPONSES TO REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION IN THE PORTUGUESE INLAND

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1. Introduction

References to the so-called *refugee crisis* in Europe intensified after 2015, overshadowing what could be considered *the* actual crisis, that of the settlement and integration of forced migrants in the European Union (EU), as a result of the progressive disengagement of EU countries from the principles of the 1951 Geneva Convention (Fassin, 2015). A crisis fuelled, in the first place, by the lack of an effective common policy of asylum which leaves the member-States fraught with multiple “undefinitions” and free to act according to momentary interests, political moods and ideological idiosyncrasies (Niemann & Zaun, 2018; Wahlbeck, 2019). This scenario is more evident and problematic in countries such as Portugal, which do not have a long tradition or much experience of refugee reception, especially, when compared to Nordic countries (Sacramento, Turtiainen, & Silva, 2019). Though Portugal has received refugees in various moments during the 20th century, it happened as a result of particular events like the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the Indonesian invasion of East-Timor (1975), the massive return of Portuguese citizens from the former colonies in Africa (1975-1976) and, later, the reception of refugee children following the Bosnian conflict (Cardoso, 2001; Pimentel, 2008; Santinho, 2016; Faria, 2020). Historically, the response had been inconsistent and casuistic, revealing the absence of a structured asylum policy and of a national settlement and integration framework.

This frailty gained visibility when, in the aftermath of the Syrian conflict, the Portuguese Government expressed political willingness to receive more refugees from Greek and Italian camps under the EU’s Resettlement Programme (2015-2017) and distributed them throughout the national

territory. The strategy, devised hastily, did not consider the necessary resources nor the structural conditions required to promote an adequate settlement and consequently posed a sudden and enormous challenge to the institutions and practitioners who were held locally responsible for receiving refugees and promoting their integration.

It is precisely these local experiences of refugee settlement and integration within the EU's Relocation Programme in Portugal that we shall discuss in this chapter. To do so, we draw on a set of semi-structured interviews conducted with professionals from municipal services, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and refugees whose settlement was being managed by several municipal services and NGOs from Northern and Central Portugal. The data was collected in inland rural and peri-urban contexts, peripheral to more cosmopolitan, economically dynamic industrial and service centres, located in and around the littoral urban areas. The selected contexts are affected by demographic decline; their local economies are less active and there are consequently fewer employment opportunities, all of which hinders refugee prospects of integration. Notwithstanding these structural constraints, our study elucidates the importance of focusing on the role played by local level institutions, examining in particular how their practitioners experience and tackle, on an everyday basis, the adversities and challenges they are faced with. Our data reveals how local social responses may determine to what degree rights and entitlements that are enshrined in law are respected or ignored. Simultaneously, it is possible to understand how, under diverse constraints, practitioners reveal agency and creativity in their attempts to compensate for the Relocation Programmes' intervention design flaws and to fill the implementation gaps. In other words, it is about understanding the role of these professionals as "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 2010) upon which the State places the responsibility of ensuring the social protection of people in situations of great vulnerability, though without guaranteeing the necessary structural conditions nor the resources.

Here, the terms settlement and integration are not used interchangeably. By settlement we mean the processes of reception and settling and the inherent system of legal provisions and support services to refugees. By integration, we mean a broader level of social, political and cultural participation in the receiving society and the correspondent strengthening of social rights entitlement and fulfilment through a structured, integrated and participated set of measures, programmes and activities. Hence, integration implies more

than a statutory access to key services and a temporary status of protection, it means enacting and fulfilling social rights through an active participation in the civil, political, cultural and economic life of the hosting society (Ager & Strang, 2008; Valtonen, 2008). In contrast to settlement – when refugees, in spite of receiving basic initial support and protection may succumb to a state of limbo (Poteet & Nourpanah, 2016) due to the uncertainty, the restrictions to individual freedom and the temporary or indefinite character of protection measures –, integration entails a long term process (Valtonen, 2008). This process implies making the refugees participation possible “with relative freedom in the economic and communal life of the host region” (Banki, 2004, p. 2), respecting ethnocultural identities and promoting diversity (Valtonen, 2004). Accordingly, integration entails a policy, a set of measures and practices (Ager & Strang, 2008; Turtiainen, 2012) inscribed within a rights-based frame, which allow for individuals’ rights entitlement recognition and mutual trust (Honneth, 1995; Turtiainen, 2012; Valtonen, 2008). Integration has been a widely contested, often seen as an ambiguous and dubious concept, especially given the idealistic, prescriptive, multiculturalist and assimilationist biases it frequently takes (Malischewski, 2016). For the sake of clarity, when using it, we do not refer, by any means, to an assimilationist stand which sees refugee reception as a process of adjustment to dominant social-cultural traits and the search for an idealized homogenous social livelihood.

Particular aspects concerning the methodology of data collection are addressed in the next section, followed by a brief presentation of policy, legal and organisational frames regarding the settlement and integration of refugees under the EU’s Relocation Programme in Portugal. The discussion around the local responses to refugee settlement and integration is addressed in the following two sections. The first centres the debate on how structural constraints pervade the Portuguese Relocation Programme’s national response and, in particular, the difficulties presented by the strategy of dispersing refugees throughout the national territory. The second section focuses on how local institutional agents, especially practitioners involved in direct intervention, interact with general policy frameworks, adjusting pre-existent devices and resources, and creatively, often informally, put in place responses to immediate needs. The shortcomings and perversities, as well as the potential discretionary nature of these kinds of interventions, will also be the subject of discussion.

2. A note on the methodology

The analysis draws on exploratory research conducted directly by the authors between 2015 and 2017. Apart from documental research (reports, policy briefings, legislative pieces, press coverage and social media contents), a set of key-interviews were carried out with technical staff of the two umbrella institutions which managed the Relocation Programme: the Portuguese Council for Refugees (CPR) and the Refugee Support Platform/Jesuit Service to the Refugees (PAR/JRS). Interviews were also conducted with 12 practitioners and service managers from three municipalities and three local NGOs eligible to receive refugees. The innermost site of data gathering was a municipality located in the Castelo Branco district, less than 50 kilometres away from the Spanish border. There, besides interviewing the mayor, the municipal social worker and the cultural mediator in charge of accompanying the settlement and integration of refugees, we also interacted with a group of four male refugees (an Iraqi and three Eritreans) while visiting a local farming company involved in the social and labour integration of the refugees in articulation with the municipality.

The selection of data collection sites prioritized institutions and areas which (i) were handling refugee reception for the first time or had scarce experience in settlement and integration, (ii) were receiving refugees under the Relocation Programme through the CPR or the PAR, (iii) were not part of Lisbon and Porto urban centres. It was in our interest to focus on refugee settlement and integration in eminently rural municipalities and peri-urban contexts – the same contexts which, according to the literature had very limited experience in working with refugee reception (Costa, Sousa, Backstrom, Magano, & Albuquerque, 2019; Santinho, 2013). With the exception of the Castelo Branco district municipality, in the centre of the country, the majority of the institutions inquired were selected in the northern part of the country, in the districts of Vila Real, Braga, Viseu and in the easternmost periphery of Porto district.

The majority of the interviews were conducted collectively in each institutional setting, allowing for the development of a more informal and interactional rapport between the researchers and the interviewees. The interview scripts focused on aspects of organisational response, the practitioners' technical capacity to intervene and address the myriad tasks related to refugee settlement and integration. These group interviews served to provide detailed

information about the circumstances and conditions of various moments and stages in the reception of refugees and they also provided an opportunity for the interviewees to develop a critical reflective stance upon their own work.

3. Refugee settlement and integration in Portugal: policies, statutory and organizational frames

In 2015, the settlement of refugees in Portugal increased by 97% in comparison to the precedent year, with a total of 872 asylum applications approved only in that year (Conselho Português para os Refugiados, 2015). Such a rise was due to the larger numbers of refugees from sub-Saharan Africa reaching the Mediterranean shores and to the Syrian conflict. Both were determinant in the framing of the EU's response, in its decision to deploy an emergency programme to relocate, under a quota system, the contingents of refugees that were being funnelled to temporary settlement camps in the southern and south-eastern perimeter of the EU. At first, the aim was to relocate 160,000 persons, though, two years later, only 29,000 had been relocated throughout the EU (Ariès, 2017). From the initially intended number, 4,486 refugees were assigned to settle in Portugal, a number which fell far of completion (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, 2017). Since the Relocation Programme's earliest days, in September 2015, until its termination, by the end of 2017, Portugal received 1,520 refugees from camps in Greece and Italy. Syria and Eritrea were the main countries of origin. From the former came, above all, men and from the latter, family groups (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, 2017).

At the national level, the organization of refugee reception is under the tutelage of the High-Commissary for the Migrations (ACM) and, from 2015 to 2016, this structure reconfigured some of its services and response structures, namely, the National and Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration, and created the Refugee Integration Support Nucleus (NAIR)¹. This is a structure linking key-stakeholders like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Immigration and Borders Service, the Institute of Social Security, the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Education, the above-mentioned ACM, the CPR, the PAR,

1. The coordination of refugee settlement and integration in Portugal followed the European Agenda for Migrations Work Group.

the Red Cross, the Union of *Misericórdias*², the National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions and the Mutuality's Union (Costa et al., 2019).

The creation of this structure and its institutional profile influenced the arrangement of the Relocation Programme in Portugal. As such, the Portuguese State ended up relying heavily on an agreement with civil society organisations and municipalities, with whom specific contracts were established in order to distribute the refugees throughout the territory. Two key entities were given the responsibility of settling the incoming individuals and families, providing initial support and accompanying their integration process: the CPR and the PAR. The latter, was instated in 2015, joining around 350 civil society organisations (Costa et al., 2019; Oliveira, Duarte, & Ribeiro, 2018), in which the UNICEF, the Children Support Institute, Caritas, the JRS, the National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions, the Justice and Peace National Commission, the Migration's Catholic Work, among other Catholic entities were included. The CPR was also among PAR's founding members.

The creation of the PAR platform complemented the CPR's intervention as refugee transit to Europe grew in the aftermath of the Syrian conflict. The platform was also intended to restrain the emerging initiatives led by Portuguese individuals, barely coordinated with the local and national authorities and institutional structures, who voluntarily started to arrange trips using their own private resources and vehicles to sites of refugee assembling in the eastern edge of the EU. PAR directed its intervention primarily to support the relocation of refugees who were waiting in camps in Greece (in Athens and in Lesbos), giving special attention to the relocation of family groups and unaccompanied children.

Regarding the Relocation Programme, both PAR and CPR function as institutional intermediaries and their action was strategic in articulating the national government and its policies with the local agents that were expected to deliver the settlement and integration services. As such, municipalities, NGOs, third sector organisations (commonly known as Social Solidarity Private Institutions), among which the *Misericórdias*, offered to receive and accompany refugees, signing contracts or protocols with the State. This political decision to decentralise service provision by distributing refugees throughout the country placed an enormous responsibility upon the shoulders of third

2. The *Misericórdias* are lay brotherhoods whose creation, in Portugal, goes back to the late XV century. In the present, its 387 chapters cover the whole country, providing beneficent intervention and social support services.

sector organisations in the local delivery of social responses and services, as well as upon the shoulders of the local municipalities.

The CPR, besides delivering direct services to refugees in its reception centres and in the children's residence located in the area of Lisbon, sent refugees to municipalities and to the INATEL Foundation³ under the Relocation Programme, monitoring the process and assisting the local staff. As mentioned above, the PAR partnered especially with the *Misericórdias* and the National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions (CNIS), allowing to distribute refugees throughout the whole country. The CNIS, as representative of the private non-profit sector, engaged lay and Catholic solidarity associations and local Caritas chapters to receive and accompany the largest bulk of refugees entering through the Relocation Programme. In total, according to the CPR and to the PAR, about 500 institutions were involved in the settlement of 1,520 refugees received under the Relocation Programme between 2015 and 2017, corresponding to 51% of the targeted quota, a figure above the EU's approximate 40% average. Of the EU countries receiving refugees in the scope of this Programme, seven presented a higher percentage than Portugal, with Malta, Ireland and Finland reaching nearly 100% (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, 2017).

4. Settling refugees in the Portuguese inland under the Relocation Programme: from political challenge to operational constraints

The geographic dispersion of refugees who arrived through the relocation programme countered the historical tendency of placing refugees in the greater Lisbon urban perimeter (Audigane, 2011; Santinho, 2016). As such, it introduced a new challenge, not only to the central institutional agents that managed refugee settlement and integration, but also, and mainly, to the local institutional players that were now being asked to partake of this new territorially dispersed strategy of response. For Government officials, the Relocation Programme was seen, in 2015, as an opportunity to revive and develop the rural countryside, suffering from human desertification and ageing. One year later, that initial impetus was tempered, as it was feared that

3. INATEL is a public utility entity devoted to provide occupational and leisure services, running a series of hostels scattered throughout the country.

concentrating refugees in certain villages could stem cases of civil unrest and tension while creating unwanted ghetto-like situations (Pires, 2016).

Such public stands by high-profile government officials clearly acknowledged the inclination to follow a dispersal policy which is not new to migration studies and many pros and cons have been raised in the literature. Avoiding the concentration of migrants in designated urban spaces and the inherent risk of ghettoization was first pointed out as an advantage of dispersal, a view later criticised for not considering individuals' personal desires and the "lack of appropriate services and support networks" in rural towns (Schech, 2014, p. 602), besides their removal from social networks and confinement to isolation in alien surroundings (Darling, 2016a). Nonetheless, the idea that migrants and refugees may want "to move to rural towns in search of work and a quieter life less scrutinised by authorities" (Schech, 2014, p. 603) should not be ignored. Moreover, dispersal may contribute towards the development of forms of rural cosmopolitanism which can be seen as a by-product of successful refugee settlement and integration since "multicultural resources and a willingness to embrace cultural diversity" prevail over a sheer logic of avoiding ethnic concentration (Schech, 2014, p. 614).

In the Portuguese case, the political decision to decentralize refugee reception met with difficulties and, at the same time, turned salient a series of structural limitations that ended up contributing towards weakening the efficiency of refugee integration. If, on the one hand, decentralization prevented ghettoization, on the other hand, it faced a lack of dedicated support structures and local intervention protocols as well as professionals trained to deal with these minority groups. On top of that, the economic frailty of various inland municipalities and the chronic shortage of employment opportunities would not favour the much-desired socio-labour inclusion of refugees⁴, not forgetting the hardships of settling in geographically isolated contexts. These circumstances were raised by the Portuguese NIEM Report (Oliveira et al., 2018), in which it is stated that the policy of dispersion rendered access to a number of services difficult, such as, health care, education, cultural and labour market services, leaving the onus on the local institutions and people who were mobilized by the umbrella organisations, like PAR and

4. This is a highly challenging objective, since refugees are confronted, in Portugal as well as in many other countries, with serious difficulties regarding their social-labour insertion (Iglesias-Martínez & Estrada, 2018; Iglesias-Martínez, Villaseñor, Asua, Fuster, & Vicente, 2018; Sacramento et al., 2019).

CPR, to facilitate the reception of refugees, as we will see in the next section. It should be also pointed out that access to those social and public services in rural inland municipalities had already been made difficult following the 2011 austerity policies, which implied healthcare services reduction, closing down school facilities, civil servants downsizing and, later, due to privatisation measures, the shutdown of key public services like post office branches⁵.

Local Portuguese institutions, both municipalities and social solidarity organisations, eagerly rose to the political challenge of providing for the reception of refugees. This entailed securing a series of minimum conditions, such as providing access to housing, food and clothing, support labour integration and facilitating access to healthcare and educational services, besides Portuguese language learning and the validation of competences and formal qualifications (Costa et al., 2019). Third sector organisations and municipalities were well equipped to supply immediate and continuous assistance regarding food and clothing, since they held charity responses in the form of social canteens, food and clothing banks. Institutions also supported the right to housing by making single family or shared apartments available, also through municipal social housing. However, as our interviews indicate, key operational constraints emerged during the implementation of the Relocation Programme.

The data gathered through interviews and interactions established with refugees and local service providers allowed us to identify six major structural constraints regarding the former's reception and integration: (i) a systematic lack of concern in matching the profile of refugees to the destination territory; (ii) the local entities' lack of time, resources and know-how needed to prepare consistent reception and integration responses; (iii) the absence of an efficient, readily available, system of translation; (iv) the lack of a structured offer of Portuguese language learning packages; (v) the near absence of professional and vocational education articulated with sustained labour insertion strategies and Portuguese language learning; (vi) difficulties in establishing linkages between public services (healthcare, education, social security, fiscal, border foreign citizens' control).

The first major constraint stems from the deficiencies in the selection and distribution of refugees gathered in Greek and Italian camps. Our service provider interviewees reported several cases of scarce data regarding

5. On the relation between refugee dispersal policies, austerity and neoliberalism, see Darling (2016a, 2016b).

the individuals to be hosted by their institutions and even situations of mismatching information. On the refugees' side, one reported to us that in the Italian camp, during the process to select his destination country, he was subjected to two interrogations about the details of his life, each lasting at least an hour. Yet, according to two municipal social workers, from the Vila Real and Castelo Branco districts, respectively this did not appear to guarantee that the information would be passed on:

There wasn't any information available and that made our intervention difficult, because, if we don't know them, if we don't know where they come from, what they do, their life history, how can we prepare an intervention?

We don't have a file stating people's personal history, basically, a biography of each individual, since they started their journeys, which countries they have passed through, which protecting status they benefited from, what kind of intervention they were subjected to, what are their greatest needs. When we receive people, we don't have any idea whether they have post-traumatic stress, infectious diseases, criminal record, or if they need any specific intervention.

If, on the one hand, front-line professionals report lack of information about the incoming refugees, it is not uncommon for the latter to claim that they were scarcely or deceptively informed about Portugal, about the exact destination in the country and the conditions of reception. The four refugees interviewed in a rural municipality in the centre of Portugal are an example of the mismatching of individual profiles with destinations. Their family roots and personal histories had always been associated with urban and cosmopolitan contexts, yet, they were relocated to a highly peripheral municipality, sharing an isolated house in the outskirts of a rural hamlet, more than five kilometres from the municipal township.

Added to the scarce information about the individuals, the local professionals in charge of accompanying their reception and integration referred that they had to deal with a very short time lapse to prepare for their arrival. Swiftiness, promptness and even hastiness seem to emerge out of the interviews:

The mayor called asking where I was. [...] He said: "In ten minutes you'll meet me and the CPR people who are here". So, it was so quick! The bottom line is, basically, it was a direct request to the municipality and we had a very short time to prepare – one and a half weeks (municipal social worker, Castelo Branco district).

When we arrived in Lisbon [to collect a family of refugees] they were already waiting for us and it was like dispatching us as quickly as possible because they had more refugees coming in

and more institutions waiting. We barely had the time to contact PAR and SEF [Immigration and Borders Service]. We were there for five minutes, we were introduced to each other, an interpreter was there speaking to the refugees and telling them where they were going to and there wasn't time for more (social solidarity institution coordinator, Vila Real district).

Transversal to all the testimonies collected amongst the professionals involved in the local reception (mostly social workers, psychologists and social pedagogues), was the acknowledgement of insufficient know-how, training and experience when intervening with this type of public. The intensive training sessions given by CPR and PAR to the personnel involved in the local reception work were apparently unable to address these shortcomings. This was openly admitted by a CPR social worker, who stated that “the majority of the local staff had never worked before with international protection claimants nor with refugees”. Another social worker, from a municipality, acknowledged that “the professionals in the field lack education and training [...] to deal with these situations”. This social worker, from a social solidarity organisation, recognised the importance of the training sessions given by PAR as the first opportunity to learn how to work in the field of migrations, however her testimony unveiled frailties in that process when she recalled her attendance of “a training course in Braga [...] to receive some hints about the procedures and to know examples of what other institutions were doing concerning refugee reception”. More than a year after having enrolled in the Relocation Programme, this municipal social worker was, in 2017, dissatisfied: “we didn't have any kind of training. [...] We were promised to have training, but it never happened. We asked for it right before receiving [the first refugees] so that we would be better prepared to organise the response and be more knowledgeable of the necessary conditions”.

Translation services, especially in the first weeks of settlement, are crucial. Though the national structures offer twenty-four hours translation services through phone lines, this resource was far from satisfactory according to most of our interviewees, and did not help to solve random day-to-day issues and particular emergencies⁶. In more cosmopolitan centres, where broader academic, scientific and corporate networks ensure cultural diversity, it is easier to have access to interpreters. On the contrary, in the inland municipalities

6. Our interviewees referred episodes when translators, working mainly as freelancers, had to suspend their support because they needed to change their babies' diapers or situations when the communication was suddenly cut due to loss of signal.

it is more difficult, if not impossible, to find interpreters, thus constraining the efficacy of the national dispersion strategy.

The learning of the local language is a crucial component of a successful inclusion (Turtiainen, 2012; Valtonen, 2008, 2015). It is important for day-to-day interactions with neighbours, services' workers and wider community, and it is vital for labour integration (Scholten et al., 2017). With the exception of more structured reception programmes like the *Guimarães Acolhe*, run by this northern municipality, and the CPR's office of professional insertion (Oliveira et al., 2018) serving the greater Lisbon area, there are no specific services of social-labour insertion articulated with Portuguese language learning. Though the national reports of the ACM indicate that about half of the active refugees were, in 2017, enrolled in professional training and employment measures (Oliveira et al., 2018), our interviewees present a far more different picture, as will be demonstrated in the next section. Furthermore, the national discrepancies in language-learning and professional training and labour insertion reveal, once again, territorial differentiation in the provision of services and the unevenness of the dispersion strategy. The issue was raised and reflected upon in the following words of a municipal social worker:

If the employment offices were integrated in a national plan, they could be readily informed by the CPR about the arrival of refugees and could be better prepared to ensure Portuguese language learning in articulation with labour-training and insertion. [...] That way, the response would not rest solely on the shoulders of the local entities and it would help to prevent the current discrepancies.

The difficulties in establishing formal linkages between public services and the heavy toll of bureaucracy were also indicated as a constraining factor. Working in rural or peri-urban contexts, our interviewees acknowledged that they drew on their proximity with social services staff in order to render their interventions more efficient. This clearly favours taking recourse to informal arrangements that are heavily reliant on inter-personal and inter-professional connections to support solutions which owe a lot to the practitioner's "good will"; *e.g.*, often circumstantial, casuistic and discretionary; a matter to be addressed below. As admitted by a social worker from a Relocation Programme umbrella organisation, "in Portugal [...] we have to rely on good will. We must trust that, inside the system, within the services, there is, indeed, someone backing us up in this context of 'let's try our best'".

5. Practitioners' informality and creativity in local responses to refugee's settlement and integration

As stated above, the Portuguese system of refugee reception implies a transfer of competences and direct intervention duties from the State to municipalities and civil society organisations⁷, however without providing the adequate conditions for an effective fulfilment of the ascribed responsibilities. Hence, in spite of the continuing improvement of local reception devices and strategies, many ambiguities, insufficiencies, lack of resources and responses still persist, especially in inland contexts. These end up constraining the efficacy of social interventions, leaving the refugees, in Vacchiano's (2018, p. 99) words, "at the fringes of citizenship in Portugal". As an interviewed CPR social worker argued, "we should have prepared our structures, our healthcare system, our schools, our employment centres, all of that!" However, the enormous time pressure to receive refugees at short notice, limited or even impeded the capacities of the entities involved to adequately prepare for their arrival. The demand to respond urgently, and almost simultaneously, to all the structural dimensions of reception and integration (housing, access to healthcare and education, language learning, labour training and insertion) created the need to swiftly arrange for solutions in a context of unpreparedness. For the staff in the local organisations, providing housing was the first challenge:

We were warned that a family of refugees was due to arrive four days later. We needed to make construction works, prepare a decent house which did not yet have a kitchen. It became possible with a lot of work, many hours devoted to the task, lots of commitment, with the help of everybody [in the institution] and whoever wanted to join us. It was possible (social worker, social solidarity institution, Vila Real district).

In most cases, the uncertainties generated by the lack of direction on how to proceed would mark the first reaction of the local institutions and practitioners: "We didn't know how we would manage all this, which procedures to follow" (social worker, social solidarity institution, Vila Real district). In the face of these novel situations within a context of unpreparedness, some practitioners assumed that their relationship with the refugees constituted

7. Similar situations have been occurring in many countries, originating a sort of "public-private-partnership" (Selm, 2003). More recently, in the case of the United Kingdom, cases of asylum system privatisation have emerged, framed under a perspective of "profit making" and "efficiency savings" (Darling, 2016a, 2016b).

an apprenticeship that led to inherent processes of professional reflexivity: “For me, everything was new regarding this [refugee reception] and the same holds for the municipality. So, this has been a relationship of apprenticeship and, also, of professional introspection” (municipal social worker, Castelo Branco district).

Similar to what happens in countries like Italy (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014), this apprenticeship is predominately empirical and impressionist, unsupported by migrations-related know-how, training and experience, as stressed by nearly all the interviewed practitioners: “We, who are in the field daily, also need more information. The more trained we are, the better we can deal with this situation” (municipal social worker, Vila Real district). As mentioned before, the staff from the umbrella institutions such as CPR acknowledged how novel it was, for many local practitioners, to work with refugees. Considering that this context of social intervention is particularly demanding, exhausting and stressful, the presence of “specialized knowledge” alongside a different frame of professional practice are fundamental (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002), namely in terms of supervision, as it is a “core element of social work practice to ensure the well-being of the front line workers” (Robinson, 2014, p. 1617).

Bearing in mind the lack of training, experience and support (mostly visible in more distant contexts from the large urban centres) as well as the shortage of specifically dedicated services to foster refugee integration (Padilla & Goldberg, 2017; Sacramento & Silva, 2018; Santinho, 2013; Vacchiano, 2018), practitioners tend to “improvise” intervention procedures, adapting pre-existing devices and actions and refitting resources from other social responses (Carvalho, 2017). Moreover, the umbrella NGO responsible for articulating with the local institutions recognize the flexibility of the latter and their capacity to improvise as a means to (try) to close the loopholes and operational shortages of the settlement and integration system. It is not just about technical versatility, it has a lot to do with, in the words of a CPR social worker quoted earlier, a sense of “good will in the system, within the services”. Henceforth, what we have now in Portugal, especially in rural contexts, is a modest refitting of already existing policies and devices of social protection, little or nothing thought to address the specificities of refugee settlement and integration (Sacramento & Silva, 2018; Sacramento et al., 2019). Taking advantage of and adapting pre-existing resources becomes evident in the testimony of this local NGO director:

The mechanisms and resources offered to refugees are the same available in our institution [specialised in youth and child protection]. [...] We offer the same support we usually give to our children and youth. [...] Besides, I don't think there's much more... When we have the psychologist, he will come over. When we have the social pedagogue, he will come over too. The bottom line is that we try to provide the organisation's resources to help them [refugees] too (social pedagogue, head of local NGO, Vila Real district).

Besides taking advantage of the existing services, the local institutions and the practitioners responsible for the settlement and integration of refugees mobilise their formal and informal networks (public services, third sector organisations, private and public companies, as well as personal contacts) to solve operational gaps and ensure the entitlement to basic social services and the protection of social rights. The following quote evidences the importance of the informal linkages with educational and health-care services and with Social Security. In particular, it refers to the collaboration of an Arabic interpreter as the result of direct informal contacts with the local public University during a week-end prior to the reception of the first family of refugees:

Collaborating with schools, health-care centres and the Social Security is fundamental. We benefited from the significant support of the [local public] University. It was a professor, of Arabian origin and speaker of Arabic, who served, initially, as translator. It was fundamental to us, right in the first contact following the refugees' arrival. He helped us explain [to the family of refugees] what was about to happen, how they would stay... how their day to day would be. He facilitated a lot our connection with the refugees and their settlement (social pedagogue, head of local NGO, Vila Real district).

Reached through informality and reliant on the altruistic availability of a faculty member, this solution did not hold for long and the NGO responsible for receiving that group of refugees had to trust in the on-line and phone translation services provided by the national umbrella-NGO from a distance.

Indeed, informal arrangements have an important role in ensuring newly installed refugees access to basic services. Another illustrative example of such is found in the efforts made by a municipality to provide communication, transportation and social-cultural mediation services to the newly arrived refugees. Here, informal inter-personal and inter-institutional contacts with three institutional partners (a social solidarity institution, a vocational and

professional training institution and a *Junta de Freguesia*⁸) were key to grant refugees' access to basic amenities:

We had to call a social solidarity institution because we needed a transportation solution for our cultural mediator [to commute to the village where the refugees were installed] [...]. We are lucky there's a close connection between the [municipality's] vice-president and that social solidarity institution as well as with the professional school. These connections will be useful to formally hire Mr. C [the cultural mediator in charge of accompanying locally the refugees whose appointment was, then, precarious]. So, the social solidarity institution supports the transportation to the village and back, and we have also the support of the *Junta de Freguesia*. When there wasn't WIFI in the house, it was there that they [the refugees] went, almost daily (municipal social worker, Castelo Branco district).

Arrangements often made through informal relations between different local stakeholders sometimes allowed for interesting integration solutions, with practitioners creatively exploring local opportunities. For instance, the social-labour integration of two Eritrean refugees in the inland municipality of Idanha-a-Nova, widely divulged in Portuguese media, resulted, largely, from the tight collaboration between the municipality and the local private enterprise sector (Euronews, 2018). In this case, the individuals were initially invited to collaborate part time, with an agricultural company, following a strategy combining occupational, social and professional integration. Through this scheme, they developed labour competences and by socialising with Portuguese workers, learned Portuguese and became acquainted with local and national cultural habits and traits. In that particular company, it was common to have lunch collectively and share food. In other contexts, like the ones observed by Challinor (2018) in Northern Portugal, it is the citizens, individually and on a voluntary basis, full of good-will, yet deprived of formal competencies, who fill the gaps and inefficiencies of the reception system. In our contexts of observation, this aspect was particularly evident when it came to resolve issues related to Portuguese language teaching:

We were expecting an intensive Portuguese course for the refugees [received in the municipality]. It didn't happen. [...] So, it's nurse M. who comes every day from six till seven in the afternoon to teach Portuguese. It has gone well, so far. They [refugees] like it. And they already know how to speak. They know already the days of the week, they know the numbers... They know a few words. The basics, which is great! (social pedagogue, NGO director, Vila Real district).

8. *Freguesias* are the smallest administrative units in Portugal, underneath the municipalities.

Though particularly vulnerable to diverse structural constraints, the inland municipalities nevertheless seem to end up solving some insufficiencies of the reception system more swiftly as a result of a greater proximity and informality of interpersonal and interinstitutional networks. Such a state of affairs reveals the frailty of the system and the way it is put under stress by multiple obstacles which compel practitioners to resort to informal arrangements. It exposes also a process of neoliberal State transfer to civil society of welfare responsibilities, shaping what Wolch (1990) has called the emergence of a “shadow state”. Moreover, in many cases, it implies an unsustainable transfer of burdens, since such a handover is not supported by the creation of the needed structural conditions and resources, leaving the onus upon institutions and practitioners to arrange for immediate and adequate responses (Sacramento & Silva, 2018). Due to this State absence, civil society tends to assume a “gap filling role”, much like what Mayblin and James (2018) observed in the United Kingdom.

In the face of this scenario of the State passing on of responsibilities, the local frontline practitioners who deal with refugees tend to develop their interventions based on a micro-policy of good will and compassion. In the words of Vacchiano (2018, p. 108), it is grounded on a humanitarian discourse which considers “protection as an act of compassionate generosity and philanthropic benevolence”. This representation echoes in the testimony of one of the interviewed social workers from a local NGO: “Portugal has this huge humane side, doesn’t it? We are always ready to give a hand to the more disadvantaged, to those who need the most”. These stands are infused with the practitioners’ own voluntariness, improvisation and creativity in accordance with their understanding, above all tacit, of what is best to be done to *help the refugees*. The next passage shows how practitioners reflexively recognise the inexistence of a thorough and coherent planning of procedures (and the impossibility to frame it):

Obviously, there’s a lot of creativity in all this, right? [...] If something goes south, it’s not because we haven’t tried, it’s not because we weren’t open to face the challenge. If something goes wrong, we’ll solve it... we’ll find a way to resolve it (municipal social worker, Castelo Branco district).

The possibility to intervene creatively beyond and sometimes against statutory guidelines and policy frames has caught the attention of critical social work literature. The interactions (and the inherent intersubjectivities)

established between practitioners and refugees prompt what England (1986, p. 32) designated as an “intuitive use of the self”, often held in reaction to emerging empiricism and managerialism. This *intuition*, somehow conformant with Reinders’ (2010) tacit knowledge production, encompasses the notion of social work as art. According to such a conception, social intervention, rather than just signifying a set of statutory driven devices and well defined technic-operative procedures, can take the form of creative artistry where “much rests on the social worker’s interpretation of the client’s world and this is always about judgement and meaning” (Gray & Webb, 2008, p. 185-186).

As interpreters, innovators and rectifiers – when not *saboteurs* (Williams & Graham, 2014) – of the policy guides which regulate the settlement and integration process, practitioners end up operating a considerable discretionary power. This action often has the objective of filling gaps and neutralizing the unreasonableness of the (in)existing refugee social protection schemes. Acting as street-level bureaucrats and as the human face of policy (Lipsky, 2010), practitioners frequently become, on their own, agents of resistance and dissent against the State’s (or institutional) statutory dispositions (Garrett, 2014)⁹. Intervening beyond and adapting the given policy was recognized by a Vila Real district NGO social worker: “though that is the standing policy and the one which we should follow, at the local and institutional level, we try to adapt that policy to better satisfy and supply the needs of these people and families”. When looking at the extensive literature on this subject, it becomes quite clear that these (re)actions are not exclusive of Portugal and become quite common in other contexts of social work intervention, where practitioners resourcefully adjust, at the local level, wider policies and frames of refugee settlement and integration (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014; Jönsson, 2014; Ottosdottir & Evans, 2014).

6. Final considerations

Much has been written on the lack of comprehensive policies and structured devices of reception and integration of refugees in the EU (Grigonis, 2016; Santinho, 2013; Wahlbeck, 2019) and Portugal presents a striking example of this, which becomes more evident when compared to other countries in

9. These processes of humanistic resistance to State political and ideological orientations regarding migrations and asylum are evident in the so called “sanctuary cities” (Moffette & Ridgley, 2018).

the EU with a longer experience of asylum (Sacramento et al., 2019). These insufficiencies in the realm of policy framings are aggravated by the structural constraints referred to above. In the face of the absence of duly structured national or regional policies and devices of integration, at the local level casuistic arrangements tend to prevail, offering a professional-voluntarist mix set of responses, at times erratic, discretionary and often uncoordinated.

The above-mentioned constraints, structural and operational, end up limiting an effective social protection and integration in terms of a rights-based policy, commonly held in political rhetoric. It reveals the State's political will to receive refugees, but through broad policies and disconnected measures which end up locating to the local organisations the bulk of responsibility and resources of intervention. Relying on scant resources, overwhelmed with existing social intervention obligations and holding very scarce experience and expertise in matters related with migration and asylum work, local social solidarity institutions and municipalities, especially in the rural inland, tend to deploy and improvise responses, adapting already existent intervention devices which were designed, in the first place, to address other publics, problems and needs. However, no matter how dedicated, creative and valiant their work is, it is not enough to ensure the full delivery of the social protection entitlements established by the law and suggested in the scientific and technical literature.

The State granted civil society the task of receiving and integrating refugees, though without providing the necessary means to operationalize refugee hospitality in a sustained, integrated manner (regarding the key dimensions of social inclusion and rights). Operating on their own, with practitioners lacking specific education and training to intervene with culturally sensitive issues and culturally diverse publics, often departing from consistent social-labour plans of intervention, the institutions responsible for locally accommodating the refugees, scattered throughout the Portuguese inland, may inadvertently contribute towards producing perverse outcomes by not delivering a consistent, comprehensive and fully integrated systemic response.

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CHAPTER 9

CUTTING THE APRON STRINGS: CONTESTED INTERPRETATIONS OF REFUGEE AUTONOMY IN PORTUGAL

Elizabeth Challinor

1. Introduction

To cut the apron strings signifies becoming independent. The term evokes breaking free from the maternal and domestic realms; it evokes growing up, leaving home, to venture into the public sphere and assert oneself with autonomy. It also implies a sense of liberation and self-empowerment. The onus is on the individual to pick up the scissors and cut the ties. There is a sense of inevitability in it too. The ties must be cut to allow for further growth. But the expression is also ambivalent since it depends upon who cuts the ties. It may also imply a threat of withdrawal of protection and support forcing the individual to find his or her own feet. In this case, instead of suggesting liberation and empowerment, it harbours an implicit moral condemnation of excessive dependence, and lack of initiative.

This chapter examines the ways in which notions of refugee integration in Portugal are imbued with conflicting understandings of cutting the apron strings. The empirical data derives from ongoing fieldwork initiated in April 2016 on the experiences of migrants and refugees in northern Portugal¹. It examines in detail the case of a single family, hosted by two institutions in Portugal through the European Union relocation programme. The family's trajectory provides a lens through which to examine the argument below of how the politics of asylum associates protection with a relinquishing of free choice.

1. Research carried out within the ambit of the IFILNOVA – FCSH, Nova University of Lisbon research project PTDC/FER-ETC/30378/2017.

[T]he dominant politics of asylum is predicated on a moral economy that institutes a nexus between protection and nonfreedom. The moment migrants/refugees file for international protection, they are immediately figured as people who, as an effect of their vulnerability, victimization, and presumed desperation, cannot but accept the conditionality and the limitations of the asylum regime in a sort of “losing game” dynamic: the price of becoming an asylum seeker is presumed to involve a sort of forfeiture of migrants’ autonomy of movement and freedom of choice. To seek protection is fashioned as a voluntary submission to a regime that authorizes itself to decide for and dispose of “refugees” as its docile supplicants (De Genova, Garrelli, & Tazzeoli, 2018, p. 246).

The restricted options available which have been examined in terms of the “politics of cramped space” (Walters & Luthi, 2016) force individuals to be creative and experimental. Such a perspective challenges the stereotyped image of victimised refugees by drawing attention to their agency and political subjectivity. A significant aspect of this is their refusal to comply with the “rules of the game” that regulate border, asylum and humanitarian regimes; their attempt to loosen the apron strings by refusing to give up their autonomy of movement and freedom of choice through “spatial disobedience” (De Genova et al., 2018).

Such was the case of the Shmoon² family hosted in Vila Norte – the pseudonym for a northern town in Portugal. The parents decided to leave the country for Germany; however, they were returned to Portugal in accordance with the Dublin Regulation, (discussed below). Despite the couple’s desire to return to Vila Norte, where they had previously made some friends and acquaintances and where one of their children had already attended kindergarten, the relocation programme required them to be hosted by a different institution. They were sent to a much smaller town, hundreds of kilometres away which I shall call Vila do Alto – where they knew nobody and had to wait for a year for the end of their contract with their new hosting institution before they were able to move.

2. All names have been changed in order to safeguard anonymity.

2. The Relocation Programme

In comparison with other European countries that have higher development indicators, the number of asylum applications received in Portugal has always been low. For example, between 1974 and 2015, Portugal received around 19,000 requests for asylum (Sousa & Costa 2018: 35) and in 2008, Portugal received 160 requests compared to 4,515 in Spain, 26,845 in Germany, and 41,840 in France (Eurostat, 2017).

In May 2015, the year when more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe (UNHCR, 2017), the European Commission (2017) adopted the European Agenda on Migration (EAM), setting up a relocation programme to respond to the demands made upon Italy and Greece by the daily arrivals of thousands of asylum seekers. According to the Dublin regulation, which was adopted by EU member states in 2003, the state responsible for examining an asylum application is the state where the asylum seeker first enters the European Union³. The latter thus appealed to the solidarity of its member states to ease the pressure on Italy and Greece by pledging to host quotas of refugees.

In September 2015 the Portuguese government made a commitment to receive 4,574 resettled refugees and asylum seekers by the end of 2017 within the ambit of the EAM (SEF, 2015, p. 48). The government consequently issued a directive to create an inter-ministerial working group for the EAM, headed by the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) in order to evaluate the country's hosting capacity and to prepare an action plan for the resettlement, relocation and integration of asylum seekers and refugees⁴. The provision of accommodation constituted a major challenge since, in order to avoid creating tensions with the local population, the use of social housing was ruled out. The government turned to the third sector for help by making a direct appeal to civil society to participate in the programme and host a family.

The provision of social services by the third sector dates to the fifteenth century, with the creation of the charity *Misericórdias* that expanded its activities throughout the nineteenth century to assist the socially vulnerable, marginalized sectors of society. Following the transition to democracy in 1974 there was a flourishing of civil society organisations: numbers have

3. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32003R0343>

4. Migration (Diário da República, 1.ª série, n.º 56, 20 de março de 2015).

risen from 1,800 in 1986 (Joaquim, 2015, p. 17) to 5,123 in 2017⁵. Some of them began to work directly with the state by signing protocols to receive financial support for their services. They operated within a framework of shared social responsibility which was formalized in 1996 with the signing of the “Cooperation Pact for Social Solidarity” (Coutinho, 2002).

It is within this tradition of cooperation between state and civil society that in 2015 the government appealed to the public to become actively involved in welcoming refugees. The aim was to mobilize consortiums of local authorities, institutions and individuals to work together to meet the asylum seekers’ needs in terms of providing independent accommodation and access to employment, health, education, Portuguese language acquisition and vocational training.

Housing affordability constitutes a growing problem in Portugal where the social housing sector is very small, and the amount of disposable household income spent on rent in the private sector has increased over the years (Branco & Alves, 2018). Houses were consequently provided by individuals such as emigrants living abroad, by civil society organizations that either owned their own properties or rented them with funds provided by the relocation programme.

The NGO Institute of Father António Vieira (IPAV) played a key role by launching the Refugee Support Platform (PAR) in Lisbon in September 2015 (Sanches, 2015). PAR created an on-line site where organizations could register to apply to host refugee families⁶. On the home page of the site, a slide show of photographs of refugees forms a back drop to the verses of a famous social protest poem that denounces the horrors of war – “the Peace Cantata” – by the Camões literature prize winner (1999), Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (1919-2004): “We see, we hear and we read. We cannot ignore” (*Vemos, ouvimos e lemos. Não podemos ignorar*). The poem, written for a vigil held in a Lisbon church on New Year’s Eve in 1968 to protest against Portuguese colonialism was turned into a revolutionary song and recorded in 1970 by Francisco Fanhais – one of the most famous political musicians during the dictatorship in Portugal (Madeira, 2017)⁷. By tapping into the collective consciousness of Portugal’s history of resistance to the injustice,

5. The list is available at this link: <http://www.seg-social.pt/inicio>.

6. <http://www.refugiados.pt>.

7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVEXIp5HuPY>.

violence and suffering of dictatorship and colonial rule, these verses served to appeal to people's emotions to get involved. By July 2016 around 400 civil society and private organizations across the country had registered with PAR to host refugees⁸.

Besides PAR, other civil society consortiums responded to the government's appeal. In order to facilitate the process, the High Commission for Migration (ACM) – a public institution of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – opened a link on its website in November 2015 where individuals could register to volunteer as mentors and institutions could find information on how to submit applications to host refugees through PAR as well as through local councils or through other national consortiums that were part of the EAM working group. These included: the Union of Mutual Societies (*União das Mutualidades*), the National Confederation of Solidarity Institutions (*Confederação Nacional das Instituições de Solidariedade*) and the Union of Portuguese Charities (*A União das Misericórdias Portuguesas*), one of which also hosted a family in Vila Norte.

Before the families arrived, the local council and other institutions organized a public meeting in the town to present the relocation programme to the general public. During the meeting, somebody drew attention to the somewhat inappropriate name of the programme, commenting that it appeared to refer to people as if they were objects. This is because the verb to relocate had been translated literally into Portuguese as *recolocar* which is often used in relation to objects and may be used to refer to people who are reinstated to positions but is not usually employed, in the English sense of the word, to refer to people moving to a new place or home.

The observation that the name of the programme evoked objects instead of people gains significance in the light of Chu's (2016) discussion of the "return' of human cargo" in the Mediterranean crisis. She analyses this in the light of the assumed modern-day entitlement to comfort in travel which helps to cultivate norms in contemporary politics of mobility that "human = passenger = rights while nonhuman = cargo = price" (Chu 2016, p. 411). Chu's analysis of how this opposition has been destabilized through a politics of dis/comfort in which the expanding consumer logic of capitalism that you get what you pay for, takes the focus away from rights. This, in turn, contributes towards the normalization of "human cargo" since beggars cannot

8. Interview with PAR in Porto, 6 July 2016.

be choosers. Most of the asylum seekers who came to Portugal were not able to choose the town where they were relocated to and some claimed that they had not chosen Portugal as a destination.

By the end of November 2017, 1,520 individuals had been hosted in Portugal across 98 municipalities through the relocation programme which amounted to 51% of the numbers the government had pledged to receive through the programme. But just over half the amount of these people (768) had also left Portugal for other European destinations by this date and 79 had been returned to Portugal in accordance with the Dublin Regulation (ACM, 2017, pp. 5-9, p. 27). Some families left secretly; they feared that they may be impeded from leaving if they informed their host institutions. Their temporary residence permits were not valid for travel but, due to the Schengen agreement, they did not have to show any documents when crossing borders by bus or train.

In some cases, Portugal was used as a steppingstone to reach desired destinations in northern Europe and this was evident when they left relatively soon after their arrival. However, social media also began to report internal causes including their dispersal throughout the country through the adoption of a decentralized strategy which prevented them from establishing their own communities; inefficient bureaucracy and lack of articulation between public services; the long waiting period – over 18 months – for a final decision on their status which, as an asylum seeker I spoke with explained, impeded them from initiating the process of requesting family reunification; limited work opportunities with unqualified temporary, low paid jobs and insufficient provision of language teaching (Marcelino, 2017; Moleiro & Franco, 2017). Another major concern was what would happen at the end of their contracts.

Families hosted through PAR signed contracts for two years, whereas families hosted through other organizations such as the Red Cross were only given 18-month contracts. The hosting institutions received 6,000 Euros for each person through the relocation program. Out of these funds, adults were entitled to 150 Euros a month and 75 Euros were given for each child. A family of four, for example, would thus receive below Portugal's minimum wage⁹. However, the families did not have to pay rent since the accommodation was provided for free, and bills and other needs were paid for out of the funds.

9. 589.17 Euros in 2015, 618.33 Euros in 2016 (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=earn_mw_cur&lang=en).

At the end of their contracts, the hosting institutions were no longer legally obliged to support the families. This created anxiety amongst the refugees. All the hosted families I contacted expressed a general sense of insecurity with regard to their future. What if they had not found a job? How would they pay for the water and electricity bills? Would they be able to stay in the accommodation provided? If so, would they have to pay rent?

In November 2018 social media reported the case of three Syrian families, resident in a town in central Portugal, who complained that their hosting institution had cut their water and electricity supplies. The title of the newspaper article reads “They brought them to Portugal with one hand; they cut their water and electricity with the other” (Lusa/TSF, 2018). In an interview, the president of the organization justified his decision by declaring that according to the rules, since the programme had come to an end, each family must become autonomous and start paying for rent, water, electricity and other expenses. The apron strings had been cut. The Syrians complained that they could not afford to pay for the 340 Euros the hosting institution had requested for rent, given that the social assistance they received from the state amounted to around 500 Euros. The Shamoan family faced similar problems as shall become evident below.

According to Syrian cultural mediators I interviewed, the secondary movement of some of the beneficiaries of the relocation programme they had assisted in the north-western Portuguese district of Minho claimed that it was the uncertainty of what would happen at the end of their contracts that prompted them to leave Portugal (Challinor, 2018).

Secondary movement was referred to in social media (Oliveira, 2016) and in everyday language in Portugal as “refugees running away” and so when they were forced to return, moral judgments easily came into play. They were labelled in the national press (Moleiro, 2017) as the “retaken” – *retomados* – which calls to mind the idea of “human cargo”; suggesting a refusal to recognize their autonomy. For the Portuguese reader, however, the term was a play on words. It was coined in order to evoke the decolonisation immigrants, derogatively referred to as *retornados* (returnees) who had left the Portuguese African colonies in mass in the wake of their independence from Portugal over 40 years ago (Lubkemann, 2002). Whatever the semantics of the term “retaken”, individuals who were forcibly returned to Portugal, were likely to feel as if they were treated like objects. This was evident in the words of Karima, the mother of the Shamoan family, when she claimed, at

the end of the contract with the second hosting institution, that she felt as if she were a pawn in somebody else's game of chess.

Social services staff referred to the family as having “run away” and I noticed that even Karima used this language. When I questioned her about this, she replied “because this is what people say”. Karima then told me that she had informed her hosting institution in Vila Norte of her plans to travel. The institution had advised her to speak to SEF. Immigration officials had told her she was free to go but that her document was only valid in Portugal because it was a provisional residence permit.

My discussion of events focuses mainly on Karima's perspective. She always spoke with me in English. Language barriers prevented me from communicating in any depth with her husband Abdul and prevented him from communicating with his host institutions. Karima was consequently the main spokesperson for the family which is likely to have constituted a challenge to Abdul's sense of masculinity (El Feki, 2014). Whilst this cannot be explored in depth here, it constitutes a significant underlying issue given that Karima also had to deal with incidents of domestic violence which highlight in turn the problems that arise when refugees are hosted as family units.

Following a frank discussion of how Karima felt disappointed with regard to the way in which my academic writing diluted the intensity of everything that she had experienced, and of how I felt, that as a researcher, it was important to gain some distance from her perspective, Karima approved my narration and analysis of events in this chapter for publication¹⁰.

3. Setting the scene

When the Shamoan family first arrived in Vila Norte, at the end of February 2016, I had very little contact with them. Although I had offered my services as a volunteer their hosting institution never requested them. I met with the family on a few occasions, one of which included a surprise birthday lunch for Karima in a restaurant. As this example illustrates, the organization was also attentive to the affective dimensions of refugee hospitality (for more details see Challinor, 2018). It was only after the family had returned from Germany and had been relocated against their wishes in Vila do Alto that a

10. This has also involved a process of continuing consultation to obtain permission to include new material throughout the different writing stages of this chapter.

mutual friend who had maintained constant contact with Karima asked me if I would speak with her on the phone. This friend has provided invaluable support to the family, highlighting the importance of recognizing the role of informal networks and conviviality in refugee reception and integration.

During our telephone conversation, Karima complained about the humidity and bad quality of their accommodation and later sent me photographs through Whatsapp to support her claims. She told me that she wanted to return to Vila Norte and asked me if I would contact her former hosting institution. I agreed to talk to them but pointed out that in the meantime she needed to make a life for herself and her family in her current location. We both knew that she was obliged to stay there for a year. I tried to make her see that a year would pass more quickly than she thought and that during this period, she could prepare for her return.

Although Karima complained about the bad conditions of the flat, she was refusing to go out and had turned down the offer of places at the local nursery for her two small children. I suggested that she accept them since it was important, not only for the children to socialize and learn Portuguese, but it would also be good for her to make some space and time for herself, so that she could think. A few days later, Karima decided to send her children to nursery.

At the time, I interpreted Karima's reaction as a form of protest against her situation. It constituted a refusal to play the role of the docile, grateful refugee. I was also cognizant that this would create tension with her hosting institution with whom she was going to have to liaise with for the coming year. Nevertheless, in the following months, Karima began to accept her new hometown as a stopgap.

One night, while the family was fast asleep in the same bedroom, the plaster ceiling collapsed showering them in their sleep with large pieces of plaster. They woke up in a fright, thinking they were in Syria and the youngest child called out "a bomb!" After this, the hosting institution agreed to find new accommodation for them and hired a more comfortable, spacious flat. They moved in a month later.

The children acquired a routine of going to nursery where they grew emotionally attached to their teacher Maria who became a helpful family friend. She managed to provide a sofa and an oven for them, highlighting once again the importance of extra-institutional relations. However, other issues such as, for example, finding work and learning Portuguese were not

so easily addressed within the relationship of increasing mutual distrust that had developed with the hosting institution that reached a point of no return.

During the year, I maintained contact with Karima through mobile communications, saw her once when she visited our mutual friend in Vila Norte and I visited the family twice in Vila do Alto before they finally moved back. I also played an active role in attempting to facilitate their settlement in Vila Norte. The myriad details of this process are well beyond the scope of this chapter. What interests me here is to examine the conflicting perceptions of refugee autonomy that emerged.

The first perspective gives a description of events focusing on the individual: it describes how Karima was perceived by the second hosting institution as difficult, uncooperative and undeserving. She failed to correspond to the docile, supplicant refugee. The second perspective which draws on my prolonged engagement with the family places Karima within a complex network of personal and institutional relations that provides a less simplistic means of interpreting events and her reactions to them.

4. Contested interpretations of refugee autonomy

The first few days after their arrival in Vila do Alto, Edgar, the president of the hosting institution was unable to convince Karima to leave the flat. He told her she had an appointment at the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF), she refused to go. He said it was necessary to register the family at the local health centre, she declined. He had found two places at the local nursery for the children, she refused to take them. His hosting institution had found work for her, she was not interested. Karima told her hosting institution that she wanted to leave. Edgar arranged a meeting at the institutional headquarters in Lisbon. Karima described the meeting in the following terms. She sat at a desk with a woman who began to draw circles on a piece of paper. “You don’t want to go to SEF”, and she crossed out a circle. “You don’t want to put your children in nursery”, and she crossed out another circle. “You don’t want a job”, and she crossed out yet another circle. The woman then told her that there were no other options and she could not move town.

Karima’s description of this encounter provides a graphic illustration of her response to the politics of cramped space – both sides had reached a deadlock. From the institution’s perspective, Karima came across as stubborn

and intransigent in her lack of cooperation with her hosts. From Karima's perspective, she was challenging the link between protection and unfreedom that characterizes the moral economy of asylum (De Genova et al., 2018). Karima had been returned to Portugal against her will, after having contracted a lawyer (with financial help from her family) who failed to challenge the court's decision in Germany. According to Karima, Germany had agreed to allow the family to stay if Portugal approved. She consequently arrived with a strong feeling of resentment because she knew four Syrian families that had left Portugal and had been granted permission to stay in Germany. Reflecting upon her reactions much later, Karima explained that she was also very nervous because she wanted to move back to Vila Norte.

After Karima decided to send her children to nursery, she then agreed to work but was told that the post no longer appeared to be available; the employer would not answer the phone. Karima also requested an appointment with SEF several times before it finally took place. Karima accepted to work some hours in the institution's laundry but later discovered that the document she had signed was not a work contract because it did not have national insurance or social security numbers. It was Maria, rather than the institution which then helped her to acquire them. These and other incidents led Karima to feel that the hosting institution staff no longer wanted to help her and were only prepared to do the absolute minimum, if that. Whether there was deliberate foot-dragging and misinformation on behalf of the institution at this stage is hard to verify; but what became evident is that the seeds of a mutual sense of mistrust had taken root.

Karima's attitudes failed to correspond to the image of the grateful refugee. She refused, for example, to accept food donations which were very close to or past their sell by date. The institution told her it was safe to give her children such yoghurts, but she replied, "You can, but I will not". Her institutional interlocutors, on the other hand, were not always sufficiently informed about bureaucratic procedures some of which were beyond their control, but it was difficult for Karima to distinguish between issues they were accountable or unaccountable for. Karima was nonetheless able to establish more personal relations with Pedro, one of the staff members, who unlike Edgar, accepted invitations to eat at her home but asked Karima not to tell him. Pedro also tried to help with other issues, always asking her not to tell Edgar.

During their one-year stay, both parents engaged in temporary, part-time work but without formal contracts. There were no Portuguese classes

available and then after about eight months a Portuguese teacher was found to give them classes once a week in the afternoon. However, disagreements regarding the feasibility of arrangements – interpreted as bad faith on all sides – terminated the lessons. The institution claimed that they did not want to learn Portuguese. Karima claimed that the government did little to help her make a life in Portugal – she could not find a job or learn the language.

As the end of their contract approached, Edgar started discussing their options. Did they want to stay, or did they want to live somewhere else in Portugal? They were free to choose. Although Karima was relatively sure that she wanted to return to Vila Norte, she withheld this information from the hosting institution in order to discuss all the possible options.

If they wanted to remain in the town, Edgar told them that they could not stay in the flat because there were no more funds for paying the rent. The institution could help her find somewhere else. They could offer her a full-time job in the laundry, but she would have to accept late shifts, even though she had small children because other women were in the same situation as her and were not exempt from working late hours. On one of my visits, we discussed this option in more depth with Edgar. Karima commented that she did not have any other family to look after her children. I asked if he could explain to the workers her situation; wasn't it his job as a hosting institution to educate the workers about what it means to be a refugee? He wagged his finger to indicate no and explained that he did not want to create bad feelings amongst the staff; all he wanted was peace and quiet so that everything ran smoothly. He also argued that her husband could look after the children, even though he was aware of the constant threat of domestic violence she was subjected to.

Once Karima took her final decision to leave the town, her file was sent to Lisbon to be forwarded to Vila Norte. However, the details of how she could go about moving were unclear. Did she have to find accommodation, or would her hosting institution help her? Edgar claimed he was not responsible for finding accommodation in another town. On my second visit, I spoke with the institutional headquarters on the phone from the local office. I was told that now that her contract was finishing, she was like a Portuguese citizen and was responsible for finding her own accommodation and work. What was unclear was how this would happen in practice. How could Karima find accommodation at a distance? I and our mutual friend began looking for flats but what if we found one? Where would the money come from to pay

for it? Should I contact Social Services in Vila Norte? This wasn't officially my business and, since the family's file had not been sent to the town yet, neither was it officially theirs. Karima informed the hosting institution she would only leave the flat if they found accommodation for her.

The institution gave various deadlines of when the family would have to leave the flat. On my second visit the deadline had been extended again. They had around a week before they would have to leave. Karima showed me a paper she had been given six months before by Paula – her institutional interlocutor – explaining her rights. Karima had gone to see her, and she had opened her file and began to explain what would happen at the end of the contract. Paula had written on the paper that she would be entitled to a social fund and had written down the amounts for each member of the family plus 256 Euros for accommodation. I rang Paula in front of Karima to clarify this because I had contradictory information and Paula confirmed my suspicions: she was not entitled to accumulate the social fund with the accommodation subsidy. Karima was very upset because rents are around 300 Euros: more than half the amount of the social benefits she was entitled to. After I left, Karima recounted later how she went to visit Paula, demanding why she had led her to believe for the last six months that she would be entitled to far more money. Karima showed her the paper where she had written the amounts and Paula acknowledged the mistake. Karima was nervous and shouted at her, “Now the last week before I have to leave you tell me this. Is this how you help me?” According to Karima, Paula replied, “Karima, what do you want? Do you want my house? Do you want my car?” She took out her keys and put them on the desk saying, “Do you want me to ring my family and tell them to leave because you want my house?” Furious, Karima left and refused to return as Paula called out to her. She refused to answer her many calls, or the calls from Edgar, the following days.

A few days before she was due to leave the flat, Edgar told Karima he had some good news – there was a flat available in Vila Norte. She would only have to stay for a maximum period of a week in a hotel. Nobody from Vila Norte had contacted her to say this and I knew nothing. She asked for the address of the flat so that I could visit it for her. He agreed, but every time Karima went to the office to ask for the address, the institution claimed Edgar was not there.

Then two days before the deadline, Edgar sent the police to the flat in the afternoon to tell them they had to leave in two days time. Karima rang me in a panic, and I spoke over the phone with a police officer who told me that there was a house for her in Vila Norte. I said nothing, but doubted that this was true since I was actively trying to find accommodation and as far as I knew, none of the institutions I had approached had anything to offer. I suggested the police go and talk with Social Security. They left her flat and did not return. Edgar called the police a second time the following day and they came in the evening at nine o'clock. They were different officers and did not speak English. They showed her a paper saying they needed the house for another refugee family, and she would have to move to a hotel. On the day Karima left, the police came a third time. She asked Edgar why he had called the police the day she was leaving for Vila Norte. "It is better", he had replied.

There was no accommodation waiting for Karima and her family. The calling of the police to ensure that they left the flat with the false information that accommodation had been found for them constitutes a dramatic cutting of the apron strings and illustrates the degree to which communication with the hosting institution had broken down, rendering dialogue impossible.

The family spent the first month in a hotel room in Vila Norte paid for by Social Security. When the latter then imposed a deadline for the family to leave the hotel, suggesting they stay with Syrian friends in a nearby town, claiming there were no more funds, accommodation was finally found through extra institutional personal networks the details of which are beyond this chapter. There is not enough space here to describe in any detail the family's second arrival to Vila Norte. What I shall discuss in the next section is how the family's sense of autonomy was undermined by a number of interlocking factors so that Karima and Abdul found themselves "in cramped space when the way ahead is traversed in all directions by blockages, boundaries and limits, be they social or material" (Walters & Luthi, 2016, p. 362).

5. Cramped space, autonomy and freedom of choice

The current restrictions upon the freedom of movement of refugees provide a sharp contrast with the past. Prior to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Nansen passport system allowed refugees to cross borders in search of employment. These passports were recognized by 52 states and issued to

around 45,000 refugees at the outbreak of the Second World War. Contrary to Dublin, it constituted a mobility centred refugee policy that allowed refugees to move between places, building their own solutions (Long, 2016).

The Shamoan family's exercise of autonomy had been curtailed by the application of the Dublin Regulation; their forced return to Portugal was experienced as a tightening of unwanted apron strings. Karima's exercise of autonomy was also reduced by the pervasive lack of reliable information about the family's legal rights and obligations in the everyday encounters with their institutional interlocutors. This information precarity (Wall et al., 2015) started in Greece and intensified in Portugal. In the camp in Greece, Karima and her husband were asked to list eight countries of their choice, Portugal was not on their list. Karima was unaware of the Dublin Regulation and nobody told her about it. When the official informed her that they could be relocated to Portugal she refused. Karima was told the only other two options were to return to Turkey or to stay in Greece. Karima had some information about Portugal, not just from Geography classes in school but from her own readings and she knew it was a relatively poor European country. She wanted to join her family in Germany or Austria. But Abdul agreed to be relocated to Portugal. The officials informed the couple that they both had to agree. Karima tried to convince her husband that it was a bad destination, but he would not listen to her. In retrospect, she believed that he just wanted to assert his authority. Abdul had told her that if she refused to go to Portugal then he would return to Syria with the children, leave them with his mother and go to the war.

Abdul had been taken to prison in Syria because he refused to go to war. He stayed there for about eighteen months. Their youngest child was born while he was in prison and he came out when she was around nine months old. He was released from prison because one of his brothers had contacts and paid money to the government. He was told to go home and that within three days he would have to prepare to go to war and so the family fled to Turkey and then to Greece.

Fearful of Abdul's threat and thinking that once she was in Portugal she could always move on to Germany or Austria, Karima agreed. Looking back, Karima thinks Abdul did not intend to carry out his threat, but at the time, she believed him. "I was innocent then and thought everyone was like me and said the truth". She now felt this was not the best decision but recognized that at the time she did not have much experience. The youngest of twelve siblings

(six brothers, six sisters) she had always been protected by her brothers and was not used to making big life decisions on her own.

In the case of Portugal, the Shamoony family's interlocutors also suffered from information precarity; they did not always know how to meet the family's needs and respond to requests which did not fit neatly into the routine procedures of Portuguese bureaucracy, inadequately prepared for refugee reception. In Vila Norte, the social security interlocutor for refugees sometimes inadvertently gave Karima incorrect or contradictory information, since she was dependent upon confirmations and authorizations from institutional headquarters in Lisbon. She exclaimed in a meeting in which I was present with Karima, "I don't have power. Nobody knows more than me. I don't have anyone to speak to. I have to call Lisbon". The bureaucratic blockages became evident when Karima took the decision to return to Vila Norte, and her file was sent to Lisbon. She was temporarily left without an institutional interlocutor. When I rang Social Services in Vila do Alto, requesting advice on how to assist the family to move to Vila Norte, the social worker told me she could not help me and that since her file was no longer there, as far as she was concerned it was as if Karima no longer existed.

Feelings of mistrust were further reinforced by the attitudes of some of Karima's interlocutors who had lost the good will to assist her due to the bad personal relations that had developed between them. The lack of articulation between the institutions involved in hosting the family during the transitional stages from one town to another, which also resulted in the deliberate giving of false information, further exacerbated her experience of information precarity and lack of trust.

Karima was also distrustful of her husband; however, she was hosted not as an individual but as part of an indivisible family unit and there did not appear to be any policy guidelines or contingency funds within the relocation programme to address separation within a family. Rather, the programme seemed to work with a standard model of the family. When the issue of domestic violence emerged, both hosting institutions in Portugal took recourse to the temporary measure of paying for a hotel room for the father. However, lack of funding for alternative long-term accommodation resulted in Abdul returning to the family flat and sleeping in a separate room.

At the end of the contract with the hosting institution in Vila do Alto, Karima and Abdul were entitled to social security benefits because neither of them was employed. The social worker in Vila Norte advised Karima not

to separate from her husband because this would result in a reduction of the family's meagre social benefits which were already barely enough to live on. Karima claimed that she was also discouraged from separating from her abusive husband by the two hosting institutions who argued that she should wait and give priority to settling into her new life in Portugal. Edgar had also advised Karima to withdraw the complaint of domestic violence she had made to the police with the false threat that her children may be taken from her. Karima thus found herself caught between the desire to protect herself and the desire to protect her children. However, she also felt the need to protect Abdul.

From the institutions' perspective, Karima seemed to have an ambiguous attitude towards Abdul interpreted in the dismissive terms of the "typical behaviour" of victims of domestic violence who remain with their partners. Edgar commented that even though he was in the hotel, Karima still let him into the house during the day. Contextual information reveals that apart from all the obstacles put in her way, Karima's sense of responsibility made it difficult for Karima to refuse to see her husband. Not only did she want to make sure the children could still see their father whose parenting skills she praised, but neither did she want to leave him isolated in a country where he did not speak any European language and had no friends. "They treat us just like one block; a family", she commented to me once. No assistance was available for Abdul who had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Germany following an incident of domestic violence. Karima consequently occupied a far more complex position than that of a mere victim: she was aware of Abdul's vulnerability and did not feel comfortable cutting off his last apron string if no other help was available to him; even though this pushed her into an even more "cramped space". However, this did not prevent Karima from creating pockets of autonomy such as deciding to stop wearing the hijab against Abdul's will. For the time being, all she could do was manage these tensions in a relationship which, similar to my analysis of an episode of domestic violence in Portugal within the context of Cape Verdean gender relations "shifted between cultivating dependence, exerting control and seeking autonomy" (Challinor, 2012, p. 585).

My role as researcher has been one of active engagement. I have tried to bridge the gaps between the lack of communication and articulation between refugees and institutions. From my engaged perspective, I would argue that encouraging autonomy within a very "cramped space" of limited

access to information and translation services in the name of equality fails to grasp the importance of equity. Equity and equality both aim to produce fairness. Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. Equality is treating everyone the same. Equality can only produce fairness, if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help. To argue that at the end of their contracts with the relocation programme, that beneficiaries of international protection are the same as Portuguese citizens and should now become autonomous fails to address the issue of equity. If they were still unemployed, the social benefits they were entitled to were not specifically destined for beneficiaries of international protection; rather, they came from a social insertion fund (RSI) earmarked to tackle extreme poverty, with the aim of helping individuals to become economically autonomous within a year (DPC/ISS, 2019). The beneficiaries of this fund have been stigmatized in the public sphere as lazy, unworthy and associated with deviant behaviour (Ferreira, 2015). The fund comes with obligations which included proving that beneficiaries are actively looking for work. Abdul was constantly summoned to the job centre for jobs he could not accept because he did not speak Portuguese. Portuguese classes for foreigners were provided once a week by the local council but Abdul had stopped going because level zero was already too difficult for him. His lack of attendance was interpreted as failing to try.

The few employment opportunities that had been offered to Karima were in restaurants that also involved cleaning; work she refused to accept. In Syria, she was studying English at university and had completed a course on management. Her attitude was likely difficult to understand for those who had found the work for her, appearing to confirm the moralizing discourse in the public sphere regarding RSI beneficiaries. In his analysis of the moral panic associated with them, Ferreira (2015) argues that it diverts attention away from developing a sense of injustice at social inequality. Karima struggled to understand why cleaning jobs were the only options available to her, especially when she compared them with those offered to a Syrian refugee friend in Germany who had registered in higher education¹¹. This poses an anthropological challenge not to dismiss her ideals and dreams; to go beyond the common perspective of focusing on the suffering, subaltern subject towards an anthropology of happiness (Walker & Kavedžija, 2015) or an “anthropology of the good” which Robbins (2013, p. 448) argues must be

11. In her own flat, Karima herself acknowledged that she was a compulsive cleaner.

imaginatively conceived and not just perceived. Karima imagined a future in which she was able to complete her higher education, interrupted due to the war in Syria, to find qualified employment and to have some comfort in her life. Comfort is a word Karima used often to refer to her own and her children's needs. Seen from this perspective Karima's position constitutes a politics of refusal (Thoburn, 2016) of the limited options presented to her so far in Portugal. Hers was the practice of hope and change (Walters & Luthi, 2016, p. 365), an engagement with the politics of dis/comfort (Chu, 2016) in her conception of a better way to live.

6. Epilogue

With the usual time lapses in academia, by the time this chapter had been reviewed, Karima's circumstances had changed for the better. The opportunity to pursue higher education in Portugal arose in April 2019 when her social worker, aware that she refused to accept cleaning jobs, sent Karima information regarding the Syrian platform scholarships¹². Her application for a scholarship to study for a degree was successful¹³. After starting her undergraduate course in September 2019, she also separated from her husband.

This epilogue does not by any means indicate a "happy ending", since Karima continues to face a number of challenges. These include the legal and bureaucratic complications of filing for a divorce in Portugal with a Syrian marriage certificate; the potential threat to her physical and psychological wellbeing posed by the continued presence of her abusive husband in the same town; concerns regarding financial difficulties, including securing affordable accommodation when her contract expires, due to climbing market rents.

Despite these ongoing challenges, Karima's determination to pursue her studies – even though higher education is not formally contemplated for RSI social beneficiaries – suggests that if the politics of refusal goes hand in hand with what I shall coin the "politics of demanding the good" then doors that seemed tightly shut are more likely to open.

12. <https://www.globalplatformforsyrianstudents.org/>.

13. I am concealing the degree subject in order to safeguard anonymity.

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CHAPTER 10

YOUTH CARE TRANSITIONS OF YOUNG ADULT REFUGEES IN GERMANY – WHICH LESSONS CAN WE LEARN FOR THE NEW DECADE?

Juri Kilian

1. Introduction

The chapter features the situation of unaccompanied refugee minors (which fall under the category of young adult care leavers) in the context of the German youth care structures. The text elaborates on the challenges posed by this process of transitioning out of care and the role of youth care services, especially vocational education transition support, as a good practice for preparing young adult refugees towards independent living in Germany. The transition of young refugees into vocational education is one major aspect of working with young people who are leaving, as unaccompanied minors, the residential care system (Anderson, 2016). To illustrate this, the last part of the article will present the research findings of a case study in the city of Kassel, Germany. The research evaluated a model project for young adult refugees intended to prepare them for vocational education training (James, Seidel, Kilian, & Trostmann, 2020). Before looking into the results of the project, an outline and a critical overview of the German system of protection of unaccompanied migrant minors will be given.

The author is a social worker in Kassel, Germany and is active in the field as a researcher, professional and community activist. Some of the knowledge presented in the text draws on the reflection of years of professional experience as a social worker in the field of residential care and care leave services.

2. Contextualising unaccompanied minors in the German youth care system

The year 2020 marks the fifth year after the historical year of 2015, in German academic literature often cited as “the long summer of migration” (Hess et al., 2016), when the Federal Republic received about 750,000 asylum-seeking applications, of which about 65,000 were unaccompanied minors. In the last years the numbers of asylum-seeking people have constantly decreased due to the intensive extension of the border protection regime of the European Union. At the end of 2019 the official number of unaccompanied minors and young adult care leavers in Germany has reduced to 30,000 (Mediendienst Migration, 2020). Many residential care homes that have opened in 2015/16 have now closed their facilities due to the decreasing number of refugees coming into Germany. Nevertheless, in the last five years, more than a hundred thousand young refugees have lived mostly for some years in German residential care homes operated by third sector non-profit organisations in cooperation with the public youth care structures of the municipalities.

The term *unaccompanied minor refugees* is relevant because it acknowledges a statutory category decisive to frame the young person’s pathway in the German refugee protection structures (Zeller & Sandermann, 2017). A person defined as such is to be transferred by the local authorities to the social services and taken into care under the article 42 of the German Child and Youth Care Law. The young people are settled in residential care homes all over Germany through a distribution system organised by the Federal States. Nearly all unaccompanied minors in Germany have been placed in residential care units (group homes), most of them specialized in taking in only refugees. Under German legislation it is mandatory that any person in Germany without parents or legal guardians below 18 years of age be taken into the care of the municipal child and youth care authorities. The social workers of these services are also responsible for handling age determination¹.

Social services distribute the minors across Germany among the Federal States and place nearly all of them in residential care settings operated by various youth care organisations under a private-public partnership with the municipalities. The social workers from the public social services are

1. Due to the political and media discussion of wrong minor age claims many Federal States have now implemented medical age determination processes.

responsible for meeting the young people at least every six months together with their social workers from the residential care facilities as well as other relevant actors in order to plan further support and to evaluate the previous steps that were taken. This is made in a care plan conference together with the young person, their social support workers and other individuals whose participation might be relevant with the aim of producing a concrete care plan that determines goals and objectives for the personal development of the young person in question. This care plan is a key instrument of the social-pedagogical support partnership between the public and the private social work actors. The German law requires that the care plan be developed under a social pedagogical paradigm of participation and personal development opportunities of the children and youth must be taken into consideration. In the care plan the social services also decide about continuous provision of youth care support after transition to adulthood. The post-18 years of age care plan becomes then very relevant for the care leavers, because it decides about the extension (or non-extension) of the youth care support. It is worth highlighting the fact that most of the unaccompanied minors in Germany arrived with the age of 16 or 17, therefore, most of them spend around two years in residential care homes. From 18 years of age onwards, many things change for the young people as they transit into the legal status of adulthood. Upon attaining 18 years and thereby becoming adults, the young people can apply for social pedagogical support again through the social work field of *youth care for young adults* under article 41 of the Child and Youth Care Law for care leavers (young adults leaving the residential youth care system).

An important possibility after the phase of residential care, for those older than 18 years of age, are the so-called *youth care for young adults* services (*hilfen für junge volljährige*) which are an established instrument of German youth care to offer social support for leavers after residential or foster care. It should be noted that, at the end of 2019, there were still 18,659 young adult refugees in the youth care for young adults services (Mediendienst Migration, 2020). We should not forget, also, that young adults leaving residential care, whether they are German or not, have the legal right to apply for this support in their municipalities (Nüsken, 2014). Theoretically, the youth care services can grant this type of youth care for young adults until the person reaches the age of 21, but the determination of the length is evaluated and re-discussed every six months in the care plan conference. In the field, social workers experience a variety of decision-making-processes in the public youth

care services: some are granting the care process for a duration of only six months, while other young people receive the support until the maximum age of 21 years for a duration of three years. It seems to be relevant under which paradigm the youth social services in a municipality are working: some seem to be more oriented towards children's or young people's rights and while others are more oriented towards public management and the efficiency of their services as well as reducing costs as soon as possible (Karpenstein & Schmidt, 2017). These individual and structural discrimination processes might even occur in the same social services unit; a circumstance that calls for further research. Indeed, a deeper understanding of these discretionary processes and more data are needed, though this phenomenon is widely known to social workers in the field.

A relevant legal aspect in the determination process of granting youth care for young adults is that of the individual situation of the young person. The social services have to assess every person carefully with a strong individual focus to decide how much support a young person needs. German legislation portrays young adults as young people who are still in a phase of personal development (*persönlichkeitsentwicklung*). The youth care agenda in Germany has further theoretically been shaped by the concept of *lebensweltorientierung* (life world orientation) by Thiersch (2002) which has a strong influence also on the policy-making arena in this field. He argues that social work and social pedagogy have to take a rights-based and anti-oppressive approach in order to let young people thrive and develop their own pathways. He has constantly warned of social work being a threat of colonisation of lifeworlds by institutional professionals such as social workers. Social workers should adapt to the lifeworlds of the people they work with instead of trying to normalise them. The relevance of this concept needs to be highlighted to understand the German discourse on the youth care system that sees a strong public responsibility of care and education not only in the formal education system. The concept *youth care for young adults* is not only a system of care but also of non-formal education which supports young people in finding their place in society and in the world while developing their individual personality and their competences for independent living. Young people, therefore, have the rights to receive this support under German legislation (Münder, 2005).

Every four years the German government sets up an interdisciplinary expert committee to write a report on the contemporary situation and developments of children and youth in Germany. The 14th Report of children and

youth of the German government looked closely into the cooperation of different institutional actors that work with the different forms of transitions for young people and the challenges that appear. The report highlighted that public institutions need to identify how they support young people in their transitions in the fields of education, labour market integration and social security or whether these institutions construct barriers that make young people's lives harder. Further, it highlights the public responsibility of the state for the biographical phase of emerging adulthood and questions whether the youth care structures are sufficient to deal with the needs of support for young people in their transition to adulthood (BMFSJ, 2013). The most recent 15th report (BMFSJ, 2017), which upholds the official government agenda until 2022, claims that many more steps have to be taken to cope with the contemporary challenges that young adults face. It also states that this life phase must be recognized and supported by public institutions. Young refugees are addressed explicitly in the report as an important focus group for the German youth care system due to the difficult circumstances of their life situations, which prevent them from carving out a successful pathway in education and vocational education. Difficulties include legal and structural issues such as the non-recognition of school degrees, the exclusion of most young adults from the public school system and the complexities of the asylum application process. Many young people also do not know the rights they are entitled to as young adults and often become deprived of consultation services regarding potential opportunities. Relevant barriers also appear through complex mechanisms of institutionalised discrimination within all institutions and structures of society (Scherr, El-Mafalaani, & Yüksel, 2017). For young adult refugees this has a significant relevance, especially when they want to enter the labour market through the vocational education training (VET) system.

Another important issue is the pressure exerted by political actors, especially of conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) governments at the level of the federal states, to undermine youth care for young adults in response to the high influx of young adult refugees to the youth care services. Due to the increased costs of funding to these services, in most German municipalities there was a strong push by the federal state ministers to reduce the services in the legislation of the child and youth care, especially for young adults. In 2016, there were long negotiations between the federal state ministers, the Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth and associations of

the social work field (AGJ, 2016). Even though there was strong pressure to reduce public spending by the federal states, the Federal Ministry has rejected the reduction of contemporary standards of youth care services offered to all young adult care leavers who apply for it. This can be seen as a successful political outcome of the social work associations, responsible for delivering strong arguments to the Ministry in order to influence policy making. There will be new negotiations in the future, but it is expected that careful monitoring by the experts from the field and their participation in the negotiations will be directed to resist the political influence of neoliberal transformations of the youth care legislation. These concerns remind us of Struck's (2017) problematisation that a successful reduction of youth care for young adults would have implied not only a sharp decrease of social support for young refugees but also for all young adults in general who lived in residential or foster care.

From a critical stance, the way in which assessment is conducted needs to be problematised since social services often follow a deficit-oriented perspective and connect the granting of further support to problems such as mental health issues (Murray, 2016; Nüsken, 2014). If an application of a young person is rejected, specialised agencies (*ombudstellen*) offer legal support to young people (Karpenstein & Schmidt, 2017).

3. Youth care for young adults as a social work practice

Youth care for young adults are support services, deployed mainly through casework processes. After leaving the group homes (residential care homes) the young people either find their own apartment or are placed in so-called training apartments offered by non-profit organisations – often the very same organisations providing residential care services for young refugees. For many young refugees, these training apartments are crucial because they (as well other refugees) struggle with finding housing due to a lack of affordable accommodation in the costly German real-estate market and often experience discrimination (Adam et al., 2019; ZEIT, 2020).

The young adults receive support from social workers in the fields of formal education, vocational education, social integration, health, housing, legal support (especially with their asylum application) and institutional support (to handle the complex communication challenges with all types of

administrative institutions). Social workers (in German language the word *social pedagogue* is often equally used in the field) have intensive contact with the young adults and exchange information about the support process on a regular basis with the case managers from the social services. In the daily practice with the young people, there is either an intervention of outreach through home-visits or based on conducting community meetings in the offices of the organisations (where relevant files are kept and workspace for administrative issues is provided). Such practice combines the youth care model of intensive case support and personal development with the more general consultation work which is provided for every person of any age.² Essential are the labour resources for that intensive work: the key-ratio of young people and social worker in residential care is, in the Federal States, usually about 2:1 (for the Federal State of Hesse see Landesjugendhilfeausschuss, 2014) but in sharp contrast to that is the 80:1 key ratio for the social work in refugee homes for adults and families, though it is reported by NGOs that the real key ratio is more likely to be 150:1 (ASH, 2016).

These figures show the very different levels of social support that people are receiving based on their age or status. Obviously, the social support that young people get through the youth care system gives them much better opportunities with their life in German society when compared to many other young adults who had to go into the adult refugee system, often without any support by social workers. It is relevant to highlight that young refugees who have lived in the youth care system have a legal right to receive intensive support, while, for others, this might only happen through some lucky encounters. It is obvious that consistent support throughout a critical biographical phase such as the migration project in youth or early adulthood can be key in order to acquire resources to improve the starting chances in German society. That is why it becomes vital that the social workers who are responsible for the young people foster an approach that promotes their empowerment. The non-formal educational aspect of social work should not be underestimated given that intensive support throughout several years can build a strong relationship basis for that empowerment process (Kilian, 2016).

2. In Germany NGOs offer in every municipality office-based consultation services for adult refugees. The big difference in relation to the youth care structure is that those services are not working very closely and time-intensive with the people since those offices have much less resources for staff.

The NGOs working with care leavers have a variety of conceptual approaches in the field. Sievers, Thomas and Zeller (2015) describe practices of agencies that focus more on everyday skills such as cooking, cleaning, getting up in the morning etc., while other agencies focus more on the initiation of education and self-reflection. Other agencies seem to involve the policy practice of advocacy and political education (which other agencies reject and concentrate only on casework). The authors underline the necessity of supporting young people in building sustainable social networks and relationships to significant others and of providing educational support to successfully carve out a path for future education after the young adults have left the care system.

Thomas (2013), like Karpenstein and Schmidt (2017), argue that many agencies are not giving enough attention to the time-phase that follows youth care and that there is no systematic establishment of support structures for this period. They also highlight the failure of agencies in establishing an *alumni* network where care leavers have the possibility to access social support from the agency after the care process has ended. From a purely economic perspective, one could reason that the young people are no longer relevant because the agency is not receiving funds anymore from the social services for casework. However, agencies that do build and maintain networks for young adults when youth care support ends can be found in the field. Some seem to organise these networks voluntarily; others successfully apply for funding through project applications.

One major aspect concerning social work with young people transiting out of youth care is the support for formal and vocational education. Germany is a very certificate-oriented society where one usually needs a degree or a professional certificate to be able to find jobs outside the low-income labour market. Many young refugees are choosing the pathway of vocational education because, apart from a few professional trainings (social education, social assistance, nursing, elderly care, care assistants), there is no formal requirement for entering a vocational training, so, this becomes a starting point for persons without school degree certificates. Also, for the young refugees, a vocational training is often a necessity because under the German law people with vocational education can apply for a deportation-protection status (*ausbildungsduldung*) in case they have a rejected asylum application. The protection status is valid throughout the vocational education trajectory and

afterwards, when it comes to finding a job placement in that field. This usually leads to a permanent residency status afterwards.

4. Vocational education transition as a major challenge for youth care transition – lessons from a local case study

To start a vocational training in Germany one needs to find an employer offering a certain type of regulated professional training, that usually lasts two to three years. One key aspect of the so called dual vocational system is that the training is split into a practice part on the job and, on the other hand, a theoretical teaching of profession-related aspects combined with general courses such as German language, maths, politics or religion which take place in public vocational schools (the dual system involves, again, a partnership cooperation between the private – or sometimes also public – companies and the public vocational schools).

The National Report on Vocational Education shows that young migrants are strongly under-represented in the vocational education sector and the risks of dropping-out are much higher when compared to those faced by Germans. Young refugees in Germany face many complex challenges when they enter the vocational education system and often need more intensive support in order to successfully finish their vocational education (Pleshakova, 2019). Statistics show that the drop-out rates among refugees are very high due to language barriers and lack of support for the theoretical part of the training (BMBF, 2017). Regarding this issue, Braun and Lex (2016) describe, in the findings of their extensive research, the structures and important aspects of vocational education for young refugees in Germany. They emphasize that most young refugees are facing complex difficulties in the German system due to the unavailability or just short exposure to formal education structures. This shortcoming was highlighted by Graßhoff and Schröer (2018), who also pointed out the lack of qualitative studies that focus on the agency and coping strategies of young refugees in the VET system.

An essential dimension of care leave services for refugees is the support for labour market integration through vocational education. Many labour market integration concepts on the national, federal state (*Länder*) and municipality levels have been developed in the last years to find solutions for the labour market integration of the young refugee population (BMBF,

2017). To support young people to enter a training programme (preparation) and to pursue their vocational degrees (support), public schools, as well as NGOs, offer different sorts of vocational transition support; especially for young people who have problems with a direct post-school-transition into a vocational education training. This support can be pre-training, extra support for theoretical preparation, language support, drop-out prevention strategies or mentoring (Skrobanek, 2015).

With regard to the support available, researchers and interveners from the University of Kassel, among which the author of this chapter is included (James et al., 2020), have conducted research that evaluated a vocational education transition project from 2017 to 2019. The city of Kassel is a mid-size German city and has a population of about 200,000 inhabitants, 40% of which have a migrant background. From a social activism perspective, it is also relevant to mention that the city of Kassel has supported the *Seebrücke* (Sea Bridge) social movement³ that convinced several German municipalities to officially declare themselves as safe havens for refugees, especially those who came through the Mediterranean route. The movement is inspired by the global solidarity city networks (Furhop, 2016; Meeus, Arnaut, & van Heur, 2019). The city of Kassel became an arrival point for many refugees during the last five years – about 8,000 people according to Stadt Kassel's (2020) official figures. The municipality, in cooperation with the Social Ministry of the Federal State of Hesse, created a model project for the labour market integration of young refugees. The aim of the project was to prepare young refugees in Kassel for a VET and to support them in order to achieve a successful transition, since many young migrants in Germany fail to meet the expectations of employers such as language comprehension and school certificates (BMBF, 2018). Furthermore, the municipality wanted to have a qualitative evaluation of the model project which was carried out by the research team based at the University of Kassel's School of Social Work.

The project accompanied each cohort for the duration of 10 months and involved a group of 10 young refugees (in some drop-out cases new people joined in). The phases of the project included vocational orientation, German language courses, excursions to meet local employers, internships at companies and the transition into a VET in the final phase. Another important aspect was the intensive case work support by a social worker who coordinated

3. See www.seebruecke.org.

the project and the use of already existing VET networks among the city's own public companies. This was a key condition to build a network capable of fostering the participants' internships and VET. The NGO running the project has built a collaboration network in recent years that includes several public companies. The educators from these companies, responsible for the VET, are meeting on a regular basis using methods from the social work field such as case supervision, where they discuss their experiences from the field and try to find solutions. This existing network was also involved in the refugee project. All the participants that were interviewed said they strongly profited from this space for exchange. The educational staff of the participating companies was further trained in a string of workshops around trauma, language sensitivity and intercultural practice by social workers specialised in diversity trainings.

The method of the evaluation research consisted of a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews (n=45) with 22 young adult refugees from two cohorts of the project. The participants came from Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Eritrea. Several follow-up interviews were conducted with the majority of the participants. The questions in the interview guidelines included themes around their own biography, their pathway into the project, their experiences, challenges, difficulties and coping strategies. The program staff was interviewed repeatedly and eight company educators were interviewed about their experiences with the young refugees. The data material was analysed through the qualitative content analysis method with the support of MaxQDA software. Preliminary results were reported back to the program staff so that project adjustments could be made.

The language course, operated by hired language teachers, had to be adjusted several times due to criticism from the young people. The first language teacher had strong difficulties handling the group. Problems between the staff and the group escalated with some participants showing challenging behaviour towards the teacher and the social workers. Complications also came along with the second language teacher, when working with the second cohort: the participants complained about the course being excessively oriented to discuss politics and society when what they wanted was a concrete preparation for language certification tests, improvement of writing skills as well as a better usage of language books. The social workers decided with the third cohort (this started at the end of the evaluation) to outsource the language training to a professional language school where

the participants also had the opportunity to do an official language test for the TELC certificate (the main organisation in Germany offering language testing and certification). Also, it emerged in the interviews that the young people needed more skills in mathematics and information technology after fulfilling the curricula for the VET. This information led to the incorporation and implementation of those missing elements in the programme's schedule. An important aspect was that too many of the internship or VET options were focusing on craftship trainings but several of the young people wanted to become healthcare workers or to enter the merchandising business field. Since such types of VET were neither in the project concept nor offered by the public companies, the social workers had to extend the network also to private corporations. One challenge that was faced by the network members was to integrate those stakeholders in the public network in order to establish a good practice in all training places. The social workers who coordinated the program expressed their satisfaction with the constant communication of preliminary results. This constant flow of information was vital to make adjustments to the project throughout the process.

From the 22 participants, 15 managed to enter a VET, which is a very high number compared to the statistics of VET entry regarding young adult refugees. An interesting aspect about the participant group was that about half of them were care leavers who have lived in youth care and still benefited from youth care support for young adults. As for the other half of the participants, they were also young adults, but had lived mainly in adult refugee homes where they had very little support by social workers due to the already mentioned high key-ratios (professionals/recipients). The participants who came from youth care had, in most cases, a significant higher level of language comprehension and, in the interviews, it became clear that they were very interacting with social workers and educators since they had had this experience on a daily basis for years. For the other participants, the level of intensive counselling and mentoring was a very new experience that they valued very much and they often expressed the need for this support to be able to go into a VET. It became clear that the young people without youth care support had a much higher need of consultation and casework, whereas the others had social workers from their care leave units who supported them in many aspects. This feature was also noted by the program staff who expressed relief with the work accomplished by the social workers for the young people coming from youth care.

The company educators, who were very committed to support the young refugees, expressed their surprise with the complexities around the legal situation of the participants, especially those who had an ongoing asylum application. The close collaboration between the social workers and the company instructors could bring in the needed expertise to work on those challenges. Another important aspect for the success of the project that could be identified was the close collaboration between social workers and the company educators to prevent dropouts from the project. A critique that was communicated by different educators was the too-short duration of the project (10 months). Also, the young people repeatedly expressed their concerns about having no support once the VET started, considering that challenges that needed to be dealt with, were still there. For several young people the asylum application was still ongoing, creating psychological pressure. Due to that, these applicants felt a need for social and legal support so that they could better cope with their situation. In the frame of social support, it is important, as well, to have someone who is able to cope with the intense flow of administrative communication (*e.g.*, home office, jobcentre, lawyers, schools). The young people expressed how much they felt supported by the local networks of social workers and company educators. It was interesting to note that the young people who have lived in residential care felt much more confident than the group of young refugees who had nearly no previous support due to their status of adults when entering Germany.

Another critical aspect was that the German authorities have categorized certain groups of refugees as having a *good staying perspective* or *bad staying perspective* according to whether the percentage of successful asylum applications is over or below 50%. These categories are revised each year (Janke, 2016). During the period under study, Syrians corresponded to the first group, Afghans to the second. The implication for Afghans was that they often had no access to education or support. Some of them reported that they were expelled from education projects or denied educational support in their VET (a service which is usually a legal right of any young person in a VET).

Contrary to what was expected and intended, many of the program elements were perceived differently by the participants. These findings, as mentioned above, were constantly reported back to the staff of the project so that they could make adjustments to the program. Misunderstandings were also reported from the side of the company educators who partly had to find ways of dealing with those problems. Another important aspect that became

visible was the risk of *getting stuck in the transition system*, when young people receive several preparation trainings but do not enter a VET at the end. This issue became visible in some cases where the young people did their long-term internship in a company but were not accepted into a VET afterwards (since some of the private companies who cooperated with the project offering internships positions did not feel under obligation to take in the internees after their long-term internships because other applicants had been chosen from a general application process). It should be noted that, in Germany, the prevailing paradigm to choose candidates to integrate a VET implies selecting always the strongest applicants in an assessment process. This paradigm needs to be rejected in this context since the young people expressed that in most assessment centres they could not compete with other German applicants due to language barriers and interrupted school education trajectories. The young people often expressed their difficulty in understanding the German vocational education system. The need for a preparation training to start a vocational training was perceived by some participants as too exclusive and time consuming, considering that such preparation training took one year before entering the three-years VET.

The saliency of relationships, mentoring and social networks was another important theme in the data. Through the intensive personal contact and the individual case work support, many challenges could be solved and, in some cases, prevented a drop-out from the project. One major success factor for the project was the intensive preparation of company instructors and the possibility to rapidly exchange information and to intervene with the program staff in case problems occurred. In some cases, project dropouts could be prevented if an early intervention was done through crisis meetings with the young people, the social workers and the company educators. The company educators expressed in the interviews the high relevance of good networking within the project and the importance of intercultural workshops. They also expressed concern about the demand of mentorship for the young people and the need to further include the private companies in the network. Regarding networking, it is worth highlighting the intensive cooperation between the social workers of the project and their colleagues from the NGO of the care leave services. This was vital to allow access to relevant information and consultation, considering these social workers' long-term relationships and work with the youth.

The project shows that the investment in local structures of youth care support also for young adults creates opportunities for both sides: young people get the support they need on their educational pathway and the municipality profits from diversifying their staff and supporting the community through training. The findings show that companies need to see the VET not mainly as a win-situation for their company but more as a process and responsibility to support young people in the community with difficult life situations. The intensive individual support by social workers in such projects requires sufficient resources so that relationships with the young people can be built to adequately support them. Another critical aspect is the relevance of developing local and multi-professional networks among social workers, youth care structures, the public sector and private companies. Such networks also require resources for the coordination, communication and development of the network. The constant evaluation and communication of results can bring the perspectives of young people into the constant development and adjustment process and can, therefore, be seen as a strategy to strengthen the participation of young people.

5. Conclusion

The youth care sector is an important field of the social pedagogy sector creating social support for young refugees in Germany. Youth care in early adulthood is very important. It implies extending support to many young care leavers and can be seen as a relevant factor for successfully building good structures for young adults in a critical phase of transition into independent living and vocational education. Integration in the labour market becomes essential for young adult refugees. The German youth care system, in cooperation with the vocational transition system, are sectors strongly conceptualised and carried out by the social work profession, allowing for the intensive support of young people in their transition to adulthood and into the labour market. From a social justice perspective, it is relevant to highlight that not only former unaccompanied minors leaving the youth care system should be given intensive social support for vocational education but also young adults who have never been in residential care.

A policy recommendation would be to convince municipalities to establish nationwide constantly funded community centres for young adults. In

such centres there would be the possibility to establish a more youth-oriented setting where visitors can spend time, but, also, with possibilities of using consultation services that focus on specific problems that many young refugees face. Young refugees could get support for housing issues, legal consultation or support to find work and vocational education training or other educational opportunities. Such centres could also closely cooperate with different types of projects such as VET transition projects. The research evidence shows that investment in vocational youth support for young adults can lead to a significant increase in successful transitions, even if such projects face many challenges. Therefore, it is relevant for the social work sector to become actively involved in further transformations of the wider youth care structures of local municipalities. Another highly relevant aspect that can be learned from the research findings is the importance of developing local networks between public structures, educational institutions, social organisations/NGOs and private companies to create spaces for education and personal development for young refugees in Germany.

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CHAPTER 11

SWEDISH RECEPTION OF UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS: SOCIAL WORK AND INTEGRATION CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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1. Introduction

Currently, there are 70.8 million people forcibly displaced around the world (UNHCR, 2019), which is the highest figure of the post-World War II era thus far. Approximately 13.6 million people were newly displaced during the year 2018, as a result of conflict, persecution, generalised violence and human rights violations. Against this backdrop of increased displacement, it is worthy of note that 52 per cent of the world's refugee population is comprised of people who are under 18 years of age, which is the greatest number in a decade (UNHCR, 2019). Within this particular group, the number of unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs hereafter) seeking asylum has increased significantly and has today reached its highest level since the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began collecting such systematic data in 2006. UNHCR defines an URM as an individual under the age of 18, who has been separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, has the responsibility to do so (UNHCR, 1994, p. 121).

This is not a newly occurring phenomenon but, due to the rapid increase of new arrivals, it has become a more visible issue in the European Union (EU) (Connor, 2016). Since there has been no common immigration policy established among the EU member states, each country has responded differently to the arrival of immigrants: with either restriction or openness (Cerna, 2016; Hall & Lichfied, 2015). A few EU countries have provided refuge for asylum seekers, while many other countries have introduced extraordinary measures in order to either stop immigration to their country or let immigrants pass through their borders in order to reach other member

states (Grigonis, 2016). Restrictive policies limiting the rights of refugees, such as introducing restrictive border controls, including ID controls and temporary resident permits, were introduced in many European countries, including Sweden (Jönsson & Kojan, 2017).

Statistics demonstrate that the quantity of URM_s seeking asylum in Sweden specifically began to rise significantly in 2006. Prior to 2010, the majority of URM_s in Europe arrived in the United Kingdom and Norway, and between 2010 – 2015 Sweden was the main recipient (Eurostat, 2020). During the so called “refugee crisis” of 2015/16, Sweden was among the three countries that received the highest proportion of asylum seekers, with a total number of 162,877 people (Connor, 2016). Among the total, 35,369 were URM_s (Swedish Migration Board, 2015). During recent years, such individuals have mostly originated from Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. The latter group has decreased significantly since 2009, meanwhile, inflows of minors from Morocco, Algeria and Syria have increased (Commission on the Future of Sweden, 2012). In spite of the noted increase of URM_s, and despite them being recognised as a particularly vulnerable group in the EU asylum legal regime (Sundqvist et al., 2015), the needs and experiences of URM_s in European destination countries remain an under-researched topic (Thommessen, Corcoran, & Todd, 2015).

The increasing migration of URM_s into the EU has, during recent years, constituted a challenge for the receiving countries and their migration authorities and social institutions. Although the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) has the overall responsibility for the reception of migrants, social authorities and municipal social workers are those who bear the operational responsibilities for new migrants’ settlements and daily lives. The role of municipal social authorities becomes even more essential since URM_s are under the age of 18. As children, their welfare is under the social authorities’ responsibility. Despite huge resources provided by the Swedish welfare system, the way the reception of the URM_s is organised generates many problems for their future integration into Swedish society.

In this chapter, we explore the challenges of the Swedish reception system and social work institutions in meeting the needs and ambitions of unaccompanied refugee minors. The study has been guided by the following key questions: How does the municipal receiving system for URM_s in Sweden function, according to the experiences of minors and their carers?

How well-informed and prepared are Swedish social workers in meeting the needs and ambitions of URM's?

2. Unaccompanied refugee minors: a mapping of the literature

The contemporary increasing migration of URM's to Western countries has led to a growing body of research. Earlier research conducted during the 1980s and the 1990s primarily focused on protection needs and mental health care (Felsman et al., 1990; Kinzie et al., 1988; Ressler et al., 1988). The focus on mental health (or psychosocial) problems among URM's is still the dominating area of study in this particular field of research. Such studies reveal that URM's often exhibit symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Derluyn, Broekaert, & Schuyten, 2008; Hodes et al., 2008; Norredam et al., 2016). There are also a number of literature reviews regarding research that takes a psychological and mental health perspective (Ehnholt & Yule, 2006; El Baba & Colucci, 2018; Thomas & Lau, 2002). The aim of such studies is to better understand vulnerability in order to develop policy and improve mental health practices (Hedlund, 2016). Franco (2018) claims that out of all migrant groups, URM's are more likely to develop psychiatric symptoms. McKelvey and Webb (1995) have argued that those who end up as an unaccompanied migrant may already be at higher risk of psychological distress *before* their migration begins. Moreover, Wernesjö (2014) argues that there is an insufficient attention paid to situations where URM's do not develop emotional problems. Importantly, despite many adversities, young refugees are extremely resilient and resourceful (Ehnholt & Yule, 2006; Jahanmahan & Bunar, 2018).

Hopkins and Hill (2008) bring attention to the importance of providing a detailed depiction of the multiplicity of life circumstances and experiences in order to develop and improve existing health and social services to identify and meet needs. Although, the psychological research tradition has also influenced research on URM's migration and living conditions in Sweden, some researchers have studied the role of the Swedish asylum and reception system for URM's' perception of Sweden and their mental health. Thommessen, Corcoran and Todd (2015) interviewed six male refugees from Afghanistan regarding their experience of arriving unaccompanied in Sweden. Their study presents individual experiences of arriving and adjusting

to a host country; further, it demonstrates the challenges and difficulties and the support systems perceived to be most helpful. The authors also call for more studies drawing upon URMs' own voices. A study conducted by Herz and Lalander (2017) showed that the URMs' emigration journey and its outcome is related to their agency as they struggle for survival, and that the current political and social context in Europe is essential in their escape, migration route and future plans.

Lidén's and Nyhlén's (2016) findings indicate that a local negative stance on immigration (primarily expressed by the Swedish anti-immigration party, Sweden Democrats) appears to influence municipality policy on immigration. In addition, Wimelius et al. (2017) found that the Swedish reception system lacks both interconnections between actors and an articulated political vision of integration. General political ambitions are regarded as insufficient when working specifically with URMs, thus there is a need for an explicit political conceptualisation of integration as well as developed guidelines on how to reach the goals of integration. The URMs participating in a study by Lalander and Raof (2016) experienced difficulty in developing a social environment in which they truly feel recognised by the residential home staff as complete human beings with valuable competences. It has been noted that bureaucracy creates barriers in URMs' relationships with their social workers. There is an uncertainty among the URMs regarding the purpose of the social workers' documentation about them and what such information may be used for (Herz & Lalander, 2019).

In another study, conducted by van Es et al. (2019), the URMs expressed the need for committed care and carers who can offer them support and guidance as they face great challenges in preparing for an independent life. Thus, the authors highlight the importance of professional carers with adequate training. However, residential homes that solely focus on care may, consequently, posit the URMs as passive victims as their agency is overlooked (Kuusisto-Arponen & Gilmartin, 2019). Moreover, Seidel and James (2019) and Korjonen-Kuusipuro, Kuusisto and Tuominen (2018) argue that social workers need to recognise the URMs' reality, which consists of living in a new society, but still having ties with their home country. It is also essential for social workers to confront social structures that promote injustice (Rotabi et al., 2017). De Graeve, Vervliet and Derluyn (2017) state that research investigating the broader social context of how URMs experience their emigration and resettlement can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of

the positions and well-being of URMs, as well as the discourses and practices that unfold around them.

A number of social work studies adopt a psychosocial perspective on URMs migration and living conditions in Sweden. Yet, the complex and multifaceted processes of the Swedish reception system's possibilities and shortcomings for the URMs' integration necessitates further research. Such studies should analyse the broader social and political contexts in which the Swedish reception system and social workers operate, since they have a direct impact upon the minors' integration. This is why a study, such as the one we present here, is relevant in exploring the challenges of the Swedish reception system and social work institutions in meeting the needs and ambitions of URMs.

3. Unaccompanied refugee minors in a changing Swedish welfare state: necessary critical perspectives

For a long time, Sweden has been an outlier with a relatively open migration policy and an integration policy based on equal rights. Compared to its neighbouring countries and most EU countries, Sweden has resisted the trend towards more restrictive migration policies, which have contributed to making Sweden one of the top choices for humanitarian migration. However, the "refugee crisis" in 2015/16, led to major redirections of Swedish migration policies and migration policy position shifts among the political parties in Sweden (Emilsson, 2018; Jönsson & Kojan, 2017). Sweden introduced several restrictions on the rights of asylum seekers, such as temporary residence permits, increasing control over internal and external borders to prevent "unwanted" migrants from crossing the borders, and encouraging the voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin.

The growth of right-wing political networks that promote economic and political nationalism, racism and xenophobia have propagated a more restrictive migration policy and demonised migrants and refugees as a major threat to the countries' welfare and security. In a time of retreating welfare states in the Nordic countries (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018) and growing social problems, xenophobic and racist discourses have influenced citizens and the mainstream parties to adopt a more anti-immigrant position (Emilsson, 2018; Kamali, 2009, 2015). However, there has also been civil mobilisations

against the hardening discourses and policies of migration in Sweden. Many civil groups and actors have addressed the situation of URM's in Sweden. Critical voices and networks have debated the increasing demand for realising human rights and for a fair asylum process, as well as for the provision of welfare and health services and psychosocial care for URM's. Protests have even been organised and carried out by networks among practitioners, social workers and volunteers, such as the organisations of *Vi står inte ut* (We can't stand it) and *Ung i Sverige* (Young in Sweden). Many demonstrations have been organised by such networks and groups in different parts of the country. Protests have sprung up across Sweden against forcibly returning URM's to Afghanistan. URM's, civil actors and organisations have participated in protests against the deportations to Afghanistan and have had, for example, a "sit-in" protest meeting.

This new political landscape also has implications for social workers and their role in implementing immigration policies and promoting URM's integration in Swedish society. We believe this requires a critical informed social work practice on integration. In the broadest sense, integration means the process by which people who are relatively new to a country become part of society (Rudiger & Spencer, 2003). It is a question of membership, citizenship and belonging to a society other than the immigrants' accustomed social milieu (Kamali, 2004). Moreover, integration can be seen as signifying bringing immigrants' rights and obligations, as well as access to services and means of civic participation under conditions of equal opportunities (Pentikäinen, 2008). However, the concept of integration is still used as something that should be reached by "immigrants" through a process of homogenisation and adjustment to the host society. Westin (2001) argues that a social, political and economic integrated state may only arise when a society appreciates and respects social diversity. Integration policies, in which migrants are considered as "aliens" who need "special treatment" for becoming a part of the new society leads to the "clientisation" of immigrants (Kamali, 2004). This means that immigrants are made dependent on different subsidies from the welfare state for their living. Immigrants are not seen as active individuals who are capable of making their own decisions for finding their ways into Swedish society. Consequently, structural and institutional discrimination creates a hindrance for the integration of immigrants in Swedish society (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005).

Combating ethnic discrimination is fundamental both for a successful integration process and for Sweden as a democracy and welfare state (Kamali, 2006). Accordingly, a social work beyond cultural otherisation (Jönsson, 2013) is important to consider the more complex mechanisms behind social problems, including structural and institutional mechanisms of exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination facing many people with immigrant backgrounds (Kamali, 2015). Furthermore, URMs immigrants are highly heterogeneous and engaged in the intersection of different power structures, such as class, gender and ethnicity, which form the socioeconomic place of each individual in society. Therefore, an intersectional perspective, which highlights the ways in which multiple systems of inequality work with and through one another, at multiple levels of society (Collins, 2000; Zinn & Dill, 1996), is important. An intersectional approach is necessary because it can link individual experiences to broader structures and systems, which is crucial for revealing how power relations are constituted and experienced (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005).

4. Empirical research methodology

The empirical data presented in the article derives from a qualitative study of URMs' living conditions, their experiences of settling in a new country and how they perceive the support available to them in Sweden. The study also examines the social workers' professional skills in working with URMs and integration. This study is framed around obtaining comprehensive descriptions and perceptions regarding personal experiences; thus the data was collected through semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2007). Interviews were conducted with 12 Afghan unaccompanied refugee minors (eight males and four females), nine carers working in residential homes, three persons from "family-homes" and three municipal social workers. The inclusion criteria for the URMs was permanent residence status. This was primarily for ethical reasons; being in the midst of an asylum procedure is recognised as constituting an especially stressful period of time. Moreover, a permanent residency is also fundamental for the individual's future integration process into Swedish society. The sole inclusion criteria for the social workers was that they should have past or present experience of working with URMs in their respective professional field. The reason for this was to attain social workers

of various ages with different backgrounds and levels of work experience. In Sweden, the municipal social workers usually place URMs in “family-homes” or in residential homes. “Family-homes” are placements for children in foster families and residential homes are congregate care settings. Carers work at the residential homes and they are responsible for providing the URMs with day-to-day care and support (Seidel & James, 2019).

We contacted municipal social workers and carers via their managers, as their contact information were available on the municipality official website. We could not directly approach URMs under the age of 18 since they had not attained the legal age for consent to procedures involved in research. Thus, the carers working at the residential homes were asked to pass on written information about the study to suitable URMs. This process also helped us to avoid making contact with URMs experiencing emotional distress. The reason for including participants under the age of 18 in this study is linked to Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), which emphasises autonomy and children’s rights to form and freely express their views on all matters and for their views to be heard. This suggests that minors ought to be encouraged to express themselves and participate in decisions concerning their own lives, thus recognising the minor as a competent agent who is able to provide valid accounts of their experiences (Kirova & Emme, 2007). When an URM expressed interest in partaking in the study, we had to retrieve consent from their legal guardian before proceeding to schedule an interview. Written consent was obtained prior to the interview, both from the URM and their legal guardian. Before each interview, we explained that whatever they might tell us could not jeopardise their residence permit nor impact future family reunifications. Three of the interviews with URMs required assistance from an interpreter. In total, two different interpreters were used and both of these were people who were close to the URM concerned and who were acting in an informal capacity. The presence and involvement of another person in the interview may have limited the information given by the URM, as some answers were relatively short. All of the names of the research participants have been changed throughout in order to protect their confidentiality.

The collected empirical material was analysed through qualitative content analysis, in accordance with Graneheim’s and Lundman’s model (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). After we had transcribed the interviews, we started the analysis process by reading through them multiple times in order to get an

overall understanding of the data. In the second step, we used the theoretical framework of the critical social work perspective to select useful meaning units, in the form of paragraphs and sentences. As a third step, the chosen meaning units were condensed to codes on a more abstract level which defined the direction of further analysis. In the fourth step, similar primary codes were assembled into more comprehensive categories: “Schooling opportunities, contradictions of ambitions and realities, The generous Swedish allowance system and clientisation of unaccompanied refugee minors and Social authorities’ working routines”. The last step of the analysis involved analysing the above mentioned categories and abstracting themes with the purpose of symbolising the whole context. One theme emerged from the three categories, namely “Swedish reception system’s possibilities and shortcomings for integration of unaccompanied refugee minors”, which will be elaborated on in this paper.

In the following sections, answering the key questions, we elaborate on the characteristics and challenges of the Swedish reception system and social work institutions in meeting the needs and ambitions of unaccompanied refugee minors, with illustrations from the narratives of minors, carers and social work practitioners.

5. Unaccompanied refugee minors in Sweden

URMs arriving in Sweden are children and, according to Swedish laws, their welfare is the responsibility of social authorities. This makes the role of municipal social workers important for the URMs’ wellbeing and future integration into society. Whilst social authorities play an important role for the introduction of new immigrants into Swedish society, their role in the “clientisation” of immigrants in Sweden has been criticised (Kamali, 2004). A strong Eurocentric understanding of the development of children and a “child-centric” perception in which a child is seen as a helpless individual almost without responsibility for her/his life is also influencing the way social authorities work with URMs. Kamali (2004) argues that social authorities are too focused on “taking care of” newly arrived immigrants, which denies the agency and active role of URMs.

There is no logical and systemic relation between the Swedish system of reception of immigrants and the integration policy of the country. As

Thommessen, Corcoran and Todd (2015) mention, the anxiety and concern the URM's experience during the initial months in Sweden, while waiting for the outcome of their asylum applications, becomes more complicated when they face another set of challenges in the host society. The problems of and barriers to the integration of immigrants in Sweden include the existence of structural discrimination of immigrants in Sweden. None of the young migrants who participated in this study had experience of receiving information, from social workers or NGOs, regarding the existence of institutional discrimination and racism within the Swedish political system, educational system, labour market, mass media, judicial system and housing market (Camaüer & Nohrstedt, 2006; de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005; Kamali, 2006). The increasing electoral success of the xenophobic populist party in Sweden and the growing discrimination, racism and segregation, which hinders immigrant integration and social cohesion in Sweden, should make the early introduction of immigrants to the Swedish way of life important.

6. Schooling and the inconsistencies between ambitions and reality

Schooling and education play one of the most important roles in the introduction of refugee youth and children to their host society to prepare them for the future (Niemeyer 2015; Oppedal & Idsøe, 2015; Taylor & Kaur Sidhu, 2012). It has been shown in several countries that the flexibility of the educational system has an important impact on the pathways and later success of immigrant and refugee youth in particular (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003; Derwing et al., 1999; Watt & Rosseingh, 1994). Education plays a central role for the URM's understanding of their place in the new society and the development of a sense of belonging to the new society (Bitzi & Landolt, 2017). However, studies in Sweden have revealed the structural problems in the integration of pupils with an immigrant background in the Swedish schooling system (Sawyer & Kamali, 2006). This adds to the difficulties of the integration of the URM's at a time of a rapid changing labour market and the need for an educated labour force in the country. Although there are differences between the URM's, when it comes to their educational backgrounds, many URM's come from societies where the majority of them have had no, or limited, education opportunities. According to the interviewed

carers, attending school and taking their education seriously is perceived as a main indicator to assess the URMs' ambitions and willingness to integrate. It should, however, be said that the willingness to participate in education in Sweden is also connected with the minors' earlier experience of schooling in their countries of origin. Those who have attended school prior to arriving in Sweden are usually focused on further education. They have predefined goals which includes pursuing studies at university level in Sweden. Armin, a carer, puts it this way:

You can immediately tell when someone wants to become integrated or not. Boys who have studied in their country of origin are very focused on getting an education, they want to become lawyers or doctors. They know that you earn a lot of money with those kind of jobs.

Some carers also mention the differences in the ambitions for schooling between various groups, including differences between girls and boys in the same group. As the carer Martin puts it:

If I generalise a little, girls from Afghanistan are often very clever and determined in their education. Boys from Afghanistan prefer leisure activities and things like that. For Afghan girls it is a bit different, they are ambitious and are more interested in education.

Carers claim that there are differences even between girls from different countries. Carer Carlos, from a residential home, states that "girls from Somalia, have a different ambition, as they often say that they do not want to educate themselves and prefer to be at home". However, other groups among URMs also show disinterest in education. Four of the Afghan male interviewees say that they do not really want to go to school. They consider schooling to be "unnecessary" for their future lives in Sweden and expresses an alternative way towards integration. As 17-year old Hossein says:

I do not want to go to school, it is a waste of time. I have waited for my residence permit so now I want to work. I have worked my entire life. I need to earn money and help my family. Why must I go to school? It is silly, they force me go to school.

The socioeconomic background of many young Afghan migrants who have work experience can explain the lack of enthusiasm in schooling and education. They are used to working and are willing to start working in Sweden as soon as they receive their residence permits. In addition, some

of them are in need of money in order to either pay back the costs of their migration journey or send money to their deprived families in their countries of origin. As one of the URM, Hossein, says:

I know that university is not for me, see Akbar who takes care of us, has never been to university but earns much more money than you or those who eagerly want to go to university. I can start my own business; it is enough to have a restaurant.

The girls see education as a chance to overcome some of the difficulties they met in their lives as girls in their countries of origin. As 17-year old Leyla says:

It was not difficult for Afghan boys to find jobs and earn money, but it was not so easy for us girls. We should help at home and even if we could go to school, it was not supported by my parents. They did not want me to get so close with Iranian girls and boys. They saw school as something unnecessary for girls. But here, I want to study, educate myself and become something, I hope to be able to become a doctor or a teacher, you never know, because there is nothing that can stop me.

Although the female URMs' more positive attitudes towards education can be traced back to, or be influenced by, their earlier lives in their countries of origin, there may be other explanations. Many girls were supposed to help their families rather than work, since this has mainly been the boys' responsibility. This may have played a role in the higher level of motivation for education in Sweden among girls. As 16-year old Maryam, say:

My family allowed me to go to school in Iran, they said this is good for you, education is good for girls. You may even get a job in the future. Even if Afghan refugees were not normally allowed to go to school, I succeeded to go to school for a few years. I did not need to help my family by working, because it was not easy, and in some cases, it was even dangerous for a girl.

However, the higher level of motivation for education and schooling among girls compared to boys is not exclusively something for the Afghan URMs, this is also something which has been proven even among Swedish girls. Studies since the early 2000s show that Swedish female pupils are more motivated in schools and produce much better educational results than male pupils (Gurría, 2018; OECD, PISA, 2000). However, there are studies, which stress the structural factors behind the differences between

girls and boys in schools, thus one should be careful not to over-emphasise gender differences as a fact independent from socioeconomic and political surroundings (Wernersson, 2010). The existence of institutional discrimination in the Swedish labour market (Kamali, 2006, 2009) is also a parameter which influences the schooling of the URM in general, boys in particular, and their ambitions. Some interviewees call the role of schooling into question and mention the “meaninglessness” of education for their future lives in society. As the 17-year old URM Gholam says:

You see many people in the neighbourhoods, on the streets, everywhere, who are unemployed, even if they are well educated and have several degrees. They say that their situation depends on racism and discrimination. This could also happen to me.

Such an attitude can be related to what is called the “spill over” effects of institutional discrimination (Kamali, 2006, 2009). This phenomenon is not mentioned in earlier research on URM and their living conditions in Sweden. The psychologisation and culturalisation of their problems is very common even among the social workers who participated in this study. Furthermore, the results show that categorisations, such as girls and boys, risk masking a proper intersectional analysis of the reasons behind the differences between some girls’ and some boys’ interests in education. The categories, boy and girl, as every other category, have internal differences and lack the same “content” which makes these two categories completely different from each other (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005). As 16-year old Shirin explained:

We had opportunities, we were not poor, my dad wanted me to educate myself and go to school. He used to drive me in his own car to school, in order to avoid any problems for me. Other girls who were in my school were also from good families, open-minded who wanted their daughters to become something.

As she indicates, Shirin belongs to a socioeconomically better off family and had the opportunity in Afghanistan to go to school. This is not the case for many others who had no access to secure education. Not only in Afghanistan, but also in Iran, the families’ socioeconomic status played a role for their children’s schooling. Ahmad, 17 years old, puts it in the following way, “my family could pay for my education, we had better economy compared to many other Afghan refugees. I succeeded to go to school and did not miss out so

much in my education”. Another problem facing by the URMs in schools is the way education is organised. All of the URMs (11), except one, are participating in the Swedish Introductory Courses, which aim at preparing them for integration in the formal Swedish school system. This has increased school segregation in two ways; firstly, many schools with high levels of pupils with immigrant backgrounds organise such introductory courses, which reduce the URMs chances of contact with pupils with Swedish background. Secondly, the specificity of such courses forces the URMs to spend most of their time socialising together. As one of the minors, Ahmad says:

We go together to school, hanging out together in the school yard, in the school restaurant, on the bus, at home, everywhere. Even if you meet other people in the school, they are also immigrants, even if they were born here. Our only contact with Swedes is our teacher; she is nice and kind but it is not like she is our friend.

All of the participants in this study state that it is very rare for URMs to create and maintain friendships with Swedish youths. It is more common for URMs to socialise with each other and with Swedes who have a similar immigrant background. This is often related to the notion of language barriers and “cultural differences”. The notion of cultural differences is commonly used in order to “rationalise” many problems of integration and find a “clarification” (Eliassi, 2015; Jönsson, 2013; Kamali, 2002; Lalander & Raof, 2016), among carers and staff from “family-homes”, and even among some URMs. It is known that there is a widening social gap between ethnic Swedes and migrant minorities (Bunar, 2016). There are also other obstacles, such as inadequate support structures, lack of space caused by the sudden arrival of large numbers of refugee students, uneven allocation of new arrivals among municipalities and schools and physical segregation and social exclusion (Nilsson, 2017). All of these obstacles have a negative impact upon the URMs’ motivation to attend Swedish schools. The difficulties in the development of relationships between pupils with immigrant background and pupils with Swedish background have also been observed in earlier research (Sawyer & Kamali, 2006).

7. Contradictions between the receiving system and the long-term integration policy

The image of Sweden as a society with a generous welfare system, in which individuals' needs are the ground for generous allowances is highly established among many immigrants who come to Sweden (Kamali, 2004). All of the interviewed social workers in this study also confirm this. They claim that the majority of the URMs have a profoundly distorted image of Sweden upon arrival. Many municipal social workers and carers claim that URMs have the preconception that Sweden is a rich country with a generous welfare state, which entitles them to extensive services to meet all their needs. Lena, a carer, says:

I am convinced that they have no idea what their living situation is actually going to be like in Sweden prior to their arrival. Because many of them say that 'Sweden can fix everything, you can buy everything, you can help me, you can get me an apartment, you can help me get a driver's license'.

Many carers say that URMs who believe that Sweden is "a paradise" do not initially show willingness to integrate. However, they mean that willingness can develop at a later stage, especially for those who realise that depending on social services and living off benefits is not that beneficial. In contrast, those whose ambition is to live off benefits for the rest of their lives do not care about integration. Some carers express that they struggle with trying to get the URMs to comprehend that Swedish society is built on solidarity, that it is important for everyone to contribute to society by working and paying taxes. The claim that many URMs fully understand how society works but show no interest in wanting to be part of it, is frequently made by the interviewed carers. Armin says, "they have money, a place to live, and they are aware that social services will pay everything for them, so they know that you are able to live a good life in Sweden without working until you are 65 years old. They know that the welfare state will provide for them throughout their lifetime". Others name the same problems of integration for Afghan URM, since they receive "whatever they want", as Saleh, staff from a "family-home", puts it:

I ask myself, why must they have a willingness to work, to do anything, since they receive everything? They have more money than my own son in the same age. My son said to me a few days ago, 'dad why does a guy from Afghanistan who is in my school have much more money

than what you give to me. He has an iPhone 7 or 8, I do not know exactly, and shows that he has a couple of thousand in his pocket'. What could I answer him?

A carer, Nicholas, adds that many URM^s have the misconception that they will get a package of expensive things immediately. He also says that “the URM^s have this image that Sweden is a land of milk and honey”. They soon realise that it is just a myth and that the amount of money they receive is not enough, it is not what they expected. All the rights they thought they had, prior to arrival, do not match with reality. It is very frustrating for them because their families expect them to send home money.

When URM^s reach the legal age of 18, their generous entitlements to welfare are drastically reduced. Many then face a situation in which they have to take more responsibility for their life in the new country. Part of the problem, according to Kamali (2004), is the clientisation of immigrants and the Swedish authorities' lack of adequate working routines for the reception of and preparing migrants for an independent life in Sweden.

8. Insufficient knowledge and skills in working with the unaccompanied refugee minors

Working with URM^s is an important task for social work in order to prepare them for a life in the new society. This is even more important since many of the URM^s have very distorted information about and attitudes towards the Swedish society, its welfare institutions and the processes of social cohesion. The majority of the participants, the municipal social workers, carers in residential homes and staff from “family-homes” have no specific education and training for working with URM^s. Although this can partly be explained by the sudden increase of the influx of URM^s to Sweden during 2015 and the engagement of many uneducated people in working with the URM^s, the problem of the lack of adequate knowledge about migration and migrants in Sweden has been observed and discussed in earlier research (Eliassi, 2015; Jönsson, 2014; Kamali, 2004). The complexity of the status of URM^s and their living conditions prior to their entrance to Sweden and the reality of their living conditions in Sweden obliged social workers and the Swedish reception system to obtain adequate knowledge in order to be able to help the URM^s to an independent life in Swedish society.

Almost all interviewees who participated in this study acknowledge that they lack the adequate knowledge necessary for working with URM. Although carers and social workers have been provided some educational courses, many of them have focused on “cultural competency”, highly influenced by the fallacy of essentiality of cultures (Eliassi, 2015; Jönsson, 2013, Kamali, 2002), as earlier mentioned. Carers state that because of the sudden increase of the entrance of URM, they have found themselves in an unfamiliar situation. Carers say that their expectations to obtain better information and adequate knowledge about the URM had not been realised because many URM decline to inform municipal social workers of their backgrounds. As Lisa, a municipal social worker says, “we do not really know anything other than that they suddenly choose to come to Sweden, either from Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan, nothing more”. She means that “we cannot really rely on the information they provide us”. The “honesty” of URM is a crucial matter discussed by all carers in the course of interviews. Many carers say that because they work with URM on a daily basis, they know that many personal histories told by the URM to the Migration Board, as well as to municipal social workers, may not be true stories. This could be accurate since many of the URM lack the reasons declared by the Geneva Convention or/and the Swedish asylum laws. This is nothing new for the URM or other asylum seekers in European countries, since obtaining a legal status as refugee is increasingly restricted. As Griffiths puts it:

In a world of increasingly restricted mobility, where recognition as a refugee is one of the few legitimate means for the financially or educationally poor to move, the ‘genuine’ refugee has become such a stylized and pure figure that it is nearly impossible for individuals to meet the ideal. The combination of a high standard of honesty and a presumption of suspicion, has serious implications, given that being branded a liar tends to not only affect the outcome of asylum claims, but the likelihood of being detained and the ability to obtain legal representation (Griffiths, 2012, p. 8-10).

Griffiths means that deception, uncertainty and mistrust are characteristics of asylum seekers’ perspectives of the immigration system and vice-versa. This makes the ground for a “mutual suspicion”, as she calls it. However, deeper knowledge about the reasons behind the increasing migration of URM, such as ongoing war and conflicts leading to forced migration, is lacking among social workers.

Another shortage of knowledge among social workers (municipal social workers and carers from private companies and staff from “family-homes”) concerns the intersectional understanding of social relations, influenced by differences in gender and class, among other power categories (Collins, 2000; de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005; Zinn & Dill, 1996). One of those areas is the question of family reunion. Many URMs interviewed in this study say that they “hope” and even “have to” bring their families to Sweden, when they receive their residential permits. Although almost all of the URMs told us about this, they reveal different attitudes regarding their “willingness” to bring their families to Sweden. There are differences between the will and ambitions of the URMs concerning family reunion. Some girls see the arrival of their families as a “problem for their freedom”, since their families will exert control on their independent lives. This is normally the picture presented by carers and even by a couple of the girls interviewed in this study. This should however not be exaggerated since there are other girls who had strong desires and plans of bringing their families to Sweden. One of them is Maryam, whose father was educated and had relatively good living conditions in Afghanistan. She says the following: “I count seconds, days to see my parents, I want them to come here, this bloody waiting and waiting is killing me. I know that my dad can get a good job here and my family can adjust themselves to Swedish society very well. We are not like the others, many do not have educated parents”. Some girls claim that social workers want them to adjust themselves to their imaginations of “immigrant girls” or “an Afghani girl”. As Leyla puts it:

I do not know why everyone think that us girls have been beaten, raped, in our countries or during our journey to Sweden. The caseworkers, those here [carers], the family [“family-home”] want you to say these things. This is not true, what more can I say? There may be others, but not me, or someone I know.

The analysis of such material requires adopting an intersectional perspective. This means that one should not consider female URM as a fixed category by which to explain the differences between for instance male and female Afghan URM. Instead of examining features such as ethnicity, class, and gender individually, intersectionality views the influence of these characteristics in an intersecting manner within specific contexts (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005). However, there are different assumptions among carers. Some

of them have knowledge about the differences among the URMIs and the lack of adequate knowledge among municipal social workers. Danesh, staff from a “family-home” who is an educated person with a university degree, says that “municipal social workers do not understand the complexity of working with the minors. They place them here or in the residential homes and pay the subsidy to us, but they do not really have any plans for the minors’ life, problems and ambitions”. He adds that municipal social workers and even many carers working with the URMIs should receive necessary education in order to work properly with URMIs.

The interviewed carers have various levels of education and different forms of previous work experience. None of them were educated in the field of social work. They also revealed that merely a few of them had one or two colleagues with a degree in social work. All carers, except for one, considered having worked with Swedish youths, in any shape or form (such as teachers, nurses and leisure-time pedagogues) as sufficient competence for working with URMIs. Most of them also had the attitude that one does not need adequate education because working with URMIs is a “learn-as-you-go” type of job. Such pragmatic understanding of working with the URMIs is at risk of denying the need for knowledge in social work practices. Practical knowledge means establishing an interaction between our professional skills and the academic knowledge, we need to work effectively (Gambrill, 1997). In other words, theoretical knowledge is transformed and made relevant and useable. It has long been argued that the social work profession must take steps to bridge the research-practice gap, since social workers in direct practice have an ethical responsibility to make use of empirical and theoretical knowledge in their work with “clients” (Barber, 1996; Reid, 1994).

9. Conclusion

Afghanistan has been suffering from the consequences of the decades-long armed conflicts. It has severely limited young Afghans’ future educational opportunities. The vast majority of the participating URMIs stated that access to educational opportunities, and the fact that education is free in Sweden, was one of the most essential factors when determining which European country to apply to for asylum. Although the Swedish Migration Board has the overall responsibility for the reception of immigrants, social authorities

and municipal social workers are those who bear the operational responsibilities for new immigrants' settlements and daily lives. The sudden increase of URMs to Sweden accounts, in part, for the lack of adequate professional work with their reception and integration. The lack of intersectional perspectives in working with the URMs hinders social workers from having a deeper understanding of the differences between and within categories such as class, age, gender and ethnicity among the URMs. The URMs are often reduced to belong to *a category* of people with solely one property, namely to be unaccompanied children. A major consequence of reducing them to a homogeneous category is that the Swedish reception system treats them as such, therefore all of the URMs are forced into the same formal school system, despite the fact that many of them lack any educational experience and despite that many would prefer to work rather than go to school.

Although the problems of settlement and introduction of URMs into Swedish society are many, in need of reorientation and of the use of new knowledge and new methods, the problems of integration are more severe and challenging. Based on the results of this study and earlier studies in the field (Östman, 2019), we argue that new critical knowledge and professional skills for working with URMs are needed, which also include a readiness to work with transnational families, new global family formations and relations. Social workers also need to be actively engaged in sociopolitical mobilisation against racism and xenophobia as a crucial challenge to social cohesion in our societies.

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CHAPTER 12

REFUGEE RECEPTION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ITALIAN MOUNTAINS

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1. Introduction

In 2016, at the peak of their presence in Italy, more than 40% of the 125,000 asylum seekers registered in the country were hosted/resettled in the mountains: 10% in Alpine municipalities and 30% in the municipalities of the Apennines (Dematteis et al., 2018). Why, how and to what extent has it been possible to receive so many people in these remote, often depopulated and environmentally fragile areas?

In this chapter we analyze the conditions and dynamics that have led to the reception of a significant number of asylum seekers in Italian mountain areas, within a dispersal policy put in place by the national government, through the engagement and activation of local actors (prefectures, municipalities and NGOs).

We will consider three case studies, two of which are cooperatives and one an association, which are involved in two reception projects in the north of the country (in the Alps of Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto). The data was gathered through qualitative research conducted by the authors based on direct observation and interviews. The aim is to discuss how the presence of these migrants in these territories can be a factor of local development and resilience for Alpine communities which have been enduring demographic and economic crisis.

2. The reception of asylum seekers, refugees and status holders in remote European areas

The reception of asylum seekers, refugees and status holders in Europe is a changing phenomenon, due to the characteristics of both migration flows and relevant public policies. In this regard, growing attention is being paid to the challenges and opportunities posed by migrants' integration in remote areas (OECD/EU, 2015; Heleniak, 2018). Between 2005 and 2015 the share of the foreign-born population grew by 80% in all OECD regions, and particularly in regions such as the north of Italy and Germany and the south of Sweden. Those who are not compelled or forced to flee (*e.g.*, EU migrants) are present chiefly in urban areas, while asylum seekers, refugees and status holders are dispersed across EU regions and they are on average more present in non-urban regions (OECD, 2018).

In EU countries, immigration policies are developed at the EU and national levels, whereas integration and reception policies are mainly implemented at the local level. This implies that the role of local authorities, and the relations they establish with private reception providers, are particularly relevant in designing sustainable integration strategies in order to generate a beneficial impact within the receiving territories (OECD, 2018).

EU hosting countries have managed the arrival of high numbers of asylum seekers through the use of three categories of dispersal policies – conceived by national governments to avoid concentration of asylum seekers in some territories – such as: policies that apply proportionality criteria for the distribution of asylum seekers within the country based, for example, on GDP, population, presence of previous applicants (*e.g.*, Austria and Germany); policies that distribute asylum seekers within the country according to the availability of places in reception centers (*e.g.*, Italy); policies that rely on complex dispersal mechanisms to match the characteristics of newcomers with the labor demand of the hosting territory (*e.g.*, Netherlands and Sweden) (Galera et al., 2018).

A debated issue is that the integration of migrants who are subject to compulsory dispersal policies might be more problematic as compared to the integration of people who choose voluntarily to settle in a specific territory. The literature finds mixed evidence on the impact of dispersal policies (Schech, 2014; Darling, 2016). While some scholars note that small villages offer greater opportunities to interact with the hosting community, others

highlight the difficulty faced by recipients in remote localities to maintain ties with their ethnic networks (Andersson et al., 2010). The literature has also shown that settling permanently or semi-permanently in a specific location is an effective way whereby asylum seekers, status holders and refugees can interact with the host community. Nevertheless, what most studies carried out so far underestimate is that the challenges posed by the arrival of asylum seekers can be managed in significantly diverse ways locally, depending on the actors involved and mechanisms eventually implemented to regulate reception and integration services.

Nowadays, while dispersal policies remain under the control of national governments, municipalities' role in distributing asylum seekers, refugees and status holders within their own territory is growing, in particular the so-called SPRAR system in Italy. The Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), created in 2002, is made up of the network of local institutions that implement reception projects for forced migrants by accessing, within the available resources, the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services, managed by the Italian Ministry of the Interior and provided under the government finance law¹.

1. SPRAR has been recently dismantled by the national right-wing government (2019) in favour of a model (called SIPROIMI) that tends to concentrate asylum seekers in large urban reception centers, adopting a securitarian approach. This political choice potentially threatens the numerous experiences of local development centered on the reception of migrants.

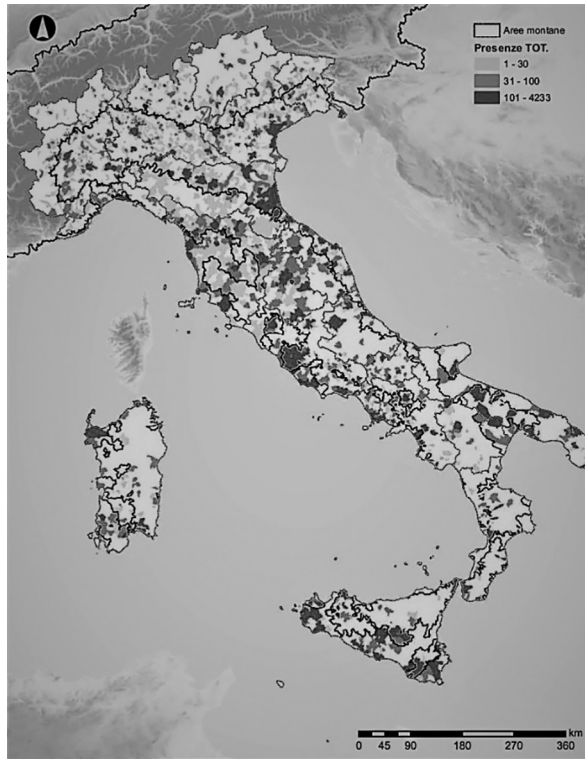


Figure 1. Total presence of forced migrants in Italy by municipality referred to Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS) and the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) - Author: Alberto Di Gioia © 2018, Dislivelli; Istat (National Institute of Statistics); Ministry of Interior.

At local level, the institutions, in cooperation with voluntary sector organizations, undertake integrated reception interventions that go beyond the simple distribution of food and housing, also providing complementary services such as legal and social guidance and support, and the development of individual programs to promote socio-economic inclusion and integration. Its primary aim is to provide support for each individual in the reception system, through implementation of a tailored program designed to enable the individuals' effective involvement, in terms of employment and housing integration, access to local services, social interaction and scholastic integration for minors. Local institutions, in partnership with the voluntary sector, implement local reception projects. Depending on the purpose, capacity and expertise of local stakeholders and taking into account the available resources,

the welfare tools and the social policy strategies adopted over the years, local institutions can choose the type of reception services to be provided and the recipients that can best be supported. Projects may therefore be focused on individual adults and nuclear families, or on single-parent families, single pregnant women, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, victims of torture, individuals needing continuing care or those with psychiatric problems or physical disabilities (SPRAR, 2017).

In this context, the Alps, located in the middle of a broad migration route from Africa and the Middle East to Northern Europe plays a relevant role even if the majority of those who migrate as a result of poverty and persecution do not voluntarily seek mountain areas as a refuge (Goodson et al., 2017). On the one hand, the Alps are one of Europe's most prosperous regions (Iammarino et al., 2017), but they lack strong urban centers where job opportunities can be found. On the other hand, national legislations try to assign refugees across the whole country and therefore also to regions not necessarily chosen by migrants. The tension between centralized and decentralized reception is latent and can also be discussed within the relationship between urban and rural/mountain areas (Dematteis et al., 2018): cities do not want to accept all migrants while often peripheral communities argue that they do not have spaces and resources to do so.

When refugees from the global South come to European mountain areas, they encounter local residents whose ancestors have invested much effort to endure in difficult natural environments and who are afraid of losing significance and decision-making power due to their declining numbers and the presence of newcomers. Immigration would be in the interest of mountain regions, but it also involves a risk for the local population, who may lose existing positions of power in the local hierarchy. Inclusion of foreigners requires trusting them, something which is not always easy to do in small communities where individuals are mutually dependent and cannot avoid each other (Perlik et al., 2019). Moreover, local entrepreneurial actors prefer highly qualified people and refugees do not fit this profile (Perlik & Membretti, 2018). Again, while it may be true that remote areas need more people due to their demographic stagnation, controversies remain regarding the desirability of immigration, and are particularly connected to another issue. The Alps have for years been engaged in a debate on the need to pursue a common Alpine identity and common interests and policies to stabilise its fragile environment and ensure the residents' quality of life. In this context, since 2017 Alpine States have been implementing strict

border controls, despite these countries belonging to the so-called Schengen Area in which travelers can move freely without having to show their passports.

Alpine communities have always claimed a certain level of autonomy from central power and they continue to defend and negotiate this autonomy today. From a lowland point of view, however, today's mountain areas are regarded as a public good, at least in terms of environmental and land use questions (Debarbieux & Price, 2008). Economically, the opposite is happening, with development leading neither to local autonomy nor to public control: mountain regions are being integrated into global value chains; the specific resources of the Alps are being commodified as landscape amenities (Perlik, 2019). Since industrialization, mountain regions and lowlands have developed different socio-economic profiles, balanced by the institutional arrangements and policies of each Alpine State. Accelerated globalization makes it necessary for mountain areas and lowlands to renegotiate their relations. The new migration flows may accelerate this necessity (Membretti & Viazzo, 2017).

3. Migrants' integration as social innovation: the Italian case studies

Over the last decade, the concept of social innovation has gained momentum among policy makers, and academics, as an instrument to help communities tackle local problems emerging due to State retrenchment and austerity policies. In this chapter we adopt the definition developed by Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas (SIMRA) – a four-year project (2016-2020) funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 program – according to which social innovation is “the reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors” (Polman et al, 2017, p. 32). The suggested definition draws from many works in a variety of fields (*e.g.*, ecology, political sciences) and refers to different theoretical foundations (*e.g.*, innovation theory, endogenous and neo-endogenous development, social capital, socio-ecological systems). More specifically, it reminds us that achieving socially beneficial outcomes requires cooperation, collective action and interaction between a large number of actors, all of whom seek to impact beyond the level of the individual (Baker & Mehmood, 2015).

Considering this definition of social innovation, we have selected three case studies based on their relevance to research in the field of forced migration, their location in mountain and inner areas of the Italian Alps and their intrinsic value in terms of social innovation. We have considered the process leading to the creation of these initiatives, the product that they create, and finally the outcomes.

We have selected three case studies in Italian mountain communities in which social innovation produced initiatives that deal directly with issues surrounding forced immigration. We consider the processes that lead to the creation of these initiatives, the product(s) they create, and finally their outcomes. Such processes occur in mountain contexts, like the Italian Alps, that are experiencing significant socio-demographic transformations: after more than a century of massive demographic decline, since the mid-nineteenth century until the middle or even the end of the twentieth, many sectors of the Alpine crescent are now experiencing a reversal trend which is leading to a “new peopling” of the Alps (Mathieu, 2016). This recovery has come particularly unexpectedly in the Italian Alps, where the eastern and western ends of the mountain range were especially affected by depopulation (Bätzing & Bartaletti, 2005), which appeared unstoppable and irreversible. Of course, local situations may be quite diversified across the Italian Alps: between 2003 and 2013, the growth rates of the resident population in 42.1% of Italian Alpine municipalities were equal to zero or negative (Alpine Convention, 2015). Nevertheless, over the past fifteen years the population has begun to grow, at first along the axes of the Aosta and Adige valleys, in peri-urban municipalities closer to the plain, in the main ski centers, but also in some “inner areas” (Corrado et al., 2014). The natural growth rate, however, remains negative or stagnant almost everywhere in the Italian Alps. This means that population growth, or even mere stability, is predominantly due to a positive net migration which is entailing a more rapid and intense population turnover than in the past, with significant implications for local communities (Bender & Kanitscheider, 2012).

So, is it reasonable to expect that this kind of repopulation can bring social innovation to the Italian Alps? An interesting hypothesis has been advanced by Remotti (2011), according to whom innovation and cultural creativity, although favored by the encounters and sometimes even the clashes between different cultures and societies, would benefit from space to be expressed. In this regard, emptiness – in terms of social rarefaction and weak ties – could

therefore facilitate innovation and cultural creativity more than a dense culture or a strong social structure (Remotti, 2011; Membretti & Lucchini, 2018).

Following this suggestion, the case studies presented here refer to three types of social innovation initiatives: socio-economic integration of migrants and asylum seekers across local mountain communities in Camonica Valley (Cooperative K-Pax - Brescia); maintenance of natural landscapes and local common goods by migrants and asylum seekers in Piedmont (Association Pacefuturo - Biella); a social enterprise supporting migrants and helping the local community in Veneto (Cadore Cooperative – Belluno).



Figure 2. Cultivating mountain artichokes in Cadore. A project with asylum seekers. Credits: Claudio Fontana, 2017.

A selection of positive examples is presented, which could shed light on different forms of active engagement of civil society in the integration of forced migrants into local communities in rural and mountain areas.

3.1. Diffused hospitality in Camonica Valley (Lombardy)

This case study describes the new approach to the issue of the first reception of asylum seekers adopted by the social cooperative K-Pax in cooperation with third sector organizations and public agencies. The Social Cooperative K-Pax was established in 2008. K-Pax is a project born from a group of operators and guests of first and second stage reception. By using a range of transversal actions developed in synergy with other bodies and local services, its interventions are realized with the aim of preventing social exclusion and isolation, and by promoting the integration of those who are most socially vulnerable: single women with children, un-waged/low-waged families, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees².

After the Arab spring of 2011, Italy has been facing a dramatic challenge as a first welcome country for refugees escaping from unstable Arab countries. Many people reached the Italian coast needing a living permit in a safe country and K-Pax – and its network – offered asylum seekers diffused micro-hospitality in small dwellings in mountain municipalities, allowing better socio-economic integration.

Breno is a small village of nearly 5,000 inhabitants located in Camonica Valley, in the Province of Brescia, Lombardy region. Camonica Valley is a large Alpine valley with about 118,000 inhabitants, which is undergoing a transition from manufacturing to tourism focused on archaeological sites and mountain resorts around Adamello Brenta Natural Park and the ski areas of Tonale and Aprica. The municipality of Breno is classified by the National Strategy of Inner Areas as ultra-periphery for its demographic and economic situation. The population in the last decade (2008-2017) has decreased constantly from 5,036 to 4,821 inhabitants (-4.3%) (Semprebom, 2017, p. 243). This negative trend can be tracked back to socio-economic factors. The Valley was traditionally an industrial territory (construction and textile sectors), which in the last decade started to lose its vitality due to macro-economic

2. <https://www.k-pax.eu/>

transformations linked to the post-Fordist economy. Within this context, even though several public services and commercial activities have been dismantled and closed down, Breno offers a good range of services (*e.g.*, post offices, supermarkets, public offices, pharmacies, stores, restaurants). In the meantime, foreign population has continuously increased since 2004 (from 195 foreign residents in 2005 to 428 foreign residents in 2016), representing today 8.4% of the resident population. Since 2011, the migratory phenomenon is increasingly associated with the presence of asylum seekers (Semprebon, 2017).

K-Pax is a social cooperative, founded in 2008 to offer assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and adults in difficulty. Since its foundation, it has developed many projects for the integration of socially vulnerable and excluded groups (single women and women with children, un-waged/low-waged families, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees). Here we focus on a successful project of socio-economic integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The project started in the beginning of 2011 and was launched in Breno in cooperation with neighboring municipalities, in order to overcome the emergency approach to the issue of hosting asylum seekers. The prevailing trend of public opinion was not favorable for K-Pax's activities. In the Camonica Valley and neighboring areas, a general sentiment against hosting asylum seekers was present, with actual protests of intolerance and violence organized by extremist groups. In 2015 and 2017, these groups organized anti-asylum seeker protests and committed violent extremist acts against migrants, like the throwing of Molotov bombs into residences that were soon to be hosting structures. In addition, some municipalities were not willing to offer vacant housing owned by the municipality, neither have they facilitated negotiations between private owners of vacant apartments and the cooperative that manages the SPRAR.

To face the integration needs of asylum seekers, the Brescia Prefecture made an agreement with the owner of an abandoned tourist hotel in a ski area (Monte Campione), where one hundred asylum seekers were placed, *de facto* isolating them and preventing interaction between newcomers and the receiving community. Moreover, the accommodation lacked legal, medical and general services. Such a solution pushed the social cooperative K-Pax and other actors of the third sector to intervene, moving the asylum seekers to more suitable accommodations, mainly vacant private or public apartments in municipalities close to Breno, in cooperation with the CGIL labor union,

local health services and 11 municipalities of the Valley. The initiative was named P-MAD, standing for project of diffused micro-hospitality.

Again, this cooperative network was able to renovate and reopen the abandoned Hotel Giardino, the only hotel in the village. This has encouraged the rediscovery of the valley as a tourist destination and has created jobs, both for Italian residents and for foreign refugees, who work as hotel staff and in tourism promotion. The hotel, now completely renovated, has become the only eco-hotel in the Camonica Valley and promotes the use of local products and a sustainable approach to tourism: migrants, after a period of specific training, are directly involved as guides in tours to nearby mountain pastures and farms, or in the organization of events such as cooking classes as well as bike-sharing services. These activities always incorporate intercultural exchanges. Revenues from these services are invested by K-Pax in social housing projects for refugees in the valley.

This newly established network therefore cooperated to create adequate accommodation solutions and a job coaching service to migrants, both of which facilitate their autonomy and integration in the labor market. Some internship opportunities were also set up. In parallel, the network cooperated on various awareness-raising activities. For example, informative workshops were organized on the topic of migration as well as intercultural events for the local population to enhance the exchange between migrants and hosting communities. Currently there are 25 places for asylum seekers in the municipality of Breno, spread out in small housing units and 75 places in Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS) in the whole territory of Camonica Valley (K-Pax, 2017).

Considering that SPRAR system foresees the voluntary adhesion of local administrations as first participants, sensitization and involvement of the local population are needed. In this regard, the creation of an inclusive network of public agencies and NGOs is crucial to facilitate a transformative learning process. Still, some criticalities are evident. Accommodation is insufficient and non-homogenous, and, due to the complex legal process for the recognition of their status, asylum seekers' turnover is slow. In the province of Brescia, in fact, a very high number of asylum denials (71%) has been observed. Moreover, an open issue is the long-term integration of refugees as the SPRAR system is being dismantled.

3.2. Hospitality as a driver to revitalize the cultural landscape in the Alps of Biella (Piedmont)

This case study describes a typical approach to the issue of the extraordinary reception of asylum seekers in a small Alpine village, where social innovation is linked to the care and rehabilitation of the cultural landscape. Thanks to the active role of a cultural association – PaceFuturo – and due to the development of a network of local and external stakeholders, migrants were involved in a project aimed at restoring some important elements of local built heritage. The project has become an important driver of inclusion of the newcomers within the local community.

Regarding the context of this case study, Pettinengo is a small mountain municipality with about 1,500 inhabitants, in a textile-producing district in the province of Biella, Piedmont region. Until a few years ago, the area was economically characterized by the historical presence of a prosperous textile industry (knitwear factories), which offered plenty of local employment opportunities and for a long time ensured the demographic vitality of the area. Over the past two decades, however, largely due to the gradual closure of all production plants, the territory has entered a deep socio-economic and identity crisis due to the aging of the population. The demographic crisis and the previous abandonment of traditional rural activities has led to the dereliction of a great part of the territory, with a dramatic impact on the cultural landscape: in recent years the forest has been reconquering what were once anthropic spaces. It is worth noting, on the other hand, that in the last decade net migration has been positive, primarily due to the arrival of foreign immigrants (the so-called “economic migrants”): in 2017, out of 1,462 inhabitants, 70 were resident foreigners (4.8% of the total population), mostly from sub-Saharan Africa and Romania.

Even more relevant is the number of asylum seekers recently housed in the village thanks to the work of PaceFuturo, an association founded in Pettinengo in 2001, involving intellectuals, media activists, social workers and even monks, interested in promoting a “culture of peace and future”. From its beginnings, the NGO’s explicit goal has been to use the arrival of foreigners as an opportunity to revitalize the whole area. The municipal administration of Pettinengo has actively supported PaceFuturo, while requiring it to extend the services offered to newcomers to the entire population. Thus, residents have always been able to benefit from it. In Italy, the State gave the hosting

organization a set fee (€35 per asylum seeker per day) that could be used to hire staff and contract local services, creating an incentive to keep costs down, making each organization responsible for effective use of the funds and enabling refugees to spend their pocket money in local shops.

In 2006, the municipality of the small village decided to give the management of Villa Piazza – a XIX century palace intended for public use – to PaceFuturo. It used the building as its headquarters and to host cultural and social activities organized by the association (from concerts and conferences to courses for unemployed people or laboratories for children, focusing both on “fragile” users and on a wider audience). To tackle high immigration following the events of the Arab Spring, in 2011 the local Prefecture of Biella proposed to PaceFuturo to temporarily host a group of 50 asylum seekers from Africa. The association, in co-operation with the local parish and the municipality of Pettinengo, decided to open the doors of Villa Piazza and to welcome the migrants in the most important building of the village. Just a few months’ experience was enough to reveal the difficulties and fears of a small community towards welcoming foreigners, the “different”, into their midst (Trivero, 2017).

Despite this initial reluctance, thanks to the mediation and participatory community-building conducted by Pacefuturo, together with other small local associations and groups in their network, the social context started to change. So, when in 2014 the Prefecture once again proposed to PaceFuturo to host a group of 25 asylum seekers there was a reasonably favorable environment for this initiative. Again, in 2017, about 130 refugees, almost all young males from different nationalities, were hosted in the municipality. Following the logic of re-using and restoring the local built heritage, they are now housed in several old buildings in the village, rescued from abandonment or previously underused. Villa Piazza (with its restaurant/café, seminar rooms, craft laboratories, concert hall) remains the centre of all the activities of PaceFuturo, where migrants, local inhabitants and people from outside the village can meet and share a common space. Moreover, the increasing willingness of residents to offer their homes for reception projects, even without remuneration, highlights the creation of a generative welfare culture, which allows a shift from individual rights towards social rights with collective return (Vecchiato, 2015). At present, mountain dwellers’ early skepticism has resulted in solidarity, reshaping and enriching the whole community structure: reception is an expression of local solidarity (*e.g.*, associations, parishes, cooperatives);

the staff of the reception projects are mainly recruited from among residents (unemployed, marginalized individuals) and supported by professionals; training courses, cultural events and recreational activities, are designed to be shared by migrants and locals (De Leonardis, 1998; Zamagni, 2011).

In 2008, ever attentive to the care of the territory and landscape, PaceFuturo launched the project “Sent – ieri, oggi e domani” (Pathways – yesterday, today and tomorrow). This project, undertaken in collaboration with the municipality and with the active involvement of the local community, aimed at bringing back to life more than 10 kilometers of old “factory workers’ paths”: the trails that connected the farms and the larger neighborhoods of the village and were used by the peasant-workers to reach the now-abandoned factories. The project goal was therefore to promote the responsible transformation of an area which is suffering a socio-economic and identity crisis by combining cultural growth, tourist development and social solidarity (Perlik & Membretti, 2018).

From this experience, the trigger of the social innovation was the idea to combine the local need for the restoration of built heritage with the needs of asylum seekers to have concrete opportunities of inclusion in the community and in its territory. For this purpose, many of the hosted migrants have been progressively involved in the restoration of pathways and rural buildings (both residential and otherwise), in connection with the activities already started with the project “Sent-ieri”. They have been enrolled as members of the association and contribute, through volunteer work, to the care and maintenance of the landscape.

In Pettinengo, refugees are thus involved in different activities aimed at safeguarding a cultural landscape which is emotionally treasured by the residents but is progressively falling into a state of abandonment. An object of care and at the same time the domain of both physical and social re-production, the territory of Pettinengo comes up as a meeting ground for the newcomers and the pre-existing population. Through its daily maintenance and the valorization of those features in the territory that are most significant for the identity of the local population, foreign immigrants are involved in a negotiation of practices and of meanings with the residents and with the historical memory of the village, echoing Putnam’s civic perspective on social capital (Putnam, 1993).

3.3. Involving refugees in a community cooperative in Cadore (Veneto)

Cadore social cooperative (SC) emerged as a local community venture, particularly following the initiative of the Municipality of Valle di Cadore, in the Province of Belluno, Veneto. Cadore is a territory with about 32,000 inhabitants and is a historical, not administrative, region situated in the northern part of the Province, bordering Austria and the regions of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Cadore territory covers in total 19 municipalities. The mountain geomorphology of this territory gives rise to several key problems, including limited street infrastructure – which does not meet the mobility needs of local inhabitants, migrants and tourists –, isolation and disadvantages for the settlement of productive activities.

Created in 2008, Cadore SC was the outcome of a political endeavor which gained the support of the local population, which was actively engaged in both the production of key services and in the debate on relevant issues affecting the territory. The establishment of a community cooperative, owned by a large portion of local inhabitants representing different stakeholders (local authorities, workers, volunteers, disadvantaged citizens) and sectors (nonprofit, public and private) employed a participatory approach with ten municipalities involved: Valle di Cadore; San Vito di Cadore; Auronzo di Cadore; Lozzo di Cadore; Pieve di Cadore; Cortina d'Ampezzo; Calalzo di Cadore Santo Stefano di Cadore; Alleghe and Cibiana di Cadore.

Two distinct phenomena influenced the choice to set up a cooperative. First, the decision to liquidate a local consumer cooperative set up at the end of the 19th century. Second, the delocalization of the local eyeglasses industrial district resulted in dramatic consequences, such as unemployment and population decline – in the Province of Belluno, over a timeframe of 10 years (2007-2016), residents dropped from 212,131 to 205,781 (-3%). Welcoming asylum seekers and supporting their social and work integration is only one of the diversified activities carried out by the Cadore cooperative. These also include environmental engineering to protect the environment against the risks of hydrogeological instability; community tourism; the management of a multi-purpose centre situated along the bicycle lane “Lunga via delle Dolomiti” and the supply of numerous services that would otherwise be at risk of closure. Some asylum seekers are employed as bakers, cook assistants and herdsmen (Argenta & Galera, 2017).

The Cadore cooperative operates over a rather large territory, including sixteen municipalities located in the Cadore territory and four additional municipalities in the province of Belluno. The reception of asylum seekers has been carried out thanks to annual contractual agreements made with the Prefecture of Belluno since 2011, following competitive tenders aimed at outsourcing the management of CAS (extraordinary reception centers). From the very beginning, the Cadore cooperative has chosen to welcome a limited number of asylum seekers and to implement a decentralized housing model, which facilitated the inclusion of the newcomers and their path towards autonomy.

Beyond its contractual obligations with the Prefecture, the Cadore cooperative is continuously experimenting with new services, which aim at favoring the social and work integration of recipients while contributing to regenerating the local territory. When compared to similar mountain territories, the answer to the challenge posed by asylum seekers' reception has been less hostile (Membretti et al., 2017), in part thanks to the mediation of Cadore SC, which promoted a fruitful dialogue with stakeholders. Indeed, local inhabitants are well aware of the cooperative's role in ensuring the survival of local services (*e.g.*, cinema and ski infrastructure) whilst integrating many fragile citizens who would otherwise be at risk of social exclusion. Albeit not essential, the delivery of these services strengthened trust relations and contributes to improving the quality of communitarian life. Moreover, initiatives that foster a welcoming culture brought about spontaneous collaborations with local inhabitants, which in turn developed into work relations and, through the active engagement of volunteers and other social enterprises, social cohesion has improved. Currently, out of the 31 asylum seekers and refugees hosted in Cadore, eight are regularly employed with diverse contractual agreements, either by the Cadore cooperative or by other local enterprises. A robust turnover and the strong commitment of employees corroborate the strategy undertaken in Cadore and its reception model developed through this community-based enterprise. Key features of this community-based model include its strong inclination towards entrepreneurship and the ability to address new local challenges and needs.

Although Cadore SC's role in regenerating the local territory and community is unquestionable, its potential is still far from being fully realized, as highlighted by some of its members, because of the difficulties that the Prefecture and municipalities have in understanding the specificity of social

enterprises. A case in point are the selection mechanisms designed to recruit the providers of reception services. In fact, the most recent tenders do not reward the model of dispersed accommodation and fail to valorize the capacity to support recipients in their path towards autonomy. In line with the 2017 Minniti-Orlando Decree³, tenders favor big managing entities able to provide a wide range of standardized rather than tailored services, and indirectly penalize small organizations – like Cadore SC – that succeeded in generating a beneficial impact on community. The strong opposition to immigration and the general increased hostility towards newcomers, which is spreading across Italy and Europe, is also reflected in Cadore and poses additional challenges.

4. Concluding remarks

This chapter presented three examples of social innovations in the area of forced migration, showing how the reconfiguration of relations between local inhabitants and asylum seekers contributed not only to migrants' integration but also offered the opportunity for the economic development of small mountain villages and a restoration of its social fabric (Membretti & Cutello, 2019).

In this context, the territory of the Italian Alps is playing an important role in shaping positive pathways of migrants' integration and local development. Nowadays, the territory should be considered a social laboratory in which new identities are created and negotiated, and new processes of inclusion and exclusion take place. It is also a social construction founded on complex representations and largely shared through relations of power between the actors. If it is true that migrants' main asset is their potential to eventually contribute to the regional labor force and to re-activate mountain communities, it is also true that this will happen via practices of appropriation of space, physical or symbolic, that will eventually generate a sense of attachment that will contribute to societal wellbeing. Such a process does not only depend on the migrants, but also on a changed perspective of the local population towards migrants: from diffidence/hostility to recognition of an active role.

3. Among the main legislative changes prompted by the Minniti-Orlando Decree, there was the abolition of the possibility to appeal a negative asylum decision by the Italian Civil Court to the Court of Appeal. Among other provisions of Decree, there is the extension of pre-removal detention centres in every region of the country.

New institutional roles, governance arrangements or networks that may occur in the relationships among actors are the instruments through which it is possible to co-create the conditions for an active inclusion and integration of migrants into the social and economic life of mountain communities.

The case studies presented in the chapter also highlight the difficulty of satisfying the needs of migrants and local inhabitants in coping with a phenomenon whose timing does not allow gradual adaptations. It is therefore a phenomenon that needs to be governed. Unfortunately, it does not happen at the European level, poorly at national level and sporadically at local level. Indeed, in the Italian situation, the optimal level of effective reception-integration policies does not seem to be at the regional level, nor, except in very meritorious exceptional cases, at the municipal level (Pettinengo), but at the intermediate level of a vast area (see the examples of Camonica Valley and the Province of Belluno). At this level is viable to invest the human and financial resources available, because it corresponds to territorial dimensions large enough to form welcoming networks relying on sufficient energies and social capital resources whilst being small enough to address local needs and opportunities (Dematteis, 2017).

Hosting forced migrants is not only a humanitarian question. In the conflict between views of moral behavior and local fears of being overwhelmed, it is often forgotten that socio-economically disadvantaged regions – such as the Italian Alps – could be demographically stabilized and economically revitalized by migrants, even if those people do not have a profile desired by local employers. The belief that mountain communities and regions can manage their future alone is becoming increasingly unrealistic because these regions are already involved in global migration flows and global markets. Neither does a sort of “creative destruction” (Schumpeter, 1942) appear a sustainable option, as it is difficult to rebuild institutional structures once they have been destroyed, and it is dangerous to create territorial vacuums, which may give rise to new conflicts. In this sense, it seems to be worthwhile to try to repopulate sparsely populated mountain regions by also promoting the settlement of immigrants (Perlik & Membretti, 2018).

In conclusion, some major issues emerge from this chapter. At first, migrant reception models taken into consideration generate mountain development, but, due to recent Italian government policies, there is a risk that concentrations of refugees will return to the cities, leaving the mountains to themselves. Secondly, the analyzed experiences are still not economically

sustainable, needing time to be consolidated and become autonomous. They operate in markets protected by the State and if the government removes or diminishes funds they could eventually collapse (Membretti & Cutello, 2019). Finally, negotiation between cultures and different conceptions of the territory is crucial – a negotiation that may pave the way to social innovation when intermediary institutions take charge of it – as well as populations of mountain communities’ empowerment thanks to the reception of migrants. These skills (conducting social business, negotiating, opening to the outside world, attracting resources) remain available and the communities could also be able to re-invest different types of social capital (Putnam, 1993), know-how and self-learning in the future, in other forms of local development.

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EPILOGUE

RETHINKING THE CONTENTIOUS POLITICS OF ASYLUM

Vasilios Ioakimidis

The United Nations (UNHCR, 2019) estimated that as of 2018 more than 70.8 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide. This estimate signifies that over the last decade the world witnessed an unparalleled increase in the number of people fleeing their communities under threat of persecution or harm. Despite the misleading impression one would shape by just following mainstream media and political debates in Europe and the US, the reality is that the vast majority of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have sought protection in countries of what we would describe, schematically and rather arbitrarily, the global south. This observation helps us put the refugee plight into some political and geographic perspective. In doing so, we also will need to examine three interlinked dimensions: a) what explains the systematic otherization and demonization of refugees in the global north? b) how has such demonization moved from the realm of discourse to the realm of policy and practice? c) what would an alternative practice and policy approach look like?

1. The otherization and demonization of refugees

As authors in previous chapters of this book have powerfully demonstrated, the movement of people across different territories and regions has always been part of the journey of humanity. Such movement has historically been integral to the creation of our societies; it was very much based on the need to secure the necessary means for survival and eventually underpin collective

economic development (*e.g.*, fertile land, agriculture, trade). The movement of people, at times, had also been the result of natural or human-made disasters, such as drought, flood or even war. For most of humanity's history the ability of people to relocate to new territories was largely unobstructed.

Restrictions related to such movement and the eventual demonization of people searching for security and prosperity through movement is a relatively recent phenomenon in history. As such it is mostly associated with colonialism, the creation of market based economies and the need of nation states to balance between the re-production of cheap labour, necessary for the advancement of economies, and the simultaneous retention of established hierarchies of power (Ioakimidis & Trimikliniotis, 2019). In the 20th Century, the contradiction between the need for free flow of capital and the expectation for restrictions in the movement of people became particularly pronounced. However, even in the midst of such contradiction, communities of people who were at risk of persecution and in need of asylum, were largely seen sympathetically and enjoyed particular protections. These protections were elucidated in the Geneva Convention and codified in numerous international and national politico-legal instruments.

The systematic and widespread vilification of refugees, despite the fact that it pre-existed in some forms, became a widespread and almost institutionalized phenomenon at the turn of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century. Gradually, established protections afforded to refugees started to be disputed and eroded. At the same time, the political and public discourse shifted towards presenting the refugee populations as a threat; a burden for the economy and a danger for the integrity of "our culture".

It would certainly require much more space than a short book epilogue to make sense of the reasons and commotions behind such a drastic shift in policies and discourse. We should not hesitate, nevertheless, to highlight the fact that suppression of the refugee plight in recent years has coincided with significant material changes in the global north. The most obvious and well recorded one is the sequence of financial crises that have shaken the economic certainties in Europe and the US. Since the 1970s western the economies have experienced periods of financial slump in much more frequent intervals than before. The need to justify the failures of the market-based economies, while diverting attention from the structural elements of the crisis, has also revealed the "usefulness" of the refugee and migrant communities as modern scapegoats. According to populist and racist narratives that have gained

prominence in recent years, refugees have contributed to the overcrowding of cities, the draining of welfare resources and therefore contributed to economic decline. Of course, none of these claims are founded on any factual argument. The current book is a powerful addition to an extensive range of literature that confirms that the opposite to the populist and xenophobic arguments is in fact true. Sadly, in the era of “fake news”, when evidence is summarily dismissed, a new enemy has already been constructed. The populist media and far-right politicians have gained prominence through presenting the refugee plight as the new irregular threat to western societies.

2. The marketisation and militarization of humanitarianism

The movement of people is shaped by two inter-related factors; what is known in sociology and economics as the push and pull factors. It is not enough for a society to be prosperous in order to attract a significant flow of people (pull factor). This is also contingent on the challenging and threatening conditions in the source (push factor). Deprivation, inequality, foreign interventions and political/ethnic violence are some of the factors that push people away from their places in search of security and dignity. The economic and social factors are so interwoven that the legal distinctions between an asylum seeker and a non-documented migrant are blurred. What is clear, nevertheless, is that a legacy of colonial and imperialist interventions has created the conditions for perpetual socio-political fragility in much of the world. For example, the direct or indirect Western interventions in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan do not only emerge as the overarching factors for the creation of new generations of refugees but they can also be seen as the latest episodes of a long history of colonial and imperialist calculations.

The inevitability of the movement of people as a result of, *inter alia*, western military interventions has not only been obscured by the normalization of the populist and racist rhetoric, but it has also informed the rapid shift towards unprecedented and draconian policies. At the heart of these policies is the omnipresent principle of “less eligibility” known to advanced capitalist economies as the gold standard of brutalization through care. The “less eligibility” principle is based on the idea that the conditions within welfare institutions should be worse than the worst conditions experienced by people outside the welfare system. The outcome is the creation of conditions

of calculated brutality. Militarized refugee camps in the Mediterranean and Australia are the perfect examples of such institutionalized hostile environments designed to deter people from seeking asylum while also satisfying the needs of domestic populism.

The extraordinary neoliberal influence of recent conflicts also marks the rise of a disturbing new era of globalized commercialization of war and peace. On the one hand an aggressive “war industry” has been created through the redefinition of the role of NATO and the introduction of the absurd notion of “militarized humanitarianism”. This notion heavily relies on the gradual privatization of policing as well as on the outsourcing of national defense (see, for example, the case of Black Waters in Iraq and G4S in Israel). Therefore, in the 21st Century, war has become a multi-billion dollars industry which brings together arms’ manufacturers, private armies, international security think-tanks and hawkish lobbies attached to national governments.

Ironically, the current conjecture has also helped create a “peace industry”, an odd state of affairs representing anything but the true meaning of the first component of the phrase. The actual objective of this industry is not to promote global peace and justice but rather to reap the financial benefits of post conflict reconstruction and societies in transition. The “peace industry” primarily consists of organisations (private and non-profit) that develop expertise and toolkits aimed at countries and populations affected by conflict and displacement. The lucrative “peace industry” rarely cares about the structural reasons behind conflict and displacement. It primarily focuses on short term fixes and target-driven services. Perhaps one of the most damaging dimensions of the commercialization of humanitarianism is that it has given the pretext for attaching the notions of human rights and humanitarian aid as a whole. However, as I point out below, the bleak prospects of humanitarian work have been counterbalanced by the contentious politics shaped by the grassroots solidarity initiatives.

3. Refugees and the politics of hope and solidarity

The militarization of the refugee question and the recent increase in the flow of people seeking safety in Europe and the US has brought up some powerful examples of grassroot and organic solidarity. Alongside, state policies that have been mostly draconian in nature, many communities have responded in

extraordinarily creative ways in their effort to support refugees. Some of this work has been captured in the current book. In addition, there are several studies (Hinestroza & Ioakimidis, 2011; Teloni, 2011; Trimikliniotis, 2013) that demonstrate how reclaiming public space in recipient countries has shaped some of the most effective and inclusive approaches to supporting vulnerable communities. These examples offer powerful glimpses into a more democratic and non-stigmatizing way of organizing-welfare. Unsurprisingly, many of these grassroots projects have been targeted by the authorities and members of the community and activists who have been supporting these projects are routinely harassed.

The criminalization of grassroots welfare work in support of refugees is not new. Over the last 90 years, roughly since the Spanish civil war, every time social movements provided wonderful examples of solidarity to refugees, their work has been criminalized (González-Duro, 2008). The internationalist “children colonies” in republican Spain followed these democratic principles. Their legacy of creative and non-stigmatizing support for refugees is even cherished nowadays. Likewise, in the 1940s, the Red Aid, a vast anti-fascist network, mobilized thousands of social welfare practitioners globally in order to develop services caring for refugees, political activists and orphan children (Schilde, 2003). Although, the Red Aid has been the first comprehensive effort to internationalize a politically engaged welfare work, unfortunately it has been wiped off our history textbooks. A better-known example of practitioner courage at a time of conflict is that of the Polish-Jewish social worker and nurse, Irena Sendler, who between 1940 and 1943 saved nearly 2,500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto.

The continuity of solidarity throughout the history of the plight of refugees sets the context of what we can describe as the politics of solidarity and hope. It also provides important principles for the re-thinking and reshaping of policies and practices aimed at refugees. These guiding principles remind us that “*top-down toolkits*” *do not work*. States and the “humanitarian industry” are often quick to produce and impose technical toolkits that bear no relevance to the real needs of communities on the ground. Instead, recent and historical projects demonstrate that in our policy and practice with refugees we ought to listen to people affected by displacement and learn from the extraordinary grassroots expertise communities develop in times of extremis. This expertise is far more superior, effective and relevant.

Secondly, it is crucial that we never lose sight of the structural reasons (military conflict, environmental depredation, sexual, religious and ethnic minority persecution) that inform forced displacement. With regard to military conflicts it is important to remember that in most cases the end of a war could only mean continuation of conflict through different means, if endemic social and political inequalities are not addressed. Therefore, the priority should be on creating the conditions for sustainable and viable peace, based on social justice, social equality and the empowerment of peoples. We need to acknowledge *the importance of unconditionally opposing all unjust wars and persecutions and supporting local and international anti-war movements.* The most powerful, albeit rather obvious, approach to dealing with the suffering caused by war is the actual prevention of wars. The authors of this book have made a powerful contribution to highlighting the importance of all these principles.

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How have countries in the Global North responded to the quest for refuge? This collection of chapters articulates diverse scales of analysis across international geographies (Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, USA) drawn from different disciplinary perspectives (anthropology, geography, social work, sociology) in order to bring to light the complexities of refugee settlement and integration. The authors address time-old questions in refugee studies, the urgency of which has not diminished: how is the distinction between migrant and refugee enshrined in law and played out in practice? In what ways can local communities become involved in welcoming refugees? How to avoid a slippery slope towards humanitarian charity-based approaches instead of rights-based approaches towards international protection? What kind of balance needs to be found between state, private and third sector provision of services for refugees? How can refugee reception systems be improved to meet their needs?

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