# Refuge

# SPECIAL ISSUE

# *Making Homes in Limbo?*

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# Contents

# Making Homes in Limbo? A Conceptual Framework[1]

Cathrine Brun and Anita Fábos[2]

## Abstract

*This article aims to conceptualize home and homemaking for people in protracted displacement. The article serves three purposes: to present an overview of the area of inquiry; to develop an analytical framework for understanding home and homemaking for forced migrants in protracted displacement; and to introduce the special issue. It explores how protracted displacement has been defined—from policy definitions to people's experiences of protractedness, including "waiting" and "the permanence of temporariness." The article identifies the ambivalence embedded in experiences and practices of homemaking in long-term displacement, demonstrating how static notions of home and displacement might be unsettled. It achieves this through examining relationships between mobility and stasis, the material and symbolic, between the past, present, and future, and multiple places and scales. The article proposes a conceptual framework—a triadic constellation of home—that enables an analysis of home in different contexts of protracted displacement. The framework helps to explore home both as an idea and a practice, distinguishing among three elements: "home" as the day-to-day practices of homemaking, "Home" as representing values, traditions, memories, and feelings of home, and the broader political and historical contexts in which "HOME" is understood in the current global order and embedded in institutions. In conclusion, the article argues that a feminist and dynamic understanding of home-Home-HOME provides a more holistic perspective of making home in protracted displacement that promotes a more extensive and more sophisticated academic work, policies, and practices.*

## Résumé

*L'un des buts de cet article est de conceptualiser l'idée de « domicile » ainsi que le processus d'établir un domicile pour personnes en situation de déplacement prolongé. Il répond à trois objectifs : présenter un aperçu actuel et récent du domaine en question, formuler un cadre analytique pour comprendre ce qu'un « domicile » et l'établissement d'un domicile peuvent représenter pour migrants forcés en déplacement prolongé, et introduire ce numéro spécial de Refuge consacré à l'idée du domicile dans l'impermanence. Il s'engage à explorer les diverses façons dont le déplacement prolongé a été défini, en allant des politiques sur le déplacement jusqu'à l'expérience vécue du prolongement et de l'impermanence, la condition d'« attente » et ce qu'on a nommé « la permanence du temporaire ». L'article souligne l'ambivalence qui fait partie intégrale des expériences et pratiques visant à établir un domicile dans des situations de déplacement à long terme. Il démontre ainsi comment des notions figées de domicile et de déplacement pourraient être mises en mouvement, à travers une analyse des relations entre mobilité et fixité, entre le matériel et le symbolique, entre le passé, le présent et l'avenir, ainsi qu'une multiplicité de lieux et d'échelles. L'article propose comme cadre conceptuel une triple constellation des notions de domicile qui permet de les étudier dans des contextes variés de déplacement prolongé. C'est effectivement un cadre qui ouvre la voie à une exploration du concept « domicile », tant dans sa dimension théorique que pratique, en trois volets : « domicile » en lettres minuscules, c'est-à-dire l'aspect quotidien pratique que constitue l'acte d'établir un domicile ; « Domicile »*

*avec un « d » majuscule, représentant les valeurs, traditions, souvenirs, et sentiments qu'évoque un domicile ; et enfin « DOMICILE » en lettres majuscules, signifiant le contexte politique et historique général à travers lequel le concept de domicile est intégré par l'hiérarchie du pouvoir de la mondialisation contemporaine, et incarné par les institutions. Pour conclure, l'article avance qu'une approche féministe et dynamique constituée de ces trois volets « domicile-Domicile-DOMICILE » offre une perspective plus complète du processus d'établir un domicile dans des situations de déplacement prolongé, et conséquemment donne lieu à des recherches universitaires, ainsi qu'à des politiques et des applications pratiques, plus avancées et sophistiquées dans ce domaine.*

### Introduction

This issue is a small attempt to take on a big dilemma: how—and why—do people who are living in ongoing displacement make homes. The dilemma is more than a problem of refugee policies ill-suited to the contemporary politics of "protracted refugee situations" (PRS)—a term that initially referred to people who spend years, possibly decades, in encampments and detention centres, but which we expand to include those forced migrants who go into "hiding" in urban areas, who are "in transit" from one place, one state, to the next, and who are subject to other "temporary" conditions such as unresolved residency permission. For refugees and forced migrants, the multiple urges for safety, for meaningful lives and livelihoods, and for belonging are not well served by the "permanence of temporariness," as these protracted liminal states have been called.[3]

The tensions that accrue as a result of ongoing conflict, volatility, and flux from interactions between people on the move and the institutions, systems, and structures designed to manage particular types of human movement, lead to states of high uncertainty and social fluidity. This tension has profound effects on practices of homemaking in precarious circumstances, notions of "return" to a recognized home, and indeed the meaning of the term *home* itself. As a geographer and an anthropologist of forced migration, and as feminist scholars and practitioners, we have used our own fruitful collaboration to examine this dilemma from new—or newly synergistic—theoretical perspectives, as we mine disciplines and approaches towards understanding how, in practical terms, people in administrative limbo find the means and the capacity to carry on thinking about home and making home, despite their liminal and often dire circumstances. We further propose that a feminist understanding of homemaking may enable alternative

humanitarian and policy approaches to shelter and meaningful inclusion.

In our introduction to this special issue of *Refuge,* we develop a conceptual framework of making homes in protracted situations of displacement. By challenging the common idea that long-displaced people are necessarily in limbo, we weave a critique of the policy context of protracted displacement in a globalizing world into our framework, and present a concept of "constellations of home" for mapping the complex and multiple understandings of home embedded in homemaking in protracted situations of displacement. We give examples of practices that illustrate the intersection of local meaning-making with national and supra-national notions of home.

This article has three main sections. We first explore the relationship between home and forced migration. We then turn to the notion of "protracted displacement," its magnitude, and implications of protractedness in a globalized world, before reflecting on people's experiences of living with protracted displacement. Finally, we place our conceptual framework of making home in protracted displacement within a feminist politics of place.

### Home and Forced Migration

"In some sense, the narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves through carving out of inhabitable space, and hence no place in which memory can allow the past to reach the present (in which the "I" could declare itself as having come home)."[4]

*Home* and *place* are complex and interrelated notions,[5] to which the experience of "forced migration" adds an additional layer to the puzzle of belonging and identity. Our understanding of *place* as open and dynamic comes from Doreen Massey.[6] Brun notes that, for refugees and forced migrants, *place* is a particular articulation of social relations stretched out beyond one location.[7] A place encompasses physical, social, economic, and cultural realities; a home in this understanding is "a particularly significant kind of place with which, and within which, we experience strong social, psychological and emotive attachments.[8] Other recent contributions theorizing home and homemaking have brought a nuanced richness to the growing scholarship and broad interest in the topic.[9] Blunt and Dowling, whose book outlining a "critical geography of home" emphasizes the relations between place, space, scale, identity, and power, bring much of this thinking together.[10] Specifically, their formulation presents home as comprising two elements: home is a place, and also an idea and an imaginary imbued with feeling. "Home," propose Blunt and Dowling, "is thus a spatial imaginary, a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related

to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places."[11]

This increased scholarly interest in home in the social sciences and humanities has led to a critical scrutiny of the often taken-for-granted and idealized notions of home as haven. Home is now established as a more unsettled and problematic entity where tension and conflict are replete.[12] Home may be a house, but it may also refer to family, community, nation, and a number of other sites with which we associate and experience contingent acceptance. Home is thus not a site protected from the outside world; rather, its boundaries are porous[13] and may be defined in relation to wider social and political locations. Home may be understood as a site in which power relations of the wider society, such as relations of gender, ethnicity, class, and generation are played out. As a case in point, people's displacement as a result of being targeted within their home country, and the deliberate damaging of civilian homes (referred to as "domicide"[14]) emphasize the political meaning of home. The forcible displacement of people from their houses, hometowns, and homelands highlights the importance of home at different scales and illustrates how unsettled the notion of the home as a safe haven becomes for forced migrants. Consequently, forced migration, the forcible displacement from places called home, becomes indicative of the experience of home as an unsettled, changing, open, and more mobile entity.

Our ongoing concern with home for migrants and mobile people continues to be enhanced by feminist thinking. Iris Marion Young's "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme"[15] illustrates how ambivalent the nature of home may be for those in subordinate positions—women, young people, or servants, for example. Taking Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" as her starting point, Young subjects the essay to feminist scrutiny and critiques its patriarchal ideology of a home in which the women's work of housekeeping helps to objectify women and "keep them in their place." Heidegger, according to Young, understands the human act of dwelling as comprising both cultivating and constructing, but his emphasis throughout the essay is on the latter rather than the former, which involves caring for, cherishing, protecting, and preserving. Women, whose roles are most often tied to cultivating, become a means through which men feel at home. Referencing Luce Irigaray, Young states, "In the patriarchal gender scheme, woman serves as the construction material"[16]—that is, a woman's role is to *be* the home.

Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir, Young furthermore adds a time dimension to feminist theorizing of home. As cultivators of home, women—through their primary maintenance role—are confined to immanence through their cyclical, but unceasing, housework—an activity that is not viewed as future-oriented, or indeed as progress. Young points out that constructing (building), on the other hand, is an activity oriented towards the future, a future that is full of opportunities. This temporal distinction between cultivating in the present and building towards the future—termed "transcendence"—bears close resemblance to the way protracted displacement has been theorized.[17] Brun argues that protracted displacement in this context has often been understood as a separation of immanence and transcendence; people survive and continue their cyclical activities of cultivating as far as they can. However, for many, the future is so uncertain that they do not know how to engage in activities that may help them to invest in the future.[18] For those forcibly displaced, understandings of home are often based on the past; people long for the home they lost, while past experiences of home influence the way home is envisaged in the future.[19] Protracted displacement, then, often leads to the feeling of being stuck in the present.[20] Hyndman and Giles[21] propose that such "stuckness," indicated by legal limbo, encampment, and other securitization strategies that immobilize refugees over the long term, contributes to a "feminization of refugees"—a depiction of displaced people as helpless, passive, and static. We propose that this feminization discourse further associates refugees and their homemaking strategies with stasis and immanence.

Returning now to the gendered divide evident in Heidegger's concept of the dwelling, we apply Young's analysis of home to the circumstances in which forced migrants in protracted displacement find themselves. They—like women cultivating their home—appear to be confined to a maintenance role, nostalgic for their former lives. Eastmond[22] "reminds us that home moves us most powerfully as absence and negation." What may be felt most strongly as absence may be the social relations and practices possible to enact in a familiar "home" environment.[23] This feeling of home as absence may be overpowering, even after many years displacement. However, the understanding of nostalgia as an unproductive yearning for what has been lost need not imply passivity. Dudley,[24] for example, demonstrates that long-term refugees create a feeling of being at home by reconstructing the past home to come to terms with everyday life during displacement. Here, nostalgia is productive, supporting a desire for home in the present.[25]

Iris Marion Young's discussion of feminist everyday perspectives on home—the role of the material in understanding home and homemaking—is a perspective that has not been prominent in forced migration studies.[26] In the articles that follow in this special issue, we respond to this shortcoming by incorporating the material dimensions of home and homemaking into our analyses, while still acknowledging

the more traditional emphasis in forced migration on the idea of home. To understand the relational nature of the material and non-material during displacement,[27] Brun's contribution to this issue, for example, addresses home as the dwelling. She engages with the role of materiality to understand the experience of home, the role of the dwelling—its location, size, and standard—in a process to move from shelter to housing for people in protracted displacement. Trapp's article (this issue) continues this discussion as she analyzes the complex relationship between the Liberian homeland and the route to, and through, America. She shows how Liberian refugees in Ghana build and furnish houses and adopt a lifestyle in Buduburam camp in Ghana representing material features of an imagined social life in America, but that is an intended precondition for an ultimate Liberian homecoming.

Forced migration studies has too often uncritically adopted the policy categories of refugees, internally displaced persons, and other terms as main categories of analysis.[28] Key features of many narratives of forced migration within a sedentary metaphysics of the "national order of things"[29] have included the narrative of home as elsewhere, refugees as out of place, and the close association and inseparable bond between home and homeland. Nurturing such connections between home and forced migration has come as a result of, and contributed to, the fixing of people in place and the notions of limbo to which we return below. As with sedentarist notions of territorial belonging and the view of mobile people as "out of place," proposing an opposition between "home" and migration leads to home becoming a site or a place of fixity, with impermeable boundaries. To understand the relationship between home and movement without creating a dichotomy between migration as movement and home as stasis, we draw on Sara Ahmed's analysis[30] of the tension between home and movement. By complicating this oppositional understanding, Ahmed subverts the idea of migration and its use in theorizing identity as predicated on movement or loss. However, Ahmed does not simply advocate dispensing with any differentiation of home and away, since this suggests that whether one remains in or leaves a place in which one feels at home makes no difference to a person's identity.

While territorialized and fixed notions of home (spatially and temporally) continue to accompany understandings of displacement, scholars of forced migration have also helped to introduce a more fluid and dynamic conception of home by analyzing homemaking practices during displacement. Such studies challenge essentialist notions of home and away.[31] Additionally, transnational and diaspora studies have influenced forced migration scholars to discuss home with an eye to multiple and extraterritorial ways of

belonging. Home may be understood as "a process marked by openness and change,"[32] and consequently we may find that home in forced migration focuses more on the relational and emotional perspectives of home rather than the territorial connections to a home. And, after many years of displacement, neither place of origin nor location of displacement may qualify fully as home.[33] Home, according to Eastmond, is where normal life can be lived; it is a place that can provide economic security, a social context, and a sense of belonging. She shows how, for forced migrants, these qualities may be fulfilled only in the trans-local home, where it is the place of origin and the place of refuge that together represent home.

We propose that theorizing home and forced migration together allows for significant potential to revise our policies and thinking about refuge and home. We recognize that the separation between home and away for people fleeing from conflict is heartbreakingly visible, and that our international mechanisms for protecting people "unable … or unwilling to return" to their place of habitual residence[34] has the effect of politicizing and essentializing the binary. Additionally, for many forced migrants in protracted displacement, trans-local practices may thus be restricted because people are fixed in place by policies and legal statuses that prevent movement and contact between the two homes. Nevertheless, even if people are restricted from moving between different places to construct complete, trans-local homes, they may still feel as though their home exists in multiple locations and may make distinctions between an "everyday home" and what Eastmond[35] terms a "cultural/spiritual" home. Often included, thus, in notions of home for forced migrants are feelings of longing for a different place, and memories of different places that come together in the practices of homemaking at the place of a present dwelling. At the same time, however, we suggest that homemaking at one location—for example, in a refugee camp—may be undertaken without necessarily including that location in a conception of home. Many of the dwellings and locations of protracted displacement are substandard or alien, and their inhabitants may never view them as home. Even if people are provided with more permanent living spaces in these contexts, they may feel "homeless at home,"[36] since their ideal homes cannot be attained.

But home may also emerge in the making, and *where* home is experienced may shift, expand, or shrink as a result of displacement. Korac[37] proposes two principles that further unsettle the binary between home and away and present home as a dynamic and temporal proposition. She first decouples "home" and "homeland" (territorial, nation state) in order to deconstruct refugees as people out of place (see also Capo, this issue). She then charges us to

move beyond the notion of refugees as "constituted by their displacement" to allow us to understand how people create place in a mobile world. In this special issue, we aim to capture an open and dynamic notion of home in protracted displacement by presenting the different dimensions of home for forced migrants, from the material and territorial to the imaginary and symbolic. Now, however, we introduce the notion and challenge of protracted displacement and its associated policies.

### Protracted Displacement in a Globalized World

The refugee and forced migration policy literature candidly describes the situation of protracted displacement has having "no solution in sight."[38] This description indicates an immobilized temporariness in which people "find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile."[39] The term *protracted refugee situation*, or PRS, in the policy literature, initially referred to those populations of forced migrants granted refugee status by the international community but for whom a "durable solution"[40] has yet to be implemented. At the time of UNHCR's creation, a core task was protecting and finding solutions for the people of Europe who had been displaced during the Second World War and who were still displaced in the late 1950s.[41] While even then the UNHCR worried[42] about the long-term displacement of refugees under its care,[43] it managed by the 1960s to provide resettlement quotas for European refugees who could not return or integrate locally—a precedent for addressing the contemporary "durable solutions" approach and a way of reorganizing displaced people back into places. Nevertheless, the other significant forcibly displaced population following the Second World War, the Palestinians, did not have a "place" to return to, for they were casualties of the unsuccessful 1948 UN Partition Plan and ensuing war between Israel and the Arab states.

The registered refugee population of Palestinians, dating back six decades and currently numbering over five million people living in 58 registered camps,[44] is the most entrenched protracted refugee situation, but, notably, circumstances where large[45] populations of co-nationals or co-ethnics have been in protracted situations of displacement are increasing, not decreasing.[46] Nearly two-thirds of the world's refugees are in seemingly never-ending exile, with the average length of these states of "limbo" approaching 20 years.[47] Many more find themselves in towns and cities, often without access to formal legal protection, without assistance and consequently also often with precarious and risky livelihoods. In addition to the very visible phenomenon of large concentrations of displaced populations, such as the IDP camps in Darfur,

Sudan, and Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, there is thus an equally important proportion of this group that is invisible.[48] The majority of the world's protracted refugee situations are located in impoverished countries[49] and appear in Malkki's words as "vast zones of asylum."[50] Malkki argues that "refugee camps are not 'test beds' of global segregations yet to come, but, rather, part and parcel of well-established international technologies of power for the control of space and movement. In those technologies, the refugee camp is 'standard equipment,' along with transit centers, reception centers, holding cells, prisons, labor compounds, ghettoes, and other familiar features of the modern sociopolitical landscape."[51]

The predominant response by the international community to large-scale refugee movements has been strongly criticized as the "warehousing" of human beings.[52] According to this response model, dominating in the 1980s and 1990s, but currently continuing as the practice in many contexts, assistance is based on survival till the displaced populations are able to return—what Horst[53] refers to as "don't die survival." Yet the majority of protracted conflicts do not offer the solution of "returning home" any time soon. The other "solutions" promoted by the international community—the incorporation of non-citizens, ethnic minorities, and others into the locale where they are based (termed "local integration" by the UNHCR), or the wholesale relocation of populations for "resettlement" in countries that offer a meaningful pathway to full membership in the polity (i.e., Australia, Canada, most European countries, and the United States)— are still largely off the table.[54]

While many of the known situations of protracted displacement are associated with encampments for refugees and internally displaced people, there are far more displaced people outside camps, who have produced and dwell in a variety of living spaces. The contributors to this special issue reflect some of this heterogeneity. In refugee camps, people tend to start off in tents and other temporary structures provided by the humanitarian regime, but these abodes are often developed by people themselves into more permanent structures and houses. In other cases, permanent houses based on UNHCR and similar standards are being built for displaced populations, described by Skotte as "tents in concrete,"[55] but then subsequently modified by inhabitants. In the many cases where people do not live in organized settlements, the housing conditions may vary even more. These are often associated with low-standard housing, lack of tenure security as well as social security, and accompanied by fewer possibilities for modifying the domestic spaces and making homes. Fábos (this issue) describes the two-tier urban housing structure in Cairo whereby Egyptians purchase flats most often as a function of marrying and

establishing a new household, while "foreigners" (including refugees and other forced migrants) rent "furnished flats" shared by many people and sometimes located in squatter and other marginal settlements.

Adding to the precariousness of insecure living spaces for those in protracted displacement are policies believed to encourage people's willingness to return—or to be "put back into place." These policies commonly include restrictions to property ownership and limited access to other citizen rights, such as local restrictions to prevent people from becoming too permanently settled in an area. For example, while Egypt and Sudan have signed an agreement[56] allowing citizens from either country freedom of movement, residence, work, and property ownership, Egypt seeks to limit implementation of the agreement to men between the ages of 18 and 49. Egypt has also issued a number of laws regulating, restricting, or banning property ownership by foreign nationals, most recently in 2012 when foreign rights to ownership of land in the Sinai Peninsula were discontinued.[57] As Capo shows in her article in this special issue, the term *durable solutions* needs to be unpacked in the light of current conflict realities and politics of mobility. Considering the tension between various policy regimes' attempts to "fix" people in place, the unintended consequences of policies and the mobile practices that many displaced people pursue in making home during displacement, all contributors to this special issue see the need to understand protracted displacement and the making of home quite differently from the perspectives developed when the refugee convention and subsequent policies were formulated.

It is well established that the political organization of identities into nation-states, and the forced migration of those nations' Others are outcomes of struggles over national identity and a feature of population management through refugee regimes and accompanying immigration, naturalization, and citizenship policies. Inclusion and exclusion in the everyday practices of statecraft influence which types of people are allowed into national spaces, which types of people are kept outside, and on what conditions people are allowed to stay. A range of forced displacements, including persons internally displaced as the result of civil conflicts as well as nation-building (i.e., development-induced forced displacement) can be linked conceptually to the creation and policing of borders and the liminal position of groups of people who fall between categories of population and citizenship management.

### Living in Protracted Displacement: Immobilized Temporariness

"Limbo" has become a common description of protracted displacement and gives the impression of a fixed, locked, and consequently static situation in which people wait for a better life.[58] Protracted displacement for people is often described as existing "betwixt and between" a former home and a new home, a previous social setting and a receiving society, a homeland and a country of refuge. And many displaced people tend to describe their experience using similar binary terms. Yet, in this seemingly static set of circumstances, homemaking nevertheless takes place as people try to recreate familiarity, improve their material conditions, and imagine a better future. The authors in this special issue are concerned with notions of home and the material day-to-day practices that people in displacement pursue to survive and move on, and demonstrate that, even in waiting, people continue to challenge static arrangements, long for and imagine a home located somewhere else, and make home in exile. The overall perspective from the empirical material emerging from the contributions is a departure from the conception of protracted displacement as "limbo." In order to understand the ways in which homemaking practices take place during displacement, we shift towards a vocabulary of liminality[59] that captures the simultaneous processes of marginalization, control, and stasis on the one hand, and transformation and flows on the other. In taking up this vocabulary, we point to the political potential in formulating a dynamic understanding of home, an understanding that contests the policy understanding of protracted displacement as limbo and rather focuses on the ways in which notions of home are formulated and reformulated during displacement.

In this article, the notion of "limbo" and its inherent fixity—geographical and temporal—come under scrutiny. By incorporating movement, transgression, and transformation into the notion of protracted displacement, we propose that the extended temporariness of "home" for forced migrants in protracted situations may be understood not as limbo, but as a form of "liminality"—a concept occasionally used in the literature on refugeeness to help theorize the "place" of refugees and forced migrants, both in geopolitical terms and with regards to notions of social roles and cultural belonging.[60] According to anthropological theorizing, the quality of being in a liminal state—betwixt and between accepted social categories and the norms and expectations linked to those categories—is profoundly threatening to the social order. The usual application of the concept of liminality is in regard to the social rituals that mark transitions between life stages—from adolescence to adulthood, or from an unmarried to a married state, for example. The expectation for those proceeding through rites of passage is that, however difficult the transition may be, there is the promise of movement to another state of being and belonging. The concept of liminality has also been used to help explain why groups out of place in the social order (i.e., people with

mobile or itinerant livelihoods, such as peddlers or musicians) are often treated as having threatening or polluting qualities, since their embodied roles are in a process of uncertainty, transformation, and flux, and powerful social actors are not entirely able to exert control.[61]

Theorists of forced migration who have identified "the refugee" as a liminal category in the nation-state system—most notably Liisa Malkki,[62] whose work has inspired a generation of forced migration scholars—observe how mobile people "out of place" are imbued with similar qualities of dangerousness, including the treatment of refugees as a security threat to borders, refugees as a threat to public order, and refugees as criminal elements. The long-term persistence of forced migrants "out of place" creates an existential threat to the global order. Mortland describes refugee camps as "an international strategy for dealing with the 'fallout,' the 'refuse' of international crises; as such, they mark physically and symbolically the transition of human beings between societies."[63] Hyndman and Giles[64] point out that the particular policies of fixing displaced people in sedentarist metaphysics underscores Malkki's notion of people on the move as a threat. They have eloquently shown how policies that fix people in place create feminized spaces of encampment that maintain protracted situations of displacement rather than contribute to enable people to escape the limbo created materially, discursively, and politically by the refugee regime.

As we have noted, the feminization of encamped refugees further supports "the attribution of certain programs, practices and identities as passive, helpless, static."[65] "Fixing" people in camps and "safe places" reduces the threat that people's temporary status represents. In this context, Kibreab[66] provides several examples of forced migrants in the Greater Horn Region of eastern Africa who have opted out of regulatory processes that accompany refugee policies of the international community, such as the thousands of Eritreans in Sudan who either have left formal refugee camps for cities and provincial towns or eschew them altogether.[67] These individuals, while highly mobile and agentive, are also vulnerable to abuse, detention, and deportation as a result of their "in-between" legal status; because they are neither citizens of their countries of residence nor registered refugees, their conditions of homemaking are precarious and liminal, even though outside the gaze of the international refugee regime. The liminal spaces we study here are located "between vulnerability and agential power," and represent "the ambiguous, grey zone between the inside and outside, the social condition of neither fully excluded nor fully recognized."[68]

Despite the vulnerable legal position and precarious socio-economic and political circumstances of forced migrants in protracted situations, contributors to this special issue demonstrate that, contrary to the static notion of limbo, the work of homemaking at a number of levels does not cease. Shifting our discussion from limbo to liminality indicates a more unsettled relationship between fixity and motion in the experience and practices of protracted displacement. We connect our thinking about people "out of place" to the concept of "mobility" as a way for scholars of forced migration to inquire how homemaking might open up a transformative political space for people in protracted refugee situations. Thinking about mobility helps us to theorize the relationships between movement, people, and places, even when people are unable to move—for example, in protracted refugee circumstances—and to apply these ideas to possibilities for creative engagement with powerful state and humanitarian actors, as well as the quotidian practices of homemaking. Herein lies the dynamic and open understanding of home that was introduced above.

Forced migration studies is beginning to address the tension between fixity and motion prominent in the "new mobilities paradigm."[69] Still, there is little published work that grapples explicitly with the empirical and theoretical intersections. In this special issue, the contributions help to provide an understanding, not of the tension between fixity and motion, but rather of the important relationship and dynamics between them for the experience of protracted displacement and the associated practices of making home that we explore here. Being on the move does not mean that people do not dream of or aim for a more stable life and a fixed material and territorial entity[70] that they can call home. Protracted displacement involves living with an uncertain future in the context of conflict and mobility. Vigh's concept of social navigation[71]—the observation that people are not only "on the move" in multiple ways, but that they must constantly interact with a "moving environment"—connects the notion of mobility to circumstances of insecurity, uncertainty, and volatility. Examining the empirical evidence-based arguments from our authors' research, we suggest that the people in the protracted situations under study are experiencing extraordinary flux even in their immobilized states, and the metaphor of navigating the "moving environment" here is apropos of these dynamic conditions.

The theoretical tools of mobility are applicable to assessing a range of homemaking strategies of people in "immobilized temporariness" at different scales. Our contributors attend to the scalar variations of mobility through analyzing such local creative practices as transforming temporary shelters to places of homely meaning (see Brun, this issue), as well as through looking at transnational practices that connect past and future homemaking imaginaries to present experiences of "managing limbo" (see Trapp, this issue). Ethno-national tropes of belonging have long underpinned international

policies of "return" for refugees, and Capo's article (this issue) allows us to view critically, from the perspective of refugees from former Yugoslavia who were "returned" to their ethnic homelands, the idea of a "durable solution" to the predicament of displacement. Continuing to practise mobile strategies that incorporate pre-war settlements and houses, the homemaking of these forced migrants straddles two territories in two or more countries (Capo, this issue) but does not completely erase feelings of temporariness, of liminality.

The empirical analyses and theoretical observations of our colleagues in this issue help us to get beyond the notion of protracted circumstances of displacement as stasis or "limbo." We incorporate the real concerns for those who are "stuck" in liminal categories, the processes of marginalization that comes with being kept in waiting, and the attendant dilemmas of belonging and practical limitations of current refugee and forced migration policy with an understanding of what Brun[72] terms "agency-in-waiting," the creative work done by forced migrants to get on with the process of homemaking in protracted displacement.

### Constellations of Home

The current political context determines "place" and "emplacement" in such a way as to render large groups of people "out of place" even while "fixed in place," and has given rise to the "no solution in sight" policy limbo of protracted refugee situations. And yet, the lives of these warehoused individuals and families go on, with all of the attendant quotidian acts, social practices, and meaning-making. This very human capacity to navigate uncertainty[73] is wielded even while governments, international agencies, and local administrations treat these situations as "fixed" and their occupants as "in limbo." For immobilized forced migrants, this includes engaging with the concept of home. As our authors demonstrate, many people in situations of protracted displacement will continue to organize their daily lives and think about their futures, even while their abilities to plan appear curtailed, and while their homemaking practices are shaped by hardship and uncertainty. Our authors' research finds that homemaking for refugees and displaced persons is rather like a dialogue that spans place and time, incorporating ideal concepts of home and the homeland, aspirations to return "home," and hopes to achieve a more stable exile by strategizing to go somewhere else or return. We suggest that these multiple concepts exist simultaneously while the people who hold them move among different locations to form a very complex idea of home that we have called "constellations of home."[74] The metaphor of constellations is useful here to demonstrate how human beings turn points of reference into meaningful

patterns, but that the same points may be imagined differently from each site of observation.

Building upon the literature on home and forced migration and the insights from experiences of protracted displacement, we have derived a simplified triadic constellation that may help us to think about the interconnected and multidimensional implications of homemaking in protracted circumstances of displacement. To distinguish between the different strands that make up this constellation, we visually code them as "home," "Home," and "HOME." Beginning with "home," we take this to mean the day-to-day practices that help to create the place of displacement as a particularly significant kind of place.[75] Such practices involve both material and imaginative notions of home and may be improvements or even investments to temporary dwellings (Brun, Trapp, this issue); they include the daily routines that people undertake in these dwellings; and they incorporate the social connections people make in a neighbourhood, a section of a camp or other institutions formed to "take care of" refugees and IDPs. Capo (this issue) shows the importance of re-establishing the everyday for ethnic Croats in order to make newly transnational homes in exile and return as a way of rekindling a sense of security—both physical and economic.[76] Homemaking practices do not necessarily take place in a dwelling: Fábos (this issue) discusses how visiting patterns knit Muslim Arab Sudanese forced migrants together through mobile practices that span significant distances across urban space, while Donà (this issue) challenges the notion of "home" as physical domesticity and shows that displacement may lead to a shift in homemaking practices away from the dwelling and towards non-territorialized settings such as online communities. The feminist observation that women and men imagine domesticity differently and that the labour of homemaking is gendered reminds us that home is also the site of power relations and domestic inequity. The dynamics of displacement we study here, including changes in gendered relations of power, help to show the multiple and often ambivalent ways in which homemaking practices transform notions of home during protracted displacement. Together, the homemaking practices analyzed in this special issue help to bind material and non-material values and experiences of the home. As such, "home" in long-term displacement must also be understood in relation to other points of reference within meaningful constellations for people in circumstances of permanent temporariness.

The second modality in our constellations of home formulation, "Home," represents values, traditions, memories, and subjective feelings of home. Discussions of home and displacement tend to concern an ideal Home, the Home that many displaced people dream of and long for (see, Trapp this

issue). We have shown above that these ideas of home are created by the experiences displaced people have of lost homes, past homes, and their dreams and hopes for future homes. The Home articulated during protracted displacement refers to a more generalized ideal in a particular socio-cultural context and influences domestic practices in temporary dwellings as the authors of this special issue explore. Emerging from the ideal Home are the material standards a dwelling must have for it to be inhabitable; while some minimum standards may be commonly shared across socio-cultural contexts, certain aspects such as what constitutes privacy may vary widely. The ideal Home for forced migrants in protracted situations is then reflected in the dwelling, but is also expressed at different scales. For example, numerous studies on home and diaspora analyze the ways in which nostalgia and longing for the "homeland" nurture an ideal, "idealized," or even invented Home.[77] The contributions to this special issue identify a similar nostalgia for Home that operates concurrently with people's conceptions of the ideal dwelling and of the homeland. This relationship between dwelling and homeland is exemplified by Trapp (this issue) who unpacks the complex relationship for Liberian refugees in Ghana between their Liberian homeland and the United States as a way station to Home through her analysis of camp dwellings that are said to be "already in America." Capo (this issue) furthermore juxtaposes her own ethnographic research on home and homecoming among Croats from Serbia with studies on home and homecoming among Serbs from Croatia and Croats from Bosnia to understand the gap between people's everyday notions of home and the politicized notions of home dominating scholarship in the Balkans.

Finally, grappling with homemaking in protracted displacement requires engaging with the dominant meaning and institutionalization of HOME for the current global order. While we recognize that the notion of "homeland" is highly politicized for forced migrants idealizing their Home, our focus on the modality coded here as HOME refers to the broader political and historical context in which home is understood and experienced not only by displaced people, but also by the perpetrators of nationalist exclusion and violence and the policy-makers addressing protracted displacement through the optic of "durable solutions." It refers to the geopolitics of nation and homeland that contribute to situations of protracted displacement and the ways in which politics of home are necessarily implicated in the causes of displacement. Including HOME in our constellation makes the rift between assumptions about displaced people in a (largely) fixed global order and the fluid conditions of precariousness and unsettledness more visible.

Together with the ideal notion of Home as homeland, HOME requires an understanding of the status assigned to displaced populations in a particular society, the ways in which displaced populations are governed and disciplined by the state, its norms and technologies that privilege official status and sedentarism, and associated politics of inclusion and exclusion. HOME indicates how people conform with, negotiate, challenge, and change the labels assigned to them, and thus, finally, HOME signifies the dynamics of identity formation at community and individual levels that often take place during displacement as a result of the experience of loss of home on the one hand, and the experience of being labelled IDP or refugee on the other hand.

In capturing the dynamic processes of making home in the politically "fixed" circumstances of protracted displacement, the contributions to this special issue recognize that these understandings of home are analytically difficult to separate and are often presented together by forced migrants in the way they make home during displacement. However, the modalities of home, Home, and HOME, while produced simultaneously, mutually influence each other in different ways in the cases presented here. Varying with the context, the points of reference in a constellation of home are given different weight; accordingly, depending on where the centre of gravity lies within the different dimensions of home, the constellation changes from context to context. Making home in long-term displacement is thus given different forms and configurations, depending on the spatial and temporal context. The "constellations of home" that our contributors think through and analyze therefore produce different strategies of homemaking in the liminal circumstances specific to each interrelationship between the three meanings of home represented above.

### Making Home in "Limbo"? A Feminist Proposition

In this introduction we have addressed understandings of how—and why—people in protracted displacement navigate the process of making homes. We have pointed to two fundamental dilemmas in the relationship between home and displacement. First, what tools do we as scholars, practitioners, and forced migrants have to help us understand, theoretically, the relationship between home and movement without resorting to a dichotomy between migration as movement and home as stasis? Second, how can we overcome the policies of stasis and fixity, with their structural manifestation in durable solutions as the bedrock of home— that have played such a strong role in creating the limbo of PRS? Inspired by new thinking in migration studies and feminist studies, our conceptual framework of "constellations of home" demonstrates ways in which the "problematic and fluid nature" of home can be analyzed and theorized[78] in the specific context of displacement, but also more generally in a shifting and changing global context. We

propose that thinking about constellations of home allows for a more holistic exploration of how and where processes of making home in protracted displacement take place. We also assert that a dynamic understanding of home in protracted displacement enables new possibilities for reflecting on homemaking practices during displacement. The contributors analyze (in different contexts) the ways in which particular constellations of home—relationships between home-Home-HOME—produce specific notions of home and specific strategies for making home that challenge perceptions and policies of fixity and limbo and unsettle the dichotomy between stasis and movement.

While contributing to a general debate about home and forced migration, this special issue also challenges the ways in which nation-states and the "inter-national" community employ encampment, minimum standards, and "don't die survival" to address unending displacement—a predicament that has emerged from the problematique of viewing PRS as limbo and forced migrants as out of place. This lens leads states, policy-makers, and humanitarian actors to use essentialist and static notions of home that continue to fix forced migrants in both place and time, depriving them of agency and the opportunities to move on and make homes in displacement. The continued policy use of the term *limbo* to refer to protracted situations of forced migration additionally underscores the gendered geopolitics of forced migration management at the global scale. A feminist approach to the agentive work of making home helps us to unpack the gendered aspects of control inherent in policies that derive from such a static understanding of home. We are proposing a more dynamic understanding of home in this special issue. Here, *making home* is not the same as *homemaking practices*, which is only one dimension of the concept of home as we have identified above. "Making home" refers to the particular ways in which home is constituted in protracted displacement through the dynamic relationship between home-Home-HOME. Making home represents the process through which people try to gain control over their lives and involves negotiating specific understandings of home, particular regimes of control and assistance, and specific locations and material structures.

If our notion of HOME requires new thinking about how the very systems of administering and regulating mobilities are inculcated in the ongoing displacement of people, then a feminist politics of security, border management, and migration addresses some of the gendered assumptions inherent in viewing mobile people as masculinized threats to the social and political order. Similarly, policies in support of exilic nostalgia for an ideal Home often foster exclusive visions of the homeland that recreate—or create anew—heroic narratives of belonging with associated normative gender relations that punish hybridity, dissent, or withdrawal. Exile politics directed at a return to the homeland have often been the purview of the masculine, with sometimes dire results for members of diasporic communities whose alternative visions of an ideal Home are viewed with suspicion or worse.[79] A feminist analysis of Home speaks to the possibilities for more nuanced imaginings of the homeland, and the ideal domicile as an inclusive space. Finally, a feminist analysis of the day-to-day practices and domestic experiences of forced migrants in ongoing circumstances of displacement would be attentive not only to their gendered differences—in access to resources, division of labour, and use of space—but also to the humble creative work of domesticity in the face of politicized neglect. Attending to the specific ways that people live agentive lives in administrative limbo, and to the inseparability of their domestic practices from the oftentimes masculine politics of exile and global responses to displacement, we argue, carves out a crucial space for challenging international systems and structures and their policies of limbo. For the millions of people living in the liminal circumstances of PRS, making home involves and even requires a constellation of efforts.

Home is furthermore an intimate dimension of people's lives, involving private spaces as well as public meaning-making, and requires what Miller[80] terms studying "behind closed doors." Although our conceptualization of home as a multi-scalar and multi-temporal assemblage tempers the artificial binary of the public/private, we nevertheless need to come in close to understand the role of the different dimensions of home. Ethical dilemmas are abundant in this context, and Trapp (this issue) mentions how the line between the status as an outsider and insider is a very narrow distinction when examining how the researcher organizes her own living spaces while conducting fieldwork. Methodologically, much of the research is ethnographic, involving living with people (Trapp, this issue), following people's lives over time (Brun, this issue), accompanying them in their everyday movements/mobilities (Fábos, this issue), as well as joining them in new/non-territorial locations for the production of home (Donà, this issue). Understanding the *making of home* through constellations of home requires locating those ethnographies in a wider context, and the authors in this special issue engage with a range of methods to create this wider understanding of political context.

Our major contribution to the understandings of making home is thus to bring the focus onto the politics of immobilized temporariness for people who nevertheless continue to *think* of home as existing in a range of different places across space and time and *act* within circumscribed geographic, historical, and political contexts to create domestic

spaces. In order to study the making of home during displacement, the contributors have engaged with the constellations of home in various ways: empirically, theoretically and methodologically. In viewing a constellation of stars, the image appears flat, with all of the stars appearing the same distance away. However, were we to come closer to the astral cluster, some stars are discovered to be closer and some more distant. Similarly, for forced migrants reimagining home in protracted displacement, the various nodes of home-Home-HOME may retreat, emerge, or reappear in different configurations over time. It is through an exploration of these processes of making home in immobilized temporariness that the articles to follow extend our understanding of how notions, experiences, and feelings of home are manifested, challenged, and changing, despite the liminality of unending displacement.

*Cathrine Brun, Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology*

*Anita Fábos, Department of International Development, Community, and Environment, Clark University*

**Notes**

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2 Equal authorship

3 Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Midgdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 279.

4 Sara Ahmed, "Home and Away. Narratives of Home and Estrangement," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999): 330–1.

5 See a more extensive discussion by Hazel Easthope, "A Place Called Home," *Housing, Theory and Society* 2, no. 3 (2004): 128–36.

6 Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Marxism Today* June (1991): 24–9; Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994).

7 Cathrine Brun, "Reterritorialising the Link between People and Place in Refugee Studies," *Geografiska Annaler* 83B, no. 1 (2001): 15–25.

8 Easthope, "Place Called Home," 135–6.

9 Katherine Brickell, "'Mapping' and 'Doing' Critical Geographies of Home," *Progress in Human Geography* 36, no. 2 (2012): 225–44; Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home*

(Abingdon: Routledge, 2006); Ann Varley, "A Place Like This? Stories of Dementia, Home, and the Self," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 47–67; Geraldine Pratt, "Geographies of Identity and Difference: Marking Boundaries," in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Phil Sarre (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 151–67; Paul Basu, "Hunting Down Home: Reflections on Homeland and the Search for Identity in the Scottish diaspora," in *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place*, ed. B. Bender and M. Winer (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 333–48; Jennifer Hyndman, ed., "Authors Meet Critiques. Review and Responses. Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling. Home," *Social and Cultural Geographies* 9, no. 5 (2008): 557–72.

10 Blunt and Dowling, *Home.*

11 Ibid., 2.

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13 Maria Kaika, "Interrogating the Geographies of the Familiar: Domesticating Nature and Constructing the Autonomy of the Modern Home," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 2 (2004): 265–86.

14 Douglas Porteous and Sandra E. Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

15 Iris Marion Young, "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," in *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*, ed. Iris Marion Young (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 7.

16 Ibid., 129.

17 See Brun, this issue; Cathrine Brun, "Active Waiting and Changing Hopes: Toward a Time Perspective on Protracted Displacement," in "Conflict, Mobility and Uncertainty," ed. C. Horst and K. Grabska, special issue, *Social Analysis* 59, no. 1 (2015): 19–37.

18 Brun, "Active Waiting and Changing Hopes."

19 See, for example, Peter Kabachnik, Joanna Regulska, and Beth Mitchneck, "Where and When Is Home? The Double Displacement of Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 3 (2010): 315–36.

20 Brun, "Active Waiting and Changing Hopes."

21 Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles. "Waiting for What? The Feminization of Asylum in Protracted Situations," *Gender, Place and Culture* 18, no. 3 (2011): 361–79.

22 Marita Eastmond, "Transnational Returns and Reconstruction in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina," *International Migration* 44, no. 3 (2006): 141–66, cited in Maja Korac, *Remaking Home: Reconstructing Life, Place and Identity in Rome and Amsterdam* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 28.

23 Tania Kaiser, "Social and Ritual Activity in and out of Place: The 'Negotiation of Locality' in a Sudanese Refugee Settlement," *Mobilities* 3, no. 3 (2008): 375–95.

24 Sandra Dudley, "Feeling at Home: Producing and Consuming Things in Karenni Refugee Camps on the Thai-Burma Border," *Population, Space and Place* 17, no. 6 (2011): 743.

25  Alison Blunt, "Collective Memory and Productive Nostalgia: Anglo-Indian Homemaking at McCluskieganj," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 21 (2003): 717–38.

26  Dudley, "Feeling at Home."

27  Kaiser, "Social and Ritual Activity."

28  See especially Oliver Bakewell, "Research beyond the Categories: The Importance of Policy Irrelevant Research into Forced Migration," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 4 (2008): 432–53; and Cathrine Brun, "Hospitality: Becoming 'IDPs' and 'Hosts' in Protracted Displacement," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 3 (2010): 337–55.

29  Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24–44.

30  Ahmed, "Home and Away."

31  Laura Hammond, *This Place Will Become Home: Refugee Repatriation to Ethiopia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Eastmond, "Transnational Returns"; Korac, *Remaking Home*; Stefansson, "Homes in the Making: Property Restitution, Refugee Return, and Senses of Belonging in a Post-war Bosnian Town," *International Migration* 44, no. 3 (2006): 115–39; Steve Jansen and Staffan Löfving, *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

32  Korac, *Remaking Home*, 25.

33  Eastmond, "Transnational Returns."

34  1951 Geneva Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1.

35  Eastmond, "Transnational Returns."

36  Katy Bennett, "Homeless at Home in East Durham," *Antipode* 43, no. 4 (2011): 960–85.

37  Korac, *Remaking Home*, 25.

38  Jeff Crisp, "No Solution in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa." Working Paper 68 (San Diego: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, 2002).

39  UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations: The Search for Practical Solutions," in *The State of the World's Refugees: Human Displacement in the New Millennium*, ed. Nada Merheb and Sean Loughna (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 106.

40  This policy term entered into usage in the 1970s and coincided with the shift of the majority of the world's refugees to non-European settings. It sets out three "solutions," in order of preference to the problem of people out of place: repatriation, local integration, and resettlement in a third country.

41  James Milner and Gil Loescher, "Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion." Forced migration policy briefing 6 (2011).

42  High Commissioner Gerrit van Heuvan Goedhart called the remaining camps "black spots on the map of Europe" that should "burn holes in the consciences of all those privileged to live in better conditions." Ibid., 75.

43  UNHCR. *The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 105.

44  United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, "Palestine Refugees," http://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees.

45  The UNHCR has arbitrarily used the number 25,000, but this figure is gone in the 2012 iteration of the definition of PRS (thank you to Jennifer Hyndman for this observation).

46  U.S. Department of State, "Protracted Refugee Situations," http://www.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/issues/protracted/index.htm.

47  Milner and Loescher, "Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations."

48  For a discussion of such invisibility, see Gaim Kibreab, "Invisible Integration in the Greater Horn Region," in *Regional Integration, Identity and Citizenship in the Greater Horn of Africa*, Eastern Africa Series, ed. Kidane Mengisteab and Redie Bereketeab, 69–100 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2012); Tara Polzer and Laura Hammond, "Editorial Introduction: Invisible Displacement," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 4 (2008): 417–31.

49  UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations."

50  Liisa H. Malkki, "Mass Displacement and Globalized 'Problems of Organization,'" *Ethnology* 3, no. 3 (2002): 355.

51  Ibid.

52  Merrill Smith, "Warehousing Refugees: A Denial of Rights, a Waste of Humanity," in *World Refugee Survey*, 38–56 (Washington, DC: United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2004).

53  Cindy Horst, "Globalization of Protracted Refugee Situations: Kenya Case Study Fieldwork Report," IASFM Meetings, Cairo, January 2008, cited in Hyndman and Giles, "Waiting for What?," 362.

54  Exceptions may be found in the large U.S. resettlement program for 60,000 of the 107,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal since 1992; the ongoing project to close the camps in Nepal includes offers from Australia, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Denmark, and the United Kingdom to resettle some of the refugees. UNHCR 2010, "A Fresh Start: Refugees from Bhutan Arrive in the UK," 9 August 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/4c6026059.html. Another exception may be the naturalization of 17,000 Burundians in Tanzania, which continues at the time of writing. See UNHCR, *State of the World's Refugees*.

55  Hans Skotte, "Tents in Concrete: What Internationally Funded Housing Does to Support Recovery in Areas Affected by War; The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2004).

56  "The Four Freedom Agreement guarantees to citizens from the two countries freedom of movement and residence, right to work and own property. It was signed in Cairo by former president Hosni Mubarak and Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir on 18 January 2004." "Sudan-Egypt Relations Hit Speed Bump over Four Freedoms Accord," *Sudan Tribune*, 24 February 2013.

57 Karkabi notes that a recent decree (no. 14, 2012) caused panic. In the sections addressing the Sinai Peninsula specifically, the decree states that all Egyptian citizens holding a second foreign nationality or those who are descendants of at least one non-Egyptian parent, including all non-Egyptian citizens, must sell their rights to property (private or commercial) within six months.

58 Deirdre Conlon, "Waiting: Feminist Perspectives on the Spacings/Timings of Migrant (Im)Mobility," *Gender, Place and Culture* 18, no. 3 (2011): 353–60; Alison Mountz, "Where Asylum-Seekers Wait: Feminist Counter Topographies of Sites between States," *Gender, Place and Culture* 18, no. 3 (2011): 381–99.

59 Turner has been critiqued for his structuralist notions of society, and status systems as characterized by binary oppositions. His theorization of liminality as dialectical and society as constantly in transition nevertheless anticipates this thinking:

> From all this I infer that, for individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, communitas and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality. The passage from lower to higher status is through a limbo of statuslessness. In such a process, the opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable. Furthermore, since any concrete tribal society is made up of multiple personae, groups, and categories, each of which has its own developmental cycle, at a given moment many incumbencies of fixed positions coexist with many passages between positions. In other words, each individual's life experience contains alternating exposure to structure and communitas, and to states and transitions. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 97

60 Marita Eastmond, "Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 248–64; Barbara Harrell-Bond, "The Experience of Refugees as Recipients of Aid," in *Refugees: Perspectives on the Experience of Forced Migration*, ed. Alistair Ager, 136–68 (New York: Cassell, 1999); Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Korac, *Remaking Home*.

61 See also Tim Cresswell, *In Place / Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996).

62 Malkki, *Purity and Exile*.

63 Carol A. Mortland, "Transforming Refugees in Refugee Camps," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 16, nos. 3/4 (1987): 375.

64 Hyndman and Giles, "Waiting for What?"

65 Ibid., 362.

66 Kibreab, "Invisible Integration."

67 Ibid.

68 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 40.

69 Tim Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 1 (2010): 17–31; Nick Gill, Javier Caletrio, and Victoria Mason, "Introduction: Mobilities and Forced Migration," *Mobilities* 6, no. 3 (2011): 301–16; Hyndman and Giles, "Waiting for What?"

70 Ann Varley, "A Place like This? Stories of Dementia, Home, and the Self," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 47–67.

71 Henrik Vigh, "Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation," *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 4 (2010): 419–38.

72 Brun, "Active Waiting and Changing Hopes."

73 Henrik Vigh, "Wayward Migration: On Imagined Futures and Technological Voids," *Ethnos* 74, no. 1 (2009): 91–109.

74 We borrow the notion of "constellations" from Tim Cresswell, who talks about constellations of mobility "as a way of accounting for historical senses of movement that is attentive to movement, represented meaning, and practice and the ways in which these are interrelated" ("Towards a Politics of Mobility," 26).

75 Easthope, "Place Called Home."

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77 M. Agosin, "I Invented a Country," in *Women in Exile*, ed. Mahnaz Afkhami, 140–9 (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1994); Desiré Kazadi Wa Kabwe and Aurelia Segatti, "Paradoxical Expressions of a Return to the Homeland: Music and Literature among the Congolese (Zairean) Diaspora," in *New African Diasporas*, ed. Khalid Koser, 124–39 (London: Routledge, 2003); Cameron Macauliffe, "A Home Far Away? Religious Identity and Transnational Relations in the Iranian Diaspora," *Global Networks* 7, no. 3 (2007): 307–27.

78 Victor Buchli, Alison Clarke, and Dell Upton, "Editorial," *Home Cultures* 1, no. 1 (2004): 3.

79 See Stef Jansen, "Homeless at Home: Narrations of Post-Yugoslav Identities," in *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*, ed. Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, 85–109 (Oxford: Berg, 1998); Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Juliane Hammer, *Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

80 Daniel Miller, "Behind Closed Doors," in *Home Possessions: Material Culture behind Closed Doors*, ed. D. Miller, 1–19 (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

# "Durable Solutions," Transnationalism, and Homemaking among Croatian and Bosnian Former Refugees

Jasna Čapo

## Abstract

*This article proposes that the UNHCR-supported "durable solution" programs for former refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Croatia were at odds with the actual exilic experiences of former refugees. It introduces homemaking as an essential aspect of a successful durable solution and proposes supplementing the usual ethnopoliticized understandings of home in the specific context with analyses of the process of homemaking at different scales—house (dwelling), community (the wider space of settlement containing natural, cultural, social, and economic aspects) and nation. The article also argues that repatriation and local integration in the country of first asylum—two allegedly distinct and opposite solutions to refugee crises—should be viewed as intertwined processes within a broader transnational context. It is concluded that their combination brought a durable solution to refugee predicaments in the specific case.*

## Résumé

*Cet article propose que les programmes de « solutions durables » soutenus par le HCR pour les anciens réfugiés originaires de la Bosnie-Herzégovine et de la Croatie ne s'accordaient pas aux expériences vécues de ces réfugiés. Il introduit la notion d'établissement de domicile comme un élément essentiel d'une solution qui puisse réussir et propose de supplémenter les conceptions ethnopoliticisées habituelles concernant l'idée d'un domicile que l'on trouve dans ce contexte particulier avec des analyses du processus d'établir un domicile sur des échelles variées, notamment celle du domicile en soi (lieu d'habitation), celle de la communauté plus large dans laquelle l'installation a lieu, contenant des éléments naturels, culturels, sociaux et économiques, et celle de la nation. L'article soutient aussi que le rapatriement et l'intégration locale dans le pays de premier asile, deux solutions aux crises de réfugiés qui ont été conçues comme distinctes et en opposition, devraient être considérées comme des processus complémentaires et interdépendants dans un contexte transnational plus général. Pour conclure, l'article avance que leur application simultanée avait apporté une solution durable à des problématiques de réfugiés dans le cas particulier dont il est question.*

## Introduction

"The renovation of a house does not in itself make a home." This sentiment was shared by a young Bosniac participant in a roundtable on homemaking and integration in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, held in Sarajevo in March 2013 with representatives on all sides of the ethnic divide. The man, who had returned to the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) described "a permanent feeling of insecurity" that prevents him from regaining the feeling of home in his hometown. His insecurity stems from the lack of Bosniac participation in the political process and administration of the Serb Republic, and the lack of memorialization of war crimes committed against the Bosniacs.

Another man, himself a Serb who had stayed in Sarajevo during the Serbian siege, voiced a similar opinion and, at the same time, a grievance: the "four walls" of his house were not sufficient to generate a home-like feeling; like the Bosniac participant, he asserted that, in order to (re)integrate, one must feel at home in "the wider area," but the streets and neighbourhoods, now replete with the names of Bosniac historical heroes, are not conducive to such a feeling among the city's Serbian population.

These two speakers at the Sarajevo roundtable, although with different backgrounds, geographical origins in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and war experiences, equated home and home-like feeling not only with their immediate dwelling, but with wider scales of social and geographic space surrounding it. For them, home also extends from the street, neighbourhood, and local community to the encompassing political structure, the state, and, in particular, the nation. When speaking about home, they easily and naturally slipped from reference to the house as *home* to the idea of home as *national homeland* and claimed that they could not restore the feeling of security and familiarity—that is, the feeling of being at home—in an ethno-national polity where they are a minority. These examples voice an ethno-nationalized and politicized idea of home, in which "home" becomes conflated with the national homeland. They exemplify the framework of thought that stresses the utmost relevance of ethno-nationality and ethno-politics for successful return and reintegration of refugees. That ethnicized discourse of home is common to most accounts dealing with the post-Yugoslav space in the context of "durable solutions" that UNHCR implemented in refugee crises in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The article challenges this presumed link between an understanding of home as nation and the evaluation of the effects of durable solutions in the particular context, by arguing that a more encompassing notion of homemaking is needed to evaluate a durable solution as successful.

In the past twenty years, voluntary repatriation has been given precedence over two other durable solutions devised by UNHCR to manage refugees, namely, local integration in the country of asylum and resettlement to third countries. It has been privileged by both international stakeholders and national states.[1] This has a political background related to the disappearance of the Cold War era but also a grounding in the "metaphysics of sedentarism."[2] In the post-Yugoslav context, repatriation had an additional rationale—it was aimed at reversing "ethnic unmixing" and recreating ethnically mixed areas as they existed in pre-war times.[3] Most commonly, then, repatriation took the form of "minority return." The term is used to describe persons returning to areas not or no longer controlled by their ethno-national

group. Stipulated as a prerequisite for post-conflict reconciliation, minority return was promoted by international aid agencies and foreign donors. Local integration—or settlement of refugees in the areas where they fled into exile (in this case, usually in the country in which their ethnicity was in the majority)—was, in contrast, minimally backed by these agencies, even while people engaged in it and some countries of exile encouraged it. I argue that both of these "solutions" resulted in a period of more or less protracted displacement and that neither brought a truly "durable solution" to the refugees' predicaments, because neither created the foundations necessary for the refugees to feel at home. Empirical data show that home was not more easily reconstructed within the scheme of local integration among refugees' co-nationals than in the place of origin within the scheme of refugee repatriation (in this context, minority return).

Furthermore, in this article I question the supposed mutual exclusivity of repatriation and local integration and critique the preference given to repatriation over local integration in the post-Yugoslav space. I argue that instead of dwelling on separate states' contexts and supposedly distinct solutions, international actors should have adopted a transnational approach to the management of refugees. This approach could have elucidated *transmutations* and *combinations* of repatriation and local integration across state borders. In addition, resettlement (secondary movements within the country of repatriation or to third countries) could have been employed as a third option for resolving the refugee crisis. Finally, I argue that, on the basis of empirical research, a combination of these two or three solutions, involving the countries of origin, exile, and third countries, seems to have been economically a most viable outcome of durable homemaking by refugees in the area.

In this respect, the article acknowledges and brings into the picture the transnational dimension of refugee mobilities. It gives support to Van Hear's thesis that formation of a transnational social field in refugee diaspora is an "enduring solution" to the condition of displacement.[4] The article thus combines forced migration (refugee) issues with insights provided by transnational migration studies. In the specific context that it scrutinizes, it relies on studies that have analyzed repatriation in the post-Yugoslav space as an "open-ended process" with transnational dimensions rather than a definitive closure of the refugee cycle.[5] I theorize open-endedness within the transnational framework of analysis. Researchers have conceptualized transnationalism in different ways, including a variety of phenomena under the notion.[6] Relevant for this article is the understanding of transnationalism as the multiplicity of involvements that migrants sustain in two or more societies, thus creating

"transnational social spaces" that go beyond geographic, political, and cultural boundaries.[7] By their actions, decisions, concerns, and identifications within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously, migrants create a single arena of social action.

The article argues that in this context of dislocation and protracted refugee situations, people managed to create a sense of home in the trans-local and transnational space. I propose an understanding of refugee integration that captures the notion of home as constituted and negotiated, and not given and fixed, as a processual and evolving aspect of becoming emplaced in a new environment and not as essentialized and naturalized attachment to the house and/or place/territory of origin.[8] In this approach, then, home is analyzed as a practice (homemaking) that evolves. The analytical framework encompasses multiple scales of homemaking simultaneously—house (dwelling), community (town/village), nation. The scaling of home takes its cue from David Morley's argument that "the extent of space in which a person may feel at home varies—from the space of a house to that of a street, a neighborhood, whole country,"[9] and Ulf Hannerz's distinction between homemaking at the level of dwelling, of town/village, and of the nation, polity, and/or society.[10] Rather than assuming that home equals just a dwelling and that a successful/durable solution results from reclaiming the pre-war dwelling (as in minority return schemes) or that home is "naturally" regained by settling in the space controlled by one's nation (as in local integration among co-nationals and the examples quoted at the beginning of the article), my analysis tries to capture people's own meanings of home and how they resist and go beyond policy-driven and ethno-politicized understandings. Empirically, the intermediate scale of homemaking—located between house and nation—appears to have been the most difficult to achieve. At the same time, an enduring home appears to have been created transnationally.

The article is an analysis of protracted refugee situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Displacement contexts and solutions deployed in these Yugoslav successor states vary widely from the situation in other displacement contexts in Europe and beyond, insofar as in most instances of displacement, people sought refuge among their co-nationals in another state, i.e. in the country dominated by their national group. For example, Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia fled to Croatia, Serbs from Croatia fled to Serbia or to Serbian-dominated areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bosniacs relocated to Bosniac-dominated areas within Bosnia and Herzegovina. These displacements led either to minority return (repatriation) or to local integration in the country of asylum, which happens also to be the displaced persons' "national homeland." The regional

specificity of displacements and, as a consequence, also of repatriation and local integration schemes warrants analysis. I contend that the evaluation of displacements and "durable solutions" across the state borders is a necessary transnational context, not only for understanding refugee agency in the area, but also for critically evaluating international solutions and understanding the protracted precarity of refugees' livelihoods.

Within the proposed framework, I aim to analyze a number of studies on displacement and "durable solutions" produced by other researchers of the area. My own research data about a case of local integration in the country of first asylum inform this analysis, directly or indirectly. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted among Croatian refugees from Serbia several years after they arrived in Croatia, in the mid-1990s, and almost twenty years later, in the late 2000s. The first phase of research used participant observation and informal and formal meetings and interviews with mostly middle-aged and elderly refugees as well as with the local population among whom they settled in a locality in northern Croatia.[11] The follow-up was done in 2009–11, by engaging with some of the same interview partners as ten or more years ago and by introducing some new ones, in Zagreb and elsewhere in Croatia.[12]

The article is divided as follows: after a brief presentation of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the rise of successor nation-states, I describe complex population displacements triggered by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the controversies surrounding the two solutions to refugee crises: repatriation, which, in the form of minority return, was the focus of international actors such as UNHCR, and local integration in the country of first asylum (and also the "national homeland"), which was practised by refugees without international support. I then show how both solutions resulted in protracted displacement, since refugees developed ambivalent feelings of "home" under either scenario. This finding is used to critique ethnicized explanations of the alleged failure of minority returns. The next section discusses how refugees utilized repatriation and local integration schemes in order to arrive at viable solutions to their predicaments. On the basis of these insights, I critique the assumed exclusivity of repatriation and local integration in refugee management. In the final section, before a summary of findings, I pick up the argument that homemaking should not be evaluated in terms of ethno-politics only and discuss different scales at which home was created among former refugees.

### Background and Context

The multinational Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (founded in 1943) was dismantled in 1992 following the

wars that raged in the territories of its constituent republics, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The duration of the wars extended well beyond the disappearance of the socialist Yugoslavia and the creation of independent successor states that emerged during the 1990s.[13] In Croatia, the main brunt of fighting between the Croatian army and rebel Croatian Serbs, backed by the Yugoslav national army, was over in 1992. However, one-third of the Croatian territory was occupied by the Serbs and remained exempt from Croatian state control until 1995 and 1998. The war in multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was at different periods fought in various constellations of the three main actors (Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs), ended in 1995. The new state was consolidated by the Dayton Peace Agreement, which essentially institutionalized the ethnic divisions by dividing the country into two entities: Republika Srpska (the Serb Republic) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first is dominated today by Serbs, the second by Bosniacs and Bosnian Croats.

The wars provoked unprecedented refugee crises that affected the wider region. Very briefly and without going into detail, I shall mention some of them. Following the occupation of its territories, Croatia had huge numbers of internally displaced persons as well as refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, both Croats and Bosniacs; after their liberation, internally displaced Croats could return to their homes, but Serbs fled from these same areas and found refuge in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina produced much larger numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons among all three nations in the country: Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs. Croats and Serbs went into exile in their nearby "national homelands" (Croatia and Serbia), but Bosniacs could either remain internally displaced or seek refuge in third countries (and on a temporary basis also in Croatia). With the cessation of enmities, refugees started coming back to their pre-war areas. The specific nature of the displacements and repatriations, and how they are linked to the decisions to remain in the country of first asylum, will be discussed on the following pages.

### Displacements and Their Controversial Reversal

It is generally concluded that the displacement of "ethnic Others" was "a strategic parameter in the 1992–1995 war" in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[14] Across Yugoslavia, people were forced into displacement by threats, the spread of fear, killings and similar deeds, because of being identified as a certain ethnic/national group. Many displacements were individual acts in search of security that eventually triggered displacement of entire villages and regions. Such was the case, according to my research, of the Croatian inhabitants of northern Serbia who relocated to Croatia.[15] Nationalist elites sometimes orchestrated displacement and instrumentalized people for their nationalistic politics, as when they helped resettle Croats from Kosovo to Croatia,[16] issued an order to the Serbian civilian population to leave their settlements and withdraw from Croatia together with the defeated Serbian rebel army,[17] and called upon displaced Bosnian Croats to settle abandoned Serbian property in Croatia.[18] In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the resettlement of Bosnian Croats into the western part of the country or, in the aftermath of the war, the induced exodus to territories under Serbian control by Bosnian Serbs from Sarajevo suburbs,[19] also fall into this category.

As mentioned, the politics and ideology of repatriation have underlain efforts of international organizations and nation-states to encourage and mediate the return of refugees to their original homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, at the expense of implementing other solutions, including local integration and resettlement to third countries. Repatriation has meant mostly encouraging "minority return," i.e., repatriation to areas/states that were governed by another ethno-national group. Minority return has emerged as a moral argument, a political "righting of wrongs" committed by the displacement of "ethnic Others." Therefore, it was designed not only to reverse displacement, but to reverse ethnic homogenization as its consequence. Thus it became inseparable from the notions of post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation, and peace process in the area.[20] For the same reason, local integration in a place of exile—which implied durable settlement of displaced persons among their nationals—has been downplayed and rendered "taboo" by international stakeholders, because backing it would have sealed ethnic unmixing triggered by the war.[21]

Repatriation was to be ensured by property restitution, which was enshrined in the Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement and made obligatory for all signing parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[22] Thus the right to return to the former war areas has not become just the right to return to the country of origin, but to return to the areas of origin via restitution of abandoned, and in the meantime also partly or entirely destroyed, property. Similar institutional provisions were made in Croatia, though much later.[23]

The scale of minority returns in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, measured by the figures of returned property, was impressive—nearly half a million minority returns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and about 130,000 minority returns in Croatia.[24] These figures are ostensibly grounds for the international community to positively evaluate their achievements.[25] However, these statistics need some qualification. Researchers have pointed out that only about 38 per cent of registered minority returnees reside permanently in Croatia.[26] In the Serb Republic, that number hovered around

42 per cent in 2003.[27] Clearly, property restitution, which to this day has been almost fully effected in both countries, was not followed by the return of people, and therefore cannot be used as a proxy for the number of returnees and the "success" of minority return schemes.

Rather than returning definitively, people have engaged in degrees of return, ranging from occasional stays overnight to permanent return. Stef Jansen, who has systematically been unravelling the unexpected outcomes of repatriation schemes in Bosnia and Herzegovina for more than a decade,[28] has discovered other interesting facts hidden behind the statistics: that half of Bosniac repatriates were actually "majority repatriates," and that many Bosniac returnees (who would have become minority returnees had they indeed returned to their homes of origin after reclaiming property, as expected by the Dayton Peace Agreement) ended up relocating within Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to settle among their nationals.[29] In other words, what was organized as a minority return ended up in secondary migration within Bosnia and Herzegovina and became "majority return."

Thus, instead of reversing one of the consequences of the war—ethnic unmixing—repatriation schemes inadvertently produced largely the opposite effect of what was expected and confirmed ethnic homogenization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and less so in Croatia. It is ironic—and at the same time hypocritical—that the Dayton Peace Agreement, enforced by international actors on Bosnia and Herzegovina, institutionally legitimized military conquests and ethnic divisions by partitioning the country into two constituent entities based on the control of the dominant ethno-national group. This process ran parallel to efforts of the very same international actors to reverse the effects of ethnic unmixing by prioritizing minority return and ignoring local integration.[30] The consequence of this "schizophrenic" situation[31] was that political structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina—as well as in Croatia several years after the war—were opposing minority return and stimulating local integration; i.e., they were acting in exactly the reverse of international efforts.

Even though it was left out of international consideration as a "durable solution," local integration in the areas of exile—which implied settling among co-nationals—was widespread. In spite of international directives and money put towards minority return, local processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were actively consolidating ethnically unmixed areas. As already mentioned, this was achieved in Bosnia and Herzegovina by majority returnees but also by those minority returnees, who, after having reclaimed their property in the pre-war locations, remigrated to the entity governed by their national majority.

Croatia, which witnessed significant minority returns of exiled Serbs, was also the arena of exile and integration of a large number of Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina (who subsequently also reclaimed their property in Bosnia and Herzegovina) as well as some numerically smaller Croatian groups from Serbia. In other words, ethnic homogenization in post-Yugoslav successor states was strengthened as a result of several local processes and defiance of international political and policy decisions: remaining in the country of first asylum, majority return and minority return followed by secondary displacement.

Both returnees and those who chose local integration in the country of first asylum had difficulties in making a home, the first in the areas of origin, the second in their alleged national homeland. The next section sets out the experiences of home among refugees in both situations.

### Experiences of "Home"

Studies of returnee experiences in Bosnia and Herzegovina have deconstructed and de-essentialized the idea of "home," as the original place of "natural" belonging to which one has to return to retrieve the feeling of being "at home." Researchers speak of negotiations of home rather than of natural reinsertion in the society;[32] of ambivalent homecomings;[33] of hesitant returnees[34] and they challenge the idea that returnees can experience their homes of origin as "homes" in the light of their radical transformations.[35]

In one way or another, researchers have called for a need to consider broader socio-political aspects in securing and evaluating the "success" of return processes in the area. They have analyzed belonging and attachment to places as contingent on wider social and historical processes through which people "lay claim to a place and call it home."[36] Jansen and Löfving[37] have underlined the necessity of understanding the context of economic and political transformations as they intersect with changes in individual and social trajectories of refugees.[38] Stefansson has criticized the "de-politicized" understanding of homes by international agencies and policy-makers—that is, their idea that a person just needs to be given his house back in order to re-establish himself at "home"—and has argued that the project of property restitution enshrined in the Dayton Peace Agreement was unsuccessful because it was reduced to "small home politics" at the expense of taking into account the wider context of return, or "big home politics."[39] The author claimed that a "full sense of home" can be recreated only when there develops a "positive connection between the house—the 'small home' and 'its social surroundings'—or the 'big home.'"[40]

These arguments reiterate the opinion voiced by the participants in the roundtable mentioned at the beginning of

the article. However, I challenge this ethnicized explanation of minority returnees' failure to regain home. If it were valid, should we not assume that the home was more easily constructed under the scheme of local integration in the country of asylum, for the reason that refugees integrated among their nationals, in their "big home"?

The answer to that question is not straightforward. My research into the integration of Croats from Serbia in Croatia confirms this. The integration of Bosnian Croats in Croatia and that of the Serbs in the Serb Republic offer equally illuminating case studies of the problem. Bosnian Croats fled their pre-war homes in Bosnia between 1992 and 1996 and chose Croatia, their presumed "ethnic homeland" as the country of exile, in which the majority stayed, even after having repossessed their property in the abandoned localities of origin in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 2000s. They were given Croatian citizenship soon upon arrival, which paved the way for their local integration, but at the same time excluded them from international aid, since with the conferral of citizenship they fell out of the category of "refugee." However, their lives continued in limbo for years to come.

Unfortunate decisions by the Croatian state contributed to their dilemma. It allowed them to settle in the exiled Serbs' private property,[41] that Bosnian Croats, themselves destitute displaced persons, did not hesitate to occupy. This turned them from victims into a sort of war profiteers, which isolated them even further from international aid but also from the local population. The density of their settlement and their occupation of Serbian property not only earned them negative attitudes from the returnee Serbian population—which was forced to wait for the Bosnian Croats to vacate their houses—but also from the local Croatian population who, in addition, resented their alleged resourcefulness and privileges given by the state.[42] They encountered exclusion from the locals precisely when they were in a difficult situation of protracted waiting for a solution to their housing problem. Their housing uncertainty lasted some five to seven years after settlement and supposed "local integration" in Croatia.[43] Also, they were negatively stereotyped by the local Croats as a "less civilized" people arriving from Bosnia, especially if they were coming from lower socioeconomic circumstances and less educated backgrounds.[44] Insecure housing, non-existent jobs in the marginal areas of settlement, failure to be recognized by the locals as the *we* group, etc., all contributed to liminality in which they lived for years without developing a feeling of belonging and home.

The difficulties encountered by Bosnian Croats in Croatia have been similar to those of Serbs who, after repatriating in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, embarked on a second migration to the other entity, the Serb Republic. When they are compared to minority Bosniac returnees in the Serb Republic, it appears that it might well be the Serbian secondary migrants who were in a more precarious socio-economic situation and encountered more hurdles in the process of integration in the Serb Republic than the minority Bosniac returnees.[45] This is a bold and unexpected statement, especially when viewed from the dominant perspective of ethnicized explanations of refugee solutions in the former Yugoslav space.

On the basis of these insights, I contend that the settlement among one's own national group does not decisively ease homemaking and the integration of refugees in the receiving society. Very much like minority returnees, they do not integrate unambivalently in their new settlements, in spite of the fact that their settlement occurs in their "national homeland."[46] While minority returnees cannot simply regain lost homes because they come back to what are radically transformed surroundings (destroyed property, economic problems, changes in politics, etc.), those integrating in the country of asylum, even though it is controlled by their nationals, have come to completely new surroundings, in which their predicaments might be worse than those of returnees. Both share, in one way or another, an experience that can better be described as that of an *immigrant* rather than a "naturalized" returnee (due to the recovery of "original" home) or ethnic settler (due to the recovery of "national homeland") experience.[47] If we are to understand the most important dimensions of home and homemaking in the process of attaining a successful durable solution, we need to look at economic viability as the main feature of durability and take into account different scales at which refugees experienced homemaking: house, community, nation. The two following sections discuss this point.

### Ensuring Viable Livelihoods

As has been mentioned, repatriation in many cases set in motion a second displacement within Bosnia and Herzegovina. This did not mean that displaced persons, who became minority returnees and later resettled internally, severed bonds with any of the places in which they lived at some point. In simpler scenarios, a Serb refugee returning to Croatia did not sever ties with the settlement of exile in Serbia and a Bosnian Croat integrated in Croatia but also reclaimed property in the pre-war place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In all cases, contacts between these places was kept on a regular or irregular basis. These forms of "open-ended return" led to trans-local (within Bosnia and Herzegovina)[48] and transnational (across international borders) families and economies and to circular migration between the areas.

These developments challenge established understandings of "durable solutions" to refugee crises, as distinct and

mutually exclusive forms. They point out that the boundary between return and local integration can be fluid, and that even with the firm intention and orchestrated international political and donors' support, as well as monitored direction of funding, repatriation can transmute into or be combined with local integration in country of first asylum. They can be complementary and interdependent processes: in order to be able to enact a second migration within Bosnia and Herzegovina, a person had first to secure property restitution in the area of origin via minority return schemes, and then, with its sale or exchange, could ensure housing elsewhere, in the entity controlled by her or his ethnic group. This is exactly what Croatian refugees from Serbia were doing in the first place: when as an ethnic minority they felt threatened in Serbia and decided to leave, they managed their local integration in the country of asylum by negotiating property exchange with the Serbian population in Croatia.[49] It took Bosniac and Serbian refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina several years, maybe even a decade, to achieve the same result. In other words, they spent a protracted period of insecurity and liminality until they could ensure some stability for their families and themselves. While the above scenario is specific to the area under analysis, the one in which repatriation is combined with local integration and possibly also with resettlement to third countries is more common and attuned to the contemporary transnational moment.[50]

I argue that such transnational/trans-local arrangements were a strategy deployed by refugees to ensure sustainable livelihoods.[51] They have spent protracted periods—ten or more years—in insecure and unresolved liminal situations, waiting for the involved states and international actors to agree on a common solution to their plight, sometimes waiting for their houses to be vacated or rebuilt, competing for meagre resources with the locals, lacking local social networks, and struggling to ensure viable livelihoods and future for their family members and themselves. Living in the place of exile or in the place of return was not bringing satisfactory livelihoods and durable homemaking for all these reasons. Linking these two places into a common social space did bring a solution. What helped the integration of Bosnian Croats in Croatia were not only closely knit social networks in areas of compact settlement of extended families and neighbours from the pre-war villages, but also transnational social spaces established with elderly relatives who returned to their Bosnian settlements and possibly also with the younger ones who migrated to third countries in search of (seasonal) work (e.g., in Germany). A combination of two or even three "solutions" made their settlement in under-developed Croatian regions viable. As it is with the minority returnees who relocate but whose livelihoods

straddle the interior border in Bosnia and Herzegovina,[52] it is difficult to ascertain where the Bosnian Croats actually live: they are registered in and have documents of both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, they have two homes in two states and might live alternatively in one or the other (or maybe even in a third one) for indefinite, prolonged periods of time, depending on job opportunities in these places, while they take advantage of welfare benefits in both countries.[53]

By keeping ties with the areas of former exile or return, refugees have been keeping options open, spreading out risk factors, and creating a strategy to minimize exposure to the precariousness of life in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. By stressing future-orientated projects of returnees and the need to create economically sustainable livelihoods "beyond considerations of nationality," Jansen has argued for an understanding of returnees' decisions to relocate that goes beyond the ethnic/national lens.[54] The notion of "normalcy" contains the same type of reasoning: rather than exclusively preoccupied by ethnic considerations (and fears of the "ethnic Other"), people strive to ensure good living and normalcy,[55] and do not dwell on romantic or ideologized notions of national home. Similarly, as minority Serbian returnees and locals start working together and sharing the problems of infrastructural deficiencies in the marginal areas of common settlement in Croatia, ethnicity takes on a secondary role in everyday communication.[56] Ethnicity and an ideologized notion of home as nation may still be evoked in public roundtables, as in the quotes at the beginning of the article. I argue that such ethno-politicized statements reflect dominant discourses rather than empirical situations of everyday life.

It follows from my analysis that refugees, no matter how their refugee trajectory evolved, engage in very similar activities, which take them beyond the ethnic and into the realm of economic reasoning that is managed in trans-local and transnational space. In the final section of the article, I explore aspects of homemaking in this context.

### Scaling Home: Levels of Homemaking

In the cases presented, the deceptive nature of "home" for refugees has appeared in two ways: on the one hand, in the context of the recovery of pre-war houses by minority returnees and, on the other, in the context of local integration in presumed "national homelands." In the first case, except for elderly people,[57] pre-war dwellings could not be refilled with the meaning of home, as the naturalizing sedentarist discourse would expect. While some explanations attribute this to drastic transformations in the pre-war areas of settlement,[58] many more invoke the disjointed relationship of a minority returnee with the national majority

in the area. These interpretations prioritize an understanding of home in terms of a national homeland. After finding that, in the context of local integration among co-nationals, the ethnicized argument appeared to be without foundation, I have challenged ethnicized explanations of failed homemaking in minority repatriation schemes. That argument is strengthened in this section by pointing out different meanings of home and levels of homemaking among a group of Croatian refugees from Serbia that I studied.[59] The analytical framework I used looked at homemaking at the level of house (dwelling), community (town/village), and nation.

I found that exchanged houses were made into homes slowly and over a period of time, after refugees had imbued them with meaning. Immediately after arriving, the refugees did not consider them "theirs." But after fifteen or more years, the house became meaningful as the site of material input, investment of efforts and activities, of the implementation of ideas and projects. In that second period of my research, it was also presented as a site of family togetherness, familiarity, and security. The community (town or village), which embraces a natural (landscape), cultural (built environment, symbolic meanings, gestures) and social (networks) aspect of belonging, generated less home-like feelings among my research subjects. While the feeling of "home" in Serbia was a holistic experience embracing the entire broader area of the place of living, in Croatia, people continued to experience the physical and social environment in which they lived as not entirely "their own." This was reiterated almost twenty years after the displacement. Their social networks are oriented toward socializing among other settlers like themselves, their former co-villagers, who live in the same or other localities in Croatia. By socializing among themselves—rather than with the locals among whom they live—they recreate, trans-locally and transnationally, the social and cultural space of the old settlement, by which a sense of belonging to the old village as "the home" is imagined and enacted outside its territory.[60] I therefore hypothesize that their relationship with the places in which they reside today, almost twenty years after displacement and the onset of local integration, is merely *functional*. They are simply housing locations, while only the relation towards the house and property is *emotional*.[61] With the passage of time, these refugees who integrated in the country of asylum (which also happens to be their national homeland) thus managed to imbue their new houses with the meaning of home, but have not managed to imbue the surrounding area with the same meaning.

At this intermediate level of homemaking, I suggest, we need to consider economic viability. The assertion by a Turkish migrant working in Germany that "home is wherever you have a job"[62] seems to be equally valid in this post-refugee context. It resonates with the statement of a man who participated in the Sarajevo roundtable mentioned above: "My home was destroyed when I was thrown out of my job." This is maybe the most concrete but also the most poignant definition of home that I have encountered. It lends support to a further argument, that settlement in the country of first asylum (and also secondary migration to the territory inhabited by co-nationals) can also be viewed as a search for sustainability and not only as ethnically motivated mobility. This does not deny that there was not an initial ethnic motivation for displacement. It was indeed present under conditions of heightened war and the early post-war situation. My research elucidates that at the beginning of displacement, the refugees were indeed mentioning the importance of being "among their own" as a factor contributing to their homemaking. In later phases, however, this was no longer an issue. Therefore, I reiterate the argument that in order to understand the different facets of the process of homemaking in the particular refugee experiences, we need to move beyond ethnic/national reasoning and consider *durable homemaking* as a process linked to a concatenation of factors such as becoming emplaced in the house, social networks, and economically viable trans-local and transnational contexts. Only in the last resort, and in a short period after the conflict that had caused displacement, is the ethno-political context important for homemaking. It is further argued that the intermediary level of homemaking is a vital element in the development of attachment and the feeling of home. It is the most difficult of scales to achieve; it is the missing but necessary link between the concreteness of the house as home and the abstract, third level—the understanding of home as the nation, polity, and/or society.

## Concluding Remarks

The article focuses on tensions produced by ethno-national politics (which caused unprecedented population displacements of "ethnic Others" in the former Yugoslav space, especially in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), international agendas (which, by privileging minority return as the "durable solution," engaged in the politics of redressing the wrongs of ethnic unmixing), and finally and most importantly, refugees' own understandings of and attempts to find durable solutions for the protracted precarity in which they found themselves.

I have introduced homemaking as an essential aspect of a successful durable solution and have proposed supplementing the usual ethno-politicized understandings of home in the specific context with analyses of the process of homemaking at different scales—the house (dwelling space), community (the wider space of settlement containing natural, cultural, social, and economic aspects), and nation.

The first two are the spaces of lived, everyday, unmediated experiences of the familiar and self-evident,[63] the spaces in which a person is recognized and acknowledged by others, and also the spaces in which people feel economically secure and can forge future plans. I have underlined the difficulties of homemaking at the intermediate level and the importance of the economic aspect, both of which are missing from most analysis of homemaking. The analysis has shown that, in pursuing economic viability, refugees reach beyond immediate places of settlement into trans-local and transnational space. I have argued that transmigration between their places of origin and exile and the creation of transnational social fields was their own solution to protracted insecurities of homemaking.

Furthermore, my analysis of Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Croatian refugee mobilities has questioned the sustainability of the strict distinction between return and local integration employed by UNHCR. Of these two, the first, via an international political consent, was given precedence over the second, with the result that the "real necessities" of the displaced who chose local integration in the country of first asylum rather than return were neglected by international and sometimes also national politics and policy-makers. In other words, politics enmeshed itself in humanitarian matters and brought about prolonged vulnerability to some displaced people while trying to help others. Paradoxically, even those targeted were not exempt from long periods of insecurity under refugee status. The combined effect of international and local national politics in the region thus resulted in protracted precarious circumstances for displaced people that have required more and more financial input and new programs to make up for inadequate decisions by international and national stakeholders.

I have argued that instead of privileging one solution—return/repatriation, especially in the form of minority return—and keeping it distinct from the widespread practice of local integration in the country of first asylum, international actors should have adopted a non-compartmentalized and transnational approach to the management of the multiple regional refugee crises, pursuing simultaneous return and local integration in the country of exile. This argument takes its cue from the empirical finding that repatriation and local integration in exile were closely intertwined processes in the specific regional context. They were combined by the refugees in order to secure durable solutions for themselves and their families. Transnational practices and lives straddling two or more places in different countries continue to be crucial for securing sustainable livelihoods. With the deepening of the economic crisis, transnationalism is further pursued and involves frequent secondary migration to third countries. This analysis then

also shows how viability in a post-refugee context is an enduring search in unpredictable directions.[64]

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*Jasna Čapo is a senior research associate at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research and titular professor at the University in Zagreb. She was a Humboldt fellow in Munich and Berlin. Her research interests are in the anthropology of forced and labour migrations and diasporic identities. Her books include* Strangers Either Way: The Lives of Croatian Refugees in Their New Home *(2007 and 2011) and the co-edited volume* Co-Ethnic Migrations Compared: Central and Eastern European Contexts *(2010). The author may be contacted at capo@ief.hr.*

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(Zagreb: UNHCR, 2011); Stef Jansen, "*Refuchess*: Locating Bosniac Repatriates after the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Population, Space and Place* 17 (2011): 140–52.

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18 Brad K. Blitz, "Refugee Returns, Civic Differentiation and Minority Rights in Croatia 1991–2004," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 3 (2005): 362–86.

19 Jansen, "*Refuchess*."

20 Black and Gent, "Sustainable Return."

21 Phuong in Stefansson, "Homes in the Making."

22 Black and Gent, "Sustainable Return," 23.

23 Blitz, "Refugee Returns." Of course, the aim of return politics was also to increase human capital in demographically depleted areas of war and, as judged by Brad Blitz (lecture in Sarajevo, March 2013), in more cynical accounts, it was to relieve the burden on other states and justify international aid programs. See also Black and Gent, "Sustainable Return."

24 UNHCR Representation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Statistics Package*, 31 December 2012, http://unhcr.ba/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/SP_12_2012.pdf; Mesić and Bagić, *Minority Return in Croatia,* 77.

25 Black, Eastmond, and Gent, "Introduction"; Jansen, "*Refuchess*."

26 Mesić and Bagić, *Minority Return in Croatia*, 82; estimate based on a sample.

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28 Stef Jansen, "The Privatisation of Home and Hope: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Dialectical Anthropology* 30 (2006): 177–99; Jansen, "Troubled Locations: Return, the Life Course, and Transformations of 'Home' in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 49 (2007): 15–30; Jansen, "*Refuchess*."

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38  See also Jansen, "Troubled Locations."

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40  Ibid.; Anders H. Stefansson, "Travelling States: State Reconfiguration, Co-Ethnic Migration and Non-Diasporic Identities in Bosnia's Republika Srpska," in Čapo Žmegač, Voß, and Roth, *Co-Ethnic Migrations Compared*, 165–75.

41  Blitz, "Refugee Returns."

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44  Valenta, Mesić, and Strabac, "Bosnian Croats in Croatia."

45  Petrović, *Ničiji ljudi*.

46  The presumed "ethnic privilege" of the co-ethnically resettled population plays a role only at the beginning of their relocation (i.e., they are given citizenship); see Jasna Čapo Žmegač, "Ethnically Privileged Migrants in Their New Homeland," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 2 (2005): 199–215.

47  Jasna Čapo Žmegač, "Return Migration: The Changing Faces and Challenging Facets of a Field of Study," *Ethnologia Balkanica* 14 (2010): 227–45.

48  Strictly speaking, this is not a transnational arrangement, for it straddles the interior entity border in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IEBL), when people live a life connecting a place in the Serb Republic and one in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

49  Čapo Žmegač, *Strangers Either Way*.

50  Van Hear, "Refugees in Diaspora."

51  That refugees were taking things into their own hands and acting against official schemes is also shown by the fact that the peak of minority returns in Croatia was registered already in 1998 and 1999, as if in defiance of domestic opposition and economically dire situation in the post-war areas into which returnees came.

52  Jansen, "Refuchess."

53  Valenta, Mesić, and Strabac, "Bosnian Croats in Croatia."

54  Jansen, "Refuchess."

55  Anders H. Stefansson, "Refugee Returns to Sarajevo and Their Challenge to Contemporary Narratives," in *Coming Home? Refugees, Migrants, and Those Who Stayed Behind*, ed. Lynellyn D. Long and Ellen Oxfeld, 170–86 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Jansen, "Troubled Locations."

56  Mesić and Bagić, *Minority Return in Croatia*.

57  Jansen, "Troubled Locations."

58  Ibid.; Jansen, "Refuchess."

59  They were less exposed to protracted precarity than other refugees, because they immediately became Croatian citizens, and they secured their livelihoods by exchanging houses and land with Croatian Serbs. Nevertheless, home-making was not a self-evident and easy process; see Čapo Žmegač, *Strangers Either Way*; Čapo Žmegač, "Refugees, Co-ethnic Migrants, and Diasporas."

60  Čapo Žmegač, "Return Migration"; Huttunen, "The Notion of Home"; Hariz Halilovich, "Trans-Local Communities in the Age of Transnationalism: Bosnians in Diaspora," *International Migration* 50, no. 1 (2012): 162–78.

61  Valentina Gulin Zrnić, *Kvartovska spika: Značenja grada i urbani lokalizmi u Novom Zagrebu* (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku and Jesenski i Turk, 2009). This is certainly contributed to by the fact that they are middle-aged and older; in other words, they did not attain their formative experiences in the places in which they are now living, but rather settled in them as mature adults.

62  Morley, *Home Territories*, 44.

63  Ibid., 48; Hannerz, "The Local and the Global."

64  I thank Stef Jansen, Cathrine Brun, Anita Fabos and two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments on the text.

# Already in America: Transnational Homemaking among Liberian Refugees

## Micah M. Trapp

### Abstract

*This article explores how refugees at the Buduburam Liberian refugee settlement in Ghana constructed and imagined home in and through a place they have never been to—"America." Drawing on ethnographic examples of homemaking at Buduburam, this article develops the concept of entanglement to show how preferences for and access to the three durable solutions of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees were influenced by centuries of transnational homemaking embedded in the histories of the transatlantic slave trade and colonization of Liberia. Refugees preferred and practised resettlement not as a final destination, but as an active form of transnationalism. The reconfiguration of homemaking through the lens of entanglement demonstrates the importance of developing migratory policies and practices that are attentive to historic and future forms of inequality.*

### Résumé

*Cet article s'engage à explorer la conceptualisation d'un domicile dans l'imaginaire des réfugiés libériens internés au camp de Buduburam, situé au Ghana, pour lesquels l'idée d'un domicile se formait par l'intermédiaire d'un lieu qu'ils n'avaient jamais visité, notamment l'« Amérique ». Se basant sur des exemples ethnographiques d'établissement de domicile à Buduburam, l'article, déploie le concept d'enchevêtrement pour démontrer comment les préférences et l'accès relatifs aux trois solutions durables du Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés étaient influencés par la nature transnationale d'établir un domicile tout au long des siècles de l'histoire de la traite transatlantique des esclaves et de la colonisation de la Libérie. En ce qui concernait leurs préférences et leurs pratiques, les réfugiés ne considéraient pas la réinstallation comme une destination finale, mais plutôt comme un processus toujours en cours de transnationalisme. Cette reconfiguration de l'idée de réinstallation démontre jusqu'à quel point il est important de développer des politiques et des pratiques reliées à la migration qui prennent en compte les formes d'inégalité historiques ainsi que celles qui pourraient se manifester dans l'avenir.*

### Introduction

Following the outbreak of civil war in 1989, Liberians migrated throughout West Africa. When thousands of Liberians arrived in Ghana in the summer of 1990, the Ghanaian government allocated a piece of abandoned church land in the Gomoa-Buduburam region to be used as a temporary haven for Liberians. About 35 kilometres west of Accra, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) trailers, a camp manager's office, and police station officially marked the entrance of the Buduburam camp, while informal and formal commercial activities of transport and trade offered a less official but vibrant welcome. Over time, Buduburam expanded into a large settlement that intermingled with nearby Ghanaian towns; official population estimates had reached nearly 40,000 in 2005.[1] At the time of my research from December 2008 to June 2009, the Buduburam camp was characterized as a protracted refugee situation.[2] Although refugee camps are framed as a temporary stop on the path to one of the UNHCR's durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration, and third country resettlement), refugees often end up living in camps for a decade or more and in doing so, must confront the paradox of settled life and homemaking in a temporary space. At Buduburam, this paradox was intensified:

one month into my field research, the UNHCR announced that the camp would be closing in three months, causing immense insecurity among refugees. Though the UNHCR did not implement a cessation clause until June 2012, the prospect of losing refugee status loomed large during my research, and many Liberians anxiously anticipated the loss of their homes and where they would end up within the transnational landscape of durable solutions.

Transnationalism—the social and economic connections across nation-states—is certainly not a new phenomenon in West Africa and has been activated in contemporary refugee settings. For example, Guinean refugees used trans-local networks—"embedded members of family networks that have spanned borders for generations"—to sustain livelihoods in exile.[3] Refugee experiences were "not so much of a radical interruption of social life, but rather an introduction to a new structure of opportunity and constraint into a much broader social, political, and economic landscape."[4] With the establishment of Buduburam, the UNHCR-led migration complex introduced new opportunities and constraints on transnational homemaking. While Liberian refugees practised trans-localism, many viewed resettlement to a third country as the most preferable option. In discussing the reasons and context for this preference, this article suggests that the deep history of transatlantic migrations, which have shaped Liberian society for more than a century, continue to frame contemporary notions of home. In doing so, how does this transnational history interact with the logic and practice of the UNHCR durable solutions?[5] By developing a concept of entanglement, I argue that Liberian refugees reconfigured and practised resettlement not as a final destination, but as an active form of transnational homemaking. By rejecting resettlement as an endpoint within one nation-state, Liberian refugees constructed homes and engaged resettlement as an ongoing process within a much larger history. In analyzing how refugees imagined and constructed homes, I demonstrate the historic complexity and ambiguity of resettlement as a "solution." I suggest that contemporary migration policies and the assessment of the need for protection must extend beyond the contemporary conditions and consider the enduring impact of transnational histories of social, economic, and political violence.

### The Entanglement of Refugees and Home

Within the field of transnational studies, home has been conceptualized as existing everywhere and as made through movement, though critics have suggested transnationalism remains an inherently cosmopolitan experience of the privileged few, who have the money and resources to move.[6] Refugees not only struggle with the affective and material components of homemaking, but also must do so within the requirements and realities of the UNHCR's political framework of durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration, and third country resettlement). The UNHCR model of care remains premised upon individual political protection and requires that refugees prove the need for physical protection as separate from economic and social vulnerabilities. However, scholars have explored notions of home and belonging to demonstrate the fallacy of separating the political, social, and economic needs of refugees. Furthermore, processes of homemaking shaped preference and access to durable solutions.

Stefansson adopted a "pragmatic perception of home" to show how "creating sustainable livelihoods, finding a place of relational identification, [and] developing a site of cultural attachment" all contribute to homemaking, but gave some primacy to the economic condition.[7] Pragmatic homemaking among Bosnian refugees meant that the possibilities of a livelihood in exile were compared to livelihoods "at home" before the war. For many, this meant that voluntary repatriation was the preferred durable solution. Hammond conceptualized the migratory experiences of Tigrayan refugees as ongoing processes of emplacement whereby refugees actively cultivated new social networks, livelihoods, and opportunities to create home while in exile. These processes of displacement and emplacement followed Tigrayan refugees in the Sudan "home" to Ethiopia through a UNHCR repatriation process whereby refugees were "returned" to a different part of Ethiopia, where they lacked networks and resources. In this regard, repatriation was not the "best" or natural solution, but a continued cycle of displacement and emplacement.[8]

In third country resettlement, the "solution" is embedded in the redistribution of access to cosmopolitan global resources via a pathway to the global North. Van Hear's distinction between the near and far diaspora suggests that refugees traveling to the far diaspora in the global North access greater economic resources than those who remain in the regional, near diaspora.[9] Across time and space, the practice of resettlement accumulates real economic potential that is often expressed through imaginative and affective processes. For example, Horst showed how long-term Somali refugees in Kenya experienced the affliction of *buufis,* extreme desire for resettlement, and eschewed voluntary repatriation (and local integration) in the face of resettlement. Scholars have described such attachment to resettlement as "hoping," "waiting," and "dreaming," thereby relegating the possibility to the imagination.[10] Such assessments emerge from the reality that less than 1 per cent of the world refugee population will gain access to resettlement and subsequent labelling of resettlement as fiscally inefficient.[11]

However, many Liberians preferred resettlement, particularly to the United States, as the most durable of the

UNHCR solutions. Scholars have explained the migratory preferences of Liberians in a variety of ways. Tanle applied Kunz's typology of refugee identities (majority, event-related, and self-alienated) to suggest that the conditions of initial flight affected how refugees envisioned the future, where only majority-identified refugees were likely to prefer a return home to Liberia.[12] Byrne suggested that three forms of national identity (ethnocultural, civic, and liberal) shaped preferences: refugees who embraced a liberal nationalism based on the visions of the freed slaves who settled Monrovia in the early nineteenth century were more likely to prefer resettlement.[13] Others have pointed to the importance of history and primacy of economic concerns in shaping contemporary migration. Omata confirmed the fallacy of homecoming by articulating the trouble of finding a job in Monrovia and the necessity of Americo-Liberian social connections.[14] Tete explained the ongoing interest in resettlement among Liberians as a "dual idea of home," whereby refugees articulated a desire for resettlement as a means to gain "the necessary education, skills and economic empowerment to be able to contribute now in absentia, but also enable them to return [to Liberia]."[15] Resettlement would allow them to "go home with something."[16] This body of literature suggests an incompatibility between Liberian notions of transnational homemaking as a process and the UNHCR approach to durable solutions as a final destination.

Aiming to improve the durable solution of resettlement, the UNHCR Working Group on Resettlement proposed a "strategic use of resettlement" that would provide benefits beyond individual refugees.[17] To achieve this goal, the working group identified the need to increase global capacity for resettlement and, notably, the elimination of economic pull factors for resettlement.[18] Furthermore, resettlement states would need to relinquish domestic political agendas, at least to some extent, to focus on collective state decision-making for refugee migrations.[19] While admirable, state collective decision-making potentially overshadows the specific political and economic histories (and subsequent state responsibilities) that may have contributed to displacement in the first case.

Through a case study of transnational homemaking among Liberian refugees, I develop the concept of entanglement to demonstrate how political histories connect to the practice of the UNHCR durable solutions. In physics, quantum entanglement—what Einstein referred to as "spooky action at a distance"—marks an intense, yet potentially precarious relationship that occurs when two particles previously in contact with one another, maintain a direct relationship over time, *despite being separated by vast distances*.[20] While scientists do not know *why* quantum entanglement exists, it offers a provocative metaphor for exploring transnational homemaking practices among Liberian refugees. Objects in quantum entanglement exist in direct correlation to one another; "when you measure one half of the entangled pair, the other half instantly assumes the exact opposite state" without physical contact or other communicative means.[21] In this article, I use entanglement to mark the habitual ways in which the migratory histories of transatlantic slave trade between West Africa and North America and the U.S. colonization of Liberia influence and mediate contemporary practices of transnational homemaking.[22] In particular, an analysis of entanglement brings attention to how the histories of exploitation and colonization often invisibly affect and frame both contemporary practices of transnational homemaking and migration policies.

### Research Methods

During my first anthropological research trip to Buduburam from May to July 2005, I lived with a family in a central and densely populated part of the settlement. My host was a Liberian woman in her 30s who had lived in the house for six years and was, at the time, providing a home for a young girl who was in process for resettlement to the United States. The three of us shared a rather comfortable space, including a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, and indoor stall for showering. The year of 2005 was a vibrant time for the camp: many refugees were able to travel to the United States via a resettlement program. During my second research trip from December 2008 to July 2009, I rented a house on the outskirts of the camp through referral of my previous host. The house was relatively luxurious, given its porch, higher ceilings, and most importantly, its indoor commode (though there was no running water). My neighbours were both Liberian refugees and Ghanaians, and my participant-observation within the neighbourhood and various forms of domestic life—cleaning, washing outside, hauling water, cooking, and sharing food—provided me with privileged access to camp life and serves as the foundation for this article.

Three research assistants, all of whom were Liberian community health workers, facilitated and supported my research. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 Liberian households, three focus groups, and a household survey in 132 Liberian households.[23] Semi-structured interviews collected data on household conditions, economic strategies, and migratory options. Participants were intentionally selected, with the help of my research assistants, to represent a socio-economically diverse group. Interviews lasted one to two hours, were conducted in a mixture of Liberian English and English, depending on the preference

of the interviewee, and were recorded and transcribed. Additional informal follow-up interview sessions took place when necessary. Focus groups comprised five to six participants who were selected to represent different population sectors based on gender, age, and education. Each session followed a prepared list of questions regarding social status and migration and lasted approximately two hours. The household survey was administered to a randomly selected sample of 119 households and 23 of the 28 households that participated in a semi-structured interview.[24] The 119 households were selected using a random number generator to identify zone (neighbourhood) and household numbers. All survey participants completed a social resource map to illustrate geographic (Liberia, Buduburam, West Africa, "overseas") flows of monetary, food, household provisions, labour, and social resources. Participants allocated 200 beans among the different resources to measure relative importance.

Additionally, I conducted eleven stakeholder interviews with UNHCR, camp management, resettlement staff, and non-profit organizations. To provide some, albeit limited transnational context, I travelled to Liberia for two weeks in May 2009. I conducted one in-depth interview with a former refugee from Buduburam with whom I had conducted interviews in 2005. I also conducted five interviews with Liberians who had not lived at Buduburam. Participants were selected using snowball methods and interviews were conducted in Liberian English. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes and two hours and focused on homemaking and reception of returning Liberians.

### A History of Entanglement in Liberia

While many refugee populations have expressed significant interest in resettlement to the United States (among other destinations) as the solution to long-term refugee camp life, preference for and attachment to America remains historically particular and unique for Liberians. Liberian ideas and practices of citizenship and home have long since been negotiated in a transnational context linked directly to the United States.[25] In the early 19th century, the American Colonization Society (ACS) formed "to promote and execute a plan for colonizing (with their consent) the free people of color, residing in our country, in Africa."[26] Prompted largely by the desire to rid the United States of freed black men, the ACS recruited small numbers of settlers, who were primarily middle-class, free black men, whose success in the United States was limited by pervasive racism.[27] Politicians, social notables, and scholars have used various terms to describe the subsequent relations that emerged between the U.S. and Liberia, including "'maternal relations,' … 'object of peculiar interest,' 'an imperative duty,' 'the nation's ward,'

'at no time a colony of this government,' 'our national duty,' 'a moral obligation,' 'peculiar relations.'"[28]

Within Liberia, the new Constitution aimed to prevent discrimination similar to that experienced in the United States by restricting citizenship to blacks. However, political power became consolidated in the True Whig Party of the Americo-Liberian settler elite, and indigenous Africans were denied rights to citizenship and land.[29] A non-Americo-Liberian could petition to individually own land, but would have to be Christian and adopt a Western lifestyle in order to be considered for citizenship.[30] Such assimilative demands to become "civilized" were further enhanced by education and occupation and became embodied through Western-style dress and home, eating habits, driving in cars, and the furnishing and care of the home. Elite Liberians sent their children to the United States for education before returning to Liberia to inherit prominent government positions, thereby socially reproducing the position and power of the True Whig political monopoly.

However, the power of the True Whig Party must be couched within a deeper history of transnational exploitation. During an interview with Patience, a Liberian humanitarian aid worker in Ghana and self-identified Americo-Liberian, she explained that she was from the state of Georgia but lived and worked in Ghana and also travelled back and forth to Liberia. While her transnationalism required vast resources to maintain and differed from the realities of refugees who did not have ready access to America, Patience explained that Africans had sold her ancestors to American slave traders: "So who was colonized?," she challenged. In posing this question, Patience's account framed the transatlantic slave trade as an exploitative precursor to the construction of the Americo-Liberian settler elite. In the following sections, I explore how these competing and interconnected transnational entanglements informed how refugees approached and made homes within the durable solutions framework.

### Wasted Years and Remote Renters: Liberia Cannot Yet Be Home

With an end objective of closing the Buduburam camp, the UNHCR and Ghanaian government worked to actively promote voluntary repatriation. In 2009, this included the creation and screening of a video in which refugee returnees in Liberia testified to ample livelihood opportunities. Refugees at Buduburam responded with disgust and irritation that the UN and Ghanaian government would try to tell them about life in their homeland. This section outlines refugees' own perceptions of home and demonstrates how the durable solution of voluntary repatriation was evaluated through a transnational history of entanglement such that

a direct return home to Liberia was not possible for many refugees.

*Wasted Years*

Few refugees felt they had a clear path home to Liberia: only 27 households (20 per cent of the 132 surveyed) at Buduburam owned a house or land in Liberia, though a few were saving for a house and many dreamed of building a house in Liberia. For those without a home or land in Liberia, the prospect of return was especially risky and was further challenged by transnational notions of social status, as I demonstrate through the example of Blessing. Blessing arrived at Buduburam in 1992 without her family, but had since given birth to three children. Blessing was able to find only odd jobs—washing clothes or braiding hair—in nearby Ghanaian towns. Her income was unstable, and she often relied heavily on the goodwill of others and non-profit organizations to help her out. When I first met Blessing, she and her children lived in one bedroom of a two-bedroom house; the single room, lit by a dim blue light bulb, contrasted starkly with her childhood in Liberia.

> My father had a car. We attended Catholic school. The Catholic schools in Liberia are very expensive. Your father will pay for everything in the school, books, study class, everything. And they carry you to school, the driver carry you to school. Even in Liberia, some of us, our mothers not used to cook because they have to go to work. They have somebody in the house to cook and wash our clothes … So that how it looked like. You say this person have money because their house have air condition, you have fresh toilet, you have inside kitchen. You don't use that pot outside. Everything in the house.

Blessing's recollection of her past reflects the lifestyle attached with being "civilized," yet she did not believe a similarly prosperous future would be available to her in Liberia. Since she lost her parents and family in the war, "if I enter Liberia, I will be a stranger. [People] will look down upon me [and ask] 'What thing she come to do here?' I don't have anything. Nobody will even have much time for me. At least staying here, I don't have to start over." Blessing's concern about the circumstances under which she could return to Liberia reflected broader fears of being labelled as "wasted years." "Wasted years" was a derogatory term used in Liberia to describe people who had lived at the camp for a long time and then returned to Liberia with nothing. During my visit to Liberia, I spoke with a young woman in her 30s about the stigma of "wasted years." Victoria used to live at Buduburam and had since returned to Liberia, but typically did not tell people that she had lived there. Victoria's concerns about being stigmatized were echoed in my conversation with a

student at the University of Liberia. While the student had never been to Buduburam, she described the camp as a bad place, where people were just wasting time and living the high life, drinking alcohol at the expense of their family members who supported them. Facing such negative prospects of reception, refugees at Buduburam were intent on avoiding the label of "wasted years."

Historically, access to the uppermost margins of being "civilized" was highly structured, but the system maintained flexibility: a person could be considered a "civilized country" man, such that *kui* (civilized) was epitomized by settler life, but was not restricted to it.[31] In this system, "native" children could potentially gain access to "civilized" status through the foster system, whereby "civilized" kin and non-kin had "native" children within the house to perform household chores in exchange for "civilized" training and possibly education.[32] In the context of exile, acquiring education while outside of Liberia was the primary way that refugees could return to Liberia with social status intact or improved.[33] However, schools at Buduburam were generally dismissed as poor-quality "refugee schools" (classes were often cancelled when teachers had migratory paperwork to take care of), though some educational opportunities in Ghana proved beneficial for return. For example, Johnny felt confident he would be respected upon return to Liberia, because he had received a scholarship to attend university in Ghana. Such opportunities were scarce, and third country resettlement became a key means of potentially obtaining "civilized" status.

Samuel believed that earning a degree from a university in the United States would shift his identity from "wasted years" to a successful man educated in America. Although Samuel had gained employable skills through computer training and his work experience with NGOs at Buduburam, his younger cousin had earned a BA in Liberia, leaving Samuel uncertain about his status, should he return. As an example of transnational entanglement, the meaning and status of an American BA reflects a transnational entanglement: the Liberian university degree would automatically shift and decrease in relation to an American degree.

If educational opportunities were not available, the fiscal resources associated with the far diaspora of America offered an alternative route to increased status. Helena, a young mother of six, who was not formally educated, explained that many people wanted to go to America get a job—any job—where they would work hard and save money that they would eventually use to build a home in Liberia. Helena explained that saving $15,000–$20,000 in America would be enough to build a house in Liberia. Helena even claimed she could have a "book-learned" (educated) person minding the house for her. Refugees at Buduburam

thus situated resettlement as an opportunity for or means by which an eventual physical and social return to Liberia would be made possible. This transnational route to upward social mobility via the far diaspora situated Buduburam as a new space through which Liberians might interject themselves—through resettlement to America—into the "civilized" social and political terrain of status and prosperity in Liberia.

Despite these aspirations, at the time of my research, U.S. resettlement programming for Liberians had shifted primarily to the Prioity-3 resettlement program. P-3 programming required a family member already in the United States to sponsor the resettlement of incoming refugees. Thus, refugees were able to travel to the U.S. only if they had a family member willing to sponsor them. This system reflected the basic patronage structure of becoming "civilized" via a foster system, such that through resettlement, refugees could potentially access education and fiscal resources.[34] The P-3 program placed the onus and responsibility for transnational opportunities on personal relationships and swayed access to the system in favour of those with existing transnational resources. For example, Blessing—a UNHCR-verified refugee—wanted to resettle to America to work, send her children to school, and save money to buy a house in Liberia, but she did not have family to sponsor her.

*Remote Renters*

From the perspective of many refugees, resettlement would not only potentially relieve the economic burdens of refugee camp life and provide transnational opportunities to improve one's education and social status, but it was also a way to contribute to the development and improvement of Liberia. In the postwar period, the Liberian nation has turned to its people in the diaspora to invest in the rebuilding of the war-torn country. When elected in 2006, president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf subsequently appointed fellow Liberians from the U.S. diaspora to key Cabinet positions in the Ministries of Commerce, Finance, Information, Labour, and Agriculture.[35] In some ways, these appointments reinforced the continuing importance of transnational entanglement in shaping Liberian social and political structures and raised concern about the replication of history: "Could the[se] returnees constitute a political enclave … based on their orientation as people who lived abroad during the war, acquired certain skills, and now have the capital and expertise with which to contribute to the country's political development?"[36]

Nonetheless, from the auditorium stage at the University of Liberia in 2009, President Johnson-Sirleaf addressed the members of the Liberian Studies Association, many of whom were Liberians living in the United States, and called for a return of the far diaspora: "Liberia is indeed back and open for business … Explore the possibilities of coming home. Go beyond just checking it out, to actually feeling it … and come home."[37] However, when the presence of Liberians in Ghana had come to a confrontation just a year before, a chief spokesman for the Liberian government, Dr. Laurence Bropleh stated, "The government is not in the position to receive 30,000 or even 10,000 or 5,000 [refugees] tomorrow … please put a stay order on sending an exodus of Liberians to Liberia right now.[38] Refugees from Ghana were considered an economic burden and liability compared to the development potential that was attributed to their fellow Liberians in the far diaspora. Despite the development promises of the far diaspora, the prevalence of such remote renters influenced the homemaking potential of other Liberians and refugee returnees.

On a May evening in Monrovia, I enjoyed a sunset view over the water while sitting on the balcony of a government official's home. He had lived in the United States for years, but had taken a position in the Liberian government once President Johnson-Sirleaf had been elected. His family continued to live in the United States while he commuted to Monrovia. His rented apartment was nicely furnished with a large television and sound system along with a refrigerator well-stocked with cold beverages. During my brief visit to Liberia, I had heard complaints about such remote renters, who worked for the government and commuted between the United States and Monrovia, occupying much-needed housing resources as a result of their ability to pay comparatively large sums of money in rent. As one man explained, "People go out from Liberia and stay out—they do not come back home and invest. You have plenty of people with high positions in Liberia, but do not own a home there."[39] Refugees wanted to obtain a voice and stake a claim in the future of Liberia. They wanted to go beyond the contributions of Liberians in the far diaspora, who they believed did not maintain an interest in Liberia as a nation. The following section further explores how transnational entanglements shaped unequal access to resettlement and homemaking in Liberia.

### Bank of America, Refugee Mansion, Real Mansion: Inequality and Entangled Solutions

In 2008 and 2009, the economy of the camp reflected the general downturn in the global economy. People pinched resources, often described their condition as "just managing," and were uncertain about what the future held. Many refugees had built homes and lives at the camp, and the cessation clause threatened their way of being. In light of these looming anxieties, refugees struggled to evaluate and gain access to their preferred durable solution. This

section examines the intersections between homemaking and the durable solutions to demonstrate how transnational entanglements created unequal access to resettlement.

*Bank of America*

Of the 132 households surveyed, 28 (21 per cent) had an adult employed, primarily in non-profit organizations and schools, though in many cases the salaries were small, often paid late, or did not materialize at all. The majority of households (93 or 71 per cent) relied on small business income, ranging from selling small bags of seasoning, oranges, or water to more lucrative cookshops and clubs. Underneath this backdrop of livelihood strategies at Buduburam, financial remittances played a crucial role in the camp economy, homemaking, and preferences among the durable solutions.

According to my survey data, twenty-six households (20 per cent) received regular monthly remittances; twenty-four households (18 per cent) reported remittances every few months; twenty-three households (17 per cent) received irregular remittances; seventeen (13 per cent) had received one remittance; and forty-two households (32 per cent) did not receive remittances. While aggregate remittance amounts at Buduburam dropped by nearly half from 2007 to 2009 and constituted an unstable livelihood, the material and transnational significance of remittances continued to influence Liberian notions of home and access to durable solutions.[40] While remittances could funnel much-needed assistance directly into the hands of refugees, they were also capable of exacerbating and fostering local and transnational inequalities.[41] For example, at Buduburam, Mary—a young mother of two—had been receiving regular monthly remittances from her younger sister, who had resettled in the United States thirteen years ago. Mary joked that her younger sister had become her "ma" and was now "bigger" than she because she was supporting the family. Such inequalities manifested in homemaking practices at Buduburam and shaped perceptions of resettlement.

Anyone at the camp who demonstrated wealth or a comfortable lifestyle was often labelled as "already in America." Tita and Lucy both described each other's homes at Buduburam as "already in America." Tita's home included a small, furnished kitchen with a dish-draining rack, refrigerator, table, stool, and fan. Her bedroom had another fan, a television, and a computer. Lucy was "already in America" because of her lifestyle habits—drinking juice or lemonade, eating pancakes—and the travel opportunities that had become available to those who had lived in her home. Of the twenty-five people that had stayed or lived with Lucy over the last decade, ten had been resettled to the United States, some of whom occasionally sent financial remittances to Lucy, which led many people to refer to her as the "bank of

America." The use of a bank to describe Lucy's home did not merely symbolize wealth, but also pointed to the importance of access to and the ability to draw upon and distribute transnational resources. While the UNHCR provided protection and solutions on the basis of political need, the everyday realities of refugee camp life and its surrounding transnational family lives were mired in the economic inequalities (and opportunities) embedded in the durable solution of resettlement.

The idea of America and opportunities associated with resettlement reflected the historic entanglement between Liberia and the United States via the homemaking practices of those who returned for a visit to Buduburam following resettlement. For example, when Elena's brother came to Buduburam from America, he did not stay in her home, but in the hotel at the camp. As Elena explained, the conditions in her home were not conducive to his needs: the hotel offered electricity backed by a generator, air conditioning, running water, and a private shower and bathroom. To ensure her brother's comfort, Elena felt compelled to cater to the higher taste standards that she assumed her brother had developed since living in America. She went to the market as early as possible in the morning to buy the best fish for him since "zipper" fish (a small Ghanaian fish produced for local consumption rather than export) would not satisfy his tastes. Beyond confirming the worthiness of pursuing resettlement for those who remained in Ghana, the visibility of such returnees, many of whom were on their way to Liberia to build a home, further shaped resettlement as a route home.

Similar to the prospect of wasted years upon return to Liberia, homemaking at Buduburam was evaluated through the relative anticipation of the durable solutions. For example, homes that were "already in America" or like a "bank of America" remained distinct from houses at Buduburam that were furnished with the remains of transnational travel. Robertson had purchased his one-bedroom home at Buduburam from a friend who had travelled on a resettlement program. On the surface, Robertson's home was nicely furnished, yet his narration of the space revealed a different reality. The kitchen was furnished with a two-burner cookstove, but the gas tank was empty and Robertson had not used it for two months, nor did he have money to fill it. The kitchen table was bare, except for a stray ice cube tray, but Robertson did not have a refrigerator or freezer. The sitting room had a small wooden table flanked by a chair and love seat, both of which had wooden frames and were covered with foam cushions. Robertson was careful to explain that his home furnishings were not a reflection of his wealth, because he had inherited them from people who had travelled. At second glance, the dissonance—the shelf of VHS

tapes and visible lack of a television or VCR—became even clearer. The ability of his friend to leave behind these material goods, things that anyone repatriating to Liberia would have taken with them, reflected and reproduced the promise of prosperity through resettlement. At the same time, the ultimate dysfunction of these goods reflected the increasingly hallowed presence of resettlement for those who remained at Buduburam as well as the inability of the place of Buduburam to activate the lifestyle of America.

*Refugee and Real Mansions*

In seeking political asylum, refugees were considered guests in Ghana, though they could potentially gain long-term access and rights to live in Ghana as members of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS). However, many Liberians did not perceive local integration at Buduburam or elsewhere in Ghana as a durable solution. Rather, life in Ghana was evaluated in relation to transnational resources and the homemaking prospects available through repatriation and resettlement, as I demonstrate through the homemaking practices and migratory preferences of Mercy and Lillian.

Mercy lived in a sunny orange house that was flanked on two sides by a garden and small patio. A large tree with a painted trunk near the patio provided shade over the area that served as a sitting and cooking area. A wooden doorframe was covered with a chicken-wired screen to allow breezes to pass into the house. The door opened into an indoor cooking area with a one-burner kerosene stove and small refrigerator. Beyond the kitchen were two bedrooms, both with televisions, and a fan. As one of "the originals," Mercy came to Buduburam in 1990, when the camp was just a collection of tents and a few concrete housing structures owned by the Ghanaian government. Mercy had built her house by selling portions of her rice rations to buy concrete blocks and was able to get a piece of tin that had been distributed by the UNHCR for roofing.

Prior to the war, Mercy married a Ghanaian man in Liberia. Since fleeing to Ghana together, Mercy's husband had obtained a job in Accra that provided a small income for the family. Porter et al. have argued that the cultivation of bridging or linking capital with Ghanaians provided greater opportunities for sustainable livelihoods than those who focused only on bonding capital with fellow Liberians.[42] In Mercy's case, her husband's job allowed her to furnish her home and provide access to educational opportunities for their sons; however, the money he earned was barely sufficient to sustain the family, and Mercy expressed great insecurity. Her two daughters had been resettled to the United States and England, but they contributed little to Mercy's livelihood. Adding further uncertainty to her future, Mercy believed she was the owner of her home (she had built it after all), but also knew that her home was on land owned by the Ghanaian government, and a representative from the Ghana Refugee Board confirmed that refugees would eventually be asked to vacate the houses and land at Buduburam.[43] Given these constraints, Mercy maintained resettlement as part of the solution for a long-term livelihood plan. While she believed she was too old to travel to America and earn money, she wanted one of her sons to resettle so that he would be able to earn money and support her through remittances.

Lillian also faced limits to homemaking through local integration, but did not have a vision of resettling to America. When I first met Lillian on a Sunday afternoon, she was dressed in a full African suit and carried a matching purse. The heeled sandals she wore made her seem even taller inside the low-ceilinged house where we chatted. While her host teased her for dressing "big" and "bluffing" (showing off), Lillian did not hide her lifestyle and what she hoped to achieve. With financial help from her sister who lived in the United States, Lillian had leased a plot of land at the camp from a Ghanaian man and had built a large house. After our first meeting, Lillian offered to give me a tour of her "refugee mansion," as she called it. A front porch welcomed us into a large living room with high, airy ceilings. The painted walls were sparsely decorated with several formal photographs of Lillian and her family, along with several plastic flower arrangements. A television and stereo were pushed against the walls and complemented the spaciously arranged furniture. A hallway led to three bedrooms, while the indoor kitchen at the far end of the house led to a second entrance/exit and porch. Lillian insisted that this was only her "refugee mansion" and that she would build her "real" mansion in Liberia.

Even though Lillian had built a home on private land, she faced risks similar to Mercy's. Shortly before she gave me this tour, Lillian's landlord had returned to Buduburam, because her land lease had expired, and he demanded that she start paying rent to live in her own home. While Lillian faced limits to the sustainability of local integration, her access to transnational resources afforded her some flexibility within the durable solutions. Lillian's family was spread through West Africa and the United States, and her decision to live at Buduburam (and subsequent fiscal reliance on remittances) had not hampered her social status within her extended, transnational family. She was still considered and consulted on important family decisions, despite her inability to fiscally contribute to the transnational household. Rather, her transnational social networks and continued access to America resulted in a degree of mobility that was unparalleled by the experiences of most refugees, who faced

significant limitations upon return to Liberia. In this regard, Lillian's return to Liberia did not require access to resettlement, but was nonetheless rooted in the long-standing entanglements of homemaking in America and Liberia.

### Resettlement as Slavery: Entanglement and the Limits of Resettlement

While those eschewing resettlement often had such access to transnational resources, others retained a critical perspective on the entanglement between the United States and Liberia, regardless of their individual prospects for homemaking. One afternoon in June, Solo, a young man who had few prospects for homemaking in Liberia or the United States, shared a book about Liberian history. I lay with my back against the cool tiles of the floor, trying to catch a breeze through the chicken-wired door as I read excerpts out loud and asked questions to my hosts. Our conversation meandered through Liberian history, eventually coming to a discussion about the contemporary practice of resettlement.

"Resettlement is modern slavery," proclaimed Solo. I bolted up, eager to hear some critical insight into the favoured travel route. "It's like slavery," Solo explained, "because they [the UNHCR and the U.S. government] took [*sic*] people from the camp … and all you do is work in some low-paying job." Solo elaborated by recounting the story of a well-known lawyer who had been resettled to America, where he worked in a restaurant washing dishes while his supervisor was a young girl without college education. Similarly, a man who used to be the commissioner of his town in Liberia began working in a grocery store in America. Both experienced significant losses in social status and pride, which were, in Solo's estimation, not unlike the massive decrease in status, pride, and dignity experienced during the transatlantic slave trade. Solo's critique of the realities of resettlement reflects an expanding literature documenting the individual experiences and challenges of resettlement and integration.[44] However, Solo also pointed to the broader transnational impact of resettlement. By equating resettlement with the exploitative system of slavery, his critique highlighted the potential for resettlement to (re)produce the systemic inequalities of centuries of transnational entanglements of homemaking and pointed to the limits of this solution.

### Conclusion: Enduring Entanglements in Migration Policy

In this article, I have suggested that an enduring transnational entanglement between the United States and Liberia has shaped contemporary processes of homemaking and the practice and potential of the UNHCR's durable solutions for Liberian refugees in Ghana. The Buduburam camp existed as a liminal space, an intermediary between these two sites of homemaking: as an intersecting point in this history, homes at Buduburam rendered visible the complex dynamics of transnational homemaking and challenged existing dual notions of homemaking.[45] The ethnographic examples of homemaking—wasted years, remote renters, bank of America, refugee mansions, and real mansions—demonstrated how contemporary resettlement opportunities in the far diaspora intersected with centuries of transnationalism. Homemaking in the temporary space of the Buduburam camp was actively contested, was inherently transnational, and existed in relation to the potential of the UNHCR durable solutions. Through the concept of entanglement, I suggested that homemaking among Liberian refugees existed in dynamic relation to past, present, and future transnational sites of home. In quantum entanglement, "when you measure one half of the entangled pair, the other half instantly assumes the exact opposite state," without physical contact or other communicative means. When refugees created a home at Buduburam, the meaning and practice of home at another site assumed an alternative, if not opposite meaning.

My analysis focused on two sets of entanglement: wasted years and remote renters, as well as bank of America and refugee/real mansions. The socially constructed fear of becoming wasted years was entangled with the power and status of remote renters, who had access to and often lived in the far diaspora. When government employees occupied homes in Monrovia as remote renters, refugees without means at Buduburam, such as Blessing, assumed the opposite state of homemaking: they could not return to and make homes in Liberia. In the example of homes like the "bank of America," "refugee mansions," and "real mansions," the concept of entanglement revealed the complex relationships between far diaspora resources and the need for resettlement. Comfortable homes at Buduburam became physical manifestations of the status and wealth associated with the far diaspora; refugees who inhabited these homes were not in need or search of resettlement as a route home to Liberia. Here, the prospect of resettlement took on the opposite state, as the reality of performing demeaning labour in the United States rendered resettlement useless in the broader pursuit of homemaking in Liberia. Instead, the enduring transnational entanglement between America and Liberia enabled Gloria, for example, to access far diaspora resources to construct her real mansion in Liberia. However, Solo's critical insight about the realities of homemaking through resettlement challenged and disrupted the unspoken entanglements of transnational status-making between the United States and Liberia. By disentangling the complex histories and relationships that inform contemporary meanings and practices of homemaking, the transnational

processes shift from "spooky action at a distance" to reveal clear connections between place and allow for conscious intervention.[46] I conclude with some suggestions for how we might start to disentangle the links between homemaking, the durable solutions, and migration policy.

To ensure the sustainability of the durable solutions, contemporary forms of transnational migration, exchange, and assistance must be rendered historically specific. In the context of the UNHCR durable solutions, the entanglements of home suggest that resettlement programs must be conceptualized as automatically connected in relation to other migration policies *as well as* practices and meanings of home. For example, to fully understand the potential and limitations of resettlement, *national* resettlement programs need to be recognized as such, even though they may be facilitated through the "neutrality" of the multilateral humanitarian aid system. In the case of Liberians, the question of "where is home?" has inevitably invoked the geographies of West Africa and North America and the political territories of Liberia and the United States for centuries. However, once refugees arrive in the United States, the terms of resettlement policy rarely include consideration of enduring and unspoken historic entanglements, such as those presented in this article. By framing homemaking as a transnational entanglement that continues to enact the connections of place-based inequalities through habituated relationships, more effective migration policies can be developed through the disentanglement of transnational homemaking practices. Moreover, the approach of homemaking as a transnational entanglement shifts the notion of the UNHCR durable solution from a one-time event and static endpoint to complex, ongoing processes of engagement that demand conscious intervention.

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*Micah M. Trapp is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Memphis. Her current research focuses on humanitarianism, food aid, and the role of taste in the political lives of refugees. The author may be contacted at mmtrapp@memphis.edu.*

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41

# Home as a Critical Value: From Shelter to Home in Georgia[1]

Cathrine Brun

## Abstract

*Providing shelter and housing is a core area of humanitarian assistance for displaced populations. Georgia, a former Soviet republic in the South Caucasus, has experienced displacement since the early 1990s, and housing has proved to be politically contentious and a major concern during the 20-year displacement crisis. In Georgia, as elsewhere, homemaking takes place during displacement in dwellings that are temporary and not supposed to last. The article explores the conditions that enable such homemaking and discusses what Iris Marion Young terms "home as a critical value." One trial project is used as an example: the building of 42 small houses, termed "block houses," in Kutaisi, Western Georgia, by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 2002 and 2003. The article explores the relationships and homemaking practices in and around the houses that people have developed since that date. Relative to others, the project has been a positive example of how to enable home as a critical value. The article first defines house-as-home and introduces the case explored; it then discusses internal displacement and "durable housing solutions" in Georgia, before turning to explore how shelter, housing, home, and homemaking can be conceptualized in displacement. By engaging with Iris Marion Young's "home as a critical value," the article analyzes how people have adjusted to and adapted the block houses in Kutaisi to understand the relationship between the houses and the homemaking that takes place within and around them. The concluding section discusses how home as a critical value may help to show the importance of identity and social status for housing strategies in protracted displacement.*

## Résumé

*Fournir un lieu d'hébergement et de logement constitue l'un des éléments fondamentaux de l'assistance humanitaire pour personnes déplacées. Située dans le Caucause méridional, l'ancienne république soviétique de Géorgie a subi une crise profonde de déplacement datant du début des années '90—une crise pendant laquelle, sur une période d'une vingtaine d'années, la question du logement est devenue une préoccupation importante, ainsi qu'une question politique très sensible. En Géorgie, comme ailleurs, le processus d'établir un domicile en situation de déplacement se déroule dans un contexte de logements temporaires et précaires. L'article s'engage à explorer les conditions qui permettent l'établissement des domiciles de ce genre et entreprend une discussion du concept de « domicile comme valeur critique » proposé par Iris Marion Young. Un projet pilote en particulier est cité à titre d'exemple, notamment la construction de 42 maisonnettes surnommées « maisons-bloc » à Kutaisi, en Géorgie occidentale, par le Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés en 2002 et 2003. L'article étudie les liens que les personnes concernées ont développés à partir de cette époque par rapport à ces maisons et leur environnement, ainsi que les pratiques d'établissement de domicile. Ce projet se démarque, relativement aux autres, comme une actualisation positive du concept de domicile comme valeur critique. L'article commence par définir l'idée de « maison comme domicile » qui est à la base de ce projet et introduit le cas particulier dont il est question. Il aborde ensuite une discussion du déplacement interne ainsi que les soi-disant « solutions de logement durables » en Géorgie, avant de se pencher sur*

*la façon dont les notions de « lieu d'hébergement », « logement », « domicile », et « le processus d'établir un domicile » pourraient être conceptualisés dans des situations de déplacement. En dialoguant avec l'idée d'Iris Marion Young de « domicile comme valeur critique », l'article analyse comment les personnes impliquées dans le projet ont adapté et se sont assimilés aux maisons-bloc à Kutaisi, afin de comprendre le lien entre les maisons et le processus d'établir un domicile qui se développe à la fois dans l'intériorité subjective de ces personnes ainsi que dans leur environnement externe. Pour conclure, la dernière partie démontre comment l'idée de « domicile comme valeur critique » pourrait souligner l'importance de l'identité et du statut social dans le contexte des stratégies sur le logement en situation de déplacement prolongé.*

### Introduction: From Collective Centres to Block Houses In Kutaisi, West Georgia

A house—the material structure built for human habitation—is not automatically a home. Houses may be turned into homes by their residents, but some houses will never feel like home—never become home. An interplay of material qualities, symbolic meanings, the occupants' experiences, and their relations with the surroundings of the house may all play a role in enabling a house to become a home. For many people displaced by war, home is believed to be somewhere other than the place of refuge, the place and dwelling they fled from. Displacement from conflict instigates a feeling of loss of home, and making a home at the place of refuge may not be in everyone's interest. The material conditions, the location or social setting of the place of refuge may not be somewhere one would want to call home. Consequently, home may feel irrelevant at the place of displacement, but in this article, I argue that engaging with and including ideas and values of "home" in the humanitarian discourse and practices of providing shelter and housing for long-term displacement may lead to new ways of thinking and practising assistance to internally displaced populations. With Iris Marion Young,[2] I argue for the introduction of "home as a critical value," a set of minimum standards for fulfilling values of home that should be in place when shelter is provided for populations in situations of unending displacement.

The article has come out of a long-term engagement with displacement in Georgia in the South Caucasus. In July 2003, I visited Kutaisi in Western Georgia as part of an evaluation of shelter projects implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for internally displaced persons (IDPs) displaced from Abkhazia in the early 1990s.[3] I was expected to contribute insight into how the organization could develop sustainable housing solutions in a protracted displacement

setting where the authorities and displaced alike were unwilling to accept any solution other than return. The main body of the NRC's shelter work was to make the conditions for people more bearable and more dignified by renovating temporary shelters in "collective centres"—buildings such as student and worker dormitories, hospitals, kindergartens, and hotels that were not meant for permanent living and not for family lives. As part of the evaluation, an additional task was to assess a trial project: the building of 42 small houses or cottages—termed "block houses" by the local NRC staff, referring to the simple shape of the houses. The organization had been granted permission by the authorities to build the houses and move families from dire conditions in the collective centres to these houses. The project was contested, because conditions were so much better than in the collective centres and because the houses indicated more permanency than the domestic spaces in the collective centres. The NRC therefore built houses of relatively low quality that were meant to resemble emergency shelters, materials were relatively cheap, walls and windows thin and simple. However, the houses represented more privacy, autonomy, and even livelihoods opportunities with the surrounding gardens where people could grow vegetables.

The IDP category is a highly politicized category frequently used by Georgian authorities for continued claims on Abkhaz territory. The Georgian authorities had reluctantly agreed to the NRC's housing project. IDPs were not supposed to be given permanent houses. Providing IDPs with more permanent housing solutions would give the impression of less willingness and likelihood for return and consequently less power behind continued territorial claims on Abkhazia. IDPs from Abkhazia were thus kept in makeshift buildings in temporary shelters nurturing a hope to return to their homes. The block houses and the collective centres were both considered temporary dwellings.

The first 14 houses were ready in 2002. When I visited in July 2003 the remaining 28 houses were being built. I interviewed the residents after a few months of inhabiting the block houses. People were happy they had moved out of the collective centres and into houses that represented a different life. In September 2010, I came back to the same community. All 42 houses were completed and most were permanently inhabited. In the meantime, policies had changed, and in 2009 the houses were privatized under the provisions of a new state strategy for internally displaced persons. The residents—maintaining the status as IDPs—now owned their houses. I was struck by the major changes that had taken place in the seven years between my first and second visits (see figure 1). On the barren stony land, people had managed to transform the area from an IDP-settlement to a "local" neighbourhood with limited trace of

Figure 1: Block houses in Kutaisi, July 2003 and October 2010. Photo © by author.

the standardized houses and plots that had been provided by the NRC.

During two periods of fieldwork in 2010 and 2012 I conducted more extensive research on housing and home among IDPs in Georgia. I spent time in the settlement to explore the role of the block houses for notions of home and people's perspectives on return and local integration. I interviewed several residents in their houses and gardens, and interviews with one resident often developed into conversations with other people who were visiting from neighbouring houses in the settlement. A majority of the interviewees were women, because men were often out working or searching for employment. However, sometimes the interviews were with husband and wife together. All interviews were conducted with an interpreter, who translated between English and Georgian. The conversations helped to explore further the relationships between shelter, housing, house, and home in a situation of protracted displacement.

"Home" is a multi-scalar phenomenon: it can be a dwelling, a community, and a nation. Each of those scales, such as the dwelling, cannot be understood in isolation, but may be an articulation of a number of social relations at different larger and smaller scales that shape the meaning of that particular dwelling. In this article, the focus is on home in relation to the dwelling, and particularly the role that the material structure of the dwelling plays in displacement and homemaking. While a number of studies on displacement conceptualize the home and focus on the different ways in which home can be understood in different contexts,[4] and in the Georgian context in particular,[5] I am here concerned with what normative values of home can be considered in housing strategies in protracted displacement. I analyze the symbolic and the practical meaning of the dwelling and how this dwelling enables home through the practices of everyday lives, the making of community, and changing

identities during displacement. I engage with discussions about the role of the material dwelling for the experience of home and particularly Young's[6] proposal of "home as a critical value" to understand the process from shelter to housing in displacement. I explore how engaging with home as a critical value may enable the inclusion of minimum standards of home in housing strategies in protracted displacement: what is the role of the material house in this process, and how can home as a value be seen as part of the way housing is conceptualized in protracted displacement?

In order to discuss how the block houses in Kutaisi have been helpful for understanding home as a critical value, I first discuss the case of internal displacement in Georgia before moving to discuss how shelter, housing, home, and homemaking can be conceptualized in displacement. By engaging with Iris Marion Young's home as a critical value, I then analyze how people adjusted to and adjusted the block houses in Kutaisi and how the houses did and did not enable homemaking and home as a critical value. The concluding section discusses how home as a critical value may help to show the importance of identity and social status for housing strategies in protracted displacement.

### Internal Displacement In Georgia: From Temporary Integration to Durable Housing Solutions

The dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in the establishment of Georgia as a nation-state and the announcement soon after by Abkhazia of independence from Georgia in 1992. The Georgian authorities did not accept the secession, and Georgian forces entered Abkhazia to regain the territory. The ethnic Georgian population, which consisted of approximately 46 per cent of the pre-war population, fled Abkhazia following the defeat of Georgian forces. The conflict left an estimated 10,000 people dead and some 250,000

displaced,[7] most of whom continue to be displaced 20 years later.

The Georgians who left Abkhazia settled in different locations in Western Georgia and in and around the capital Tbilisi. They are recognized as internally displaced people (IDPs) by the Georgian government, but, as mentioned above, the IDP category has been highly politicized and used in the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia. Since displacement, the IDPs and the government have shared a strong concern to return.[8] The discourse of return to Abkhazia remains prominent, even after the 2008 war, leaving Georgia with an effective loss of control over Abkhazia. The hope for return has created a strong feeling of temporariness that shapes people's conceptions of home as the place they left. At the same time, their temporary status has helped to legitimate substandard shelter during displacement. After 20 years of displacement, the IDPs from Abkhazia remain marginalized in the Georgian society. They have lower employment rates than the general population, they lead more segregated lives, and their housing is believed to be at a lower standard than for the general population.[9] Shelter and housing have been and continue to be major challenges and closely connected to possible solutions to their displacement.

In 2003, when I first came to Georgia, the government, the IDPs, and host populations alike shared the view that the only acceptable solution to the displacement crisis was return. "Local integration" was not a recognized strategy, although some organizations had started to launch the idea of "temporary integration" in informal conversations with government officials. The idea was that displaced people could no longer be kept in the dire housing conditions. Some measures had to be taken to improve their lives, and the new government that came in after the 2003 Rose Revolution gradually relaxed their stance on return. The government strategy for IDPs adopted in 2007 and implemented from 2009, introduced a new term: *durable housing solutions*. While formulated largely before the 2008 war, implementation of the state strategy on internal displacement gained momentum after the 2008 war, aided by fresh international funds for assisting the new wave of displacement from South Ossetia. Housing is the main focus of the state strategy, and families who were unable to return during the 2008 war were quickly settled in small houses. The houses were similar to the block houses in Kutaisi, and the government built nearly 4,000 cottages in 13 settlements between October and December 2008. The settlements were located outside towns and cities and nearer to South Ossetia.[10] Policies for what has been termed "old" and "new" IDPs differ somewhat, and for the IDPs from Abkhazia, the state strategy has focused on privatization of living spaces in the collective centres.[11] At later stages it is anticipated that

assistance will be offered to those in rented accommodation and those who already owned their residence in 2007.

People do maintain their IDP status after privatization, and the discourse of return remains strong and influences how IDPs are assisted as well as the quality of housing provided.[12] Before privatization it was believed that approximately half of the IDP population originating from Abkhazia lived in collective centres, while the other half lived in rented accommodation.[13] Many of the collective centres were already in bad shape and in need of renovation in the early 1990s when the IDPs moved in with shared bathroom facilities, limited space, and limited privacy. Collective centres are stigmatized and segregated spaces where people live with constant reminders of their plight as IDPs, but the social environment in the buildings is more positive: there is often a close-knit community, a sense of solidarity, and mutual support among the residents.

The current housing strategy provides people living in temporary dwellings with more stability. However, the strategy does not solve the profound inequalities between IDPs and the non-IDPs, and many people's living spaces are hard to improve as a result of the material conditions and the cramped space. Campaigns such as "Housing is more than a roof" by organizations in Georgia have focused on making the government realize that a house may not in itself solve all the problems of displacement and may not create a durable solution on its own.[14] A major problem with privatization and emphasis on housing in general is that the accommodation offered may not be good enough, and that housing is considered very much in isolation from other spheres of life. It is in this context that I analyze one project of housing for IDPs from Abkhazia that I have followed since 2003. First, however, I shall conceptualize shelter, housing, home, and homemaking to suggest how these dimensions may come together in housing strategies in situations of protracted displacement.

### Shelter—Housing—Home in Protracted Displacement

The category of IDPs is extremely important but also profoundly problematic—important because it has helped to recognize the injustice and violation of millions of people worldwide forced to leave their homes and in need of protection and assistance. IDPs are uprooted within their countries of origin, but often without sufficient protection from the state that is supposed, but may be unwilling, to protect them. At the same time, the IDP category is problematic because the state may be using the category and the people labelled IDPs politically to maintain claims on a territory or keep people under control in different ways. The IDP category is a humanitarian category that has implications for

the kind of shelter to which people have access during displacement. There are minimum standards available,[15] and the emphasis is on survival, security, personal safety, protection from the environment, and healthy surroundings. IDPs are often assigned to shelters that make people survive, but that cannot be transformed into homes—they are shelters representing the interstices in displaced people's lives; no one is expected to stay there long, but rather to return home or move on.[16]

A humanitarian category is not meant to last, but internal displacement is more often than not protracted. Considering cases of internal displacement that have taken place globally over the past 20 years, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre[17] estimates that only 25 per cent of those displaced during this period have been able return to their homes. Despite this knowledge, short-term humanitarian standards are used but often maintained over 5, 10, or even more than 20 years. More emphasis must be placed on the right to adequate housing and security of tenure in protracted displacement.[18] "Tenure security" is different from the right to property ownership and includes the full spectrum of tenure forms such as "rental accommodation, co-operative housing, lease, owner-occupation, emergency, housing and informal settlements, including occupation of land or property."[19] Denial of security of tenure denotes denial of the right to acquire property or the restricted ability to repair, improve, or remain in a dwelling established during displacement. Such denial may be a strategy applied by authorities to prevent local integration and more permanency during displacement, and it is often a political strategy to maintain claims on territories, as in the case of Georgia.

A move away from temporary shelter to more permanent housing solutions requires a change from humanitarian minimum standards meant for temporary dwelling to standards for permanent living. Shifting from humanitarian shelter to adequate housing is thus a crucial step in enabling better lives during protracted displacement. As shown in this article, housing and durable solutions have been given particular meanings in the discourse and practices of dealing with displacement in Georgia. It is thus important to unpack the meaning of housing and house in the context of displacement. I would suggest, however, to move one step further to include notions of "home" in housing for protracted displacement. Wilford,[20] analyzing housing and materiality in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, suggests that "housing" may serve as a middle ground between "home" and bare "shelter': "Its relation of kind to 'house' is obviously not stable, but in its usage surrounding Hurricane Katrina it served exactly as a sign for a temporary dwelling that aspired to more than bare shelter but intentionally avoided becoming home." When the block houses

in Kutaisi were built, the NRC aspired to provide housing, but avoided making homes. But, as I show below, the block houses enabled homemaking. Housing in protracted displacement must, as I argue here, include the possibility of homemaking, and it must entail an idea of home. I consider the links between housing, house, and home to be the opportunity to make home.

### House and Home: Homemaking and Home as a Critical Value

Home is a powerful ideal embedded within the immediate context of people's lived realities, their past experiences, and present lives.[21] Iris Marion Young's starting point derives from a feminist critique of home, which led to the rejection of the ideal home by writers such as Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir. The critique is exemplified by discussing Martin Heidegger's[22] essay on building and dwelling, with an emphasis on the role of dwelling as *constructing.* House and home as constructing, the feminist critique argued, comes at women's expense because the reproductive and caretaking role of women in the home to preserve and cultivate the home is not acknowledged and thus deprives women of their own identity and projects. In a patriarchal understanding of home, women become only construction material and caretakers: they become the home. In the feminist critique of the idea of home, there is an analogy to protracted displacement. Simone de Beauvoir,[23] for example, points to the relationship between social status and relationships to the future. In *The Second Sex,* the status addressed is that of women in society. She aims to show the oppressive nature of reproductive work, distinguishing between "transcendence" and "immanence." Transcendence refers to the expression of individual subjectivity, expressing a mode of temporality in that the living subject is future oriented: "the future is open with possibility."[24] In contrast, immanence expresses the movement of life rather than history. It is less oriented to the individual, and more to sustaining life, supporting the transcending individual activities of others, and it is repetitive and cyclical. It is "a time with no future and no goals."[25] When transcendence is not available, individuals are deprived of their opportunity to express individual subjectivity. When people feel trapped in a never-ending present,[26] such as in many situations of protracted displacement, it may feel meaningless to work to achieve future goals, because that future lies too far ahead. People live with a status that is not supposed to last, and they do not know how long they can stay, when they should move on, or what will happen when the causes of their displacement change.

While Young acknowledges the deeply problematic values often attached to home, she proposes a defence of the idea of home that carries a liberating potential that expresses

uniquely human values "which can be uncovered by exploring the meaning-making activity most typical of women in domestic work."[27] Home should enable both immanence and transcendence, and homemaking may involve both caretaking and construction. I suggest that this idea of home needs to be included in the way housing in protracted displacement is understood.

Until recently, few studies of conflict-induced displacement focused on migrants' materialized relationships with their world.[28] This is perhaps because a feature of conflict-induced displacement is the absence of possessions, and thus the focus has been on those few things that people could bring with them during displacement to affirm an identity.[29] Dudley[30] argues that focusing on displaced people's relationship with the material enables a greater insight into the fundamentally cultural processes through which refugees actively and creatively seek to make meaning of and a sense of being "at home" during displacement. Dudley[31] introduces a materiality approach to forced displacement—an approach that seeks to understand the meanings that refugees create and locate between the social and physical worlds in which they now reside. Her conception of "materiality" lies in the "mutually constitutive relationships between people and things: the embodied, sensory experience of the physical world by an equally physical subject, and the multiple influences each may have on the other." The thing—or object—I am concerned with here is not so much the things people fill their houses with, but rather the house itself, and how the house is an enabling structure that provides a facilitating environment for making home.[32]

As I have shown, house and home are deeply ambivalent values, but Young argues that home (in the understanding of house as home) carries a core positive meaning as the material anchor for a sense of agency and a shifting and fluid identity. The material qualities of home can provide a site of dignity and resistance, and I look at how home as a value can be integrated into housing strategies in protracted displacement. Engaging with the idea of home may also involve minimum standards and rights for adequate housing and secure tenure. Young introduces such standards as "critical values" attached to a particular locale as an extension and expression of bodily routines. She suggests four normative values of home that should be thought of as minimally accessible to all people:

1. Safety—everyone needs a place to go to be safe. Ideally, home means a safe place where we can retreat from the dangers and hassles of collective life.
2. Individuation—existence entails having a space of one's own in which we arrange things around us that belong to us, that reflect our identity back to us in the material identity.
3. Privacy—we do not have a place of our own if anyone has access to us.
4. Preservation—safeguarding the meaningful things in which we see the stories of ourselves embodied.

While these values may be contested, as Young is clearly aware,[33] I take her understanding of home as a critical value to indicate the importance of understanding the embodied nature of the human experience with the house—an experience that takes place as a relationship between home and the physical house through homemaking practices of constructing and caretaking. Homemaking represents the dynamics between people and the block houses in Kutaisi; it involves many temporal registers,[34] from moving in, moving things around in the house, maintaining, caretaking, renovating, and modifying, and consequently it enables both immanence and transcendence.

The dwelling is at the centre of a multitude of social processes and represents a privileged place from where to understand people's embodied and conceptual appropriation of the world. The walls of the house may be understood as a porous membrane that separates the outside from the inside, but at the same time it opens up for a controlled interaction between inside and outside.[35] While safety and privacy are largely covered by the minimum standards of shelter referred to above, the role of individuation and preservation are covered to a lesser degree by current standards for providing shelter and housing for the internally displaced. To enable home as a critical value through houses for the displaced, there is a need to make the house a safe place from where to negotiate identity and social status.[36] Houses indicate social status, and by integrating home as a critical value in housing, the house potentially enables its residents to have status equal to that of people in the society in which the house is located.

### From Shelter to House: Accommodating

People who were offered a block house in the settlement in 2003 had lived in dire conditions. Most residents came from collective centres and mainly from an old hospital without windows and sanitation. Not everyone who was offered a house in the new settlement accepted the move. Some did not trust that the housing would last, or that the quality would be much better than what they had in the collective centre, and some said they could not face moving again. After displacement from Abkhazia, they had established themselves in the collective centre, and their homemaking practices took place there, they knew their neighbours, and they felt that moving again would be like another displacement.

For those who decided to move, the physical structure and the material character of the block houses influenced how people practised home, how they used the house, adjusted to

Figure 2: Hotel Iveria (*left*), the iconic collective centre in Tbilisi in July 2003 (now a Radisson Blue hotel), a communal bathroom in a collective centre (*middle*), and cooking in the corridor (*right*). Photo © by author.

the house, and adjusted the house in a process that Miller[37] terms "accommodating." The 42 block houses were all the same size, 36 square metres, the land of each cottage approximately 500 square metres (except for some corner plots that were slightly bigger). Before moving in, many families painted the floors and put wallpaper on the walls. There were two small rooms, a living room, and a bathroom at the back. Some families made a kitchen in one of the two rooms, others made part of the living room into a kitchen. Not many could afford extending the water pipes into the kitchen, but there was water provided to the bathroom. Most people made only cosmetic changes to the houses before moving in, making them beautiful by finding the cheapest wallpaper and floor paint. These acts of decorating and painting contributed to the ways people felt at home in the dwelling. It enabled ways of expressing complex selves—both the biographical and idealized self through homemaking.[38]

Already in July 2003, when people had lived in the houses for a few months, they had started talking about the alterations and extensions they were planning or wanting to do. The houses enabled making plans for the future and having dreams about things to do at the place of displacement. While their hope for the future was still to return, they could imagine improving their lives during displacement. They were concerned about the limited space of the houses and the low quality, but at the same time happy about being out of the collective centres.

However, even in the context of a strong continued hope for return and feeling of temporality, space was a major concern among the people interviewed. The quality of the houses also represented a worry. They had just lived through the first winter, and walls were thin, windows were of poor quality, and the houses were humid and cold. Still, the physical structure, the location, and the space around the houses enabled homemaking, which took place at many levels, depending on what resources people could mobilize. People were adjusting to the house, but the houses were also seen as an opportunity, and plans for modifications were made.

The block houses enabled stronger connections with the past, in terms of practices of homemaking as well as imagining and recreating feelings of home from the past. In interviews during 2010 and 2012, people recounted the ways in which the house and the surrounding gardens helped to make homes like the ones they had in Abkhazia.

We are taking good care of the house. The land is not too good to cultivate, but we try to make it similar to Abkhazia. We remember how beautiful it was in Abkhazia. From the time we came till the houses became like this, it took some time. All the people who are employed try to make their houses as good as possible. Five or six houses are very good. In the beginning it was very difficult— no fences, no roads. During rain it became very muddy—we had to wear rubber boots. I have worked hard to collect and remove stones to be able to cultivate—now it is good. Then I felt like I was on an island. In the beginning it was hard to breathe here. Now I have made it beautiful. If we had higher ceilings it would be better. But it costs too much money. (Female interviewee, September 2010)

Figure 3: The block house as built in 2003 (*left*) and an extended house from the original block house in 2010 (*right*). Photo © by author.

With the practices of moving in, establishing a garden, and making the house look nice, people made a place for themselves, a place where they could live, make life, and a home that connected with the memories of a past home. The houses enabled a bearable life and a form of preservation and individuation in displacement. A house may become a generative model for the practice of remembering,[39] an experience prominent in displacement. People made their experiences of displacement meaningful by rendering their dwelling as familiar as possible while seeking to bond to two places and two eras: here and now, and there and then.[40] The houses continue to nurture old and make new memories and to create and recreate identities. Adjusting to and adjusting the house enabled new memories to be embedded in the house. Practising homemaking and making homes have become ways of creating continuity, enable agency and the preservation of identity of subjectivity and a sense of self.

### Inside/Outside Relations of House and Home

Homemaking enabled by the block houses did not take place in isolation from outside events. Important for the accommodating processes between the people and the block houses were the changing context of the conflict and government dealings with the new displaced people from South Ossetia. The 2008 war changed people's hope for return, which affected how people related to the houses.[41] When privatization started in 2009, hope for return in the near future had changed to hope for return in a distant future. All residents accepted privatization. People decided to privatize because it provided increased autonomy and safety. During their years in the block houses, there were rumours that the houses would be taken over by other interests. Privatization

helped to make people feel safer and strengthened the feeling of permanency. Thus, ownership played an important role in homemaking practices. Safety was also maintained gradually before and after privatization and expressed both as social capital and as control over the houses. People had developed a good relationship with neighbouring non-displaced residents, and there was a strong community feeling among the residents in the 42 block houses.

Subsequent to privatization, more residents started investing in their houses. In October 2012, I counted the visible changes that had been made to the exterior of the houses. Of the 42 houses, 14 had no visible alterations, 8 had minor alterations, such as moving the bathroom and building a veranda, 18 had major alterations, which included extending the house to add new rooms and a second floor. Two houses had been demolished and were being rebuilt as bigger houses of better quality. Most people had made alterations in the same sequence: the easiest thing to do and what people had done first was to make a new entrance area and a veranda. The link between the inside—the private—and the surrounding community was established by the veranda—a place from which to look at the passersby and to welcome guests to the house, a defining moment for host and homemaker. Some people then added a bedroom, and 5 households strengthened the foundation and added a second floor. A few households started extending before privatization because they needed the space.

"First we did the veranda. We did not have a plan, we just had to start somewhere. We did it step by step. We had children, both a girl and a boy. They wanted separate rooms, so we started extending. Also for me and my husband [we made a bedroom]. So after the veranda we started to build

bedrooms. Then we built the bathroom and then the kitchen. Little by little we did it" (female interviewee, October 2012).

Changes made to the houses were determined by people's resources and needs. Most people in the 42 houses had temporary work or were self-employed and found it difficult to generate enough funding to extend the house. When she explained the process of modifying and extending, one house-owner said, "We have extended the house. We used to save on clothes and food, used to eat as little as possible to be able to gradually increase the space. We saved all the money we earned." This family had made a second-floor addition as well as a ground floor extension, and the original structure was no longer recognizable. However, in addition to being successful at saving money, a family member abroad contributed with remittances that were used mainly to extend and improve the house. Another family, who had built one of the biggest houses in the settlement, established themselves with an extensive local network through a religious organization. All the material used to build their house was second-hand material from members of the organization who had also assisted in the building work.

Many who had made major alterations and extensions to their houses had family members or relatives abroad who had helped them to make the changes. Some of those who wanted to make changes could not, as a result of unemployment or under-employment. Some had not extended their houses because their household comprised only one or two persons and they did not need more space. Most people who had made major alterations to their houses were still building. Many of the interviewees said they were tired of living on a building site. However, making changes to the house over time was the only way to improve and extend the houses, because it took time to save the necessary funds. In 2012, most people interviewed, regardless of whether changes had already been made or not, said they were saving money to extend and improve their houses.

Houses were built with materials of poor quality, and in 2012, many things were in need of repair after nearly ten years of occupancy. With privatization, people cannot find assistance to make these repairs. Earlier, they went to the local office of the ministry dealing with internal displacement to ask for assistance, but now, as they owned the houses, they had to go the mayor of Kutaisi to ask for the same assistance as all the other established neighbourhoods and households in the town. In three of the houses I visited where no alterations had been made, there were families with two or three children, and they just could not afford to make improvements. In these cases, the houses were run down, pipes were leaking, and families living in the houses worried about the coming winter. In one case, simple homemaking practices such as cooking took place in the house

of the wife's mother, who lived in another block house. This family was looking at the improvements made to other houses and longing for the employment that could make it possible for them to make their house more comfortable.

## A Roof Is Not Enough: Marginalization and Inclusion

"Yes [the house is different from the collective centre], first of all, living conditions: there was a lot of smoke and noise. It is more private. I have my own house. If someone visits me, we can freely talk and discuss. We do not disturb anyone. We have our own garden. We have tomatoes. Almost everyone has tomatoes. We can have fruits and we can add more" (female interviewee, July 2003).

"It is not that we do not want to return. But we feel at home here. We are used to living here. Used to the neighbours—we are used to the transportation system. When we lived in the collective centre, there were always problems" (female interviewee, September 2010).

"No, this house will never be my home" (male interviewee, October 2012).

Home is a deeply ambiguous value and concept to include in discussions about housing for protracted displacement. Even when made available, a house that fulfils minimum standards does not automatically become home. Making a home may not even be the aim for displaced people at the place of displacement, and some inhabitants in the block houses did not feel that they had managed to achieve a home. Even at the same starting point—the same house and a shared history of displacement—the families in the settlement in Kutaisi had different relationships to the houses. Some people developed their lives and some remained in a marginal position as a result of different social, economic, and human capital. However, all residents whom I interviewed agreed that the block houses in Kutaisi enabled homemaking—the houses facilitated what Gregson[42] terms "estate agency" to varying degrees and made visible the dwelling as an enabling structure for achieving a set of minimum standards. As mentioned above, looking at the relationship between minimum standards for shelter and home as a critical value, safety and privacy are present in both. However, Young's introduction of individuation and preservation are distinct from housing and requires an understanding of home as a critical value.

Preservation and individuation concern a person's sense of identity and the relationship between the material house and identity; it is about how identity is influenced by the house and how the house may become a materialization of

identity that makes a continuity between past and present.[43] The permanency of the dwelling as somewhere to stay in the future, together with the changing materiality of the same dwelling, help to understand the dynamic process and changing and differing identities that people in the block houses experience and practise. The inhabitants of the block houses expressed very different relationships to the houses. In this context, a highly ambiguous dimension in the discussion of homemaking and home as a critical value in the block houses in Kutaisi is the gendered practices of homemaking, which attest to the feminist critique of home mentioned above: men are more involved in the constructing, while women are caretaking and hence associated more with the home that men are building. Despite these gendered practices, men and women in the block houses in Kutaisi considered constructing and caretaking as joint family projects. Together with gender, equally prominent in differentiating how people felt connected to the block houses were their economic and social positions before and after displacement. One family whose house had been extended long before privatization and as such represented one of the most established houses among the 42 block houses were perhaps the most articulate about their house in Kutaisi *not* being their home (see the last of three quotations above by the male IDP). Where the experience of lost social standing was most prominent after displacement, people tended to long for a future that was located in the past and did not want to feel home at the place of displacement. It was not always the condition of the house and the amount of work that people had put into the house that affected people's understanding of home. The understanding of their own status in Georgian society was perhaps more prominent in understanding the role of the block houses in enabling home as a critical value. Their social status indicated the loss of social standing and what was considered lost future possibilities at the place of displacement.

The block houses influenced the status and social position of the residents, and their experience of social status influenced their relationship to their houses. Young emphasizes individuation as a critical value: a person without a home is quite literally deprived of individual existence. There is a connection between individuation, the status of IDPs, and the symbolic meaning of the IDP dwelling. The collective centre has become a symbol of displacement—of people being out of place. The block houses continue to be termed the "IDP settlement" by neighbouring non-displaced residents, but the 42 block houses seem to have been given a status different from that of the collective centres. The residents of the block houses state that they live in an attractive neighbourhood, and maintain relations with non-displaced as well as displaced. The houses can clearly be seen as tools for human activity,[44] and the houses have helped to achieve Young's fourth critical value of home as preservation: the activity of safeguarding the meaningful things in which one sees the stories of oneself embodied and rituals of remembrance that reiterate those stories. While many of the people I interviewed had a nostalgic relationship with ideas of home, they dreamed of a home that they lost and could never be regained. The way the block houses enabled preservation is, however, very different from nostalgia. The houses enable homemaking in accordance with how past experiences have taught them what a home should be. They are not recreating Abkhazia; rather, the houses encourage preservation, which offers the possibility of connecting the past in Abkhazia and the future in their houses in Kutaisi.

### Home as a Critical Value in Protracted Displacement

When home as a critical value, as suggested by Iris Marion Young, was fulfilled in the block houses, it was not because of the material structure of the houses alone. However, the material house played together with the location, the garden, and the social, human, and economic capital that the houses enabled to some extent. The block houses made homemaking possible, made people envisage a possible future in the block houses, and facilitated home as a critical value, although individuation, preservation, safety, and privacy were not necessarily achieved by everyone. There are particular power relations, mechanisms, and processes that may help to understand the unequal achievement of the values of home through the block houses.

At the time the block houses in Kutaisi were built, they represented an exceptional example among the housing projects for internally displaced from Abkhazia. Later the houses built for the displaced from South Ossetia in 2008, mentioned above, were built in a similar style. However, some key differences must be emphasized. First, the houses were in larger settlements that hence resembled displaced person's camps, with a higher level of segregation. Additionally, their location, although sometimes close to a village of non-displaced persons, had even fewer opportunities for livelihoods than in towns and cities.

It will not be possible for every IDP in Georgia to have a house and a garden in a central town location. But the case of the block houses in Kutaisi is important, because it shows what the enabling structure of a house can and cannot do. By analyzing this relatively successful story of housing for displaced people in protracted displacement, it is possible to show the importance of shifting from shelter to housing when considering protracted displacement. It is also possible to show that a house is not enough, but that we need to integrate the idea of home into the way we think about the house as a material structure.

I have suggested that more effort should go into developing a minimum standard for housing in protracted displacement that engages with home, not as a nostalgic idea or as homeland, but house as home—as a safe place from where agency can be pursued, and lives can be lived during displacement.

Including home as a critical value in housing for protracted displacement requires considering the ways in which people's statuses as internally displaced and their position in the societies where they live are understood. So far people have not escaped the humanitarian category of IDP that largely restricts people's inclusion among the non-displaced. The maintenance of subjectivity, identity, and consequently house as home through the block houses, represents a liberating potential. This potential has not been fully achieved, and home may be a problematic idea to include in housing. Although people may or may not want to make the house where they live a home, the possibility of house-as-home should be accessible. Housing in protracted displacement requires housing standards for permanent living where the future is considered possible in that dwelling. As Young says,[45] "Even if people have minimal shelter of their own …, they need a certain level of material comfort in their home for it to serve as a place of identity construction and the development of the spirit of resistance.… In this way having a home is indeed today having a privilege."

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*Cathrine Brun is a geographer and teaches at the Department of Geography at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her research concerns protracted displacement and recovery and development after war and disasters. Her main geographical area of research has been South Asia and the South Caucasus.*

*The author may be contacted at cathrine.brun@svt.ntnu.no.*

## Notes

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# Microbuses and Mobile Homemaking in Exile: Sudanese Visiting Strategies in Cairo[1]

## Anita Fábos

### Abstract

*Paying home visits to mark social events and maintain networks is an established cultural pattern in Arab countries. Northern Sudanese displaced in Cairo in the 1990s made significant efforts to continue visiting each other in their temporary homes, despite having to travel long distances to members of their widely scattered networks. The deterioration of the legal and political status of Sudanese living in Egypt during the 1990s contributed to longer-term uncertainty for those who sought safety and security in Cairo. In this article, I argue that this long-term uncertainty constitutes a protracted refugee situation, and that Sudanese visiting practices constituted a mobile homemaking strategy that actively contributed to the negotiation of a complex ethnic identity in their protracted exile. Ranging across space and connecting people through experiences and values of Sudanese "homeyness," visiting during these fraught years connected individuals and networks into constellations that recreated familiar patterns of homemaking but also encouraged new meanings granted to homeland and belonging. Woven through the more familiar relationship between "home" and "away" were the policy positions about urban refugees taken by the Egyptian government, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, International Organization for Migration, and other humanitarian aid and resettlement agencies, which produced a state-centred view of "home" for Sudanese.*

### Résumé

*Dans les pays Arabes, rendre une visite à domicile pour commémorer les événements de la vie sociale communautaire, ainsi que pour maintenir les réseaux, fait partie des pratiques culturelles consacrées par l'usage. Les Soudanais du nord en situation de déplacement au Caire durant les années 90 faisaient des efforts considérables pour continuer de se rendre visite dans leurs domiciles temporaires malgré la nécessité de devoir effectuer de longs trajets pour rejoindre ceux qui faisaient partie de leurs réseaux dispersés. La détérioration du statut juridique et politique des Soudanais résidant en Égypte pendant les années 90 avait contribué à une situation d'incertitude à long terme pour ceux qui cherchaient la sécurité et la stabilité au Caire. Je soutiens dans cet article que cette incertitude marquait les Soudanais comme des réfugiés à long terme. Leurs visites à domicile faisaient ainsi partie d'une stratégie pour établir un domicile en mobilité qui a fortement contribué à composer une identité ethnique complexe dans le contexte de leur exil prolongé. En s'étendant à travers l'espace et reliant ces individus par les expériences et les valeurs de la 'domesticité' soudanaise, le fait de rendre visite à domicile pendant ces années de précarité tissait non seulement des liens entre individus et réseaux, reproduisant ainsi une constellation de motifs connus associés à l'établissement d'un domicile, mais favorisait aussi l'essor de nouvelles significations liées aux notions de patrie et d'appartenance.*

*Entre la dialectique plus familière de «chez soi» et «ailleurs» circulaient les positions politiques vis-à-vis des réfugiés urbains adoptées par le gouvernement égyptien, l'UNHCR, l'OIM, ainsi que d'autres organismes d'aide humanitaire et de réinstallation, qui avaient crée une idée de «domicile» chez les Soudanais axée sur l'état.*

### Introduction

My Sudanese friend Khalda lives near the end of the Ma'adi–El Marg line in 'Ain Shams. The Metro, completed in 1989, had cut her 90-minute commuting time to her downtown Cairo job in half.

One afternoon, I met up with Khalda as she was leaving the office. "I told Majdy that I would stop by for a visit later," she said.

"Will we still go to visit Samira this afternoon?" I asked.

"Yes," she assured me, "but I have to be home early because Fatima's mother is sick and I have to pass by."

We set off on foot to the nearby Sudanese Victims of Torture Group office for a quick visit with Khalda's activist friends, then hopped on the Metro for two stops to the Ramsis station, where we boarded a Toyota microbus, waited for it to fill up with passengers, and set off through the late afternoon traffic to the suburb of Nasr City. An hour or more of slow going in the summer heat brought us to the refugee family we had planned to visit. Khalda's long day would end after several more social calls in her own neighbourhood, another hour away by microbus.

Khalda's visits that day in 1996 encompassed three discrete and far-flung neighbourhoods in Cairo, then home to some 15 million residents and including a rapidly growing number of forced migrants seeking safety and security from the hard-line Islamist government in Khartoum. The time Khalda spent traversing the city on public transportation far exceeded the short visits with the various people in her interlocking social networks. An unmarried secretary in her mid-twenties, Khalda had fewer and different social obligations compared with those of married women with children or her male counterparts, but still spent a good deal of her free time calling on other Sudanese. Sudanese in Cairo have seen their social networks expand from a previous focus on kin and neighbours to include sets of colleagues old and new, acquaintances and fellow activists from Cairo's burgeoning NGO movement, and the relatives and friends of these individuals, most moving to and through Cairo seeking asylum, medical treatment, or temporary escape from the oppressive political climate back home. With high levels of unemployment and depression in the community, most Sudanese in my study found solace, mutual aid, and entertainment through social visits and were prepared to travel long distances to achieve these benefits.

For people forced to live in an unfamiliar setting for an indeterminate length of time, home may take on a heightened meaning, as if experienced for the first time in the breach. Yet, as Brun and Fábos[2] note, home for forced migrants in protracted conditions of displacement is both contextual and fluid, experienced individually and socially, and connects local, national, and political dimensions. For Sudanese exiles, Cairo in the 1990s became a canvas for a particular set of notions about home that were as ephemeral as they were tied to long-standing historical identities. The Republic of Sudan, carved out of Greater Egypt in the twentieth century, had provided "Sudanese" a sense of national homeland for a relatively short time; identities shared with Egyptians, such as "Arab" and "Muslim," fellow anti-colonial independence fighter, and "brother" in an ancient Nile Valley civilization endured. But "home" for Sudanese in Cairo was also connected to particular Sudanese ways of being and doing, of a moral world view that provided Sudanese Arab Muslims with a distinctive ethos. In the 1990s, this ethos was to be challenged by a rapidly developing political and economic crisis that required Sudanese to make frightening choices on staying in Egypt or seeking even less familiar alternatives, and postponing indefinitely any "return" to the dusty streets and low-slung dwellings of northern Sudan.

I have argued elsewhere[3] that Sudanese in Cairo, during the politically uncertain 1990s, nurtured an identity that enabled them to participate in Egypt's official "brotherhood" discourse while cultivating a private Sudanese ethnicity based on what they determined to be their superior propriety in Muslim and Arab norms of behaviour. Publicly, Sudanese were "at home" in Cairo, while privately they lamented the poor manners of the Egyptians, so different from "back home." The official fiction that Sudanese were "at home" in Egypt had the all-too-real effect of voiding the possibility of the international community addressing their predicament by finding Sudanese resettlement possibilities in a new national home. The particular "constellation of home"[4] that emerged for Sudanese was a contested one, with Sudanese conceptions of domestic and territorial unfamiliarity loudly overruled by Egyptian insistence that "brothers" could never be "guests" in their own home.

The deterioration of the legal and political status of Sudanese living in Egypt during the 1990s contributed to longer-term uncertainty for those who sought safety and security in Cairo. Sudanese visiting practices helped to maintain networks of mutual support and identity for people living in increasingly protracted, precarious circumstances; furthermore, visiting constituted a mobile home-making strategy that actively contributed to the negotiation of a complex ethnic identity in protracted exile. Ranging

across space and connecting people through experiences and values of Sudanese "homeyness," visiting during these fraught years connected individuals and networks into constellations that recreated familiar patterns of homemaking but also encouraged new meanings granted to homeland and belonging. Woven through the more familiar relationship between "home" and "away" were the policy positions about urban refugees taken by the Egyptian government, UNHCR, International Organisation for Migration, and other humanitarian aid and resettlement agencies, which produced an additional dimension of "home."

The ethnographic inquiry from which this smaller study is drawn was conducted between 1994 to 1999 as part of my doctoral and post-doctoral research among Cairo's Arabic-speaking northern Sudanese–identified denizens. This period was momentous for government reprisals on Sudanese living in Egypt following the 1995 presidential assassination attempt, reputedly by Sudanese operatives, which in my view triggered a shift in Sudanese experiences of belonging. During that time, I spent time with dozens of Sudanese families and individuals in varied settings—private homes, offices, cultural events, educational institutions—and participated in numerous discussions with Sudanese, Egyptian, and other colleagues to explore the unique characteristics of Cairo as a site of sanctuary for political exiles from Sudan, and the role of the Egyptian state in offering legal refuge. Names and identifying details for all of my research participants have been changed for confidentiality and to reflect the real risks associated with living as a Sudanese forced migrant in Egypt. My positioning as a Euro-American, Arabic-speaking woman married to a Sudanese businessman undoubtedly shaped my community access and understanding. My own recollections of trips to visit Sudanese friends across Cairo—the visceral experience of sitting crammed in among fellow microbus passengers, feeling the runnels of sweat under my clothing, and tossing with the movement of the driver's multiple stops and starts—brought home the sheer physical discomfort involved in paying social calls. I propose that Sudanese exiles were willing to travel long distances to visit their fellow Sudanese as a strategy for coping with their protracted liminal circumstances of exile, and that this strategy constituted mobile homemaking and contributed to a particular ethnic identity.

### Cairo as a Protracted Refugee Situation: Protracted Circumstances for Urban Forced Migrants

The use of the policy term *protracted refugee situations* (PRS) to describe long-term circumstances of displacement for people fleeing conflict first came into widespread use in the new millennium, although the UNHCR and other organizations had previously managed humanitarian caseloads resistant to "solutions" as early as the Second World War. The protracted existence of refugee camps where humanitarian assistance is available and residence is considered, at least theoretically, as "temporary" does not preclude occupants from leaving; indeed, a percentage of "immobilized" encamped refugees are always on the move seeking work, education, and marriage partners, or simply a way out; these movers are, additionally, a part of urbanization flows and processes that include nationals and border-crossers, both voluntary and coerced. Thus, urban areas in the global South are absorbing not only labour migrants from rural areas, but also internally displaced migrants, border-crossing refugees, and a host of others with variable legal statuses.[5]

There is growing recognition that people "out of place" living in urban areas experience many of the same conditions of "permanent temporariness" as do encamped refugees in protracted refugee situations. As the UNHCR points out, "Long-staying urban refugees are not typically included in an understanding of protracted refugee situations. Yet tens of thousands live clandestinely in urban areas, avoiding contact with the authorities and bereft of legal status."[6] These "urban forced migrants" are often ineligible for government services and, if "unregistered," are unable to access humanitarian relief, and from the perspective of regulation, remain largely an "invisible" population.[7] With few resources and tenuous legal status, these women and men—and their undocumented children—have few options for addressing their temporary circumstances. Furthermore, the pan-Arab discourse regarding forced migrants from neighbouring countries, which combines notions of Arab hospitality with Islamic concepts of sanctuary, has resulted in "guest" policies that produce ambiguous "permanent" temporary residence while limiting access to services and protection.[8] The long-standing populations of forced migrants living in Cairo, in addition to Sudanese, include Palestinians,[9] Eritreans and Ethiopians,[10] Somalis,[11] and more recently, Iraqis.[12] Sudanese nationals from a variety of ethnic and religious groups make up one of the largest populations of urban forced migrants in Cairo.[13]

Egyptian immigration and international refugee policies have shifted over time according to local or domestic political circumstances, global conditions for mobility, and organizational responses.[14] Migrants and "foreigners" have been regulated differently according to their nationality; receiving any international recognition of asylum status is thus highly dependent on the political moment and relations between their national government and the state of Egypt. For example, Egypt granted Palestinians virtually the same rights as Egyptian nationals in the 1970s, including access to national health care, education, and jobs, only to rescind

this status in 1972 following the events of Black September in Jordan. Sudanese moving in and out of Egyptian territory have seen their residency rights and requirements for border crossing change over the last 50 years, sometimes dramatically. While the 1982 Integration Agreement did away with the need to show passports at the Egypt-Sudan border,[15] this residency permission was rescinded after the 1996 UN Security Council sanctions against Sudan following the 1995 Islamist attack of the Egyptian president. Sudanese already in Egypt experienced harassment, arrest, and occasionally deportation, and Sudanese aircraft were denied rights to Egyptian airspace.[16]

Excluded from both domestic citizenship and international recognition as refugees, Sudanese participants in my study were obliged to navigate an ambiguous and uncertain policy environment. Their protracted uncertainty shaped their ability to feel "at home" and to be able to "make home" in Egypt in specific ways for at least a decade. The UNHCR office in Egypt only rarely granted refugee status to Sudanese nationals living in Egypt, citing the residential and other benefits provided by the 1982 Integration Agreement between the two nations. Even though Sudanese began to flee to Egypt in the thousands following the 1989 Islamist coup in Sudan, for the six years until the 1995 abrogation of residency rights the increasingly desperate Sudanese forced migrants could not claim asylum in any meaningful way.[17] And, as a result of the Egyptian government's "Unity of the Nile Valley" language promoting the notion that Sudanese were "at home" in Egypt as "brothers of the same mother," the grim economic conditions and legal limbo experienced by Sudanese endured. Finally, while the door to receiving international refugee status did indeed open after 1995, the official Egyptian discourse of "brotherhood" did not significantly change, and the Sudanese response to their circumstances remained ambiguous. Thus, the first part of my argument for this article is that conditions for Sudanese over most of the decade can be usefully analyzed as a "protracted refugee situation," despite the absence of an encampment policy and perhaps as a result of an international inability to address the humanitarian concerns of thousands of people "out of place" in an urban environment. In the following section, I describe the particular liminal positionality for Sudanese forced migrants in Cairo, both legally and culturally, that has shaped a strategy of mobile homemaking.

### Cairo as "Border Zone": Urban Life, Liminality, and Mobility for Sudanese Refugees

Even in the mid-1990s, Cairo was considered a "megacity." The metropolitan area of Cairo proper spans 453 square kilometres, and including the urbanized outskirts is currently home to more than 18 million people.[18] While in-migration is no longer the prime reason for Cairo's continued population growth and expansion, it is still a destination and hub for Egyptians, especially young people, from rural and provincial areas, as well as for people on the move mainly from conflict zones in the Middle East and Africa.[19] Cairo's varied urbanscapes range from the faded elegance of *wust al-balad* (downtown) and the island neighbourhood of Zamalek, industrial working-class areas like Imbaba and Shubra, once-rural villages sprouting apartment buildings alongside fields of *barsoum* (alfalfa), vast residential zones such as Nasr City that have sprung up along the city's ring road, squatter areas and other informal settlements built up by newcomers on the margins of more established neighbourhoods, and gated communities with names like Dreamland for the super-rich.[20]

Urban life in Cairo is characterized by huge disparities of wealth and opportunity. With one of the highest urban densities in the world, Cairo's population is mostly young and largely poor,[21] and lives in rickety concrete-and-brick multi-family apartment blocks stretching far into the dusty horizon. Egypt's incorporation into neoliberal global networks of finance, and subsequent attempts by Washington to shape economic growth through structural adjustment policies and massive aid packages are rendered visible through the rapid rise of five-star hotels, residential developments for military officers, private hospitals, and suburban shopping malls, all served by a vast network of newly built elevated roads, underground sewer and water systems, and the ongoing expansion of the Cairo Metro. The general public has limited or controlled access to open space: public places like plazas, parks, mosques, or museum complexes are managed in different ways, such as ticketing, security guards, and surveillance,[22] while wealthier Cairenes socialize at members-only sporting clubs in specific neighbourhoods.

In the 1990s, Sudanese from all socio-economic levels were present in Cairo. During his 15 years of exile in Egypt, former Sudanese military ruler and president Jaafar Al-Nimeiri resided in a splendid villa in Heliopolis. Other wealthy and connected Sudanese, such as Sudan's last democratically elected president Sadiq al-Mahdi, lived in grand apartments in Cairo's more exclusive neighbourhoods, such as Heliopolis or Zamalek. Many urban professionals also left Sudan for political reasons at that time, and bought, or more commonly rented, apartments in middle-class areas such as Mohandiseen and Maadi. Those fleeing with fewer resources or from humble backgrounds found themselves dingy accommodations in rundown buildings downtown or cheap apartments sprinkled among newer blocks. Some, with relatives who had previously emigrated to Egypt in the 1940s when Sudanese were being recruited for posts connected with the military, rented rooms among

these long-standing clusters of Sudanese families in 'Ain Shams and Abbasiyya. While Sudanese did congregate in certain areas across the city, the tens of thousands of refugees[23] arriving after the 1989 coup were distributed broadly and unevenly among Cairo's restless millions.

Cairo—also known by the charming moniker *Umm al-Dunya* (Mother of the World)—is a cosmopolitan city shaped over several millennia, and its residents and their religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage reflect multiple conquests and migrations. Nubian, Ismaili, Coptic, Mamluk, and European identities have been variously blurred or revealed by historical processes.[24] In the 1990s, the Egyptian state managed Cairo's multicultural denizens according to a number of binaries: Egyptian/foreigner, Muslim/Christian, citizen/refugee, and a few others. Specific state policies whereby "foreigners" and "nationals" paid differential prices for housing and schooling, as well as for hotels and tourist attractions, helped to establish these boundaries among locals, reinforced by Egyptian media coverage of foreigners. As a Muslim state, Egypt also separated Muslim and Christian legal as well as religious identities with policies that managed the Christian minority through employment quotas and limited church building permits; the state additionally stands accused of turning a blind eye to anti-Christian violence.[25] The citizen/refugee distinction emerged in the twentieth century as a function of the nation-state system's management of civilians displaced across borders by war. Egypt, an original signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention for the Protection of Refugees, has provided political asylum and refugee status for decades, but with reservations that limit rights. Additionally Egyptian immigration law does not grant the possibility of naturalization,[26] and so refugees are essentially regulated as foreigners for as long as they reside in Egypt.

Cairo's dynamic mixture of cultures cannot, of course, be completely brought into order by these regulatory categories, and Muslim Arab Sudanese in particular inhabited an ambiguous space in the national imagination of Egypt. Even after the unilateral abrogation of the Integration Agreement in 1988 by president Sadiq al-Mahdi of Sudan, Sudanese in Egypt continued to be treated as quasi-citizens, with full access to national education, health care, and employment. As fellow Arabs and Muslims, furthermore, with many mutual ties and shared history of colonialism[27] and regional struggles for independence, Sudanese in Egypt largely felt "at home," even after it became politically impossible for most to return to Sudan after the Islamists came to power. Even after the Egyptian government's 1995 crackdown on Sudanese residents, Sudanese took to the streets to demonstrate in solidarity with their Egyptian "brothers."

Neither party fully accepted the notion that Sudanese were foreigners in Egypt. Refugee status, an internationally recognized legal category, is predicated upon a person's need to seek protection from another state in the event that one's own state is unable or unwilling to provide it. Arguing that Sudanese in Egypt inhabited a special legal category, the UNHCR was not authorized by the Egyptian government to regularly process Sudanese for refugee status until 1994.[28]

Muslim Arab Sudanese during this period thus inhabited a liminal position—culturally as well as legally. As uncertainty and anxiety among Sudanese in Cairo grew, a subtle counter-narrative to the official "brothers in a united Nile Valley" discourse emerged that quietly asserted a distinct Sudanese identity on the basis of moral behaviour. When Sudanese in Cairo experienced the collective punishment of the Egyptian state after 1995, the feeling of alienation grew and the need for solace and solidarity with fellow Sudanese in exile seemed to increase. Yet even as a new form of ethnicity emerged, Sudanese were reluctant to distinguish themselves completely from their Egyptian hosts, choosing as boundary markers attainable qualities like hospitality, generosity, and modesty. This ambiguous ethnicity, I have argued elsewhere, stemmed from the uniquely liminal position Sudanese inhabited in the 1990s.[29]

While Muslim Arab Sudanese in the "greater Nile Valley" were between belonging and foreignness for historical reasons, and between citizenship and refugeeness as a function of immigration policy, Cairo was also a place of restlessness, struggle, and agency. The liminal category occupied by Sudanese, and the protracted nature of their predicament nevertheless did not prevent them from actively strategizing to improve their circumstances. Cairo, one of the major hubs for information, travel, international organizations, and financial networks in the region, served as a critical border zone for Sudanese. Cairo was a place to wait while a work visa to Bahrain, Qatar, or Saudi Arabia was arranged. It was the headquarters of the UNHCR, which had begun refugee-status determination and—for a fraction of Sudanese—a process of resettlement to North America, Europe, or Australia. Cairo was also a thriving marriage market for Sudanese hoping to find partners with attractive prospects beyond Egyptian borders. Sudanese in the 1990s were stuck in a policy limbo that challenged previous assertions of brotherhood and undermined the notion of Egypt as a second "home." Nevertheless, Cairo became a significant confluence of Sudanese mobilities, both real and aspirational. Fellow members of their community of exiles comprised the most significant network of support, help, information, and solace. Visiting each other's households was a major daily activity for many Sudanese. In the

following section, I outline the second part of my argument—that Sudanese visiting practices became a type of mobile homemaking in uncertain, temporary circumstances.

### An Uncertain "Home": Temporary Visiting Patterns and Mobile Social Networks

Visiting to mark social events and maintain networks is an established cultural pattern in Arab countries. The ethnographic literature of the Middle East is rich with examples of visiting strategies that enable women and men to access information, status, and resources through networks that include both kin and non-kin. A cursory look at anthropologists writing on urban Sudanese visiting patterns exemplifies the degree to which group strategies, while drawing upon Sudanese cultural norms and ideals, are shaped by local and time-specific circumstances. Salem-Murdoch[30] describes the ways in which farmers resettled on an agricultural scheme built up access to resources such as water and other agricultural inputs by cultivating social networks in creative ways. Ismail's qualitative analysis of women's visiting patterns in urban Sudanese settings points to changes in whom a woman visits, depending on the degree of urbanization.[31] After close kin visits, she found that women in Khartoum gave priority to visiting female friends compared to their sisters in provincial towns, who tended to visit neighbours more frequently.

Anthropologists have observed that visiting strategies may serve as cultural metaphors, the analysis of which illuminates processes of social change. For instance, Eickelman's article[32] examining visiting patterns of Omani women in a provincial oasis town describes a gendered strategy that links birth-giving to the accumulation of social capital, producing in its wake significant demographic change. In this context, the metaphor of desirable fecundity points to a deeper need for women to connect with one another to exchange crucial information during a time of dramatic social and economic transformation. The act of giving birth, then, enables women to receive and pay social calls, in the process strategizing over how to enhance status and build critical links in their changing social world.

In Cairo, both Egyptian and Sudanese residents from a range of socio-economic classes acknowledge the social obligation to pay visits to individuals with new babies, to those who are travelling or returning from travel, or who are ill or bereaved. We should not discount the pleasure of spending time in the company of one's relatives or friends as a reason for visiting. There are also set events in the Islamic ritual calendar where Egyptian and Sudanese Muslims visit a wide network of people, and a corresponding calendar for the smaller number of Egyptian and Sudanese Copts in both countries. Judging from my own research, Sudanese

visiting patterns in Cairo have broadened beyond visits to family members and neighbours to include cross-gender visits to friends and colleagues (though at the office, not at home) and *hafalat al-wada'a* (goodbye parties), which may draw a wide variety of people across kin, professional, and political groups. For example, at a goodbye lunch at the house of a work colleague, Zein—a Sudanese exile leaving for a resettlement place in the United States—was toasted by family left behind, members of his religious brotherhood, a Coptic businessman, and two anthropologists.

However, since the tremendous influx of Sudanese forced migrants to Egypt in the mid- and late nineties, visiting as a Sudanese social activity took on a new dimension that explicitly related the type, frequency, and physical distance over which visiting networks extended to Sudanese ethnic identity in Egypt. The uncertainty that faced Sudanese in protracted exile in Cairo and the context-specific discourse of "home" in Egypt rendered their homemaking practices mobile, fluid, and ephemeral. And, in a subtle response to Egyptian declarations of solidarity and acceptance, Sudanese expressed their moral superiority and hence separate identity within the larger Cairene society of which they are part through visiting strategies that emphasized the duty to remain connected to family and friends despite the great difficulty in doing so.

### Mobility and Mobile Social Networks

Cairo is a bustling and crowded city, and while there are many options for moving from one place to another, congestion, noise, and pollution make getting around slow and unpleasant for most residents. Transportation is stratified, with middle- and upper-class car-owners jostling for space on congested streets with taxis, buses, motorcycles, bicycles, and the occasional horse- or donkey-drawn cart. The majority of residents rely on an extensive public/private transportation system to get around;[33] public buses are the cheapest option and are crowded and noisy, while the Cairo Metro and a network of private microbuses cost more but offer riders somewhat more comfort, at least after rush hour. The incessant hum of traffic is punctuated loudly and often by car horns blaring their warning. Routes are often snarled with traffic jams, provoking outbursts among short-tempered drivers. For most Cairenes, getting around the city is stressful and exasperating.

Sudanese exiles adapted to their Cairo surroundings, despite nostalgic comparisons between their spacious compounds back home and the cramped Cairo high-rises where their apartments were located. As newcomers, they learned to negotiate the often long distances between their apartments and those of their relatives and friends. These trips could involve any number of types of public transportation,

each with a different set of practical problems and unspoken rules. Cairo's underground rapid transit, the Metro, required newcomers to make a quick mental map of the stations in relation to the random pattern of Sudanese residences, and to learn a bewildering variety of intermediary conveyances between points of exit from the Metro and the local address of the object of their visit. These might include one or more of the following modes of transport: public buses, where a cheap ticket would pay for an unsettlingly crowded ride; private microbuses that guaranteed every passenger a seat but made money for their owners by racing through their routes at breakneck speed and screeching to a halt for potential passengers who flagged them down on the roadside; street taxis that cost ten times the amount of a microbus ticket but provided door-to-door service; and sometimes unlicensed taxis that provided short-distance shuttle service. Sudanese on their visiting rounds might make a dozen small trips across several modes of transport.

Sudanese visiting mobilities took a variety of forms that were furthermore shaped by gender expectations and class differences. People—mostly men—would walk from one visit to the next largely if those they were visiting were located in downtown Cairo, for several possible gendered reasons. According to my research, educated Sudanese men in exile in Egypt had particular difficulties reconstituting a livelihood, and downtown Cairo was a key neighbourhood where clusters of single Sudanese men could find cheaper apartments or even hotel rooms, and connect with other men in a similar predicament. Downtown Cairo was also the site of a significant level of Sudanese NGO activity, and many exiled men made the rounds of these small, dingy rented spaces to visit and drink tea with luckier men (and occasionally women) who worked there. It was not as common for Sudanese women in exile with time on their hands to visit colleagues or friends at their offices, and less acceptable for them to walk around in downtown Cairo. While public space in Cairo was by no means closed to women outright, women's inhabiting of that space was fraught with social and physical hazards, from attracting comment or even punishment for supposed transgressions of moral boundaries to sexual and racial harassment. Women thus more commonly used mechanized transport to get around, and—as a side effect of gendered norms of beauty and adornment—might wear elegant footwear that in any case would have made walking slow or uncomfortable for them.

While most Sudanese in Cairo visited daily, these visits varied greatly by occasion and purpose—and shaped the extent of people's range quite dramatically from day to day. Both men and women visited family members and close friends most frequently, and to my understanding tried to rent apartments close by (i.e., accessible by one mode of transport). More striking than the maintenance of kin networks through visiting was the degree to which Sudanese exiles made social calls to people less familiar to them. Although social connections by definition did exist—one might pay a visit to a university friend's sister or uncle, for example, or include acquaintances met at a friend's house in another round of visits—I was intrigued by the fluid, ephemeral quality of visiting patterns. As new Sudanese exiles arrived in the city, and others sought work in the Gulf or found opportunities to travel to the West, the visiting networks of which they were temporarily part shifted and altered to accommodate different people living in different places.

What endured across this landscape of kaleidoscopic connections was a distinctly Muslim Arab Sudanese sense of home in exile. Mobile visiting strategies in Cairo in the 1990s became a key feature of Sudanese social life and identity. The time and effort that was spent by Sudanese in maintaining and pursuing social networks through visiting one another is one of several metaphors used by Sudanese to highlight differences between their communities in Cairo and those of their Egyptian hosts. And, although my research participants did not emphasize the material aspects of Sudanese domestic space in exile per se, they did make frequent note of what they considered the "un-Sudanese" enthusiasm for material possessions demonstrated by Egyptian neighbours and friends.

Zeinab, a middle-aged professional Sudanese woman, described a visit to an Egyptian colleague, during which the colleague drew Zeinab's attention to one expensive item after another. As part of a generalized process of boundary-marking that set Sudanese propriety against an Egyptian "lack of manners," Zeinab made it clear to me that Sudanese did not mark their status through possessions as did Egyptians, thus bringing them closer to the Muslim Arab ideal of modesty. Hospitality to visitors by Sudanese exiles with little to spare was also presented as a significant difference between themselves and their Egyptian hosts. Karim, a young married political exile, told me that his apartment had never been empty of visitors over the four years he had been residing in Cairo. "They just call from the airport and say, 'We are here,' and then you go and pick them up," he said. The claim that Sudanese are generous and welcoming hosts—another Muslim Arab ideal—was contrasted with a purported Egyptian standard of putting up their relatives in a hotel. "Egyptians," asserted a young Sudanese woman, a medical doctor, "love their country but don't care for one another, while Sudanese love one another, but don't care for their country."

The reality is more complex than this ideal portrays. While these examples illustrate a discourse of placing

responsibilities to people ahead of accumulating material possessions, one could also argue that Sudanese, living in rented accommodations and struggling to make ends meet during their extended exile, simply did not have the wherewithal to focus attention and resources on their domestic surroundings. I heard complaints about individuals who had overlooked social obligations to bereaved families, or who visited friends only when they needed a favour. Furthermore, because of the ever-changing quality of social networks due to the mobility of northern Sudanese individuals, people might maintain visiting patterns for a few months only, either moving on themselves or having to replace friends and relatives in their visiting rounds with other people.

However, the obvious need to stay in touch with people in a community increasingly fragmented by urban sprawl, labour migration, and resettlement opportunities only partially explains why visiting played such a central role in Sudanese identity discourse in 1990s Cairo. The Sudanese portrayal of themselves as having a strong sense of obligation to visit vis-à-vis Egyptians became one aspect of an identity discourse that uses shared cultural patterns to redefine Sudanese subordinate status in the eyes of their hosts. By calling on Arab and Islamic meta-narratives that involve Egyptians as kin of equal, or lesser, standing, Sudanese reproach Egyptians for what they see as a weak sense of social duty in the larger Arab context and thus redefine and contest their own marginal role in Egyptian society.

### Visiting as Homemaking

The domestic and community life of Sudanese exiles in Cairo in the 1990s was characterized by the heightened importance of paying social visits to a wide range of fellow Sudanese displaced by Sudan's ongoing crisis and rendered "temporary" by Egyptian immigration policy. While receiving visitors in their temporary dwellings was significant, I propose that the fluid and dynamic practice of carrying out social visits itself was the key means by which Sudanese made and remade home in Cairo. The day-to-day acts of visiting performed by Sudanese, I suggest, were not only a pragmatic and comforting strategy for members of Sudanese networks, but additionally knitted together individual dwellings across space to produce a Home[34] in exile for Sudanese in Cairo.

In addition to accompanying my research participants on their frequent visiting excursions across Cairo to visit friends and family members in the Sudanese community, I had the privilege of being welcomed hundreds of times into their dwellings to drink tea or share a meal. Most lived in rented apartments, furnished with cheap living room sets and cast-off tables and chairs by landlords who charged a premium to their Sudanese tenants according to Egypt's

"Foreigners Law."[35] Big suitcases used for storage and perhaps standing by for the next opportunity for travel, could be seen in almost every apartment resting on the tops of beat-up wardrobes. Available apartments were not necessarily located in the same neighbourhood, and it was not particularly common for Sudanese to live in close proximity to the people who were significant in their social networks.

Sudanese hospitality to visiting guests was a paramount feature of exile homemaking in Cairo, even if the physical aspects of Sudanese domestic spaces were not particularly extolled. Symbolically, Sudanese hosts made their small, dim, rented accommodations homey through performing acts associated with Sudanese culture and identity. In Sudan, homes are perfumed by casting a few oily sticks of sandalwood or other fragrances (*bukhuur*) onto charcoal embers, and the scent wafts through the rooms. Sudanese living temporarily in Cairo apartments reproduce this homey smell, more often using electric incense burners acquired from relatives in Gulf countries.[36] Visitors are offered sweetened milky tea, sometimes flavoured with cloves, cardamom, and cinnamon, and biscuits—in elegant serving sets for wealthier Sudanese exiles, and in glasses on plastic trays for those of more limited resources. Milky spiced tea is a comforting and characteristic of a Sudanese way of consuming tea. While Egyptians also welcome their guests with tea and biscuits, it is unusual for Egyptians to take tea with milk, let alone spices.

Like the Egyptians from whom they rented, Sudanese in exile always maintained a public space in close proximity to the front door to receive visitors. In smaller apartments, a front room might serve double duty as a space for visitors, as well as for dining or sleeping, whereas Sudanese with resources might rent or own a grander apartment with a front parlour set aside solely for receiving guests. I don't recall particular attention being drawn to the dwellings themselves. Rather, we would be greeted at the door by one or more of the residents—with reserved handshakes and greetings if the visitor was unknown, and with an extended welcome of shoulder-touching, hugging, hand-clasping, and lengthy and effusive salutations for closer friends or those met after a long while. Upon moving into the visiting space, it was common for visitors to greet each of the other guests individually, with newcomers moving around the circle of visitors similarly exchanging handshakes or hugs, depending on the closeness of the relationship. Occasionally a person would indicate a reluctance to exchange a physical greeting with a member of the opposite sex, by which it was understood that his or her interpretation of Islamic teachings proscribed such contact between unrelated men and women.

Typically, social visits took place in the afternoon and evening hours, although my companions and I were

frequently invited to people's homes to join them as lunch guests as well. Milky tea with lots of sugar, and sometimes biscuits, cake, or Egyptian sweets would be brought out—in a family dwelling perhaps by a married woman or her daughter, niece, or another friend, but perhaps by a young husband, or in an office setting, by any one of a number of men playing host. My field notes mention an occasion where, during a visit to a colleague, Salah, whose wife and children had recently arrived from Sudan, Salah's wife requested an unrelated male visitor to bring out a bowl of *mulukhiiya*[37] and another of rice, even though she was available to wait on guests. This example of fluid gender responsibilities was not uncommon in my experience, even though it fell outside the stated norms of Sudanese gender roles. Visitors would come and go; my own visits would range from 15 minutes (where I and my companions might wave away tea or sit for only a few minutes, staying long enough to exchange greetings before we made our way to the door escorted by the host) to a few hours. In some cases, a family might urge a young woman to stay the night if her place of residence was far away. Upon departure, in most cases a Sudanese host—whether a man or a woman—would accompany a guest out of the apartment to the door of the elevator, and on occasion all the way down to the street to say goodbye. When I queried Sudanese about this practice, I was told that a proper send-off was characteristic of Sudanese hospitality and, I was asked to note, not shared by Egyptian neighbours. Proper hosting of visitors, I came to understand, was part of a range of acts and comportment linked to a unique Sudanese sense of identity, self-consciously being promoted in Cairo.

On longer visits, hosts might chat with us about the comings and goings of Sudanese in our shared network—who had just come from Sudan, who was leaving on a work contract, the status of someone's resettlement claim. With more intimate relationships, conversations fluttered around news and analyses of our friends' and neighbours' marriage options, family crises, work, study, or project opportunities, and always politics. Conversations often led to plans for further visits. At one such gathering at the house of Abd al-Fattah and Laila, key figures in the Republican Brothers,[38] Amani learned that Laila's sister and young nephew would soon be traveling to Canada to join her husband there through a refugee family reunion program. After a discussion of whether woollen sweaters and jeans would be sufficient for the weather there in January, Amani promised that she would make sure to visit her before her imminent departure. During this particular evening, other visitors, mostly exiled Republican Brothers and Sisters, came and went from the apartment. Later, Abd al-Fattah changed from his Sudanese *jallabiiya*[39] to shirt and trousers and left

for an evening course at a local institute, while Laila's sister and an older female relative put on white *tobes*[40] to go out and do a bit of shopping, even while new visitors arrived. The fluid movement of visitors into and out of Abd al-Fattah and Laila's apartment, as well as the relaxed hosting responsibilities, would certainly have been familiar to Muslim Arab Sudanese from their social milieu back home in Sudan. Specific to the Cairo exile context, though, was a heightened awareness of visiting itself as *particularly* Sudanese. The overall importance of hospitality and the social ritual joining hosts and guests did lend their temporary dwellings-in-exile a Sudanese homeyness. I further posit that the networks of Sudanese traversing Cairo to participate in everyday acts of visiting created a community-in-exile that approximated a national Home in Egypt. And, in contrast to some of the ethnographic literature on the importance of visiting in nurturing mutual connections, the often impulsive, individual acts of visiting performed by exiled Sudanese in Cairo seemed to be less related to fulfilling social ideals of reciprocity than to collectively reminding themselves of their Home in Sudan and their communal identity.

Taking a mobilities perspective towards Sudanese homemaking practices in Cairo allows us to consider not only the visiting activities that took place in the concrete space of Sudanese apartments but additionally the interaction between Sudanese in motion across urban space. The volatile, ephemeral visiting networks that connected mobile Sudanese and their temporary dwellings in Cairo, I argue, are as much a function of homemaking as burning incense or providing familiar foods for visiting guests. Including mobile social practices such as visiting in our understanding of homemaking helps to theorize the creative agency of people in motion, and to recognize their contributions to reimagining home in exile.

### Conclusion

Cairo continues to be an important node in the Muslim Arab Sudanese diaspora, now spanning towns and cities worldwide in a rebuke to Sudan's inhospitable political climate. The Sudanese who are part of these networks now weave a Sudanese diaspora identity on a global scale through travel shaped by kin networks and family reunification policies, asylum-seeking and job opportunities, and collegiality and established Sudanese communities. Though complicated by variable immigration policies, an ideal of a national Sudanese homeland continues to be present in cultural and social practices, the sending of remittances "back home" and exile politics. Further to Muslim Arab Sudanese maintaining their own national identity, the international system continues to collect statistics on Sudanese nationals, some of whom identify as part of the Sudanese Muslim

Arab-identified mainstream while others identify as Darfurians, or as hailing from the Nuba Mountains. Even after the 2011 secession of South Sudan from the body politic of the Republic of Sudan, a discourse of a nation of Sudan endures in Sudanese constellations of home.

For a decade at the turn of the century, Cairo's ambiguous reception of Sudanese in exile provided the setting for a more volatile homemaking. During a prolonged period of political and legal limbo, exiled Sudanese resided in Cairo in a state of uncertainty, maintained by policies specific to historical Sudanese-Egyptian relations. Notwithstanding their liminal status, Sudanese also came to Cairo for its familiarity while seeking opportunities to travel elsewhere. Cairo in the 1990s was an important border zone, a hub of regional and international movement that offered the possibility for some Sudanese to transform their protracted temporary situation through work visas to Arab Gulf countries or political asylum in the West. While resisting the official Egyptian discourse of a united Nile Valley, home to Egyptians *and* Sudanese, Egypt's unique domestic policies towards Sudanese undoubtedly shaped their conception of a national Home separate from the Egyptian state.

While making a temporary home in Cairo, Sudanese in my study continued to pursue key cultural activities that maintained their sense of communal identity, many associated with the domestic—women and men cooked and ate familiar Sudanese foods like *kisra, weika,* and *'asiida,* listened to Sudanese music on cassette players, and pursued Sudanese ideals of beauty through elaborate bodily cleansing, decorating, and perfuming. These practices helped Sudanese to cultivate a private ethnic identity that grounded them in the face of the pressures of exile. But Sudanese in Cairo did not live in exclusively Sudanese neighbourhoods where communal traditions could be easily nurtured and transmitted. On the contrary, the apartments in which Sudanese lived for the years of their exile in Cairo were often far apart, separated by bustling swaths of commercial and residential sprawl. Despite the long and complicated journeys required to move from place to place in Cairo, Sudanese exerted extraordinary efforts to visit each other. Women and men, individually and in groups, often with children in tow, endured crowded and unpleasant conditions across different forms of transportation daily for visits that might last for less time than the journey itself.

These mobile visiting practices knit together far-flung dwellings across unfamiliar urban space into a social fabric visible only to their Sudanese participants. Although Sudanese apartment-dwellers did reproduce homey practices that they thought of as "typically" Sudanese, the domesticity of the dwellings was not the essence of Sudanese homemaking in exile. Rather, homemaking for Sudanese exiles comprised their aggregate acts of visiting, creating a shifting network of people connecting temporary households across urban space through their movements. Theorizing home and homemaking as a product of volatile networks helps us recognize the mobile strategies required to connect people across space and time. Not only did visiting provide social support, domestic comforts, and information for individual visitors and their hosts, it also allowed Sudanese to map a communal home in exile. Through a commitment to maintaining Sudanese community connections in the most difficult of urban settings, Sudanese in Cairo brought together mobile people and temporary places, thus imagining a virtual home that gave meaning to their exilic predicament.

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*Anita Fábos is an anthropologist who teaches at Clark University. She has engaged with research and praxis among Muslim Arab Sudanese forced migrants in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. Fábos's work explores transnational ethnic and religious identity, race, displacement, and gender among Muslim refugees at a time of intensifying discourses of "security" and "Islamic spiritual geography." The author may be contacted at afabos@clarku.edu.*

## Notes

1 This article began as a conference paper given in 2001 as part of a panel entitled "Urban 'Borderzones': Sudanese Refugees and Forced Migrants in Cairo" at the American Anthropological Association annual meetings. I thank my fellow panellists Carla Daughtry, Stephanie Riak Akuei, and Elizabeth Coker for a memorable session. I am grateful to Catherine Brun for her encouragement to revisit my nascent thinking on liminality, visiting, and home for this issue. David Sims, Diane Singerman, Linda Oldham, Max Rodenbeck, Ian Portman, and Muhammad Abd al-Wadoud influenced my thinking about Cairo's urban space. A note of appreciation for two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions improved the text, although any inaccuracies remain my own responsibility. Finally, I am forever indebted to Amira Ahmed Abderahman for including me in her own visiting network and sharing her remarkable insights with me.

2 Cathrine Brun and Anita Fábos, "Making Homes in Limbo? A Conceptual Framework," this issue.

3 Anita H. Fábos, *"Brothers" or Others? Propriety and Gender for Muslim Arab Sudanese in Egypt* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010).

4 Brun and Fábos, "Making Homes in Limbo?"

5 Anita H. Fábos and Gaim Kibreab, "Introduction," in "Refugees in Urban Settings of the Global South," special issue, *Refuge* 24, no. 1 (2007): 1–19; Gaim Kibreab, "Invisible Integration in the Greater Horn Region," in *Regional*

*Integration, Identity and Citizenship in the Greater Horn of Africa*, ed. Kidane Mengisteab and Redie Bereketeab. Eastern Africa Series, 69–110 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2012).

6  UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations: The Search for Practical Solutions," in *The State of the World's Refugees: Human Displacement in the New Millennium*, ed. Nada Merheb and Sean Loughna (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 107.

7  Kibreab, "Invisible Integration."

8  Victoria Mason, "The Im/Mobilities of Iraqi Refugees in Jordan: Pan-Arabism, 'Hospitality' and the Figure of the 'Refugee,'" *Mobilities* 6, no. 3 (2011): 355.

9  Oroub El Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948* (Ottawa: Institute for Palestinian Studies / IDRC, 2009).

10  Dereck Cooper, "Urban Refugees: Ethiopians and Eritreans in Cairo," *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 15, no. 2 (1992): 1–53.

11  Mulki Al-Sharmani, "Living Transnationally: Somali Diasporic Women in Cairo," *International Migration* 44, no. 1 (2006): 55–77.

12  Philippe Fargues, Saeed El-Masry, Sara Sadek, and Azza Shaban, *Iraqis in Egypt: A Statistical Survey in 2008* (Cairo: Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo, 2008).

13  Karen Jacobsen, Maysa Ayoub, and Alice Johnson, "Remittances to Transit Countries: The Impact on Sudanese Refugee Livelihoods in Cairo," *CMRS Working Papers* (2012); Lorraine Currie, "'Who Can Be Added': The Effects of Refugee Status Determination and Third Country Resettlement Processes on the Marriage Strategies, Rites, and Customs of the Southern Sudanese in Cairo," *Refuge* 24, no. 1 (2007): 71–87; Ayman Zohry, "The Place of Egypt in the Regional Migration System as a Receiving Country," *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 19, no. 3 (2003): 129–49; Themba Lewis, "'Come, We Kill What Is Called 'Persecution Life'": Sudanese Refugee 78 Youth Gangs in Cairo," *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration* 1, no. 1 (2011): 78–92; Elizabeth M. Coker, "Dislocated Identity and the Fragmented Body: Discourses of Resistance among Southern Sudanese Refugees in Cairo," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 17, no. 4 (2004): 401–18; Anita H. Fábos, "Embodying Transition: FGC, Displacement and Gender-Making for Sudanese in Cairo," *Feminist Review* 69 (2001): 90–110; Pascale Ghazaleh, "Two Miles into Limbo: Displaced Sudanese in a Cairo Slum," *Middle East Report* 225 (2002 ): 2–7.

14  For example, the Egyptian Constitution, Article 53, states, "The right to political asylum shall be granted by the State to every foreigner persecuted for defending the people's interests, human rights, peace or justice. The extradition of political refugees shall be prohibited."

15  Gabriel Warburg, *Historical Discord in the Nile Valley* (London: Hurst, 1992).

16  United Nations Security Council resolution 1054, adopted on 26 April 1996, placed sanctions on the Government of Sudan after its failure to comply with OAU requests to extradite suspects sheltered in the country to Ethiopia. *Yearbook of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, United Nations Publications, 24 January 2002), 54:218.

17  Sherifa Shafei, *Forced Migration Online Expert Guide to Egypt*. Forced Migration Online (Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 2004).

18  Olusola Oladapo Makinde, "Urbanization, Housing and Environment: Megacities of Africa," *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 1, no. 3 (2012): 976–93.

19  Jackline Wahba, "An Overview of Internal and International Migration in Egypt," in *Egypt's Labor Market Revisited*, ed. Ragui Assaad, 157–76 (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009); L. Vignal and E. Denis, "Cairo as Regional-Global Economic Capital?," in *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture and Urban Space in the New Globalised Middle East*, ed. D. Singerman and P. Amar, 99–151 (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006); Ayman Zohry, "The Place of Egypt in the Regional Migration System as a Receiving Country." *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 19, no. 3 (2003): 129–49.

20  While taking place after this research was conducted, the events of the February 2011 revolution in Egypt and its aftermath have contributed equal measures of hope and alarm to Cairo's urban mix: the exhilaration of ordinary Egyptians taking to the streets to force the military government of Hosny Mubarak to stand down has given way to fear—of political instability and autocratic power, and personal insecurity on the very same streets.

21  For more information, see "Egypt," *2010 Demographic Yearbook* (New York: United Nations Statistics Division, Demographic and Social Statistics), http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/PDF/2011/Egypt.pdf.

22  Singerman and Amar, *Cairo Cosmopolitan*.

23  Some sources suggest that this figure was in the hundreds of thousands, though the evidence is inconclusive.

24  The 1952 Egyptian revolution marked the culmination of nationalism that increasingly required citizens to align with a unified vision of "Egyptianness," a vision that consequently turned many Cairenes into "foreigners" in their own city.

25  Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *The Copts of Egypt* (Cairo: Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, 1996).

26  Exceptions may be made in the case of non-citizen women who marry Egyptian men.

27  Sudanese territory was administered by a British governor-general under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium arrangement from 1899 until 1955, even during Egypt's own struggle for independence from British colonial rule.

28  Shafei, *Forced Migration*.

29  Fábos, *"Brothers" or Others?*

30 Muneera Salem-Murdoch, *Arabs and Nubians in New Halfa: A Study of Settlement and Irrigation* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989).

31 Ellen T. Ismail, *Social Environment and Daily Routine of Sudanese Women: A Case Study of Urban Middle-Class Housewives* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1982).

32 Christine Eickelman, "Fertility and Social Change in Oman: Women's Perspectives," *Middle East Journal* (1993): 652–66.

33 David Sims, *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City Out of Control* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2011).

34 Following Brun and Fábos, "Making Homes in Limbo?," *Home* here reflects national longing for the homeland, and is distinguished from both home as dwelling and HOME as the system of nation-states underpinning the refugee regime.

35 Government of Egypt. *Foreigners Regulations* (Cairo: Middle East Library for Economic Services, 1996).

36 Incense-burning is also a common practice across the Arabian Gulf countries.

37 A thick, highly mucilaginous soup made from the leaves of a type of mallow boiled in (usually) chicken broth.

38 A Muslim reformist movement founded by Ustaz Mahmoud Muhammad Taha and outlawed by the Sudanese regime.

39 A floor-length long-sleeve caftan worn by many Sudanese men.

40 A sari-like modesty garment worn by many Sudanese women; Republican Sisters are often recognizable by their white *tobes*.

# Making Homes in Limbo: Embodied Virtual "Homes" in Prolonged Conditions of Displacement

## Giorgia Doná

### Abstract

*This special issue makes an original contribution to our understanding of the meaning of home by introducing the idea of the constellation of HOME-Home-home and home-making practices where these are not necessarily foreseen, in contexts of displacement. In this article, I argue that we need to distinguish between humanitarian-driven under-standings of "protracted refugee situations" and people-centred experiences of "prolonged conditions of displacement." I show how the papers in the special issue bring to the fore inconsistencies between state-centred perspectives and people-centred meanings of the "constellation of homes." Lastly, I examine the significance of other spaces where home may be made during prolonged displacements: the virtual space. I conclude by suggesting that we need to examine in greater depth the complex relationship between the dwelling, home, and homemaking practices when these occur in material and de-territorialized virtual spaces.*

### Résumé

*Ce numéro spécial de Refuge apporte une contribution ori-ginale à la façon dont nous concevons l'idée de « domicile » en postulant la constellation triadique de DOMICILE-Domicile-domicile ainsi que les pratiques reliées à l'éta-blissement d'un domicile dans des contextes parfois inat-tendus, en ce qui concerne les situations de déplacement.*

*Dans cet article, j'avance qu'il faut distinguer entre les conceptions humanitaires reliées aux « situations de réfugiés prolongés » et les expériences en « conditions prolongées de déplacement » axées sur les individus. Je montre comment les articles dont le numéro spécial est composé font ressortir les désaccords inhérents entre les perspectives étatiques et les conceptions expérientielles des individus autour de cette « constellation » triadique de « domicile ». En dernier lieu, je me penche sur l'importance d'autres espaces qui pourraient servir de contexte à l'éta-blissement d'un domicile en situation de déplacement pro-longé, notamment l'espace virtuel. Pour conclure, je pro-pose qu'on réexamine en profondeur la relation complexe entre les pratiques de logement, de domicile, et d'établisse-ment de domicile dans leur actualisation matérielle ainsi que dans le contexte d'espaces virtuels déterritorialisés.*

### Introduction

My contribution to this special issue is an examination of three issues that arise in response to the innovative material presented in the volume: (1) the distinction between "pro-tracted refugee situations" and "prolonged conditions of displacement," (2) the tension between state-centred and people-centred perspectives of home in the "constellation of homes," and (3) changes in the meaning of home and home-making practices when these occur in de-territorialised vir-tual spaces.

### From Protracted Refugee Situations to Global Conditions of Prolonged Displacement

Over the last few decades, migration patterns have increased in frequency, speed, and categories. More migrants, including forced migrants, women, and

minors move from and to more countries and use diversified routes.[1] The consolidation of a dominant Western political strategy referred to as securitization of migration[2] has further altered these conditions. One main effect of these changed environments and patterns has been the increased number of individuals caught in territorial, spatial, and bureaucratic limbo. _The State of the World's Refugees: In Search for Solidarity_[3] reports that 7.2 million people now live in "protracted refugee situations" out of the thirty million people under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) mandate, which include ten million refugees.

The term _protracted refugee situations_ is now commonly used by UNHCR, even though it has not been formally defined or elaborated by the organization,[4] and forced migration scholars too have used it.[5] Its use gives visibility to the circumstances of those millions of individuals across the world who have been granted refugee status and for whom a permanent solution—settlement, resettlement, or repatriation—cannot be reached within five years. The concept of protracted refugee situations defines a distinct legal status (refugee) and temporal framework (five-year period).

Individuals make homes or engage in homemaking practices while living in conditions of uncertainty that are outside the UNHCR definition of "protracted refugee situations": asylum-seekers waiting to be granted protection; undocumented migrants living in "hiding" in urban areas; asylum-seekers in detention centres; individuals caught in "temporary" administrative vacuums such as unresolved residency permission; others waiting to be repatriated, and those who are "in transit" from one place, one state, to the next.

New patterns of migration and increased securitization of migration have led to the emergence of a new globalized phenomenon: prolonged conditions of displacement. In the global South and North contexts that are different, at first sight, such as refugee camps, urban areas, or detention centres, are brought together through their becoming sites where forced migrants experience forced immobility and where humanitarian agencies implement policy-driven temporary solutions. In these globalized contexts[6] of displacements, forced migrants turn shelters into homes and engage in homemaking practices.

The legal/policy-driven term _protracted refugee situations_ does not cover these new transnational contexts of prolonged transit that forced migrants experience in the age of securitization of migration. Broader concepts like "prolonged conditions of displacement" or "prolonged displacements" are better suited to describe the ongoing disruptions that different groups of forced migrants experience across multiple environments of long, drawn-out uncertainty.

The use of the term _prolonged displacements_ is useful when considering the experiences of forced migrants themselves. Protracted refugee conditions and prolonged displacements are distinct concepts. The first emerged in response to policy and humanitarian concerns. It is policy- or agency-driven. The concept of prolonged displacements is people-centred. It considers sociological and experiential elements of forced migrants' experiences. For forced migrants, prolonged conditions of displacement are about spatial, temporal, or bureaucratic states, and they also encompass emotional and relational qualities. United Nations and humanitarian assistance agencies consider "contexts," "conditions," and "solutions." Forced migrants speak of homes, homemaking, and belonging.

Contributors to this special issue examine different contexts of prolonged displacement. Their articles bring to the fore inconsistencies between state-centred perspectives and people-centred experiences. Čapo compares the lives of former refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and argues that, unlike the language of durable solutions proposed by states and international agencies, neither "repatriation" nor settlement (local integration) brought "durable solutions" to refugee predicaments but resulted in a period of prolonged displacement and liminality.

Trapp's article reveals the incongruity between state-centred and individual-centred perspectives in the context of homemaking practices in refugee camps. Trapp argues that Liberian refugees in the Buduburam camp live in a paradox of settled life—visible in their homemaking practices—within the broader context of the refugee camp, a temporary space that becomes a space of long-term residence as a result of political constraints.

Fábos and Brun highlight the inconsistencies between state- and people-centred perspectives on prolonged displacement for less visible groups, namely urban refugees and internally displaced. Long-staying urban refugees are not typically included in state-centred understanding of "protracted refugee situations," and yet many across the world live clandestinely in urban areas, avoiding contact with the authorities and bereft of legal status for years. Excluded from both domestic citizenship and international recognition as refugees, Fábos's Sudanese participants were obliged to navigate an ambiguous and uncertain policy environment. Their prolonged uncertainty shaped their ability to feel "at home" and to be able to "make home" in Egypt in specific ways. Brun examines long-term displacements of Abkhazians who fled to Georgia in the early 1990s following claims of independence from Georgia. As internally displaced, they are less visible in international discourses on durable solutions. Brun assesses how the construction of "block houses" that promote "durable housing solutions"

changed their perceptions of home, and she explores how shelter, housing, home, and homemaking can be conceptualized in the context of prolonged displacement.

This special issue addresses an important dimension of forced immobility—the meaning of home and the practice of homemaking—in conditions of prolonged displacements from a people-centred perspective. It conceptually distinguishes between the state policy-oriented focus of "protracted refugee conditions" with its "distinct legal status (refugee) and temporal framework (five-year period)," and the people-centred focus of "global situations of prolonged displacement." The use of the term *protracted* (lasting for a long time or longer than expected or usual) has now become thoroughly associated with UNHCR, U.S. State Department, etc., and this is why the term *prolonged* is being introduced: to highlight the people-centred language that describes these global situations.

### Tensions in the Constellation of home, Home and HOME

In the editorial introduction to the special issue, Brun and Fábos describe a new conceptual framework to explain how and why people who live in ongoing displacement engage in the process of making homes. The framework distinguishes among three kinds of homes—HOME, Home, and home— and it suggests that we examine their relationship through the concept of "constellation of homes." *HOME* refers to the broader political and historical context in which home is understood and experienced, and to the homeland as defined by the national borders of nation-states; *Home* describes forced migrants' memories of, longing for, and imaginations of homes that are idealized; and *home* describes day-to-day practices and meanings individuals give to the places they inhabit. The constellation of homes is a welcome conceptual contribution to the literature on home in general[7] and in contexts of displacement and forced migration.[8] It enables us to consider each component of the triad independently and to assess their relationship within the "constellation of homes." Therefore, in addition to decoupling "home" and "homeland"[9] and deconstructing refugees as people out of place, there is a need to disentangle the home triad, and the editors beautifully accomplish this task in presenting the elements that form the constellation of homes.

In this section, I shall examine in greater depth the relationships among the components of the home triad, and I shall do so in three ways: territorially, temporally, and socio-legally/administratively. In doing so, I shall highlight the complex relationships and sometimes tensions that exist between state-centred and people-centred perspectives of home, Home, and HOME in prolonged displacement: forced migrants' meaning of home may challenge or exceed nation-states' constructions of HOME, while the concept of Home may fulfil a mediating role by bringing together the perspectives of nation-states and those of forced migrants, and integrating elements relevant to both categories of social actors.

Nation-states and international refugee organisations, most notably UNHCR, continue to view HOME primarily in territorial terms and to be synonymous with homeland. Refugees and returnees are said to be at HOME when they are (re)-settled across regional borders, have moved to resettlement societies, or are back in their countries of origin, independently of where they end up making their homes. Eastmond and Őjendal,[10] among others, show that while from the state-centred perspective, Cambodians' return HOME is understood as their crossing of national boundaries, individuals' return to familiar and unfamiliar areas has a significant impact on the ways in which returnees perceive "returning home" and make their "new" homes. Muggeridge and Doná[11] show the profound impact that the first visit home, which sometimes but not always coincides with their imagined "Home" and the borders of the national HOME, has on refugees' re-assessing the meaning of "home" and re-connecting with HOME-Home-home.

The state-centred understanding of HOME constructed through nation-states boundaries and citizenship rights is in tension with the UN-HOME that stateless people, for instance, are confronted with. Like other forced migrants and displaced populations, they inhabit "spaces of exception," spatially confined areas that are situated inside the HOME defined by nation-state borders but where refugees and forced migrants are not citizens and do not belong to the nation-state's view of being at 'HOME'. Bauman,[12] for instance, describes refugees camps, an example of UN-HOME, as being "in" but not being "of" the countries in which they are located. He goes on to show how refugees from different parts of Africa who live together in refugee camps in Kenya transform standardized spaces into homes by delineating boundaries, giving them familiar names and embellishing them with symbolic pictures.

States and agencies' HOMEMAKING (in capital letters to distinguish this practice from people-centred homemaking) endeavours consist in supporting refugees and returnees to (re)settle in their territorially defined HOMES. These efforts are different from those provided through humanitarian assistance, which supports the constructions of shelters (not homes) as part of their efforts to ensure individual and collective survival. HOMEMAKING appears not to be vital in situations of temporary displacements. As we have seen, the increase in frequency and duration of protracted refugee conditions, and protracted displacement more generally, challenges current state-centred practices

of HOMEMAKING, and prompts the analysis of how states and agencies can promote HOMEMAKING during prolonged displacements.

In addition to the spatial dimension discussed above, there is a temporal element to the understanding of the constellation of homes, and the tension between HOME, Home, and home. From a state-centred perspective, refugees and forced migrants are at HOME when they have successfully met the requirements of long-term residence as they settle, resettle, or repatriate. Thus, forced migrants and refugees are at HOME if a permanent solution to their "refugee condition" is found within a short period of time, recently codified by five years. This period signals the temporal boundary between temporary and protracted refugee situations, and it indicates the transition from one to the other. As we have seen, people living in prolonged displacement are caught in the paradoxical situation whereby the permanency of temporary solution has become recognized and it has even been codified. Life in UN-HOME contexts (protracted refugee situations) has become normalized.

From a people-centred perspective, the temporal analysis of HOME, Home, and home exposes a more complex relationship, and longer time frame. It is in the transformation of one or more elements of the home triad, and their combination, that we can better understand how forced migrants make their homes in prolonged displacement. This ranges from loss of past home, Home, and HOME, to aspirations to make a new home, Home, and HOME in the future, and engagement with HOME, Home, and homemaking practices in the present. Changes in the relationship among the home triad are visible the emergence of new forms of embodied practices, transformations of dynamic relations, and evolving emotional attachments.

The homemaking practices of Somali refugee women living in Australia offers a poignant example of these transformations. It is through Islamic rituals such as daily prayers that these women are able to feel at home in unfamiliar environments because, as they say, "Everywhere is Allah's place."[13] Through dynamic homemaking practices, the Home for the past and that of the future is actualized in the present. The distinction of the three components of the triad helps us to grasp the tensions between territorial and temporal dimensions that have different and divergent meanings for different social actors.

The third and final way to examine the tensions between HOME, Home, and home in protracted situations of displacement is through the socio-legal-administrative lens. From a state-centred perspective, forced migrants are at HOME when they have gained some sort of permanent status like refugee or citizenship status in receiving societies or have regained citizenship status upon return to their countries of origin. To obtain permanent status means to be entitled to the same rights granted to HOME citizens (such as employment, education, identity, vote, etc.). Non-permanent socio-legal status, such as being an asylum-seeker or having being granted humanitarian protection or temporary protection has become widespread, and for some groups or countries it has completely replaced permanent status.

As the securitization of migration gains prominence and restrictive migration management practices intensify, non-permanent status is becoming the "majority status," as shown, for instance, in the 2012 *State of the World's Refugees* report, which indicates that two-thirds of the thirty million people under UNHCR's mandate have not been bestowed refugees status. The end of permanency is in sight: recent changes in UK legislation, for instance, have led to the revocation of permanent protection status, even to Convention refugees, whose refugee status is now going to be reviewed after five years.[14] Temporary and protracted solutions have become the "permanent norm." The five-year period sanctions a new way of thinking about the relationship between temporary and permanent conditions. It also marks the creation of a new phase in the experience of forced migration: prolonged displacements.

Forced migrants fleeing persecution, human rights abuses, and generalized violence increasingly experience a new type of temporariness, one of administrative limbo (and for undocumented forced migrants this condition may be for the duration of their forced migration). This condition subjects forced migrants to ongoing relationships with the HOME Office (the UK department responsible, amongst others, for immigration), and restrictions in official opportunities for homemaking. This results in forced migrants having to find innovative homemaking ways to feel that they belong, at least partially. The last section will describe one such type of new homemaking practice in virtual spaces.

From a people-centred perspective, it is important to keep the three components of the home triad distinct, and to examine their complex relationship. Forced migrants' meaning of home is expressed through their engagement with one component of the triad, or a combination of them. The process is more complex than the state-centred one reliant on the conflation of the three components to only one. In the past, the hegemony of state-centred perspectives meant that the achievement of permanent territorial, temporal, and administrative status was identified with being at home, and this was on the basis of the conflation of the concepts of home-Home under that of HOME. The examination of the meanings of home in protracted conditions of displacement allows us to disentangle the conflation of the home triad in response to the changes that are taking place globally. In addition to

separating the three elements of the home constellation, we must also be aware that the three components themselves are shifting in meaning from solid and durable states to transient and fluid conditions, and that the tension expresses these discrete and relational transformations.

The significance of this special issue rests in its timely and innovative contribution to ongoing discussions on the meaning of home in a changing world. In the past, only a minority of forced migrants found themselves stuck in conditions of prolonged displacements. The increase in frequency, diversification, and creation of new conditions of prolonged displacements means that they have become the "permanent norm" for those fleeing persecution and generalized violence, and they have become the "majority status" for those in need of protection. Hence, the value of understanding how forced migrants make homes in these new contexts.

This special issue makes an original contribution to our understanding of the constellation of HOME-Home-home and homemaking practices by examining them in contexts that are conventionally associated with homelessness, transit, and un-homey conditions. The edited volume challenges the assumption that HOME-home = rootedness and that forced migration = HOME-homelessness in a novel way that goes to the core of the problematic equations outlined above. It examines the meaning of HOME-home and homemaking precisely where these are not necessarily foreseen, in UN-HOME-Homely contexts.

Contributors challenge conventional scholarly and policymakers' assumptions that those forced to leave their homes feel homeless (Brun, Fábos, Trapp), that return equals HOME-home-coming (Čapo), and that those living in temporary shelters do not feel at home (Brun, Trapp). They all show that homemaking practices are ongoing, even when people live unsteady lives as they try to improve their material conditions (Brun, Trapp) and recreate familiarity and belonging in their new environments (Brun, Čapo, Fábos, Trapp). Overall, contributors to the special issue give examples of where and how forced migrants make homes and engage in homemaking practices in protracted conditions of displacement without romanticizing the experience of home and homemaking that takes place during displacement. Their aim is to enable a more complex understanding of the relationship between home and forced migration, between home and homelessness. They examine the ways in which settling and unsettling take place simultaneously for many forced migrants.

In a changed global landscape, forced migrants living in prolonged conditions of displacement have found new ways of making homes that challenge conventional meanings, as shown by the contributors of the edited volume. Brun

identifies how decorating, expanding, and renovating shelters are homemaking strategies through which internally displaced Abkhazians transformed shelters into homes in Georgia. Fábos examines mobile homemaking strategies such as visiting by which Sudanese made and remade home in Cairo. Čapo adds complexity to the understanding of homemaking by showing that for former refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia homemaking needs to be considered at different scales—the dwelling; the locality, the latter (locality) embracing a natural (landscape), cultural (built environment, symbolic meanings, gestures) and social (networks) aspect/component of belonging; and the wider social and (ethno) political context. Additionally, intra- and interstate trans-locality is a strategy to ensure sustainable livelihoods and promote new ways to belong. Trapp too shows the relevance of transnational homemaking practices for Liberian refugees in Ghana, for whom homemaking was rooted in a preference for resettlement to the United States, such that travel to America provided refugees with the necessary status to belong and survive at "home" in Liberia.

In the next section I shall examine an additional innovative way of making homes in virtual space. Forced migrants' increased access and use of information and communication technologies inspires them to create de-territorialized homes and virtual homemaking practices.

### De-Territorialized Homes and Virtual Homemaking Practices

Living in prolonged displacements, forced migrants find new ways to create homes away from the dwelling and towards non-territorialized settings such as online communities. Forced territorial and bureaucratic immobility is reversed in virtual spaces, where forced migrants are free to navigate, to enter in dialogue with co-ethnic, co-national, and also transnational and trans-generational others, and to feel "at home" among online communities. "Home" is a highly fluid and contested site of human existence that reflects and reifies identities and values. For many individuals in prolonged displacement, the material conditions of encampment, detentions, surveillance, etc., are one of the reasons why "home" would be found elsewhere, for instance through home-making in de-territorialized spaces.

Virtual homemaking can be seen in the ways in which refugees use Internet cafés in refugee camps to keep in touch with those who have left the camps and are in the diaspora.[15] Through Skype calls and email exchanges, Somali refugees confined in protracted situations of displacement transcend their immobility by interacting with family members and friends in transnational spaces.[16] These online and web interactions contribute to maintain the Home in the past and to

foster aspiration to reach new Homes in the future. Meanwhile, remittances sent back to those in need through "online" banking transactions and mobile phones help with the improvement of physical dwellings in camps and their becoming homes.

Asylum-seekers confined in detention centres rely on mobile phones to keep in touch with the "outside world" in receiving societies.[17] Mobile phones become functional tools for overcoming isolation and the main channel of communication with outsiders, and connecting with the world. Like computers, mobile phones come to symbolize home. They make it possible to connect with family and friends, and to experience intimacy at a distance. Thanks to mobile phones, detained asylum-seekers manage to hold onto the family and the familiar. These examples show the relationship between the material and the virtual, and the significance of the location/dwelling relative to other spaces where home may be made, namely the virtual space. Materiality plays a role in the location of the Internet café and in the technology being used. There is a need to examine in greater depth the complex relationships between the dwelling, home, and the domestic in material and virtual spaces.

In virtual space, forced migrants and e-diasporas can feel virtually part of their HOME country, which they cannot physically visit, by accessing news and sharing information with other members of their ethnic and national group when they are not able to meet in person.[18] Similarly to Anderson's imagined community,[19] ethnic and national groups create imagined virtual communities that, similarly to the one proposed by Anderson, are very powerful. In virtual space lost homes are located, imaginations of idealized Homes are strengthened, memories of the Home of the past are relived, and future homes are visualized. Bernal,[20] for instance, shows how the Eritrean diaspora online strengthens their political imagination of the home triad through the web, while Anat[21] describes how the Palestinian diaspora moves between de-territorialization and re-territorialization homemaking practices, and Doná[22] outlines the role of cyber-memorialization in creating new spaces for spoken, unspoken, and unspeakable stories of the past, and in doing so, HOME was reinvented.

Forced migrants' homemaking practices accompany them in their everyday movements/mobilities as well as in new/non-territorial locations where they develop new homes and forms of belonging.[23] This new practice challenges the notion of "home" as domesticity and shows that displacement may lead to a shift in homemaking practices and in new/non-territorial locations for the production of home.

### Conclusion

This special issue addresses an important dimension of contemporary experience of forced migrants—the meaning of home and the practice of home-making—in conditions of prolonged displacements. The people-centred approach of the special issue offers an innovative understanding of the complex relationship between home and displacement. Contributors offer detailed examples of where and how forced migrants make homes and engage in homemaking practices in protracted displacement, showing the complexity of home and homemaking rather than romanticizing them. The special issue makes an original contribution to our understanding of the constellation of HOME-Home-home and homemaking practices by examining them where these are not necessarily foreseen.

The contributors challenge conventional scholarly and policymakers' assumptions that those forced to leave their homes feel homeless, that return equals HOME-home-coming, and that those living in temporary shelters do not feel at home. They all show that homemaking practices are ongoing, even when people live unsteady lives as they try to improve their material conditions and recreate familiarity and belonging in territorialized and de-territorialized environments.

The special issue as a whole offers an interesting approach for future research on the meaning of home. Future studies will need to focus on the examination of complex and related meanings of HOME-Home-home, and in under-researched contexts where homemaking takes place, including unexpected, invisible, and de-territorialized spaces.

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*Giorgia Doná is professor of forced migration and refugee studies at the University of East London and fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She has been researching and writing in the area of forced migration for almost thirty years. Her research focuses on forced migration and refugee movements, child protection, psycho-social interventions, and participatory research methodologies. Her recent publications include* Child and Youth Migration: Mobility-in-Migration in an Era of Globalisation *(2014, Palgrave, with Angela Veale),* "Research Methodologies in Forced Migration," *special issue,* Journal of Refugee Studies *(2007, with Eftihia Voutira);* "Child and Youth Migration," *special issue,* International Journal of Migration. *The author may be contacted at G.Dona@uel.ac.uk.*

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# Book Reviews

### *Inhabiting Borders, Routes Home: Youth, Gender, Asylum*

❧

Ala Sirriyeh
Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013, pp. 230

Home—something so ontologically important, and at the same time, so taken for granted that we don't much think about it until we are away from it or it is away from us. Home, like culture, is woven into our everyday lives, shaping us as much as we shape it. Feeling at home, longing for home, being homesick, coming home—all emotions that we share, yet describing exactly what home is remains elusive. To be cast out of home is one of the many violences of forced migration. The relationships between people, place, and home is a much studied topic in the scholarship on forced migration. The book by Ala Sirriyeh, *Inhabiting Borders, Routes Home: Youth, Gender, Asylum*, employs the concept of home as the central organizing theme for exploring the experiences of 23 young refugee women living in the county of West Yorkshire in the United Kingdom. Sirriyeh adopts an anti-essentialist position to the concept of home, describing it as fluid, complex, embedded in social relations, and, importantly, not necessarily fixed to one place. In line with contemporary thinking about home and away, this book sets out to describe the intricacies of homemaking among these young women, with a view to illuminate the dynamics of gender, age, and social position. Sirriyeh hints, however, that while it is important to de-naturalize the links between home and place, this does not mean a total rejection of attachments to place. Indeed, as she shows, home is a slippery creature that refuses to be pinned down by sociologists of forced migration and by scholars of many other disciplines. Perhaps that is why this book is so intriguing, with its promise to explore the many dimensions of home from the context of local, lived experiences of young refugee women who remain unsettled in the United Kingdom.

In setting the scene, the book is based on Sirriyeh's doctoral work and, in many respects, reads like a PhD thesis.[1] This is disappointing, if one expects something other.

However, when accepted as such, the work offers important insights and raises intriguing questions about young refugee women coming of age in a mobile and uncertain world. Using a narrative approach, Sirriyeh interviewed 23 young women aged 16 to 25 in 2007 and 2008. She also gave them disposable cameras and used their photographs as a tool for eliciting their reflections and stories about their lives and the places they inhabited. The women represent a diversity of socio-demographic backgrounds and experiences of their forced migration. Some arrived with families and some alone. Some personally experienced violence pre-migration while others did not. Sirriyeh embraces this diversity and cautions that while it is important we learn something generalizable from these women, we must not do so at the expense of erasing the significance of individual experiences of past and present and how these are differentially shaped by the structural conditions in which they are placed.

There are other cautions set out in the book by Sirriyeh worth highlighting, as they are useful signposts for other researchers of forced migration. First, Sirriyeh warns against casting the young women within a trauma and/or asylum account. The women are not only or always victims. Using the framework of home, Sirriyeh attempts to capture a more holistic picture of the lives of these young women—a picture that resists being anchored in an asylum narrative. Further, while not avoiding discussing the traumas of the past with these women, Sirriyeh argues that it is also important to acknowledge the possibilities of the traumas of the present and how they affect women's lives. Second, Sirriyeh argues convincingly that it is important to ask what can be learned about the ordinary, the everyday, in women's narratives about their past and their present. She warns us that a focus on the extraordinary risks erasing the young women's personal, social, and political histories. Third, we are reminded

that although women have a range of pre-migration experiences, their encounters with settlement in a city such as Leeds are mediated by more than the physical locations—rural, small town, and city—from where they lived in their home countries. Class position and cultural identities mediate how Leeds is experienced. Some found Leeds quiet and slow in contrast to the cities they had lived in while others felt at home with the Westernized way of life as they considered their own experiences to be more Western prior to their forced migration. And finally, regarding nostalgias of home, Sirriyeh cautions against assumptions that home past and/or present is necessarily safe. Home, while often portrayed as the haven from which one ventures out into the world, and to which one returns to where one belongs, can also be a place of conflict and violence. Home as a place of privacy and security can equally be a place of privacy and risk, where violences can be enacted unseen by the outside.

As this book is centrally about home in a mobile world, what are these young women's experiences of home and homemaking? Each chapter interrogates this question from a different standpoint—"Becoming Refugees," "Cartographies of Age," "Beyond Hospitality," "Social Relationships," "Safe Havens," and "Routes Home." This is where the book perhaps promises more than it delivers. The major strength of each of these chapters is Sirriyeh's review and discussion of relevant literature but, in doing so, the voices and stories of the women themselves tend to disappear. Although Sirriyeh presents quotes from interviews to illustrate particular arguments, and summarizes specific examples drawn from the interviews, I was hoping for the stories of the women to lead the reader through the complexities and nuances of their life worlds within the context of home. As a reader, I wanted to come to know the women, and through doing so, better understand both the comforts and the insecurities of home—through their experiences, feelings, reflections, and voices.

The final chapter—"Routes Home"—focuses on the dual transitions of migration to settlement and childhood to adulthood within the context of cross-border migration. Importantly, Sirriyeh convincingly shows how a sense of home is ongoing, and affective attachments to home are made and had, even for those women without refugee status or the legal right to settle. So what does this book tell us about home, forced migration, settlement, age, and gender? It perhaps raises more questions than it answers and would be stronger if it were more provocative and less cautious.

One challenge facing social research into home, place, and forced migration is skirting the political correctness of the times, and Sirriyeh's book on borders and home takes a somewhat safer epistemological path. In spite of the current predilection for de-naturalizing assumptions about home—for emphasizing the fluidity of the contemporary world and for resisting the emplacement of people in time or geography—there is something *essential* about home that matters. Home matters emotionally, socially, and materially. It is our security in the world, and this cannot be theorized away completely. Cathrine Brun[2] has cautioned wisely against adopting either an essentialist or anti-essentialism perspective when dealing with the relationships between people, place, and home in refugee studies. There are merits to each position, and while scholars now lean towards de-naturalizing place and homemaking in a mobile world, the perspectives of local people who are displaced but who are also in a particular place at a particular time and in a particular socio/political context count in essentialist ways. Hearing these voices of local people and their experiences of home and homemaking highlights the strength of small, in-depth studies such as Sirriyeh's in the broader field of forced migration research.

This book by Ala Sirriyeh makes a good attempt to navigate this difficult territory of home and homemaking. The scholarship makes important contributions to the wider literature on settlement, gender, and forced migration. However, a less restrained approach and a deeper interrogation of the stories that the young refugee women have to tell would make for a richer, bolder, and more provocative engagement with problematics of home, forced migration, and asylum.

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*Sandra Gifford is professor of anthropology and refugee studies at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University, Australia. Her background is in medical anthropology and her current research focuses on settlement, well-being, policy, and practice among recently arrived humanitarian migrants in Australia, with a particular focus on young people. More information is on her staff profile http://www.swinburne.edu.au/health-arts-design/staff-profiles/view.php?who=sgifford. The author may be contacted at sgifford@swin.edu.au.*

**Notes**

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## The Ideal Refugees: Gender, Islam, and the Sahrawi Politics of Survival

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Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh
Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014, pp. 304

The Western Sahara refugees have been many things to many people. Some have described the Sahrawi camps as a revolutionary paradise where women have played a profound role in their nation's political struggle for self-determination. For others, the Sahrawi refugees have been living in prison camps run by Marxist revolutionaries supported by Algeria. These camps were formed in the wake of Morocco's 1975 invasion of the Spanish Sahara and today are home to some 100,000 to 160,000 refugees (even the camps' population is highly contested). Even with the Internet and cell phones now available in the camps, as well as a significant international presence of aid workers and activists, the realities of life in the camps remain subject to intensely contested counter-representations. With the rise of armed Islamist groups in the central Sahara and the 2012 conflict in Mali, speculation surrounding these camps has reached an all-time high. Since 9/11, Morocco and its lobbyists in the United States—among the top ten most well funded in Washington—have ceaselessly insinuated connections between the Sahrawi refugees and Al-Qaida's northwest African affiliates. The question of Western Sahara's independence—and thus the fate of the Sahrawi refugees— is now so tangled in the broader question of trans-Saharan security and African "failed states" that the refugees' rights and dignity are being displaced by wild speculation about their religious and political radicalization.

In this context, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's *Ideal Refugees: Gender, Islam, and the Sahrawi Politics of Survival* arrives perhaps at just the right time to provide sober observations on the realities of camp life for the Sahrawis. Based upon several visits to the camps and interviews with Sahrawi refugees in a number of other locations (e.g., Syria, Cuba, and South Africa), Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's fundamental conclusion is quite simple: representations of Sahrawi refugees have been over-determined by the politics of those claiming to act on the refugees' behalf or in solidarity with them.

*The Ideal Refugees* rightfully avoids engaging with the most histrionic claims about the refugees, particularly the unfounded claims of Islamist radicalization in the camps. Instead, the book examines other widespread claims about the Sahrawi refugees, particularly reports about the exceptional nature of their political community, gender relations,

and practice of Islam. These "ideal" claims are the subject of Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's book.

Over the course of several decades, the idealness of the Sahrawi refugees has been constructed through comparisons with "bad" African and Arab liberation movements (particularly those that lapsed into terrorism), with stereotypical images of women's repression in Muslim majority societies, and with the rise of armed Islamic fundamentalism across Asia and Africa. The method of analysis used in *The Ideal Refugees* is to marry interview and other observational data with documentary research. In each case, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh questions the origins of these ideal claims. It is little surprise that she finds things are not as ideal as alleged in politics, gender, and Islam in the camps. These findings are then positioned within currents in postcolonial and post-structuralist feminist theory, as well as the practical dilemmas of internationally managing prolonged exile.

Many historical and contingent factors led to the Western Saharan refugees becoming "ideal," particularly the propaganda war between Morocco and the Sahrawi nationalists. But the most tantalizing element of Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's story are the ways in which Spanish solidarity actors have been part of the refugees' idealization. The refugees' ideal performances are done for the sake of, notably, a kind of solidarity tourist who visits the camps for no more than days or weeks at a time or to help maintain increasing interpersonal connections with specific refugees and host families in Spain. These acts of solidarity are predicated upon, and so artificially perpetuate, those core ideal images of the refugees as politically progressive, religiously moderate, and socially egalitarian. The maintenance of these ideal images, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh argues, ultimately masks questionable relations of power in the camps. Solidarity actors are not only blind to these relations but they are haphazardly complicit with them. The result is solidarity that does much to maintain what is, for Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, a longstanding and problematic regime of power in the camps.

*The Ideal Refugees* unfortunately stops well short of connecting its examination—failed Spanish solidarity and Polisario's questionable refugee management— with the broader geopolitics of the issue. The bulk of

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's critique is aimed at Polisario and solidarity activists for failing the refugees as refugees. Little is said about the international community's failure to respect Western Sahara's fundamental right to self-determination, which was upheld by the International Court of Justice in 1975 and is the basis for UN Security Council engagement with the issue since 1991. A more powerful critique would have extended the initial conclusions in *The Ideal Refugees* to examine how transnational refugee solidarity and support networks actually help maintain prolonged exile by collaborating unwittingly with geopolitical power. For example, one of the strangest features of the Western Sahara conflict has been the ambivalence of Spain. Though Spanish civil society overwhelmingly supports the rights and independence of its former colony (and shows that support through refugee support), Spanish government policy on the issue has been largely unaffected. Madrid has simply followed France and the United States. Their support for Morocco's illegal occupation of the Sahrawi homeland is largely for the sake of the Moroccan monarchy's stability, which is now tied to the conquest and annexation of Western Sahara. No one has yet sufficiently explained this paradox of massive Spanish solidarity with the Sahrawis while the state continues to back Morocco.

That *The Ideal Refugees* does not make these connections is surprising, given the intellectual tradition of feminist anti-imperialism it claims to follow. The power of gendered analysis was never simply its ability to re-describe quotidian realities. The power of such analysis rested in its ability to elucidate the simultaneous operations of power at multiple levels of analysis in ways largely invisible to mainstream forms of implicitly masculinist and deterministic top-down analysis. The great tradition of post-colonial feminist understandings has always demonstrated the ways in which geopolitical power operates upon and through gendered relations at the most intimate levels of subjective human experience. Towering figures like Cynthia Enloe, Lila Abu-Lughod, Liisa Malkki, and Marnia Lazreg revolutionized international relations, refugee studies, and Middle East studies by doing exactly this; that is, by transforming ethnographic thick description into a tool that could account for the manifold local, regional, and global forces that constrain and enable particular manifestations of gendered relations, including resistance to those forces.

*The Ideal Refugees* claims to make gender visible in the politics of Sahrawi refugee survival, but it does so at the expense of making the geopolitical conditions of the Sahrawis' dispossession, exile, and brute refugeeness invisible. In *The Ideal Refugees,* the invisibility of the larger forces acting upon the Sahrawi refugees is evidenced in the fact that France and the United States, the two states that have done the most to determine the lives of Sahrawis through their support of Morocco on the UN Security Council, are mentioned so rarely as to be omitted from the book's index. The connections between the conflict's "high" politics of international diplomacy and the "low" politics of refugee survival are plainly obvious to most dedicated observers of the conflict. But all we get in *The Ideal Refugees* is the low politics of camp life vis-à-vis the entrenched rule of Polisario and the naiveté of solidarity activists.

The ironic fact of *The Ideal Refugees* is that, for all its effort to position itself within post-structural and post-colonial feminist theory, it is difficult not to see it as a refugee expert explaining how brown men use and abuse brown women. As Spivak's much-cited critique of British colonialism noted, the civilizing mission of imperialism was often predicated on a need to save black and brown women from black and brown men. *The Ideal Refugees* oddly reconfigures this colonial politics of representation and salvation for the post-imperial, post-ideological world. Thus the theoretical irony of *The Ideal Refugees* is matched by an ethical one as well. Though *The Ideal Refugees* claims to use ethnographic methods, it fails to apply the hard-won lessons of post-colonial ethnography. Having been deeply complicit in European colonialism, critical anthropologists recognized the need for ethnography to disavow and disassociate itself from colonial governmentality's efforts to scientifically manage the Other.

Much of the research behind *The Ideal Refugees* stems from prior research projects aimed at improving the scientific management of refugees, one of the contemporary world's most important bio-political Others. The argument and conclusion of *The Ideal Refugees* is thus an intellectual defence of the *mission civilisatrice behind today's* international regime of refugee science and refugee management. *The Ideal Refugees* not only fails to account for the actual politics of Sahrawi survival, it fails to recognize its embeddedness within the anti-politics of neo-liberal governmentality. The result is a study that is neither enlightening nor emancipatory.

*The Ideal Refugees*' lack of reflexivity, apart from some caveats on field research and ethics, can therefore be attributed to the dominance of its managerial impulses over its ethnographic ones. Here the problematization of the refugee begins not with the geopolitical fact of the refugee or the camp but with the bio-political imperative to understand and manage them only as refugees. Thus questions are never directed at (1) the broader conditions of the refugees' possibility; (2) the processes that have led to their reification as a consistent thing and as a persistent problem; or (3) the role of the refugee expert in these conditions and processes.

This suggests that the contemporary problem of the refugee and the camp cannot be sufficiently understood through

either a paternalistic analysis of camp life or an emancipatory critique of the geopolitical conditions of exile. The contemporary problem of the refugee can be understood only if we also examine those stakeholders who have the most invested in the maintenance of refugees and refugee camps—that is, the refugee expert. In much the same way that we can today use colonial ethnography to shed light on the logic and operations of European imperial power in the past, *The Ideal Refugees* sheds much light on the contemporary discourse of refugee expertise and its articulation within the logics and operations of post-imperial power in the present.

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*Jacob Mundy is an assistant professor of peace and conflict studies at Colgate University, where he also contributes to African and Middle Eastern studies. His monograph* Imaginative Geographies of Algerian Violence: Conflict Science, Conflict Management, Antipolitics *will be published by Stanford University Press later this year. The author may be contacted at jmundy@colgate.edu.*

## *Belonging in Oceania: Movement, Place-making and Multiple Identifications.* Vol. 3 of *Pacific Perspectives: Studies of the European Society for Oceanists*

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### Edited by Elfriede Hermann, Wolfgang Kempf, and Toon van Meijl
### New York: Berghahn, 2014, pp. 232

This absorbing collection of essays focuses on how immigrants make efforts to define who they are, or where and to whom they belong, through plural claims of relationships to both home and host societies. As such, it is part of the "mobility turn" in recent social theory according to which any presumed or intrinsic relationship between moral order and identity, on the one hand, and place or territory, on the other is called into question and thus shifts our attention to such phenomena as airports, travel, vehicles, virtual communities, diasporas, and so forth.[1]

Set in the insular Pacific, the book begins with an introductory chapter by its three editors that sets out a useful (but then largely ignored) theoretical framework. It presents a concept of moral belonging that is dispersed and diluted by global forces and transnational movement but is then reasserted through ties to "place," ties that are made primarily, although not exclusively, through claims to land tenure back home, church-related activities, as well as participation in festivals and other recreational activities.

Each chapter is a case study of immigrant experience in a different part of the region. Australian Aborigines and Papua New Guineans are included, but at least half of the book is taken up with Polynesians living in urban New Zealand, such as Nieuans, Cook Islanders, as well as of course Maori people.

Apart from Rollason's fascinating case study from Papua New Guinea that discusses shifting concepts of place that arose after a big colonial development initiative ended, several themes preoccupy the volume.

Perhaps the first one is spatial but also moral displacement and disconnection and the consequent longing and nostalgia for, or perhaps one could simply call it alienation from, the "paradise" where diaspora people view themselves as authentically belonging. This ongoing experience of loss/attachment appears in Garond's account of descendants of mainland Australian Aborigines living on Palm Island, where their ancestors were "removed" to prison-like reserves by the state. It is discussed in Thode-Arora's chapter on Nieu Islanders who left their small island state to find work in Auckland. It is prominent in Brandt's chapter on urban Maori. Lastly, it appears in Kempf and Hermann's peculiar epilogue, which does not really address the important issues the volume raises in any comprehensive way but rather focuses on the projected effects of climate change and rising sea levels on the future of place and society in the island state of Kiribati.

The second theme, which is the book's main one, is how diaspora peoples try to construct themselves in networks and in terms of "multiple belonging" both to the places they have lost and the places where they have come to reside. One important modality of this project is, as I say, through land claims. A couple of startling images caught my attention in this regard. Nieuan healers use ingredients imported from their island, but pastors and church elders possess power (*mana*) not from the land, as they would at home, but from the offices they occupy. Land, say urban Cook Islanders in New Zealand, is "the mother of identity," but they have no moral connection with, and gain no agency from, land in the diaspora. Meanwhile, absentee landowners, who make

contested claims to ancestral property in the Cook Islands, have become something of a problem. Half-finished houses are a common sight there but so are well-kept, yet empty plots of land that are planted with ornamental flowers or with short-term crops, like tomatoes. In a similar way, perhaps, urban Maori youth try to reconnect with their sacred status as "custodians of the land" by burying the placenta of newborns not necessarily on their lineage lands but beneath urban meeting halls (*marae*) where they otherwise lack ancestral ties.

Ironically, it is the churches, whose missionary activities sought so hard to erase or at least reduce local allegiances and local particularisms, or to put it more bluntly, local culture, now offer a very important institutional framework for building transnational moral solidarity within and among Pacific diasporas. They provide settings for sustaining local, place-based identities. In Auckland, Nieuans sit in rival village groups in church and sing their own community-based hymns. Fer and Malogne-Fer report that Pacific Islanders create "new localities" (148) for themselves and new island identities when they assemble in churches for rites of passage, to celebrate the independence of their home states and gather in various voluntary associations, such as women's weaving, or other self-help groups.

At the same time as islanders try to maintain transnational ethnic identities, acculturation processes go on. Senior Cook Islanders in Auckland want to retire back home where not everything is a commodity and kinship values (*aroha*) prevail. Yet processes occur that raise questions about the moral status of second- and third-generation youth. Youth lose vernacular language fluency, possess no first-hand experience with home, and feel stronger loyalties to school and neighbourhood rather than to a vague memory of a place and time never experienced. Like their elders, such young people nevertheless retain attachment either to specific villages or tribal ethnicities back home. We see some of this sort of allegiance in Dürr's chapter describing reactions of Maori high school students to a month-long visit to Mexico. Its fragility, however, is also evident in efforts some churches make to recruit Polynesian young people. Evangelical movements in a Polynesian idiom have arisen seeking to promote a "new birth" of pan-Pacific identity (156).

I mentioned the epilogue's focus on the pending tragedy of rising sea levels and climate change in the Pacific above and want to return to an important point that Kempf and Hermann make in their discussion. How, they ask, can we begin to think about the migrations of climate refugees that will inevitably result? How can we begin to think about their future identities? Their answer points to a central conclusion of this volume: Pacific Islanders have been migrating for a long time, although for a variety reasons rather than just because of environmental damage, and Pacific diasporas already exist. These transnational networks suggest themselves as a "useful entry point" (198) for starting to think about an anthropology of climate migration that does not assume an overly static, essentialized concept of place and belonging. At the same time, Kempf and Hermann also remind us that attachment to place is enhanced by its vulnerability: I-Kiribati worry about the loss of the graves of their ancestors by way of expressing the prospect of the tragedy of place-loss. Some refuse to leave, while others give up and go take up a life of multiple belonging.

The editorial construction of this collection is uneven, as I suggested above. Its authors make little or no effort to interact either with the introductory chapter or with each other and I have expressed reservations about the epilogue. On the whole, however, *Belonging in Oceania* remains a fascinating volume, one that will intrigue regional scholars or anyone else interested in diasporas in this increasingly globalized world or who is influenced by the "mobility turn" in contemporary social theory. Perhaps it could also be usefully included in courses on the contemporary Pacific or on the moral challenges posed by the conflicting pressures of transnational loyalties.

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*David Lipset is professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota. He has done fieldwork on masculinity, culture, and modernity among the Murik Lakes people of Papua New Guinea since 1981. He is the author of two books:* Gregory Bateson: The Legacy of a Scientist *(1982), and* Mangrove Man: Dialogics of Culture in the Sepik Estuary *(1997). He has co-edited two books and has written many journal articles. The author may be contacted at lipse001@umn.edu.*

**NOTE**

1  See Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); David Lipset and Richard Handler, *Vehicles: Cars, Canoes and Other Metaphors of Moral Imagination* (New York: Berghahn, 2014); Cathy A. Small, *Voyages: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); and John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000).

## The Point of No Return: Refugees, Rights, and Repatriation

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### Katy Long
### Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 280

Refugee flows are, by definition, complex and contested events that defy easy solutions. In *The Point of No Return,* Katy Long invites readers on a 100-year journey tracing the history of refugee repatriation as one "solution" to refugee flows—by far the most common international response, as well as one of the most complex and politically contentious. Long's book is an ambitious and insightful work, theoretically sophisticated and well grounded in rigorous empiricism. Drawing on original archival research and a deep knowledge of the field, the book makes several major contributions to the literature on refugees, repatriation, and humanitarian assistance.

One of the book's clearest contributions to refugee studies comes in the form of historical narrative. As Long notes, the largest portion of the literature on refugee repatriation has emerged in the last 30 years. As a consequence, it focuses primarily on the experiences of refugees and aid organizations in the post–Cold War era. The few studies that do address the historical development of refugee policy tend to begin with the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, without reference to the refugee flows and international responses that gave rise to the 1951 Convention. As an antidote to this perceived "ahistoricism," Long offers a comprehensive modern history of refugee repatriation, detailing the ebb and flow of both principle and practice. Drawing on new archival data, the book traces the origins of coordinated international refugee policy to the early twentieth century, when international actors negotiated the fate of displaced populations in the aftermath of the First World War.

Taking a longer view on the practice of repatriation, the study is able to situate more recent developments in refugee policy in a broader historical narrative. This narrative effectively weaves numerous and seemingly disparate 20th-century examples of refugee repatriation into a cohesive series of case studies, which illustrate how changing principles and practices have affected real refugee groups, as well as how specific refugee crises have shaped the evolution of refugee policy. For example, Long argues that the desire to protect refugees from the Stalinist regime in Soviet Russia played a key role in the international adoption of the principle of "voluntariness" as a prerequisite for refugee return. Later in the post–Cold War period, as refugee crises multiplied and the international community's commitment to

voluntary repatriation waned, Long details how Rohingya and Rwandan refugees were subject to repatriation programs in the mid-1990s that effectively amounted to "imposed return"—representing what she describes as the nadir of international refugee policy in the modern era. In this way, Long highlights the dialectic between real-world events and the international refugee policy regime.

Beyond this important historical perspective, Long's analysis offers a rich theoretical framework to explain the evolution of changing norms and policies in refugee repatriation. Specifically, the book highlights several related theoretical tensions that are woven throughout the historical narrative—between nationalism and liberalism, state sovereignty and individual liberty, and often competing concerns about refugee protection and the need to find viable solutions to refugee crises. Central to her argument, Long contends that the modern international system of nation-states, whereby citizenship and individual rights are tied to territorially fixed states, is an imperfect compromise between the principles of liberalism and nationalism. While liberalism stresses the inalienable rights of all individuals, nationalism insists that the protection and exercise of those rights are linked to one's membership in a collective national group. The problem, according to Long, is that "territorial state entities and 'national' identities are often mismatched" (20). In the real-world system of nation-states, many states contain multiple nations, which can lead to conflict and exclusion as groups compete for territorial power and authority. According to this logic, "refugee flows are clear evidence that nation-state politics does not provide all mankind with access to the rights and freedoms of citizenship . . . Refugee crises can therefore be conceptualized as crises of liberal nationalism" (20).

Building on this premise, Long argues that much of the history of international refugee policy can be understood as an attempt by Western liberal states—who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo structure of the international system—to put the genie of nationalism back into the nation-state bottle. Despite a sincere commitment to liberal ideals, the international community's desire to protect refugees' rights is counterbalanced by the need to respect state sovereignty and "solve" refugee crises in a way that preserves the integrity of the existing nation-state system.

Thus, the ebb and flow of refugee policy over the last century can be seen as a kind of metaphorical tug-of-war between ideologically based commitments to liberalism, individual rights and refugee protection, and pragmatic concerns about states' rights and the stability of the international system of nation-states.

From this theoretical framework, two important lessons about refugee repatriation emerge. The first concerns the politicization of refugee policy. Though the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) maintains that its role is to act as a neutral apolitical arbiter in refugee situations, Long rightly contends that this is a logical impossibility. Any action (or inaction) that the international community takes—whether asylum, resettlement, or repatriation—is an inherently political act. Moreover, the historical record makes clear that all interested parties are not given equal say in the repatriation process. From the earliest examples of "population exchange" in 1920s Turkey and Greece, to recent cases of repatriation in Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Sudan, Long's analysis repeatedly demonstrates that international policy clearly favours the interests of host states, donor states, and international organizations like UNHCR—over and above the concerns of refugees themselves. Time and again, states' rights have trumped the rights of refugees. This prioritization of interests explains both how the principles of "voluntariness" and "protection" initially came to prominence (as a politically convenient justification against repatriating Soviet citizens), as well as why these principles have been degraded in recent decades, as they have stood in the way of expedient solutions to protracted refugee problems. It also explains why the international community has repeatedly insisted that a physical "return home" is the optimal solution in the vast majority of refugee situations, including cases where repatriation has put those refugees in harm's way and prompted subsequent refuges flows.

Related to this point, a second lesson emerges concerning the troubling disconnect between theory and practice in the implementation of repatriation programs. Despite longstanding international commitments to the principles of protection and *non-refoulement,* the historical record shows that politically palatable "solutions" to burdensome refugee problems are routinely privileged over refugee rights and voluntary choice. Long makes the point aptly: "States' actions continue to illustrate the extent of the gap between rhetoric and practice in repatriation. Statements on return not only reaffirm states' power over displaced populations, but also make clear their continued focus on repatriation as *the* solution to displacement, so that 'voluntariness' becomes not a bulwark but a cynically employed smokescreen, paying lip service to long-ignored principles" (155).

Despite these discouraging conclusions, Long's prognosis for the future of refugee repatriation is not as dismal as one might expect. In addition to an empirically grounded account of refugee repatriation, *The Point of No Return* also puts forth a well-reasoned analysis of the philosophical and moral underpinnings of refugee repatriation. Drawing on the writings of Enlightenment philosophers like Locke and Rousseau, as well as modern theorists including Hannah Arendt and Robert Nozick, the book builds a persuasive argument about the ethical grounds for refugee repatriation, which Long uses as a backdrop for an alternative conception of repatriation. Specifically, Long contends that refugee flows occur when the social contract between citizen and state is broken, typically because the state has failed to adequately protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens. Repatriation can therefore be understood as a moment when citizen and state "remake" the social contract. Accordingly, Long argues that the guiding principles for refugee repatriation set out by the international community—enshrining voluntariness, safety, and dignity (to which she adds "autonomy")—are not just aspirational goals, but requirements for the legitimate reconstitution of the social contract. If repatriation is to accomplish its ultimate objective (i.e., restoring the relationship between citizen and state), refugees must be afforded the rights and protections necessary to act as genuine participants in the process, rather than hapless spectators.

Following this logic, Long concludes with some broad recommendations about the nature of voluntary and participatory repatriation. Starting from the premise that the current policy regime is broken, the book tries to imagine a better alternative. Among the recommendations, Long asserts that refugee communities must be adequately represented in repatriation negotiations, that individuals must have the right to consent (or dissent), and that alternatives to physical return should be considered. Specifically, she argues for the decoupling of physical return from political repatriation—what she calls "repatriation without return"—such that refugees might regain the political rights and freedoms of citizenship while remaining outside their home state as migrant workers or transnational citizens.

The logic of this new approach to repatriation is clear. Ethically, a break from the well-trod path of "repatriation as *the* solution to displacement" would certainly allow the international community a better chance to meet its ethical obligations to refugees. There are practical benefits as well. Particularly in fragile and economically struggling states, transnational mobility would allow citizens to weather economic shocks or political crises without sparking new refugee flows. Greater mobility may even contribute to the process of state-building and reconciliation, by affording diaspora opportunities to accumulate social and economic

benefits abroad, and to return to their home states on their own terms, better equipped to invest in the reconstruction process.

Nevertheless, it is in the reimagining of citizenship and repatriation that Long's hard-nosed, empirically grounded assessment of repatriation as an inherently political act—one of the book's greatest strengths—seems to break down. Her suggestions regarding autonomy, representation, and consent for refugee groups in the repatriation process fall short of being practically useful, while raising serious questions about implementation: How should refugee voices be included in repatriation negotiations, when donors, host states, and international actors fear the obstructionist role they could play? If they are included, is it possible to ensure that those who speak for refugee groups are truly representative of their collective interests, rather than opportunists seeking to maximize their political influence or economic benefit—or worse? Moreover, how can individual consent be ensured, while maintaining the integrity of repatriation process as a whole?

Similarly, Long's proposal to decouple de jure repatriation from physical return raises immediate questions about the practical feasibility of brokering international agreement on such a policy. For much of the book, Long makes

the argument that real-world refugee policies have been shaped by the pragmatic political interests of states. The idea that the international community, which has sought at every turn to bolster the strength and viability of the existing nation-state system, would voluntarily adopt this new approach to citizenship and statehood seems fundamentally at odds with the history of politicization of refugee policy. Moreover, as Long herself recognizes, it runs counter to recent trends "increasing restrictions placed on global mobility as a result of many states' moves to contain general migration flows" (211). Despite the ingenuity of the ideas and their potential benefits for refugees and their home states, it is hard to imagine a new policy regime emerging that would reverse the trends of the last 100 years, as described so ably in this book.

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*Daniel Beers is assistant professor of political science and international relations at Knox College. He teaches courses on comparative politics, international development, and non-governmental organizations. His current research focuses on the international community's response to internal displacement in post-earthquake Haiti. He may be contacted at dbeers@knox.edu.*