

Entanglement

While Johannesburg may indeed be a liminal city, it nonetheless is situated at the heart of African cross-border migrants' desires, drawing so many into its centrifuge as the narratives attest. Within the vortices of the city, migrant women's lives are thus entangled in legal and socially embedded mobilities. Seen in this light, Kihato demonstrates how the liminal city is generative and a "gateway rather than a ghetto" (129), where entanglements transform migrants' social status while they also illustrate migrant women's tactical relationship to the city. The relationship that migrant women of Johannesburg have with the city is intertwined with the politics of survival against pressures imposed by culture, laws, and incidents of violence upon which Kihato reflects in three vignettes emerging from xenophobia in South Africa in 2008. Drawing upon—and extending—Sen's³ "capabilities approach," Kihato illustrates how migrants' capabilities are limited by their liminality and their socially embedded mobility. Beyond a social-capital thesis, the author underscores the political nature of mobility, and the ways that mobility forms the foundation of the migrant experience.

Mobility

Seen through the prism of the "new mobilities paradigm,"⁴ the mobile lives of cross-border migrants disrupt the formerly static nature of the social sciences. Kihato's work may be understood as a response to Sheller and Urry's challenge to re-examine relationships between materiality and mobility. If we understand mobility as an "entanglement of movement, representation and practice,"⁵ then the narratives of Kihato's migrant women add new dimension to the relationship between material and mobile lives. The migrant women in her book exemplify mobility not only through their physical movement from "Home" (where they come from) to their adopted "home" in Johannesburg as a rite of passage, but also social mobility where social status is

meant to be transformed through cross-border migration, and demonstrated materially through remittances and gifts, and symbolically through photographic evidence of their success in a new city.

The sum of migrant women's stories in *Migrant Women of Johannesburg* disrupts conventional views of the African city and its governance from "above" and allows a view of the city from "below" that speaks to "how urban dwellers navigate the city, access urban resources, and related to the state and others" (124). Using their own vocabularies, voices, and eyes through visual methodologies, Kihato demonstrates that migrant communities have agency that is realized in liminal spaces, through entangled relationships to people and place, in the context of highly politicized and mediated mobile lives.

NOTES

- 1 M.L. Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991): 33–40.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 3 A. Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor, 1999).
- 4 M. Sheller and J. Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 207–26.
- 5 T. Cresswell, "Toward a Politics of Mobility," in *African Cities Reader: Mobilities and Fixtures*, ed. Ntone Edjabe and Edgar Pieterse (Cape Town: Chimurenga and the African Centre for Cities, 2011), 160.

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Belonging: The Social Dynamics of Fitting In as Experienced by Hmong Refugees in Germany and Texas



Faith G. Nibbs
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Whenever refugees and immigrants arrive in new places, there are pertinent questions about how they will adjust to living in their new society. These processes have been studied in terms of "integration,

assimilation, and acculturation"—terms that have been critiqued as unidirectional and not as central to arrivals' experiences, such as the term *belonging*. In *Belonging: The Social Dynamics of Fitting In as Experienced by Hmong*

Refugees in Germany and Texas, based on her anthropology doctoral dissertation, Faith G. Nibbs explores Hmong refugees' "belonging" vis-à-vis mainstream society in their new countries, Hmong in their new locales, and Hmong throughout the diaspora.

Through ethnographic methods (with her English and German skills and help of Hmong translators), Nibbs has given us insight into the varied and complex nature of "belonging" through her exploration of social, political, cultural, economic, and historical contexts of Hmong refugee resettlement in Gammertingen, Schwaben, Germany (GG) and Dallas–Fort Worth, Texas, USA (DFW). Both locations had relatively small numbers of Hmong refugees during her study period—approximately 5 families in GG and 250 families in DFW.

To explore "belonging" vis-à-vis the new society, Nibbs illustrated interconnected processes by which resettlement program structures applied pressure on refugees, so they were "being made" into people who could fit into the new society; and whereby refugees' own agency engaged them in "making it" as people who made a place for themselves in the new location.

Nibbs explored the different structural events at national, state, and local levels to understand the societal forces of refugees "being made" into new citizens. Germany had an integrated program that connected people with local citizens, and provided one year of financial support so that people could learn the language before having to find employment. In contrast, Texas found locals who initially helped the refugees find apartments and jobs, with the goal that they be economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible (if not within two weeks). Years later, Nibbs described how refugees in both communities were economically self-sufficient, with all families having a wage-earner and the vast majority of families owning their own homes.

On the other side of these mainstream processes were refugees' actions of "making it." Nibbs asserted that people's "ingenuity and agency" shaped their lives, as they reacted to local situations and local resources, and as they utilized mainstream resources and resources within their own local ethnic group to be successful. This was the other half of "being made"—this was refugees' actions towards "making it."

Beyond economic status as a measure of "belonging," Nibbs looked into people's participation in the larger society. She discovered that people became citizens for security, so they could not be expelled, could travel without restriction, and could vote (although they did not run for office or participate in political processes). They did not become citizens in order to become Germans, or become Texans. Both GG and DFW Hmong expressed how their being Hmong was

separate from their resident country; they had been Hmong in Laos, and now they were Hmong in Germany and Hmong in Texas.

To explore "belonging" in their local Hmong communities, Nibbs recounted the communities' interactions with each other and with new Hmong arrivals and then compared their similar and yet disparate experiences. For Hmong in both locations, the cultural values of kinship, maintaining face, and reciprocity were important dynamics as people adjusted and created new relationships that translated into their belonging with their local Hmong community. The role of religion was significant, as animist Hmong became Christian in order to fit in with other Hmong, not in order to fit in with their mainstream neighbours. In conclusion, people in each locale had created their own version of Hmong culture, so she asserts they "became" German Hmong or Texas Hmong, while still being Hmong in Germany and Hmong in Texas.

To explore "belonging" in the diasporic Hmong community, Nibbs investigated Hmong people's social connections with each other in the diaspora that occurred via modern technology and face to face, facilitated by modern transportation. The Internet allowed people to interact around important issues, such as videos that represented their shared history, discussions about changing cultural traditions (particularly funerals, weddings, and New Year's), and formations of Hmong political alliances and actions, and it facilitated their ability to find Hmong marriage partners. She described how these technologies illustrated as well as dictated (on the basis of differential power bases) to dispersed peoples elements of the diasporic identity. And she asserted that the diasporic identity was dynamically shaped by local people who contributed their sense of identity in return.

As a family physician working with Hmong in St. Paul, Minnesota, I appreciated Nibbs's in-depth examination of intertwined processes, but I was disappointed in two aspects. While she wrote that she hoped her findings would help policy-makers and professionals create "culturally sensitive" programs for refugees, she did not spell out the practical applications as she did the contributions to the literature. While her aim was to describe "belonging" and identity from Hmong people's experiences, she did not expand upon their personal emotional experiences or explore psychological and mental-health aspects of resettlement and the belonging processes. She quoted people saying they were Hmong "in their heart," by their "values," dress, language, food, rituals, and how they "raise their children." It would have been gratifying to me if she had expanded upon these aspects of identity and included emotional dimensions of "belonging" to her ethnography.

In conclusion, Dr. Nibbs has made several contributions to the anthropological and refugee studies literature on important questions of refugee resettlement, by exploring relevant and inter-related issues that influence refugees' "belonging" in relation to their new larger society, their own local ethnic group, and their diasporic ethnic group members, which readers will find insightful.

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The Law of Refugee Status, 2nd edition



James C. Hathaway and Michelle Foster
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Refugee law is unique. It is practised by few (those who do, tend to specialize), understood by fewer, yet is the constant subject of lawmakers as a means to manage and reflect public opinion.

Since refugee law is an international instrument that is moulded and shaped by individual signatory countries, it tends to develop in many directions, sometimes rationally and sometimes not. This makes a comprehensive, principled understanding quite difficult.

This is where *The Law of Refugee Status*, second edition, steps in to try to make sense of the development of the law since the first edition more than twenty years ago.

The first edition of this book, published in 1991, has been cited often. It built a clear understanding of refugee law over the last twenty years. It is a staple on the bookshelf of legal professionals in this area.

Overall, Hathaway and Foster have done an excellent job of updating and providing a substantially revised tool for those who practise, adjudicate, and legislate in refugee law. Ironically, I see many of my colleagues still citing the first edition, as if by deeply ingrained habit.

Where this text really shines is the clarity of making sense of otherwise complex concepts. For example—alienage—the chapter—starts with the sentence: "Only a person outside her own state can qualify as a Convention Refugee." That pretty much says it, and you can dig into the details from there, but you have a solid grasp of the concept right from the start.

Each chapter draws on the interpretations of international tribunals, such as the UN committee against torture and the UN Human Rights committee, regional tribunals such as the European Court of Human Rights, and the national courts of more than twenty countries. The book draws heavily on Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States,

and Germany for guidance. This is truly an international perspective.

When the first edition has been cited with approval by various courts and tribunals, that is noted in the second edition. When courts and legislators have made advances, the second edition shows where and why.

I have practised refugee law in Canada since shortly after the first edition was published and have taught in this field for nine years. Despite my client-centred perspective, ultimately all refugee decisions must be sound and principled to all stakeholders. This book strives to describe the principles as interpreted around the world as its context. They show what is sound and principled.

Here is how the book is broken down.

First, the introduction. It is important and worth a careful read. It reminds us that this area of law derives from an international treaty that has been adopted by its signatory countries. It is not a law of convenience for signatory countries. These are rights that must be respected. It is a treaty that must, in law, be interpreted in good faith, in a manner that promotes its effectiveness, within a current social reality and contemporary legal context. That's the law of international treaty interpretation and application. Sometimes this is overlooked by courts and legislators.

Second, like in the first edition, the refugee definition is broken down into the constituent elements, and each gets its own chapter.

The five basic parts of the refugee definition from the first edition—alienage, well-founded fear, persecution, nexus, and cessation/exclusion—are now expanded into seven: alienage, well-founded fear, serious harm, state protection, nexus, cessation, and exclusion.

The first five describe who is included in the definition, and the last two say who is excluded. Each element has its