Refuge

Vol. 28 • No. 1 Spring 2011

Iraqi Refugees, Beyond the Urban Refugee Paradigm
Géraldine Chatelard and Tim Morris

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Canada's Periodical on Refugees
La revue canadienne sur les réfugiés

Vol. 28 No. 1

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Founded in 1981, Refuge is an interdisciplinary journal published by the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University. The journal aims to provide a forum for discussion and critical reflection on refugee and forced migration issues.

Refuge invites contributions from researchers, practitioners, and policy makers with national, international, or comparative perspectives. Special, thematic issues address the broad scope of the journal's mandate, featuring articles and reports, shorter commentaries, and book reviews. With the exception of formally solicited work, all submissions to Refuge are subject to double-blinded peer review. Articles are accepted in either English or French.

Refuge is a non-profit, independent periodical funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and supported by subscriptions. The views expressed in Refuge do not necessarily reflect those of its funders or editors.

Refuge is indexed and abstracted in the *Index to Canadian Legal Literature*, *Pais International*, *Sociological Abstracts*, the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences*, and *Canadian Business and Current Affairs*. The full text of articles published in *Refuge* is also available on-line through the Gale Group databases, accessible in many university libraries. *Refuge* is also available online through Lexis-Nexis's Quicklaw service.

Typesetting and production services were provided by Becker Associates.

ISSN: 0229-5113

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Editorial Essay: Iraqi Refugees, Beyond the Urban Refugee Paradigm

Géraldine Chatelard and Tim Morris

Abstract

Displacement and exile have been recurrent and durable phenomena affecting Iraqi society for the last 90 years. The process of forming an Iraqi state from the ruins of the Ottoman empire, which Aristide Zolberg has analyzed as a prime factor generating refugee flows,[1] has been ongoing since 1920. Unfinished endeavours to build a state and nation have been characterized by almost incessant antagonistic claims over the nature of the state and national identity, the exercise of and access to political power, control of natural resources and border sovereignty. Political repression, violent regime change, redefinition of national identity, demographic engineering, and domestic or international armed conflicts have resulted in eviction, deportation, denaturalization, political emigration, and flight from violence. A large part of displacement in Iraq has been internal. But vast numbers of refugees and exiles have also formed a regional and global diaspora extending from Iran, Jordan, Israel, Syria, all the way to such distant emigration countries as New Zealand.

Résumé

La société irakienne est affectée depuis 90 ans de façon continue et prégnante par des déplacements de population et l'exil. Depuis le démembrement de l'empire ottoman en 1920, un état irakien a continuellement tenté de se constituer, ce qui a été analysé et identifié par Aristide Zolberg comme étant la source principale des mouvements de réfugiés. Les efforts pour construire un état et une nation en Irak ont constamment été minés par des revendications contradictoires et des luttes portant sur les questions de la nature de l'état, de l'identité nationale, de l'exercice et de l'accessibilité du pouvoir politique, du contrôle des ressources naturelles et de la souveraineté des frontières. La répression politique, les changements violents de régimes, les redéfinitions de l'identité nationale, les politiques démographiques, et les conflits armés régionaux et internationaux ont entraîné des évictions, des déportations, la dénaturalisation, l'émigration politique et la fuite devant la violence. Une grande proportion des déplacements de populations irakiennes est intérieure au pays. Toutefois, un nombre important de réfugiés et d'exilés forme une diaspora régionale et internationale qui s'étend à l'Iran, la Jordanie, Israël, la Syrie, et jusqu'à des pays d'immigration aussi éloigné que la Nouvelle-Zélande.

Belated Recognition of Iraqi Displacement

Despite their massive scale, displacement and other forms of involuntary migration from Iraq have so far largely escaped academic interest as topics in their own right. This is in sharp contrast with the large body of research devoted to Palestinian refugees. References to displacement within and from Iraq do exist, but they are scarce and scattered: they generally document displacement in relation to particular ethnicities or sects, episodes of conflicts, or political struggles.[2] So far, there has been little attempt to conceptualize Iraqi displacement as a political and social phenomenon or reflect on its historical depth and global scope.[3]

The displacement that resulted, directly or indirectly, from the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime by a US-led coalition in April 2003 has appeared to most scholars as a crisis of unprecedented scale. Although many Iraqis started leaving the country as early as 2003, it was only in 2007, at the height of sectarian tensions and generalized insecurity, that advocacy and humanitarian organizations started releasing reports on Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. They particularly focused on Syria and Jordan, where the majority had fled, generating media coverage, especially in the US

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and UK, and a new interest from the part of mostly young scholars. The corpus of academic publications focusing on the post-2003 displacement trend has since been growing.[4]

It will come as no surprise that the 2007 surge of interest in Iraqi refugees closely corresponded with the beginning of humanitarian and policy engagement from the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and large donors, particularly the US and the European Union. Since then, research on Iraqis refugees has been largely policy driven, by or from the perspective of humanitarian aid agencies or refugee advocacy organizations. There are many justifications in favour of the policy bias in refugee research.[5] There are also several shortcomings. In 2008, at a time when scholars were still mostly focusing on refugees in formal camps, and often limited their interest to refugee policy issues, Oliver Bakewell made a plea for researching forced migrants without using preconceptions.[6] He convincingly argued for considering the large number of self-settled refugees and aspects of their lives other than their interaction with aid programs, which tended to remain invisible to scholars.[7]

The new academic interest in self-settled refugees had in fact emerged in the early 2000s, inspired by the policy concerns of UNHCR which, in 1997, had issued its first policy on refugees in urban areas. However, scholarly publications on the belated recognition of the presence of refugees in cities only started to be available during the mid-2000s. This new area of refugee research has flourished in recent years due to the realization by a number of ground-breaking scholars that, in developing countries, the number of refugees found in non-camp settings, and particularly in urban areas, has increased considerably and that the paradigms used to understand the predicament of encamped refugees are not applicable to urban contexts. Beyond creating knowledge that reflects more closely the variegated experience of refugees, this approach also responds to the ethical imperative of better informing humanitarian policy to make it more relevant and likely to promote durable solutions for refugees.

Urban Refugee Studies Rises Up Agenda

Most humans now live in towns and cities. As the world urbanizes, so too do patterns of displacement. Increasingly, refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not living in camps and rural areas but in towns and cities. They usually reside in impoverished neighbourhoods where governments are already struggling to provide their own citizens with basic services.

In recent years the growing attention to the phenomenon of displacement to urban areas is reflected in a spate of special issues of displacement-focused publications.[8] In part, this interest has been fuelled by the decision of the High Commissioner to focus on the subject for the annual dialogue convened by UNHCR in 2009. Urban refugee studies has gained traction and legitimacy as a subfield of refugee and forced-migration research, structured around a number of established scholars, and a growing bulk of literature. The field has developed analytical paradigms to reach a sociological understanding of specific refugee situations.

In urban areas most governments of host countries leave the management of refugees to UNHCR. The refugee agency often finds itself unable to provide the degree of protection and assistance it commonly provides in camps. Refugees may be hard to access. As their presence is often unauthorized, many keep a low profile and remain unregistered. Many host governments continue to regard camps as the only legitimate space for refugees, and UNHCR has tended, at least de facto, to adhere to this view. Often it has had little choice except to do so in the face of determined governments.

Many refugees, like IDPs, find urban settings attractive, offering better livelihood, social and self-sufficiency opportunities than rural or camp settings. Outside of the physical and legal space of camps, refugees in cities are often not granted a legal status under international or domestic law, thus remaining unprotected. For many the main consequence of lack of protection is having to pay bribes to government officials to move about cities, to trade, or to seek work. In urban areas, governments and political parties may frame refugees (as well as migrants and IDPs) as security threats to the existing social and economic fabric and strive to maintain their segregation to prevent their long-term settlement and integration. By implying that urban refugees should be contained, and that their stay is temporary, governments deny the possibility of accession to citizenship. Deemed a burden on national resources and often demonized, urban and other out-of-camp refugees may be faced with arbitrary state action and a hostile environment that creates xenophobia and fear among the refugees. This forces the refugees to seek anonymity, generally in urban slums, and adopt strategies of identity or physical concealment. As a result, refugees are prevented from access to existing services and decent livelihoods. Jacobsen[9] and others have stressed that urban refugees could be an asset to regional economies if legal avenues were opened to allow them to pursue productive lives within formal frameworks. Fábos and Kibreab[10] point to the development of transnational spaces within which refugees may rely on, or contribute to, remittances and other forms of support from social networks, often family based. They further note that refugees are often part of mixed-migration movements.

The urban turn in refugee studies, but also in advocacy, has had a strong impact on policy. In recent years, international

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emergency NGOs, together with UNHCR, have strived to adapt protection and assistance, the two pillars of their actions, to the challenges of operating in an urban environment. They have found it difficult to assess the needs of refugees intermixed among the population of the host country, to distinguish refugees, IDPs and migrants, and to deliver aid to those who either do not necessarily want to be identified or are extremely hard to identify as they live on urban peripheries far from UNHCR offices.

Iraq Displacement Hastens Policy Change

UNHCR recognized that the Iraqi refugee crisis was the biggest urban refugee crisis it had ever been obliged to address. The agency's reports of its operations in the main host countries of the Middle East, namely Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, have also made it abundantly apparent that the crisis is different from previous urban refugee situations. The profile of the refugees, in their majority from the urban middle class, and the operational environment resulting from the development levels of Iraq and regional host states, together with the latter's reception policies for Iraqis, have presented humanitarian actors with some unprecedented challenges to existing protection and assistance models. Furthermore, the high political profile of the crisis, particularly in the US, has generated a donor response significantly greater than for other UNHCR caseload of urban refugees and IDPs. All these factors have allowed the agency to test new and costly approaches for delivering assistance, such as systematic outreach efforts, the provision of services to refugees and nationals alike on the basis of vulnerabilities, partnership with local NGOs,[11] informing refugees via SMS or delivering cash through ATMs and employing refugees as outreach workers and counsellors.[12] It is unlikely that these new models will be easily replicable in other urban refugee situations where funding levels for assistance are lower, the operational context in host countries is less favourable, and refugees have a more typical third-world profile.

Operations in favour of Iraqi refugees have also prompted UNHCR to revise its much-criticized urban policy, launching a new Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas in September 2009. Its roll-out correlated with the expansion of the refugee agency's activities in favour of Iraqi refugees. However the Iraqi refugee crisis raises questions about the universality of the new urban refugee policy. The document acknowledges the need to adapt to the specific context and the circumstances, capacities, and vulnerabilities of different groups and individuals within the refugee population. It provides a checklist to assess protection risks and vulnerabilities, describing in detail what these risks can be in extreme circumstances. On the other hand, very little guidance is given on how to identify and assess risks and vulnerabilities in situations where refugees are moving between middle-income countries, and where the protection environment is more favourable yet far from guaranteeing local durable solutions for refugees.

Cumulative Causes of Displacement

A consideration of the causes of displacement, which are extremely varied, helps understand the untypical profile of Iraqi refugees. As early as 2003, several thousands of political émigrés who were close associates of the Saddam Hussein regime left with their families and assets to find refuge in Arab countries, particularly Syria and Yemen, which welcomed them and offered them a stable status. That same year, the dismantlement of the Iraqi army and the order, passed by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority, to remove all public sector employees who had been members in the Baath party left over half a million Iraqis without an income and disenfranchised. Among them were large numbers of professionals, such as medical doctors, engineers, teachers, and university professors. Furthermore, the lifting of the international embargo, imposed on Iraq by the UN-Security Council in 1990, gave way to a neo-liberal order which made the professional conversion of former civil servants difficult.[13] This situation was compounded by an assassination campaign targeting secular intellectuals and professionals. Factors have therefore combined to force or convince tens of thousands of middle-class Iraqis to seek security and employment abroad, particularly in other Arab countries, from Jordan and Egypt all the way to the Gulf.

The major impetus for displacement was however the sectarian killings and cleansing affecting several areas of Iraq, particularly Baghdad, in 2006–8. During those years, Syria, the only country of the region with borders still universally open to Iraqis, received the largest number of refugees. Within this group, socio-economic and geographical backgrounds have been more varied than among political émigrés and professionals; however the majority still originates from the Baghdad middle class. Less economically or socially privileged Iraqis forced into displacement have remained inside the country as IDPs.

Further factors convincing many Iraqis to take the decision to leave are the constant deterioration of public services (at the time of writing, Baghdad only receives four hours of electricity a day) and the growing rate of unemployment (close to 30 percent). For many, it is a combination of various types of insecurity—physical, social, and economic—together with a sense of alienation from the new political and religious order now prevalent in Iraq that has prompted their departure and still prevents them from considering return a viable option.

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The pattern of displacement has not been a sudden and vast movement of people across borders, limited in time. Rather, it has been a constant out-migration since 2003, with a peak in 2006–7. Entire family groups have left with children and, at times, aging parents. Most did not flee abroad reactively, but after pondering their decision and making preparations, including selling properties. In several cases, the decision to leave Iraq came after an initial episode of internal displacement.

Mixed Migration and Patterns of Mobility

Iraqi refugees have to be understood as part of a large flow of mixed migration created by the major geopolitical and economic reconfiguration of Iraq which the US intervention has prompted. The integration of Iraq within the global free market, the war and reconstruction economy, and the possibility of travelling outside the country, strictly controlled under the Baath, afforded new opportunities for Iraqis with capital to invest in real estate and the private sector of neighbouring states, and in cross-border trade. This capital flow has benefitted the economies of countries hosting refugees from Iraq. Already in 2004–5, Iraqi businesses and community organizations started becoming highly visible in Damascus and Amman, the two major urban centres where refugees from Iraq have moved. Many of those Iraqis who left with financial and/or professional assets were able to successfully invest in other Arab countries, in some cases creating employment opportunities for less affluent refugees, generally in the informal sector. This has particularly been the case in areas of Damascus where Iraqis have gathered.

Not all Iraqi capital holders with a foothold in another Arab country are refugees. Many business entrepreneurs operate between Iraq, a base in the region, and the international market, and keep their families in security in Beirut, Amman, Cairo, the Gulf, or even a Western country. Dual residence is also a common feature of the Iraqi political class with duties carried out in Iraq, and family life lived elsewhere, including in the more affluent Arab capitals that also host refugees. Furthermore, Damascus, Amman, and Beirut play hub to activities for large numbers of temporary visitors from Iraq: patients seeking high quality medical care, university students pursuing an education, pilgrims to Shiite shrines in the Syrian capital, holiday visitors escaping the summer heat at home, and so on.[14]

Migration Regimes Sharpen Socio-economic Differences

Overwhelmingly from the middle and upper classes, and with urban backgrounds, Iraqi refugees originate from a middle-income, oil-producing country with what were, at one time, good social and education services, which progressively deteriorated over several decades due to the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the international sanctions applied between 1990 and 2003, and the US-led invasion. The refugees have first-world expectations in terms of living standards, medical care, and quality of education for their children. Exile has sharpened social stratification between those who have maintained socio-economic status and those who have not, creating anxieties and uncertainty among the latter.

The Arab states receiving Iraqi refugees are themselves middle-income countries generally experiencing a crisis of the welfare state and increasingly adopting neo-liberal policies. They have a vested interest in offering privileged access and status to Iraqis with capital to invest or to spend on the local market and services, regardless of the reasons why they have come to stay. Each of these countries, particularly those sharing a border with Iraq, also envision their policy vis-à-vis Iraqis willing to enter or stay on their territory within specific geopolitical and domestic agendas. None of the main host countries receives Iraqis within a refugee regime. Rather, Iraqis are fitted within migration regimes that tend to favour those with financial, professional, or political assets.

Syria has been the most inclusive host facilitating the near universal entry of Iraqis, and the delivery and renewal of one-year residence. The government has also offered Syrian passports to high-level Iraqi Baathists. By contrast, Lebanon only allows entry to Iraqis with financial means, and has requested that those who want to stay long-term find a local sponsor to be granted residence permits. Many Iraqis who entered illegally or remained without a sponsor have been detained. Jordan and Egypt restrict entry based on financial means or professional guarantees. They grant one-year residence to holders of financial capital or legal work contracts. The authorities however apply a tolerance regime to Iraqis inside the country who fail to meet residence requirements, and they refrain from systematic detention or deportation.

In all cases, because Iraqis are treated as migrants, their access to the work market is governed by labour laws applying to foreigners. The general trend has been to deny work permits to Iraqis except in professions where skills are in demand. Since labour markets in host countries are already congested, and unemployment high in sectors where educated Iraqis have competences, vast numbers of refugees have been left without employment or forced to seek informal jobs below their qualifications. This has greatly contributed to the sense of insecurity and anxiety of Iraqi individuals and families who have used their savings and survive on remittances from relatives in Iraq or the diaspora

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to strive to maintain living standards, particularly quality education for their children.

As migrants, Iraqis are free to settle where they wish, in urban or rural areas, and to rent or even buy properties when then can so afford. Residential patterns reflect socio-economic status, real or aspired, as many Iraqis make desperate financial efforts not to move to less affluent areas in large Arab cities. Iraqi neighbourhoods have developed in the centre or the periphery of Damascus, Amman and Cairo with ethnic businesses catering for the needs of the new residents.[15] In Amman, for example, Iraqis are known to be scattered across the city. The most affluent ones cluster in a number of residential neighbourhoods in the west part of the capital where a high-end Iraqi business area has also developed. Less well off Iraqis have regrouped alongside poorer Jordanians, Palestinian refugees, and labour migrants in the eastern part of Amman. This is also where local and international NGOs have concentrated their social services.

Refugee Policy and Assistance

UNHCR operates through agreements or memorandums of understanding with Arab host governments whereby responsibilities for refugee assistance and protection are shared. Michael Kagan provides an in-depth analysis of the modalities and implications of UNHCR's role as a "surrogate state' in the Middle East."[16] He also sees the Iraqi refugee crisis as exemplifying the "grant compromise" of global refugee policy, namely burden sharing: high donor interest has allowed UNHCR to mobilize considerable resources channelled to services for refugees delivered by the UN refugee agency, international NGOs, or host governments.

However, there are marked differences between host countries in their willingness to open state-run services to Iraqis. Syria and Jordan allow Iraqis to use government medical facilities and schools regardless of their residence status and situation vis-à-vis UNHCR. In Jordan and, to a lesser extent, Syria, the vast amount of international aid generated by the Iraqi refugee crisis has served to upgrade public facilities that benefit host-country nationals more than the refugees from Iraq.[17] By contrast, Lebanon has opened public schools and medical facilities only to Iraqis registered with the UN refugee agency, whereas Egypt has closed access for all Iraqis to public services and has impeded alternative service provision by NGOs. UNHCR also directly operates programs such as the delivery of cash assistance to needy refugees, and has set up mechanisms to coordinate between different assistance providers.

Syria does not fit neatly into Kagan's analysis. The country's almost constant open-door policy to Iraqi refugees, and the universal access it grants them to public facilities while receiving much less donors' assistance than Jordan, require a consideration of the country's regional and international political agendas. In general, it can be argued that the relative favourable "protection space' afforded underprivileged Iraqi refugees by host countries is as much the result of economic and geopolitical calculations by host governments as the effect of international assistance and UNHCR's assumption of the role of a surrogate state.

Resettlement and Asylum

The high interest of resettlement states is the second pillar of the "grand compromise" between regional host states and Northern donors. All Arab host countries envision the stay of Iraqis, particularly those dependant on assistance, as temporary and rule out naturalization.[18] Even Iraqis with assets and a residence permit share with their less advantaged co-nationals a feeling of uncertainty about the future because there is no guarantee that host states will not shift policy and force them to return to Iraq. The current instability in the region, particularly in Syria and Egypt, exacerbates this feeling and it appears that refugees have returned to Iraq in unprecedented numbers over the first quarter of 2012.[19] In this context, probably the main reason why Iraqis register with UNHCR is to access third-country resettlement.

The resettlement program has taken up a large amount of UNHCR staff time and financial resources. In 2010, Iraqis were the largest group of beneficiaries of UNHCR-facilitated third-country resettlement programs (26,700).[20] The US has accepted far more Iraqis than the other developed country (including Canada, the Nordic countries, Australia and New Zealand) that each year participates in the program.[21] As of April 2012, 58,810 Iraqi refugees had arrived in the US. Numbers have been declining since arrivals peaked in 2009.[22] The process has been extremely slow with a large number of Iraqis waiting well over a year between admission and actual resettlement because of several levels of security screening.[23] This delay maintains Iraqi individuals and families in an unbearable situation of uncertainty, keeping them dependent on humanitarian assistance or depletion of personal resources; thwarts their efforts to plan for their future and, often, that of their children; and forces an increasing number to return to Iraq where insecurity still prevails.

While the US has been the main resettlement country, Western European states have received the largest number of in-country asylum applications from Iraqis, with Sweden topping the list. Another unusual aspect of the ongoing crisis of Iraqi displacement is that there are considerable numbers of Iraqi asylum seekers whose claims have been refused but who are in a legal limbo as European states seek to enforce decisions to forcibly return them to Iraq—despite

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UNHCR advocacy. Judgments in 2010 by the European Court of Human Rights blocking forced returns were followed by a resolution of the Iraqi parliament in June 2012 banning the forced return of tens of thousands of failed asylum seekers and threatening to fine airlines that take part in deportation programs. There appears to be no precedent for the post-crisis legislature of a refugee-producing state to refuse to take back its own nationals.

Assumptions about Refugees' Needs

The unusual profile and first-world expectations of the refugees, the desire of governments to assert control and sovereignty over humanitarian intervention, and the role UNHCR has come to assume as a "surrogate state" for non-Palestinian refugees in the region have rendered models developed to respond to the needs of urban refugees in extremely different circumstances ill-fitted to the situation of the Iraqis.

Interventions initially proceeded from a series of assumptions about the needs and vulnerability of the refugees. In its early stages, programming was emergency-oriented and aimed at meeting such needs as access to primary health care and basic education. Refugees were thought to be at threat of arrest and detention, refoulement, harassment, exploitation, discrimination, and vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. Over the last two years, UNHCR and its implementing partners have made considerable progress in refining their approach, responding to Iraqi refugees' actual needs: secondary and tertiary healthcare psychosocial programs (particularly mental health for survivors of torture), remedial and higher education, skills maintenance and development.

"Guesstimating" Numbers

Arguably, the most difficult assumption to dislodge has been that there are vast numbers of unregistered Iraqi refugees, fearful and in hiding among the host population. Indeed, the original *estimates* of the number of Iraqi refugees put forward by host countries at the April 2007 donor conference organized in Geneva by UNHCR were above two million. In 2009, the number of registrations with UNHCR peaked at just above 310,000 throughout the Middle East, with 220,000 in Syria and 52,000 in Jordan. When the expected number of refugees failed to register, humanitarian actors, advocacy organizations, the international media, and refugee scholars all concurred that uncounted numbers of Iraqis were in hiding in the cities, fearing arrest and deportation.

UNHCR and NGOs inaugurated outreach programs that considerably stretched their human and financial resources to try to locate these "invisible" refugees and convince them to register. However, after a couple of years of these costly efforts, concerned agencies came to admit that, at least in Syria and Jordan, over 90 percent of those Iraqis in need of protection and/or assistance were already registered.

This is not to say that the figure of 310,000 represents 90 percent of Iraqis who left to escape political or criminal violence, or the new social, moral, and economic order brought about by the change of regime, which for many has proven disorientating. However, it is likely that other Iraqis who have relocated from Iraq without seeking registration with refugee or asylum agencies have to be approached in terms different from those offered by both the international refugee regime and refugee studies.

Difficulty in estimating numbers of refuges is compounded by the mixed nature of Iraqi migration to neighbouring countries and the circulation of refugees between a host country and Iraq.[24] This situation is not unlike that of other refugee crises worldwide after the intensity of conflict decreases. Afghanistan provides another major example of the phenomenon.

Policy Effects of Inflated Numbers

There has been much discussion about the size of the Iraqi refugee population as well as a tendency among practitioners and scholars to base accounts, assessments, narratives, and analysis on the highest figures publicized by host governments.[25] There has also been much debate behind closed humanitarian doors and academic institutions about the relevance of speculating on the number of refugees when what mattered was the amount of suffering the displacement experience was inflicting.

There are at least some reasons for arguing that inflating the number of refugees has had direct detrimental effects on their immediate well-being and future. Kate Washington and Harriet Dodd,[26] reflecting on their experience working with a large international NGO in Jordan since 2007, concur that the adherence of large donors and UNHCR to very high figures—up to 750,000 Iraqis in Jordan at some point—negatively impacted the capacity of operational aid agencies to plan, tailor, and implement programs in the best interest of the refugees. The disproportionately large amount of funding flowing from donors, particularly the US government, also had negative consequences: the rapid expansion of agencies applying ready-made models and the resistance to change in approach even as it became obvious that the Iraqi refugee situation was not, except maybe in its very early stage, a humanitarian crisis; competition between NGOs for, and retention of Iraqi beneficiaries; agencies focusing on meeting pre-developed targets rather than on quality and goal of the services; the difficulty of developing a sustainable strategy focused on a realistic number of beneficiaries;

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and the development of an assistance-seeking behaviour in the Iraqi community. With some nuances, these remarks are equally valid for Syria.[27]

The perception of the Iraqi refugees by host communities has also been affected by their representation in official discourse, in the media, and by many international NGOs as hordes of people preying on scarce national resources or as potential exporters of the kind of sectarian conflict which raged in Iraq in 2006–7.[28] These representations have, in several cases, created xenophobia and tensions between nationals and refugees. They have also provided justification for authoritarian governments to enhance their security apparatus and restrict the entry of Iraqis fleeing violence.[29] Unfortunately, at the time of writing, these patterns are being reproduced in relation to Syrians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries while fleeing massacres and repression at home. These misconceptions have also undermined advocacy efforts by UNHCR and international NGOs to encourage host governments to support refugees' self-sufficiency through allocation of work permits, vocational training, or credit schemes for small businesses. Which government, anywhere in the world, would willingly open its formal labour market to a foreign work force thought to represent up to 10 percent of the national workforce?

Another distorting effect of inflated numbers has been sidelining of UNHCR resettlement endeavours and the fact that the program has provided ammunition to critics of the US intervention in Iraq. In January 2011, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres stated that 60,000 Iraqi refugees had departed to resettlement countries while another 60,000 were still in need of resettlement. In statistical terms, there are at least two contrasting ways of measuring the overall resettlement efforts. One is to look at the ratio of resettled refugees to the numbers of Iraqi refugees—according to host governments about two million. This would represent 3 percent of the total estimated refugees already resettled, and another 3 percent in need of resettlement. The other way is to take as a basis the number of Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR throughout the region. If and when the target of 120,000 is met, 40 percent of the total number of Iraqi refugees registered in 2009, or 46 percent of those registered in early 2011, will have been resettled. Considering the unreliability of the estimates used by host governments, the second set of figures is more likely to reflect the size of the efforts and the remaining needs. Here too, it may make a difference for policy makers and public opinion in resettlement countries to be informed by refugee advocates and the media that 60,000, and not two million, refugees are desperately waiting to be granted the safety and stability which they hope resettlement will provide them.

Towards Improved Understanding of Iraqi Displacement

Social scientists have tended to see those displaced from Iraq almost exclusively through paradigms developed to account for the experience of urban refugees facing extremely different circumstances. The caseload of Iraqi refugees has not been typical urban refugees of the kind now found throughout the world. Arguably, the category of urban refugees has been too rigid, unable to adequately describe either the situation of displaced Iraqis or to analyze the universal applicability of programs to assist them.

This has prompted several contributors in this issue, particularly those with a strong ethnographic insight, to engage with Iraqi refugees on a different plane. Distancing themselves from policy-informed analytical frameworks, they anchor their discussions within current social science debates, exploring the nexus between gender and citizenship among women refugees; the dialectic of provisional return and place-making; social stratification, class, and the effects of neo-liberalism on refugees; the production and reproduction of state sovereignty by international NGOs; the impact of exile on relations within the nuclear family and rebuilding of roles and meaning; or migrant's social capital and its role in information sharing about the resettlement process.

Essays in this issue also aim to contribute to some crucial policy issues: the effect on refugees of irregular migration and refugee containment measures adopted by the more wealthy states; the politics of resettlement, particularly in the US and EU; the process of accommodation taking place between refugees and host societies and governments in countries of the Middle East; the necessity for humanitarian actors to recognize regional and international mobility as legitimate coping mechanisms for refugees; and finally the urgency to look beyond conventional approaches to durable solutions to the plight of the refugees.

The three opening contributions examine the legacy of previous trends of refugee migration from Iraq, so far largely disregarded by scholars and the humanitarian community. Thousands of Iraqis aspiring to reach safety from the regime of Saddam Hussein in Australia, which they expected to be a liberal asylum country, have spent years stranded in transit countries in Southeast Asia with no durable solution in sight: they are now joined by new arrivals from Iraq. In Middle Eastern host countries, where no stable legal status is available to poor refugees, UNHCR has fitted the pre-2003 Iraqi caseload into resettlement programs that would force some of these long-term refugees to sever the family ties they have built in the host country. More fortunate escapees from the Baathist regime, who managed to rebuild a secure life in exile, have taken advantage of post-2003

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opportunities to go back to Iraq, only to then realize how much home, and their sense of it, had changed, making permanent return impossible.

Iraqis Stranded in Indonesia

Sue Hoffman addresses the experience of Iraqi asylum seekers stranded in Indonesia after failing to reach Australia through irregular migration in the late 1990s. Often experiencing multiple traumas—from persecution at home to unsuccessful boat journeys trying to reach the coast of Australia, in several cases resulting in the death of loved ones—these refugees are difficult to resettle, because they represent the old caseload of pre-2003 refugees from Iraq. They have fallen through the gaps of the international refugee protection system and their experience of "wasted lives" is poignant. This significant group is at the core of recent policy debates in Australia, not least because of the continuous furor over boat arrivals and the centrality of anti-refugee rhetoric in political discourse (blaming Iraqis, and other asylum seekers, as "queue-jumpers"). The contribution documents the action of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Indonesia and highlights the essential problem with Australian demonization—that there is, effectively, no regional queue for them to "jump." The paper also accounts for arrival, along the same routes, of new Iraqis fleeing the Middle East after 2003, and the reasons behind the refugees' choice of this migratory route.

Iraqi Women Returning from Australia

Katie Vasey examines the experience of Iraqi women who relocated to Australia as part of Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program during the years of international sanctions against Iraq, and who returned to visit their homeland after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The author explores these women's experiences of provisional return to Iraq, and questions how their return influences their "home" making in Australia. Through narratives of longing, belonging, return to Iraq and return to Australia, Vasey interrogates the complex, contradictory, and ambivalent relationships that Iraqi women developed with both their host and home countries and how this impacted upon their well-being. Iraqi women expected to experience a feeling of well-being upon return to Iraq, as they stepped back into the "home country," an idealized place that had allowed them to cope with the anxieties of exile. Such feelings of well-being, security, and being "at home" crumbled with the realization that the social environment had irreversibly changed, and that returning permanently to Iraq was impossible. This realization was not only based on the fact that the country had, in their absence, been subjected to ongoing destruction and devastation, but also related to the transformations they had undergone in Australia.

Divorced Iraqi Women in Jordan

Susan MacDougall explores the nexus between divorce, immigration laws, and refugee status for Iraqi women in Jordan who had arrived in the country before 2003 and were previously married to Jordanian men. The legal systems effectively fence off divorced women in Jordan, with child custody laws preventing them from leaving and citizenship laws denying them the possibility of naturalization, reinforcing their vulnerability and social exclusion. These women register with UNHCR as an alternative to their lack of status, but are funnelled into a refugee management regime that envisions Jordan merely as a place of transit for refugees. This is inappropriate for women who have lived in the country for over a decade and have children with Jordanian citizenship. Central to the discussion are issues of gender and citizenship, or rather how citizenship is gendered in particular ways in countries of the Middle East, and how the refugee regime is ill-suited to provide durable solutions to women whose situation does not fit neatly into existing legal categories.

Class and Rejection of the "Refugee" Label

By introducing the class variable, Elisa Pascucci offers a complex view of what displacement means to those who do not want to be called "refugee." The author challenges typical portrayals of Iraqis in the Middle East while prompting the reader to consider the ways in which vulnerability and class status may coexist. Her informants underplay ethnic and religious differences, and emphasize rather social stratification, past or created by displacement, as the most divisive factor among Iraqis. Class divides in exile between those who can maintain stability and security through financial capital, taking advantage of neo-liberal investment policies and unconcerned by the regime of international refugee assistance, and those who cannot, or who cannot any more after a slow process of downward social mobility during which they strived to maintain social status through remittances and/or savings. What Pascucci deems "middle-class anxieties" about children's education and standards of living pose challenges to international assistance providers used to dealing with other types of refugee vulnerabilities. Pascucci reminds us that, beyond the focus of humanitarian agencies and legal scholars on the legal and policy context of reception in host countries, social and economic factors are strong determinants of the refugee experience. She also argues that neo-liberal policies and the political economy of bilateral relations (such as trade and investment linking countries of origin and settlement of the displaced) need

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to be factored into any meaningful analysis of the refugee experience and context of vulnerability.

INGOs and State Sovereignty

Sophia Hoffmann takes the reader to a different plane—that of humanitarianism—unveiling the underlying tendency among mainstream INGOs to work within social relations established by and, in essence, reproducing the hegemonic power of state sovereignty. INGO practices towards Iraqi refugees in Damascus reveal how the "sovereign ideal" of territory, nation, and government informs techniques of migration management, which in turn reproduces this ideal. The author makes a point crucial to an understanding of how the humanitarian regime—whose perspective has dominated the literature on Iraqi refugees—has also blurred an appreciation of the variety of Iraqi experiences in exile and in migration. She notes that professional INGOs were prevented by the Syrian government from amassing knowledge about the Iraqi population and could not conduct the needs assessments that usually form the basis of aid-projects. INGOs in Damascus thus based their interventions largely on *assumptions* about the Iraqi population, which flowed from established ideas and tropes about refugees, intimately connected to sovereignty and sovereign exclusions. INGO rhetoric, and the academic production that adheres to this rhetoric, reduce the extremely varied existence of Iraqis in exile, which also includes successes, opportunities, strength, health, and self help, to that of suffering and weakness, and in this contribute to the construction of sovereignty. Yet, as the author notes, refugees negotiate, experience, and subvert in multiple ways the sovereignties projected by the state and the INGOs.

Rebuilding Roles and Meaning within the Family

The contribution by Muriel Génot—together with Muath Asfoor, and Hala Hammad who assisted her in her therapeutic engagement with Iraqi refugee children and their fathers as part of the activities of the NGO Center for Victims of Torture (CVT)—brings to the fore the crucial question of how exile affects relations within the nuclear family. The authors account for an innovative experience of psychological counselling with Iraqi refugees in Jordan responding to a request from fathers who had seen their protecting role shattered by violence and displacement. CVT offered to organize regular meetings of small groups where fathers and children worked together with counsellors on rebuilding roles and re-establishing communication though endowing violence and exile with meanings children could access and fathers could utter. One of the key contributions of the paper is that humanitarian intervention does not necessarily reproduce existing models as long as practitioners are ready to listen, propose, engage on par with refugees, and take the risk of innovating. Beyond its disciplinary underpinnings, and its value for practitioners, the paper makes a particularly strong contribution to the literature on refugees' agency. It demonstrates in a powerful yet moving way how, during periods of uncertainty and temporariness, such as between flight and resettlement, refugees can productively engage at the family level to act upon their own future.

Information Sharing among Refugees

Adam Saltsman's focus remains with Iraqi refugees in Jordan. He provides insight into the effects of information sharing (or lack thereof) between international organizations (especially UNHCR) and displaced populations. The author argues that information campaigns by international refugee agencies often falter for two crucial reasons beyond resource scarcity. First, agencies disseminating information are often under pressure to curb the outflow of migrants from the Global South, and as a result, information provision has tended to be coloured by efforts to control or protect against forced migrants' movement or desires. Second, these agencies do not typically consider or engage with migratory capital, including migrants' informal networks for sharing knowledge about the migratory process, often based on transnational relations. As a case study, the author explores the lived experiences of refugees vis-à-vis both the official information from humanitarian agencies and their informal networks that are transnational in nature. Saltsman makes a compelling case in favour of initiatives contributing to migratory capital, a set of resources on which forced migrants often depend just as much as on the protection of international agencies. He argues that, rather than relying on a model of universal protocol, UNHCR and other agencies should both increase their transparency vis-à-vis the refugee and engage the sorts of local and transnational initiatives that spring up as survival mechanisms in contexts of displacement.

Local Accommodation

Dawn Chatty and Nisrine Mansour offer a more policy-oriented contribution to this issue based on a study of perception among refugees and policy makers in the three main host countries of the Middle East, who are found to be more pragmatic than the international aid community and to broaden the scope for durable solutions. The authors identify an ongoing process of local accommodation that takes please in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan in lieu of official integration, a term widely rejected because of the sensitivity to the protracted Palestinian refugee situation. Accommodation is the outcome of new patterns of inter- and

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intra-social relations between host and refugee communities and within Iraqi communities, and is not problem-free as mutual recriminations and competing claims between local and refugee communities are reported. Another important element the authors highlight is the fluid movement of Iraqis back and forth to Iraq as an important mechanism for improving life opportunities and reducing family risk. Mobility is also a common feature of Iraqi exiles' transnational networks, built over decades of displacement from Iraq and linking family members scattered on several continents. The authors make a case for recognizing regional and transnational mobility as a risk-management strategy for refugees for whom the three classic durable solutions are largely inapplicable. They also regret that this mobility is often looked at sceptically by many in the humanitarian aid regime as it raises questions regarding how well Iraqis fit into the "category" of refugee.

Return and Remigration

Echoing and complementing Chatty and Mansour's paper, Vanessa Iaria's essay provides an overview of the complex political and economic context within which Iraqis who fled to Syria or Jordan after 2003 make decisions regarding return and remigration. She found that Iraqi refugees' decision to return is driven less by improvements in Iraq than by their desire to rebuild their lives back home and overcome the difficult legal and socio-economic conditions in neighbouring countries. However, the micro and macro transformations occurring in post-Saddam Iraq also have a strong bearing on refugees' return and reintegration in their home communities. In the absence of security at home and durable perspectives in a neighbouring country, several of the Iraqis Iaria interviewed engage in transnational mobility and livelihoods as a survival mechanism. The article makes two notable contributions to refugee policy. One is that the voluntary repatriation of refugees cannot be interpreted solely as an evidence of progress in a series of post-conflict issues, including restoration of security and political stability. The other is that the international refugee regime's concern with governing refugees' movements after repatriation by stopping remigration may hamper the natural transnational practices that refugees have developed as alternative livelihood strategies in the absence of other, durable solutions.

Limits of Third-Country Resettlement

Chantal Berman's closing contribution stands as a counterpoint, illustrating the inadequacy of third-country resettlement as the main durable solution envisioned so far by the humanitarian regime for Iraqi refugees. The rationale for resettlement policies is to be found elsewhere than in the humanitarian needs of the refugees. Using a detailed comparative policy focus, the author examines US and EU policies regulating the selection and admission of Iraqi refugees since 2003, focusing on the divergent political priorities and structural considerations underpinning variations in resettlement levels during this time. The author argues that US resettlement of Iraqi refugees is primarily an element of foreign policy, defined by strategic objectives in Iraq and the surrounding region, whereas admissions to the EU reflect ongoing intra-European debates surrounding the construction and modification of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). While Europeans opposed to Iraqi resettlement have argued for sole US responsibility for Iraqis' humanitarian needs, Bush Administration officials justified policies of minimal resettlement through a causational de-linking of the US invasion and the ensuing refugee crisis. Refugee resettlement (or a calculated lack thereof) remains one tool among many in the diplomatic and strategic arsenal of the United States on a global scale. Finally, comparing US and EU policies vis-à-vis Iraqi refugees raises questions about states' accountability for refugee-producing policies, and about the corresponding levels of aid and resettlement required to offset this "responsibility."

Notes

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Living in Limbo: Iraqi Refugees in Indonesia

Sue Hoffman

Abstract

Between 1999 and 2001 about 4,800 Iraqi refugees made their way to Australia. While the vast majority reached their destination, some never got that far, instead finding themselves stranded in Indonesia for up to 10 years. The author conducted interviews with Iraqi refugees in both Indonesia and Australia, from which a number of themes emerged. Central to these was the insecurity and uncertainty faced by participants over a protracted period with a marked difference when comparing the narratives of the participants settled in Australia with those living in a limbo situation in Indonesia. The former recalled the stresses of their journey and the associated feelings of fear, anxiety, and depression. In the case of the latter group, these feelings were ever present as their journey was not yet over.

Résumé

C'est au nombre de 4800 que des réfugiés irakiens se sont installés en Australie entre 1999 et 2001. Alors que la majorité de ce nombre ont atteint leur destination, certains ne se sont jamais rendus et se sont retrouvés bloqués en Indonésie pendant une période allant jusqu'à 10 ans. L'auteur a effectué des entrevues avec des réfugiés irakiens en Indonésie et en Australie, et un certain nombre de thèmes se sont dégagés. Un des thèmes centraux est l'insécurité et l'incertitude des réfugiés confrontés à un séjour prolongé, ainsi que le contraste marqué entre les récits des réfugiés installés en Australie, et de ceux coincés en Indonésie. Alors que les réfugiés installés en Australie avaient enfin la possibilité de digérer le stress du voyage et les sentiments associés de peur, d'anxiété et de dépression, ces derniers, bloqués en Indonésie subissaient ces mêmes sentiments quotidiennement comme si leur voyage n'était pas encore terminé.

Introduction

Between 1999 and 2001 an estimated 4,800 Iraqis transited Indonesia, leaving on smugglers' boats bound for Australia. However a few hundred did not make that final leg of their journey and found themselves living in a limbo-like situation for up to 10 years in Indonesia. Initially incarcerated in Indonesian immigration detention centres, they were later released to live in the community. However, without work rights, their day-to day-living arrangements were dependent upon agreements made between the Indonesian government, the Australian government, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), rendering the Iraqis largely powerless in making even the most basic decisions about their lives and futures.

In 2006 and 2007, as part of my doctoral research which examined the journeys of Iraqi refugees from the Middle East to Australia, I interviewed Iraqi refugees in both Australia and Indonesia.[1] The absence of research focused on refugee journeys from the Middle East across southeast Asia was an important consideration in deciding to use interview and analysis methods influenced by grounded theory. Grounded theory contrasts with other research methods which typically require the researcher to decide upon the main focus of the study and review the literature before gathering and analyzing data. This can be problematic when the study concerns a social phenomenon for which there is minimal literature available. Adopting a grounded theory approach means the central theme of the research is decided upon after conducting initial interviews during which the participants identify what they regard as important and significant. Analysis of early interviews then influences decisions by the researcher about the selection of

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further participants, the subjects canvassed in later interviews, and the overall direction of the research.[2]

For these reasons, grounded theory is particularly well-suited to studies such as mine where there has been little previous research or literature to draw on. Consistent with a grounded theory approach, rather than preparing detailed questions for participants to answer, I invited study participants to tell the story of their journey from Iraq in whatever way they chose. As well as providing them with the opportunity to talk about what they regarded as important and significant, it was consistent with a major aim of my research which was to centre the refugee voice.

I drew upon two main bodies of sociological theory concerned with risk to interpret and analyze the circumstances of participants. Ulrich Beck presents a view of the modern world that "is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced."[3] Beck argues that decisions made in one era can have unexpected consequences for future generations which are unbounded by time or national borders, and that such hazards typically have the most devastating impact upon the poor and vulnerable who are least able to insure or protect themselves against risk. Obvious parallels can be drawn between Beck's theory and the refugee issue, where conflicts and regimes that give rise to refugees have their origins in decisions made in previous decades. This is particularly apposite with regard to Iraqis. After the First World War and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations gave the British the mandate over Mesopotamia, which was renamed Iraq after some adjustments to borders to suit colonial interests. Although the mandate formally ended in 1932, many Iraqis considered British involvement in their affairs to have finished only when the British-installed monarchy was overthrown in 1958, which was coincidentally the year Saddam Hussein joined the Ba'ath party.[4]

Beck drew attention to the distinction between "risk *decision makers* and those who have to deal with the consequences of decisions of *others*."[5] He also made reference to the power imbalance between them; powerful actors minimize the risk to themselves while increasing the risk to others. The power differential is readily apparent when considering the situation for refugees who flee their country of origin when their own government is unwilling or unable to afford them safety and security. They are then obliged to prevail upon other countries from a position of no or limited legal rights and hence vulnerability. In this case the balance of power is clearly weighted in favour of national governments who have the sovereign power to grant or deny them refuge.

From a different perspective, risk is regarded as a technology by which social problems can be managed. This approach has its origins in the work of Michel Foucault and the governmentality theorists who developed his ideas.[6] Foucault distinguished between three modes of exercising authority; sovereignty, discipline, and governmentality. Sovereign power is evident through the exercise of law and military deployment; discipline is the means by which institutions such as prisons, factories, and schools exert power over inmates, workers, and pupils to conform and is achieved through self regulation; and governmentality is concerned with the various mechanisms employed to exercise authority and control populations that extend beyond security forces, laws, and institutions. It relates to the strategies and tactics used to shape and influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of resident populations.[7]

The state is therefore but one element in a complex array of authorities, organizations and institutions through which power is dispersed. These are Foucault's "apparatuses of security," the means by which the trilogy of sovereignty, discipline, and governmentality shape conduct.[8] They include the military and police forces, intelligence agencies, and the health, welfare, and social systems.[9]

Governmentality theorists suggest that governing is the more or less deliberate attempt to direct behaviour of individuals targeted by a particular policy to bring about a particular result. Examples include public campaigns that warn of the risks associated with drink-driving or political rhetoric concerning the dangers inherent in boarding unsafe smugglers' boats, especially if travelling with children. Importantly, this shaping of conduct is moral in nature whereby government purports to know what behaviour is good and desirable and what behaviour is deviant.[10]

My research also considered the psychological impact of living under duress for extended periods of time, and how people overcome such experiences. These matters are briefly addressed in this article.

Participants' reasons for leaving Iraq, and the timing of their departures, varied. Some had fled or been forced out of Iraq by the ruling regime up to 20 years earlier, suspected of having Iranian antecedents at the time of the eight-year war between Iraq and Iran which started in 1980. Others had left Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 uprisings in Iraq's south and the Kurdish north. The uprisings were brutally crushed by Saddam Hussein's regime which then sought retribution against its opponents. Some fled Iraq during the late 1990s after becoming of interest to Iraqi intelligence because of the actions of a father or brother or cousin; or because they refused to spy on colleagues or inform upon neighbours.

The countries of first asylum for participants were Iran, Jordan, or Syria. Of those who went to Iran, some made a decent life for themselves while others remained on the

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margins of society. In the late 1990s, Iranian authorities, struggling to cope with almost two million Afghan and Iraqi refugees, announced that it was time for people to go and started to withdraw work and other rights to reinforce that message.[11]

Neither Jordan nor Syria provided the safety or stability sought by the Iraqis. Even if they arrived legally, they lost that status as visas expired. They did not have work rights and struggled to survive. Jordan in particular was regarded as a place where onward travel was organized rather than offering a permanent home.[12]

As to why participants targeted Australia, in my study only a small number had friends or relatives living there. The majority followed the advice of smugglers; were influenced by cost when compared with journeys to Europe; or believed that as a Western country, Australia supported human rights and would provide sanctuary. The route to Australia for almost all involved a short sojourn in Malaysia, then to Indonesia with the intention of taking a boat to Australia.

Indonesia as Host

Indonesia is made up of over 17,000 islands of which 6,000 are inhabited. It is home to 240 million people and is the most populous Muslim nation. As well as contending with widespread poverty, corruption, and poor infrastructure across the islands, Indonesian authorities have had to address calls for independence from the populations of Papua, East Timor, and Aceh which have seen bloody confrontations between local militia and the powerful Indonesian military.[13] The relationship between Indonesia and its closest southern neighbour, Australia, has been variable, with periods of cooperation interrupted by chilling of diplomatic relations, most noticeably with regard to Australia's support of East Timor at the time of its independence.[14]

Between 1979 and 1996, Indonesia had hosted refugee camps on the island of Galang for Indochinese refugees awaiting resettlement. When these closed there were very few refugees in the country. By the end of 1997, there were an estimated 100 refugees, mainly from the Middle East region.[15] Yet between 1999 and 2001 about 13,000 refugees tried to reach Australia from Indonesia, of whom about 4,800 were Iraqi. This increase in refugee numbers had little to do with internal Indonesian politics, being instead a consequence of "push" factors in the Middle East region and growth in people-smuggling activity in Indonesia. There is no data to suggest that the relatively small numbers of refugees, most of whom transited Indonesia en route to Australia, were considered to be a risk factor for Indonesia given the size of its base population and the other priorities it had to address. Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugees Convention), and at the time had not legislated to protect refugees.[16]

However, the presence of growing numbers of refugees in Indonesia was of concern to Australia, which had long demonstrated a reluctance to accept people arriving by boat on Australian shores asking for protection. Rather than being characterized as a humanitarian problem it was framed in terms of a risk to national and border security. In 2001, the Liberal Party—which was part of the Coalition government then in power—claimed that:[17]

> The illegal movement of people poses a serious security and law enforcement challenge for Australia. People smuggling provides opportunities for the extension of international criminal activity, for the spread of terrorism, for the breakdown of law and order, and for the violation of laws which protect Australian health and security.

Fuelled by such rhetoric, public opinion in Australia was generally hostile to unauthorized boat arrivals. The Australian government instigated a number of measures to stop refugees reaching Australia by boat including a Regional Cooperation Agreement with the Indonesian government. This encouraged detention of asylum seekers by Indonesian authorities, aided by Australia's willingness to fund Indonesian detention facilities.[18] Despite a change in government in Australia in 2007 and softening of the rhetoric, similar policies have continued as not to do so is politically risky for whichever government is in power, given the widespread antipathy to refugees and asylum seekers.

IOM, established in 1951, is an intergovernmental agency with over 120 member states. From December 1999 Australia contracted IOM to provide a range of migration-related services in Indonesia and other overseas locations, as part of its policy to prevent asylum seekers making their way to Australia. IOM in Indonesia has been involved in the monitoring and surveillance of those suspected of planning to travel to Australia to seek asylum as well as providing them with medical services, food and shelter, and assistance to return to their country of origin.[19] This exemplifies how a sovereign power such as Australia utilizes external agencies to shape and influence the conduct of the objects of policy.

The Iraqi refugees in Indonesia were considered to be illegal immigrants if they did not have appropriate papers. If caught they were detained by Indonesian authorities and theoretically faced deportation. However, according to one commentator Indonesia did not have the funds to finance deportations, with the result that refugees stayed in detention.[20]

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Generally, it was only intervention by UNHCR and subsequent registration with them that secured their release. As UNHCR resources were limited, refugees could be held for weeks in substandard accommodation before they were interviewed. When refugee claims were denied, applicants remained in detention indefinitely.[21]

An exception to this was made for hundreds of Middle Easterners, including Iraqis, who had been held in Indonesian immigration facilities for a number of years in the early 2000s. According to those interviewed by the author, without any explanation being proffered, between 2005 and 2007 they were moved to villas and hotels organized and overseen by IOM. Like those formally recognized as refugees by UNHCR in Jakarta they had no legal status in Indonesia and were not permitted to work. With few exceptions, their children were not able to attend schools.[22] Refugees recognized as such by UNHCR were given a small allowance by UNHCR whereas others living in the community received an allowance from IOM.

In addition to the refugees who interacted with UNHCR and/or IOM, many others transited Indonesia without making contact with these agencies. Either they were kept hidden by their smugglers and had no such opportunity, or they were not interested in approaching UNHCR, having little faith in its ability to assist them as UNHCR-registered refugees stayed in Indonesia for years.[23]

Participant Interviews and Accounts

In late 2006 I interviewed Iraqi refugees who had been settled in Australia for a few years by that time. In early 2007 in Indonesia I interviewed Iraqis who had been living there in a limbo situation since before 2003; their numbers were being slowly augmented by new arrivals fleeing the Middle East region.

The fieldwork component was undertaken in the Cisarua/Puncak area of Indonesia, about 100 kilometres south of the Indonesian capital of Jakarta. Although a popular tourist destination for wealthy Indonesians away from the stifling heat of the capital, it attracts few Western visitors. The refugees I met there were in a range of accommodation, with the majority living in small chalet-like homes in one of two compounds. One compound housed mainly Sabean Mandeans and the other was home mainly to Shia Muslims but also housed other nationalities such as Burmese. A number of men who had travelled alone—either single men or not accompanied by their families—lived in a nearby hotel.

In addition to conducting eight interviews, I met with a group of six men aged between 30 and 55 years, and spent many hours with participants and other Iraqis in social settings which were opportunities to gain further insights complementing the formal interviews. In all I spoke at length with about 30 Iraqis in Indonesia. When referring to or quoting participants below, pseudonyms have been used and I have avoided specifying medical conditions and naming professions that could lead to a participant being identified.

Of the eight interviews, four were conducted in people's homes, one in a café, two in communal gardens, and one in a television room used by the 40 or so residents living in the same complex. Five interviews required an interpreter. Without a working knowledge of Arabic, it was not possible for me to be sure of the quality of translation. However the responses as interpreted made sense given the questions I had asked, and at no time did the interpreter and participant appear to be engaging in a private conversation.

Generally, the Iraqis treated me hospitably, offering refreshments. The one occasion where I encountered direct hostility occurred when I met with the group of six men. The atmosphere was tense as they questioned me about what I was doing and why. They told me about another researcher who had disclosed information which created problems for them. It was evident that conducting interviews with these men was not appropriate but they did have opinions and views they wanted to convey, and they gave me permission to use these. This experience highlighted one of the many ethical challenges that can arise when conducting social research with marginalized and vulnerable groups.[24]

Six Years and Counting …

Participants interviewed in Indonesia recounted why they, unlike the vast majority of Iraqis who had transited Malaysia and Indonesia en route to Australia, were still there. For some, their plans to reach Australia had been thwarted when they were caught by Indonesian authorities and imprisoned. A few ran out of money to pay smugglers or were unable to get a passage on a smugglers' boat before the trade all but finished in late 2001. Others preferred to register with UNHCR in the hope of being resettled. Some changed their minds about travelling on smugglers' boats to Australia after bad experiences on such boats. Taeseer was one, and recounted what happened to him and his family.

> The boat journey was like death for twenty-four hours. There were twenty-one people on the boat which was a very small fishing boat and not big enough for twenty-one people. They put us on the bottom of boat. We lay down and they covered us with piece of wood maybe thirty centimetres from the ground. Then they put goods on top of that. We could not move. Nothing to eat, our little girl took milk. We sacrificed ourselves, all that trouble just for the future. The boat journey was in October when it was rainy and stormy. The smuggler chose bad weather as police don't patrol in bad weather and so wouldn't find us.

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Norres was one of a group of 23 Mandeans who, in October 2001, boarded a boat to Australia which came to be known as SIEV X. Alarmed by the overcrowding and the condition of the boat, the group disembarked while the boat was still close to the Indonesian shoreline. The following day SIEV X sank en route to Australia, killing 353 people, mainly Iraqi women and children.[25] In Norres's words:

> The waves were high. The boat began to break up, and water started to come in … I was unconscious. I was sitting on the floor and behind me a piece of wood came loose. I was scared and thought I would fall into the sea. We smelt smoke and the bad smell of burning. It seemed as though we wouldn't arrive safely. We saw a fishing boat and called to them, and the twenty-three Mandeans left the boat.
>
> The boat we had been on had sunk but we didn't know. We heard that the police captured it, then we heard that it sank, then we heard it arrived. We didn't know. We decided to try again to go to Australia. Then after two to three days we heard the news that the boat had definitely sank with very few survivors, maybe forty to forty five. Once we heard the news, we didn't want to try again.

Fear and Insecurity; Anxiety and Powerlessness

For all participants, whether interviewed in Indonesia or Australia, fear was a constant at all stages in their journey. It varied in intensity but was never absent. Some participants, especially the women, were reluctant to venture outside in Indonesia as their appearance and dress made them highly visible. Nezal was particularly frightened. "In Jakarta, we stayed in the hotel room for ten days. We were scared and worried in Indonesia." Nazek harboured similar fears. "We were afraid and in hiding, just waiting for the people smuggler to tell us what to do. We were like sheep. If told to go—we go. If told to stay—we stay."

A number of participants spoke of their fear of being incarcerated, having experienced prison in Iraq or seen the effect of Iraqi prisons on relatives. This fear was realized. All the participants based in Indonesia were locked up in Indonesian immigration detention facilities, of which there are a number across Indonesia of varying standards. Kokeb said that he and his family were arrested at their hotel on the day they arrived in Mendan, Indonesia, and spent 11 months in immigration detention, far away from UNHCR and IOM, which made it difficult to follow up on their cases. He said that although they were treated satisfactorily, the facility was unhygienic and many people became sick. Anness described a different facility in Jakarta which housed two to three hundred people where the conditions were very bad, with four or five persons or a single family to a room which was constantly checked. They were given little food and kept isolated.

No reason was given as to why Iraqi and other refugees in Indonesia were relocated from immigration detention centres after 2005 to better accommodation with greater freedom of movement and association. Anness doubted that concern for their welfare accounted for the change, believing instead it was simply to reduce pressure on the various authorities to find a permanent solution for them. It has not been possible to find any official explanation or reference to the changes.[26]

Despite these improved living conditions, participants still felt unsafe. Having been moved from detention centre to detention centre, and then into the community, with no explanation, they did not know for sure if they would be allowed to remain in Indonesia, under what conditions and what might happen next. The decisions affecting their long-term future were in the hands of UNCHR and the Australian and Indonesian governments. Control of their daily lives rested with these bodies and IOM. These contributed to their general sense of powerlessness over their lives.

In this regard, there was a sharp contrast with the accounts of the Iraqi refugees settled in Australia. At the time of their interviews, they had lived in Australia for five or so years, with the worst of their experiences behind them. While both groups spoke of the chronic fear they experienced during their journeys, those in Australia were recalling past events from which they had moved on; the Indonesia-based participants continued to live with the fear on a daily basis as their situation remained unresolved.

Indeed, it was clear that the issues of greatest significance to the Indonesia-based participants were their ongoing uncertainty and the years they felt had been wasted in Indonesia. They spoke of being pressured in the past by IOM to leave Indonesia and return to Iraq, and of being offered financial inducements to do so, but by 2007 this practice had largely stopped. For this reason, by the time I met them, they were not so concerned that they would be returned to Iraq against their will. However they spoke about ongoing anxiety and an inability to relax. They worried about family left behind, they worried about what the future might hold, they worried about how they would survive financially day to day, and they worried about the decisions they had made that had got them to where they were.

Wasted Years

Even though participants at the time of interviews were living in the community and could travel freely in the local area, they had to obtain permission to travel further afield and were not permitted to work. The denial of work rights affected participants on many levels. With support from

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UNHCR and IOM they received enough money to buy the basics but little else. Although their accommodation was secure, they lived in poverty. The lack of work rights was particularly distressing to participants who had the skills and desire to work. The professionals amongst them felt this keenly. Anness grieved for what his life could have been. After describing the obstacles he overcame to become qualified in his chosen profession and how hard he had studied, he said how wrong it was to deprive a person of the opportunity to put their skills to use.

Kokeb recounted how they passed their time. "We sit around. There is nothing to do. Sometimes we exercise, play games, use the computer or read books. We kill time as life continues." The standard of their accommodation and its location in a picturesque region of Indonesia was not enough to ameliorate the feelings of being trapped and powerless. As Gadeer said, "A bird in a beautiful cage is still in a cage."

Participants with families carried the burden of seeing their children suffer. Kokeb expressed his concern that children especially had been harmed by being held in Indonesian jails and detention centres. Like other parents, he was also worried of the lifelong impact on his children of missing out on the educational and social benefits of attending school. He had two children, both of whom had reached school age when they left the Middle East. After six years in Indonesia, he was anxious about their psychological health, particularly that of his daughter, who had few opportunities to socialize. He blamed himself, believing he had made mistakes in bringing his family to Indonesia where they faced a hopeless future, with his children paying for his mistakes.

Participants resettled in Australia recalled their experiences of Australian immigration detention centres and, upon release, of being issued with Temporary Protection Visa (TPVs) rather than their permanent equivalents. TPVs were introduced in late October 1999 for those recognized as refugees who had arrived in Australia without pre-arranged visas. TPV holders did not know if they would be allowed to remain in Australia. They could work but were not able to access facilities available to other refugees in Australia such as English classes and government assistance with finding employment. The harshest restrictions attached to TPVs related to family reunion and travel rights. Other refugees with permanent protection could apply for family members to join them, and were permitted to travel overseas and return to Australia. These rights were denied to TPV holders with the result that they were unable to be reunited with family, either in Australia or overseas, without losing the right to live in Australia.[27]

Participants in my study and other research[28] spoke of the adverse effect that living with TPVs had on their psychological health. However their situation was arguably better than the refugees in Indonesia. TPV holders at least had work rights and were therefore able to occupy their time; plus they had more autonomy in managing their lives compared with those in limbo in Indonesia.

Disillusionment with UNHCR and IOM

Six of the eight participants interviewed in Indonesia expressed negative views towards UNHCR and IOM. The slow and opaque processing of asylum applications left participants perplexed and distressed by the different outcomes when all had fled Iraq and the Saddam regime. Taeseer said that his application for refugee status was rejected after his first interview and he was not told why. He said that he was still waiting for a response to an appeal he lodged before learning that the processing of Iraqi cases was put on hold in 2003 after the US invasion. Norres gave a similar account.

> UNHCR interviewed us in February 2002. They reject us in April 2002. It never occurred to us that UNHCR would reject us. We were interviewed again in May 2002. There is still no result from that interview. In April 2006, they asked us to attend a new interview, so now we are waiting for the results from that interview.

Those found to be refugees were frustrated by UNHCR's failure to resettle them. "People are stuck in Indonesia. We are afraid to go back and cannot go forward. We are stuck in the middle," said Sabah. This was alarming for new arrivals. "When the new arrivals see the people who'd been in Indonesia for four years, they have no hope," he added. Anness recalled that when he, with others, demonstrated in front of UNHCR and IOM offices, the police were called to intervene and prevent journalists from talking with the refugees. Hadeel said he was effectively blackmailed by UNHCR staff who told him not to demonstrate or go on a hunger strike because if he did, Australia wouldn't help him, and that it would be better if the refugees accepted that life was unfair.

Their disillusionment with UNHCR went further than the body's inability to arrange settlement in a third country or work rights in Indonesia. Gadeer questioned its priorities.

> The UNHCR office in Jakarta grows and improves. We think they are funded by Australia. UNHCR is supposed to be humanitarian but we see them to be a political organisation, in which case they are working for others and not helping asylum seekers find a solution.

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He, like many others, also suspected the politicization of UNHCR and IOM because they encouraged refugees to return to Iraq even though many Iraqi cities were unsafe.

As for resettlement in another country, this was unlikely as countries with resettlement programs were reluctant to take refugees they saw as Australia's responsibility, given that they had been intercepted en route to Australia, were physically close to Australia, and Australia funded both UNHCR and IOM in Indonesia.[29] This caused additional frustration and despair. Hadeel said that he asked UNHCR to refer his case to Denmark where his sister and cousins lived but after a year was told that his only option was Australia although much later he was informed that his case would be put to Denmark. He said that even UNHCR staff regarded their situation as hopeless, telling the refugees they would be better off going with smugglers operating in Indonesia.

Participants had even greater misgivings about IOM than the UNCHR, feeling that the organization monitored their lives and restricted their freedom. Anness claimed that IOM watched them and reported upon them. He said that until 2004, IOM prevented them having contact with the outside world but their situation has since changed and the refugees can speak freely with journalists, researchers, and social workers.

Resilience and Coping

Time and again it became clear the participants attempted to ameliorate their situation in Indonesia. When they were moved to better accommodation, but provided with only mattress, blanket, and pillow, they acquired chairs, tables, and beds over the years. They attempted to set up classes and share their skills. They held demonstrations outside UNHCR offices and tried, without much success, to arrange regular meetings with it. Further, over time the different religious groups organized places where they could gather; the Shia now had a mosque, and the Mandeans had their own place.

Some of the men had married Indonesian women and had children. This, however, was tainted with great sadness, so much so I could not bring myself to explore it further with participants. As Anness told me ,"Many of the men have Indonesian wives now. Some men have left wives and kids at home. When families are split up, it's really painful to be separated for such a long time."

Anness spoke about how the refugees were supportive of each other. If they had problems between them, they resolved it themselves and avoided involving IOM in their disputes. He reflected that in the cramped detention environments where many people lived in one room for years, arguments inevitably occurred. These tended to be over food and access to the few toilets. He reflected that in the beginning, hopes of reaching Australia dominated people's thoughts. But as these hopes faded, they turned to making the best of their situation, recognizing that thinking about Australia all the time did them no good.

At various times, participants singly or in groups organized classes to pass on their skills. Taeseer said that between them, they had computer skills, English language and Arab literature. He said that they taught each other although the informal classes were mainly for the children. However, while sharing a meal with Anness and his family, I was told that, for a combination of reasons, the initiatives taken amongst the Iraqis to educate the children were not able to be sustained. Although they had knowledge of various subjects, they did not have material aids like books and blackboards, or venues to provide schooling to groups of children. In addition, both adults and children were worn out and depressed by their circumstances and attempts to school the children in any regular fashion faltered.

The Ingredients of Feeling Safe

It is well established that recovery from past trauma such as that typically experienced by people from a refugee background can only begin when people feel safe.[30] Specifically, Steel et al.[31] argue that a "sense of security … seems to be essential for refugees to recover from trauma-related psychiatric symptoms" and that "insecure residency and associated fears of repatriation contribute to the persistence of psychiatric symptoms and associated disabilities."

One of the characteristics of the refugee experience is being caught up in events that are beyond the capacity of the individual to control. This may create a sense of powerlessness and shatter a person's belief in their ability to manage their own lives. It points to the importance of building self-efficacy and self-empowerment as part of the recovery process in the aftermath of experiencing extreme events.[32] Family also plays a crucial role in the recovery process. While a person is worrying about their family, they are less likely to have the internal resources to tend to their own needs. Conversely recovery is impeded if there are fears about the well-being of family members. A recent study conducted with Iraqi refugees settled in Australia found that their concerns for the safety of family still in Iraq had a significant impact on the severity of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression.[33]

Employment is another critical element in regaining hope for their future.[34] Practically, it means an income which can pay for accommodation and buy possessions. It also provides routine and stability, and builds a sense of competence and self-worth. It allows a person the satisfaction of knowing they are providing for self and family. It

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also connects people to their community and can be the base for new social networks. It occupies the mind, providing a positive distraction from memories of events of the past.[35] In this fashion, employment contributes to a feeling of being safe and secure, necessary for the healing from trauma to occur.

Hobfoll et al.[36] make the point that unless people who have been through extreme adversity feel safe, have the means to start rebuilding their lives, and are able to establish control over their daily lives, psychological interventions have little benefit. Almedom and Summerfield[37] sum up the situation perfectly:

> How people recover from catastrophe is a profound question, but the lessons of history are straightforward: "recovery" is not a discrete process. It happens in people's lives rather than their psychologies. It is practical and unspectacular, grounded in the resumption of the ordinary rhythms of everyday life—familial, sociocultural, religious and economic activities that make the world intelligible.

The Situation of Participants

Rather than being given the tools to build self-efficacy and self-reliance, participants based in Indonesia had few opportunities to exert control over their own lives. They had all spent years detained in immigration detention facilities before being moved to hotels or villas. The small allowance they were given to buy food was barely adequate but they were not allowed to work to augment it. If they needed medical attention they were reliant on IOM. The inability to provide adequately for themselves and their families was particularly hard for the men, traditionally the providers. Without money or a job, each day was the same, with no hope for improvement or change. The lack of work rights was a major contributor to boredom and depression. Many participants felt that fruitful years of their lives were simply going to waste. Those with professional training feared losing the skills they had acquired along with any hope of resurrecting their careers. Single men were concerned they were missing the opportunity to find wives and start families. Those who had left their families behind in the Middle East had no means to support them from afar or be reunited, while those who had travelled with their families saw their children becoming depressed and shamed because of the lack of schooling and opportunity. This left the men troubled by guilt, feeling it was their decisions that had placed their families in this situation.

Further, participants had no idea how long they would be in that situation, and indeed, if it would ever improve. Those who had been unsuccessful with their applications to UNHCR for refugee status and resettlement would reapply. Steel et al.[38] point out that refugee claimants can be retraumatized by retelling their story, especially in a formal setting and under questioning where any challenge to their credibility can have a deleterious effect on mental health.

The normal and natural response for people facing stressful conditions is to use their own resources and abilities to try and improve their situation.[39] Generally, the participants warehoused in Indonesia did this. However they were faced with socio-political realities that left them feeling vulnerable and insecure. The solution to their stress and anxiety lay in the simple expedient of allowing them to live without the fear of physical harm, a permanent home, family reunion, work rights, and education for their children but for many years this was denied them.

Concluding Thoughts

Participants in both Indonesia and Australia voiced similar sentiments concerning their years of uncertainty and insecurity and the adverse effect these had on their psychological well-being. Their narratives clearly indicate that refugee populations through no fault of their own find themselves to be largely powerless and at the mercy of those in positions of power. The Australian government, with its access to extensive resources, sought to minimize its political risk by using a variety of means to stop asylum seekers reaching Australian shores and deterring others from attempting that journey even though these means increased the risk to the asylum seekers in the following ways. Their physical and mental health was put at risk because of years of incarceration, uncertainty, living in poverty, and, for many, separation from families left behind. With almost no legitimate means of finding permanent refuge, many refugees bought passages on smugglers' boats and some of those lost their lives in the seas between Indonesia and Australia. IOM, at the behest of the Australian government, encouraged Iraqis to return to home despite the uncertain security situation there. The Australian government painted the asylum seekers as deviant to justify policy responses[40] and to varying degrees suborned other bodies such as UNHCR, IOM, and the Indonesian government to its own interests. These bodies then operated, using Foucault's nomenclature, as apparatuses of security for the Australian government.

Pat O'Malley,[41] who has written extensively on risk, argued that although the technology of risk is generally regarded negatively by liberal scholars and proponents of social justice, the adoption of a risk analytic to address a social problem could be productive. He suggested that such an approach allows framing an issue differently, involving the objects of policy in the development of it, and de-emphasising binaries such as victim/offender, powerful/powerless,

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expert/layperson. Together these promote a different way of thinking, a different set of questions and hence a different set of answers.

In considering O'Malley's reasoning as it might be applied to Australian refugee policy, it would begin by canvassing all identifiable and relevant risks—border and national security concerns and risks to the health and well-being of asylum seekers—and seek to quantify them. Questions framed in terms of risk sidestep value-laden concerns, instead emphasizing preferred outcomes which can be agreed by stakeholders and assessed against indicators that include, perhaps, human rights instruments as well as numbers of unauthorized boat arrivals. Being risk-focused, questions would consider damage that might be done to, for example, Australia's standing overseas if seen to be in breach of international law as well as those most directly affected by the policy. This approach would look at the financial costs of contracting out to service providers such as IOM, and financing the building and refurbishment of Indonesian immigration detention centres, and weighing these against the financial cost of alternative policies. These might have a different aim altogether or seek to stop asylum seekers getting on smugglers' boats by providing them with an attractive alternative rather than prevention through detention.

Adopting a risk-based approach in a comprehensive fashion is, then, more measured and ultimately pragmatic. It has the potential to facilitate finding a solution to the dilemma that confronts those policy makers who may believe that a humanitarian/human rights approach to refugees is desirable but feel constrained by the politics of the day.

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Place-Making, Provisional Return, and Well-Being: Iraqi Refugee Women in Australia

Katie Vasey

Abstract

Returning to Iraq, even for a visit, was something Iraqi refugees residing in Australia could only dream about while Saddam Hussein remained in power because the ongoing social, economic, and political conditions made return impossible. Despite danger and chaos, the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime (May–December 2003) gave exiled Iraqis the unique opportunity to visit their homelands. In this article, I draw on ethnographic research conducted with 26 Iraqi Shi'i women from refugee backgrounds who resettled in a small country town in Australia. I explored their experiences of provisional return to Iraq, and questioned how their return influences their "home" making in Australia. In this context, I interrogated the complex, contradictory and ambivalent relationships that Iraqi women developed with both their host and home countries and how this impacted upon their well-being.

Résumé

Les réfugiés irakiens installés en Australie ne pouvaient que rêver d'un retour en Irak, même pour une visite, tant que le régime de Saddam Hussein restait en place puisque la situation sociale, économique et politique rendait ce retour impossible. Malgré les dangers et le chaos inhérents au changement, la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein (mai–décembre 2003) a donné aux exilés irakiens l'opportunité unique de visiter leur pays d'origine. Cet article repose sur une étude ethnographique effectuée par l'auteur auprès de 26 irakiennes Shi'i réfugiées qui se sont installées dans une petite ville de l'arrière-pays australien. On y explore leur expérience d'un retour temporaire en Irak, et comment ce retour a influencé leur création d'un « chez-soi » en Australie. Dans ce contexte, l'auteur a examiné les relations complexes, contradictoires et ambivalentes qu'entretenaient ces femmes irakiennes avec leur pays d'adoption et leur pays d'origine, et comment elles ont affecté leur bien-être.

Introduction

> What are we doing here? Balancing between two boats. We drag our souls over days and seasons, while our traditions, our roots, keep getting diluted. Watered down by filtered, distilled circumstances. We [might] never go back. We are grateful and live meaningful lives here, but why this longing; why does this sense of non-belonging niggle us? Why do we catch this 'transplantation torment' like a virus every now and again? This eternal question plays hopscotch with our minds. What price do we pay for clean roads, health care, safety, and shiny cars. What pound of flesh do we bargain for, for a foreign passport. Where do we really live?

As suggested in the above excerpt from an interview conducted with Fatima,[1] while she yearns for her country of origin, she does not necessarily want to return there. Life is safe and meaningful in Australia, yet the persistent longing for somewhere or something else comes across clearly in her words. In recent decades, migration across and within borders has both intensified and diversified, with vast numbers of people afflicted by displacement, dislocated from national, regional, and ethnic locations. This has raised significant questions concerning mobility, deterritorialized identities, and diasporic forms of belonging across nation-state boundaries.[2] In fact, uprootedness from the soil of home and place has resulted in a general condition

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of "homelessness," referred to as the diasporic condition.[3] The search for a "home" forms the basis for this paper: does home move where the migrant moves; is it forever tied to place, soil, and kinship; or does home lie somewhere in between?

Although many refugees and migrants who cannot return to their country of origin aspire to resettle permanently in a new country, this is a rare opportunity. Three-quarters of the world's refugees reside in countries neighbouring their country of origin, often living illegally in temporary camps.[4] In 2010, 108,000 out of 10.55 million of the world's Convention refugees were offered resettlement in one of 22 countries participating in UNHCR's resettlement program.[5] Australia offers places to approximately 13,000 refugees annually as part of its program of migration.[6] For the majority, resettlement is part of the process of placement in a third country. Resettlement may be traumatic, in part because the host country, the timing, and the conditions of resettlement are not always freely chosen. The arbitrary decision making, the sometimes haphazard direction of people to new settings and the disregard of prior relationships and networks have created a diasporic scattering of families and communities across the globe.[7] Yet relatively little attention has been given to the convergent and ongoing process of forced emplacement[8] and the establishment of connections to place among people from refugee backgrounds in these contexts.[9] The focus on displacement has left a gap in our understanding of emplacement and of the connections to place in settlement settings that allow refugees and other humanitarian migrants to recreate a sense of home and relative safety.[10] A relatively small cohort of Iraqi refugees and humanitarian settlers have resettled in Australia, where they are expected to build (from virtually nothing) a new life, and to create "home," literally and metaphorically, in a new place.[11] For Iraqi immigrants, as the above extract illustrates, moving to and building a "home" in Australia can mean that contradictory emotions permeate their experiences of resettlement. Each place represents different elements of what constitutes home, impacting upon and underscoring women's understanding of belonging and longing.

Through the prism of imagined and provisional return to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein and his regime (May–December 2003), in this article I explore how Iraqi women from refugee backgrounds articulate dimensions of home and its associated longing and belonging in exile, highlight the dynamic nature of these emotional negotiations, and illustrate the interconnectedness of place. By exploring how people are simultaneously both "here and there," I offer an explanation for the varying and complex expressions that provisional return may take, as the women with whom I worked showed that it is misleading to draw clear boundaries between the past and the present, here and there, or to juxtapose these terms with Australia on the one side and Iraq on the other when one is considering the location of home. In order to explore how women's experiences of provisional return to Iraq influence their "home" making in Australia, a brief discussion of the conceptualization of the meaning of "home" embraced by refugees and migrants is necessary.

Refugees, Home, and Place

The search for "home" and how people set about making themselves "at home" necessitates discussing the dispersed nature of "home." "Home" is a significant analytic category to understand changing constructions of place, for it is central in understanding shifting notions of belonging to place.[12] Over the past two decades there has been a shift away from essentialist or naturalized assumptions about the people and place relationship.[13] Whereas "home" may once have been considered fixed, unchanging, and stable in terms of geography, governance, and institutions, such a linear focus fails to acknowledge the changing personal, historical, social, and political contexts through which "home" is continually redefined.[14] It also fails to address how people's relationships to particular places are continually changing, being made and remade over time and space.[15] This does not mean that concepts of home are less important or that people are less attached to place, but that its dimensions are more multifaceted;[16] particularly accompanying forced migration, ongoing war and violence in the country of origin. While the meaning of "home" is not culturally universal and not always tied to a single place, the disruptions of war may require new and more pragmatic considerations. A broader and more mobile concept of home is necessary, something to be taken along as individuals move through space and time.[17] In this sense home can be transformed, newly invented, and developed in relation to the circumstances in which people find themselves or choose to place themselves.[18] Belonging to a place, a home, or a people becomes an experience of being within and in between sets of social relations.[19] The relationship between people who become refugees and place is positioned somewhere in between, and includes a strong sense of connection to places left behind and their associated traumas while at the same time acknowledging the possibilities of (re) building connections to place within the context of resettlement,[20] as involuntary displacement marks a very real loss of human capital that is not easily re-established.[21] The complex spatial strategies that refugees develop for negotiating places in which they are physically present, while concurrently negotiating ongoing social, economic, and emotional

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relationships with places from which they are physically absent, has been described as reterritorialization.[22] These strategies have been explored in several ways in the resettlement context, most notably concerning place-attachment[23] including the role of religion in overcoming alienation in places of resettlement,[24] the ways in which the gendering of place relates to feelings at home,[25] and how places can be therapeutic landscapes.[26] What forces would lead immigrants from Iraq to uproot themselves and abandon the soil of home to migrate to Australia?

Iraqis on the Move: Coming to Australia

The oppressive policies of the regime of Saddam Hussein, the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), the Gulf crisis starting with the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the subsequent Gulf War in 1991 and the Intifada, economic hardship during the sanction years (1991–2003), the more recent Gulf War (April–May 2003), and subsequent ongoing domestic and international conflict have all contributed to internal displacement and refugee flows to neighbouring countries and around the world.

Iraqi people do not have a long history of migration to Australia, and have come mainly from countries of first asylum neighbouring Iraq. The Iraqi population is one of the smallest but fastest-growing groups in Australia.[27] Only 288 Iraqi people had arrived in Australia before 1981. By 1986, the population had risen to 4,516. By the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the size of the Iraqi-born community in Australia was 5,186. The population increased by 77.3 percent (10,827 persons) between 1996 and 2001. Since 1996, over 10,000 Iraqi people have settled in Australia, the majority (77 percent) having arrived through the Refugee and Humanitarian Programs for permanent resettlement, with the remaining 23 percent entering either through the family or skilled stream or as undocumented asylum seekers.[28] Since then, Australia has accepted increasing numbers of Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers fleeing gross violations of human rights, violence, civil war, socio-economic disasters, life-threatening circumstances, and destitution, under the rule of Saddam Hussein of the Ba'athist Party and following the 2003 invasion.[29] From 2000 until 2010, Iraqi refugees were among the top four nationalities accepted under the Humanitarian Program.[30]

Australia has a history of changing refugee and migration policies, in terms of criteria to migrate and acceptance, and in relation to resettlement strategies—from the White Australia policy to assimilation and multiculturalism. These all have their own discourse and have impacted on the lives of refugees entering Australia in different ways. The policy in place when refugees enter Australia can have a profound influence on their settlement experience. For example, between 1999 and 2008, a clear distinction in policy was established between refugees holding temporary protection visas (TPVs) and those issued permanent protection in Australia. TPV refugees are mostly excluded or restricted from government-funded welfare services, language tuition, university places, and family reunion programs, whereas permanent humanitarian visa entrants are entitled to the full range of services provided by the Australian government.[31]

In addition to restrictive immigration legislation and policies, the resettlement of large numbers of Iraqi immigrants to Australia occurred during a period when attitudes to refugees were skewed by persistent popular anti-Islamic and anti-Arab sentiment, inflamed by the convergence of international and local factors including the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, the 2002 bomb blast in Bali, and Australian military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. These highly publicized events were fuelled further in Australia by debates in political arenas and the media, whereby the "Arab other" was regarded with suspicion, and people from Middle Eastern backgrounds were (and still are) treated as foreigners, even though many have formal citizenship status, or through other official documentation mechanisms, similar privileges and rights of formal citizenship. The change in government in Australia in November 2007 led to some immediate changes in policy, programs, and perceptions of immigrants, but even so, the general uneasiness regarding settlers from Iraq and elsewhere in West Asia pertains.

Methods and Study Participants

The case material presented below derives from ethnographic research conducted between 2003 and 2007 with Iraqi women from refugee backgrounds in a regional town in Victoria, Australia, referred to pseudonymously as Taraville, where, for the last 15 years, there has been a steady flow of Iraqi settlers. The key research methods included group discussions and participant observation; in-depth interviews conducted over a period of 15 months with 26 Iraqi women, 16 service providers, and members of the wider community; and archival research and analysis of national media. These tools are part of the methodology of ethnographic research[32] which can provide insights into the meanings of transition and resettlement[33] and give voice to refugee experiences.[34]

The Iraqi settlers had all entered Australia under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. Although they had common humanitarian roots and were all practicing Shi'i Muslims mainly from the south of Iraq, their backgrounds were diverse. Their life circumstances in Australia also varied. A number had an extensive network of family members

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both locally and elsewhere in Australia, whereas others had no extended family in Australia, with all their surviving relatives in Iraq or spread across multiple countries. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 42 years. All participants were married and their family sizes ranged from no children to seven children. Some people spoke fluent English while others spoke only a few words. The vast majority were welfare dependent, although several were employed, working either on a permanent basis or seasonally in the agricultural industry.

Sixteen service providers were also interviewed, all of whom were involved with migrants and migration projects in different capacities; they included local and regional civil servants, councillors, a multicultural project worker, a trauma and torture counsellor, maternal and child health nurses, primary school and secondary school teachers, ESL teachers, community development workers, human resource managers, and volunteers at the Community House. Several key informants, not directly involved with the Iraqi community, were also interviewed. They included horticultural employers, church members, a member of the historical society, a journalist, several people who had spent their whole lives in Taraville, an Iraqi academic, and Turkish and Italian migrants also residing in Taraville.

Contextual data derive from participant observation: I attended a diverse array of women-only activities, including religious celebrations, day trips, and gatherings in homes. In addition to informal time spent with women in their homes and other social settings, I worked as a volunteer in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and provided home tutoring. I also participated in resettlement related projects for Iraqi women and attended initiatives organized by different community development agencies. I also attended home visits with the Arabic Family Support Officer and with the maternal and child health nurses, observed mothers' and children's groups at the crèche, and attended meetings including DIMIA (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Immigration Affairs; now DIAC, or Department of Immigration and Citizenship), and with regional and local service provider meetings.

The core of this paper derives from data collected from in-depth interviews with 26 Iraqi women, conducted in English and Arabic, the latter with interpretation by my research assistant, Safria (a pseudonym).[35] In particular, I focus upon interviews of women who returned temporarily to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein and his regime (May–December 2003). Almost half of my study participants made a trip to their homelands during 2004, some with the intention of testing the water for permanent repatriation, others for a visit only. Several women spoke with me, or with Safria and me, on two or more occasions. All interviews were conducted in women's homes, and ranged from one to six hours, depending on how much women wanted to share. The interviews were unstructured and open-ended, allowing the women to direct the course of the conversations, so enabling new issues to come to light, particularly regarding the rapidly changing circumstances in Iraq.

Findings

Iraqi Women and Imagined Return

A study exploring Iraqi refugees in London found that the "history of the communities, the circumstances of their flight and their relationship with the people and the land they have left behind"[36] all shape the perceptions of being a refugee. Among Iraqi Arabs, a refugee is someone who "cannot go back home," whereas Assyrians regard a refugee as "one who does not have a home." Accordingly, these statements are rooted in the "history of the two communities, the circumstances of their flight and their relationship with the people and the land they have left behind."[37] Many of the personal stories of dispersal from the women in this study were tragic both in terms of the conditions that forced them to flee and in terms of the circumstances of flight and the living conditions in countries of asylum before being granted refugee status in Australia. They described becoming refugees as a result of suffering under Saddam Hussein's regime of death, persecution, fear, and domestic exile, of human rights violations, of the crumbling and disintegration of their social worlds. In the majority of cases this was due to their ethnic and religious affiliation as Shi'is or due to their affiliation, either as wives or relatives of male political activists or war deserters. As a result women in this study perceived their refugee status as resulting from the fact that they "cannot go back home," suggesting their orientation and relationship with Iraq—they would like to return but they cannot. Reim[38] explained longing for the homeland within the context of the historical trauma of war, rupture, and exile:

> The home is very dear—do you understand me? Like, it is very important. No one wants to leave his or her country because the country is very dear, but we were obligated to leave our country because of the bad regime, because of the wars, because we suffered too much. So we left Iraq, but it was very hard to leave our country, but we were obligated to leave Iraq. Until now there is no settling in Iraq, no going back to Iraq.

Prior to 2003, many women retained the view, despite the political regime in Iraq, the trauma of war, rupture, and displacement, that their exile was temporary and that they would eventually return.[39] In an interview, I asked Zara[40]

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if she imagined returning to Iraq. She replied, "I didn't imagine that I would stay away from Iraq for 9 or 10 years. I thought maybe I would be away for 1 or 2 years and then I would go back to Iraq. I always thought that I would return to Iraq after a short time." She continued, "I will not live here forever. One day I will go back to Iraq. I know that my exile will not last forever. It is a passing moment in my life. I will return to my country." Such statements reflected women's feelings that their time in Australia was indefinite but transitory.

The experience of forced displacement sets in motion processes of identity formation by which the construction of the homelands, coupled with the hope of one day returning to the places left behind, emerges as a fundamental dimension of exilic life.[41] Return is conceived as an idealized construct whereby people reinvent a past and imagine a fictitious future that would reconnect them with their "home."[42] But perceptions of return do not exist only in refugees' minds, whereby they imagine resuming their lives in an idealized place frozen in (mythic) time and space, as though returning to a place, void of socio-political realities.[43]

Iraqi Women, Resettlement in Australia, and Imagined Return

The idea and possibility of return can be an important aspect of migrants' lives in another country, even if the return never takes place. A critical dimension to understanding imagined and actual return is linked to the process of displacement and resettlement. Understanding these processes requires consideration of the broader social, political, and policy environment of surrounding refugees' settlement experiences. One of the reasons why migrants may wish to return is dependent on how migrants understand their position in host societies.[44] The yearning for the homeland is rooted not only in the context of displacement but also in the experience of exile. Imagining the homeland and the possibility of return are anchored in and deeply affected by the reality of resettlement. For many Iraqi women resettlement in Australia has been particularly challenging, and many women had to confront multiple barriers while adjusting to a society dramatically different from that with which they were familiar, both as a result of stigmatization related to their religion, language, country, and dress, and because of people whose own style was regarded as challenging and confronting.[45] Some Iraqi women I spoke with hold on to the idea that they will eventually return to their country of origin, in part because of the social and economic marginalization they experience, but also because of their wish to be reunited with family, to return to a place with which they are familiar and comfortable. Women often spoke of returning permanently to Iraq, emphasizing settlement experiences as key factors propelling them to desire permanent return. Women alluded to the restrictive immigration and refugee policies in Australia, the limited reception and settlement strategies that prevented their full inclusion in Australian society, including minimum or no opportunities for social and economic interaction with nationals. Perceived exclusion on multiple fronts, in the areas of work, education, and lack of family reunion possibilities, figures prominently in women's narratives of potential return. Shatha,[46] for example, explained:

> Here we can't do anything, because we haven't got enough money to start a business. Money is the problem. If I have money, I will go and see my family. Then I would be happy. It is nice here and safe, but I am cut off from my family. Home for me is in Iraq, because of my family, my sister and brother, they are all in Iraq.

While the everyday pressures in Australia are one reason for return, family separation is a pervasive source of emotional distress in Iraqi women's lives. Extended separation from family members is a continuing link to an unbearable past, and refugees' distress about the fate of those who they have left behind is tied to ongoing trauma.[47] Consequently, women's perceptions of and orientation towards return were inextricably linked to family separation and the limited opportunities for family reunion in Australia. As Shama[48] described to me when I asked her about coping with life in Australia, away from her family members: "It's much harder than I ever thought. I wasn't prepared for how much I would miss my family. It is very bad because they can't come here."

Running through women's narratives was a strong sense of ambivalence; at the heart of this ambivalence was the separation from family members in Iraq and elsewhere in the world. This emerged as one of the most pervasive aspects of distress in displacement and contributed to a feeling of not belonging.[49] On the one hand, women described freedom, peace, and being used to the life in Australia, often describing it as "normal." Yet the insecurity of not having family in the same place and missing them, while living in another country which has now become "home," permeates my informants' accounts, creating their ambivalence and unease. As Shama described:

> Everything is different here, but I am now used to it. It is normal. But I miss my family; if my family came here, it would be very good. I would feel like it was home if my family were here.

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Returning to Iraq for the First Time

Iraqi exile has been transformed in the aftermath of the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime, as thousands of Iraqis were able to go "home" for the first time in decades after the invasion in 2003. Most returned for a short visit only, but many among them were hoping to return for good.[50] In the initial six months after the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime, an estimated 50,000 Iraqi refugees, including Australians, chose to return to Iraq.[51] Women I interviewed mentioned their desire to reconnect to the memory of the place that they had continued to keep alive in their minds; to view, touch, and smell Iraq again in a material sense. Upon their return to Iraq, however, women had to confront the disjuncture between dream and reality. It is worth noting that people's memories were shaped by somewhat romanticized memories and often fragile links and limited news coverage. Far from experiencing their country of origin as less problematic and multifaceted than that of immigration,[52] "home" proved bewildering and unfamiliar, a foreign country. The Iraq of their imagination was no longer the same. The memories, and their dreams and hopes for a future that served as an anchor in displacement in Australia, altered upon return to Iraq. As Jasmine[53] suggested, "I have been dreaming about going to Iraq. I thought I would find Iraq better than when I last saw it, but it wasn't." Women were shocked that the Iraq they now observed was, in fact, worse than the Iraq they remembered. Women were saddened because the Iraqi landscape had changed so dramatically. As Sawsan[54] illustrated when she recalled her first moments in Baghdad:

> When I entered the border of my city, I was crying because I was very happy, not because I was sad. Yes, I had a sad feeling because I saw a lot of buildings were demolished by the war, but my friend kept saying to me, *take an Iraqi breath, an Iraqi breath* and it was a wonderful feeling, you can't imagine. And I was saying to the driver I want to go to my family home and I mentioned the name of the street, and he said "ok, we are very close to that street." I was shivering. When we entered the street, I said "no, this is not the street" and another person in the taxi said "it is the same street" and I said "no the street was much more beautiful."

Other women also noted the impact of the war on cities, towns, and other physical landscapes. For example, as Zahra[55] described it, Iraq was like a desolate desert that caused her to feel sick: "It is like it is dark in Iraq, when we arrived it was dark. Everything is upside down, it was like a desert, there is no life and no greenery and everything is destroyed. I was shocked and sick when I saw Iraq."

The legacy of the wars, economic destruction, and political upheaval on the Iraqi people was palpable. The return to the "physical site of violence, the political site of repression, and the emotional site of memories,"[56] which had precipitated flight many years before, was confronting and challenging. Women were disturbed to find the current economic circumstances, security, infrastructure, and communications all worse than they were under Saddam Hussein, and violence was a primary concern and most profoundly affected their sense of "home" in Iraq. By the time women were able to return to Iraq post–Saddam Hussein, violence, suppression of freedom and of thought, and the violation of property rights had been endemic for decades, producing a "culture of terror and fear." People were also subjected to the coalition forces and Iraqi insurgency. Fear was still omnipresent, the threat of violence in the everyday reality for people in Iraq pervasive. The violence, fear, and mistrust disrupted women's ability to find continuity and meaning, thus making their return volatile and fraught with difficulties. As Zahra explained,

> It was very terrible in Iraq. When I walk [I have to] stop [because there is a] problem, when I walk, stop and problem. There were many problems. When I went out of the house I was afraid, often the police would stop us and tell us that a bomb was going to explode and we must take care. I worried all the time. When my husband went out, I worried. Life is too hard in Iraq; people are tired, always nervous, irritable and worried. There is no system in Iraq; it is chaos.

Yet contrarily, women also described a sense of well-being when reuniting with family members, and the emotional distress when they could not. Some women were simply happy to have returned to see their family because they had not seen them for 14 years.

Coming Back to Australia

Despite the troubled and difficult experiences they felt and witnessed, many women were reluctant to leave family members behind again. Their departure was a time of a deep sense of loss, anxiety, and loneliness. Leaving family members behind to return to Australia was sometimes shattering, as Sawsan emphasized:

> It was really a very bad time. The night before I left, everybody was crying, and I was crying three days before I left. I realized *a person without family is nothing at all.* I was saying to them that I wanted to stay with them and come home for good. But they kept saying to me, no it is not settled yet, it is not a good time to decide, you have to go back to your family. It helped me in the beginning to return to my family [in Iraq], but by the end I felt, no, this is really hard for me.

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Although many extended family members advocated that the women return to Australia, women struggled with leaving family members behind. Reim, for example, found it hard to reconcile the fact that two of her children lived in dire circumstances in Iraq, whilst the rest of her family lived in peace and safety in Australia. She felt that she could not enjoy the freedom she has in Australia, knowing her children were suffering:

> I told my husband to let me stay with my son and my daughter because I feel that I can't enjoy the situation [in Australia] anymore. But my husband insisted that I came back to my family here. I am always arguing with my husband, asking him why he didn't let me stay with my children in Iraq. Why didn't he let me die with them? Always there is fighting between the people and the US soldiers. My son is not part of the insurgence but I don't feel peace because by accident they might kill him. I worry about my son and what will happen to him.

As Reim suggests, returning to Australia "involved multiple losses,"[57] because she had to confront family separation in dangerous and difficult circumstances. Many women's narratives revealed the ongoing struggle to recover continuity and control on return to Australia, as they were consumed with and deeply affected by the suffering they had witnessed, as Zara revealed: "When I was in Iraq, I saw my family in a bad situation and they suffered too much. Now I think about them and feel sad and cry when I remember them. I feel more nervous now."

Shama also found that she was preoccupied with remembering her family upon her return. As she describes, "It took me a long time to forget my family, to be normal again in Australia when I got back. Everyday for three weeks I was thinking about them all the time, it made me upset and nervous."

Despite the anguish resulting from separation from family members upon return, women also reflected upon the harsh reality of Iraq. Stories were circulating about how Iraqi women kissed the ground when they arrived back in Australia, because they were so happy to be away from the violence, chaos, and uncertainty in Iraq. Many women now shared a disillusioned image of Iraq, which they compared to Australia, as Zara describes:

> When I was in Iraq, the women can't go out from their homes because they are surrounded and there are soldiers everywhere. Bombings happen everywhere at anytime. It is not safe. There are big differences between Iraq and Australia, big differences. It is the difference between the earth and the sky.

Women acknowledged that Australia is the better place to live in terms of personal safety and peace; as Zahra suggested: "I decided to go back to Australia when I saw Iraq, it is a different life in Iraq." Shama made similar points:

> In Australia I feel at peace and I feel safe, but in Iraq I felt like I was arrested, and I felt that from anywhere a bullet could come and kill me. When I got into cars I wondered if they would be bombed, it was terrible. I am alright in Australia, I feel good, it is better than living in Iraq, and I hope to go and live in Iraq but not now.

Many women mentioned that they had told other women, who remained in Australia, not to consider returning, even for a visit, because of the changes that had occurred in Iraq. This realization led to a conceptual shift in their locus of home and their sense of belonging and where this is best situated. The ways in which time and space have changed women's imagining of Iraq is perhaps best summed up by Zahra, whose orientation shifted from Iraq to Australia once she witnessed life in Iraq:

> Before I travelled to Iraq, I didn't feel very happy here in Australia. I felt like I was a stranger, but when I came back I was very happy. I don't feel totally at home in Australia, because I don't have any relatives here. I need my mother, father, sisters and brothers, especially when I have babies. But I would like to stay here because the situation in Iraq is not good. I was very happy to come back here. As I said, before I travelled to Iraq, I didn't feel happy here, I felt like I was strange, that I was a stranger, but when I came back I was very happy. I changed my mind and the idea that I had before changed, and I feel less like a stranger now.

As Zahra's statement portrays, perceptions of what the two places symbolize, where one feels one belongs or is best positioned, do not remain static. Whilst not all Iraqi women would subscribe to Zahra's views, mainly because of the hardships they experience in Australia, many would agree with her statement: that Iraq has changed and it is unsafe to consider returning at this point. Some women still expressed a desire to return to Iraq, although the timelines had shifted. For example, Shama said:

> When the US army has gone, and everything is good, and Iraq is a good country, I will go back. Maybe in the next 10 years after they have rebuilt Iraq and that will take a long time. It is alright if Iraqi families in Australia visit their families, but if they go there to live again that is hard, I don't like them to go at this time because it is dangerous.

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> Other women will return only if Iraq becomes like Australia in terms of safety and peace. Zara explains, "In Australia we feel in peace and we have freedom and we feel like we are equal with the other people, no one hurts us, so we are free here. If Iraq becomes good and safe like Australia, we will go back, we will return."

Migration stories are permeated with explicit and tacit comparisons of the two places.[58] Unfortunately, however Iraqi women choose to position and reconcile the differences between Iraq and Australia, and which elements of that "bundle of ideas, practices and relationships"[59] they concentrate upon, they are forced to face the reality of making "home" Australia. This involves reconciling to emotional distress connected to family members, family separation, and lack of family reunion possibilities. Other women hold on to the concept of return because of family relations and worrying about family members but, if they had no family members in Iraq, they would not consider returning. Other women too were reconciled to the fact that they would not return to Iraq, despite profound sadness connected to their family members and the conditions in which they live their lives. For Iraqi women, living in Australia involves the emotional pain of separation, loss, grief, disappointment, and exclusion, coupled with a sense of safety and freedom. Many women clearly marked the difference between Australia and Iraq as the difference between the earth and the sky. Each place represents different elements of what constitutes home; and in turn, this impacts upon and underscores notions of belonging and longing. It is at this juncture that we can gain a sense of the shifting ways in which longing and belonging to places are constructed and the ways in which they transcend local and national boundaries. Iraqi women's relationships to Iraq and Australia are neither fixed nor straightforward, as their constructions of belonging in relation to places, people, and social spheres shift according to changing contexts through which "home," and where one is best located, are challenged, redefined, and reinforced.

Conclusion

There has been significant research on migrants' ongoing relationships with their home country[60] and in relation to migrant return.[61] However, relatively less research has focused on the ambiguities and tensions that accompany forced migration compounded by ongoing war and violence in the country of origin and the effects on people who return home[62] to be powerfully reminded of why they left and their own tenuous ties with a place that has lost its footings. Homecomings—the return to the country of origin—are not a unified social process but a multifaceted experience characteristic of diversity, complexity, and ambivalence that challenges boundedness and fixity. Iraqi women expected to experience a feeling of well-being upon return to Iraq, as they stepped back into the "home country," an idealized place that had allowed them to cope with the anxieties of exile. Such feelings of well-being, security, and being "at home" crumbled with the realization that the social environment had irreversibly changed and that returning permanently to Iraq was impossible. This realization was not only based on the fact that the country had, in their absence, been subjected to ongoing destruction and devastation, but also related to the transformations they had undergone in Australia. In other words, possible comforts of being "back home" are challenged by changes in both the country of return and the migrants themselves, which are greatly intensified in conflict-affected countries.

Refugees return but they do not return, they "go back to their country of origin, but they are not the same, nor are the people in the country of origin."[63] As any displaced and dispossessed person can testify, there is no such thing as a genuine, uncomplicated return to one's home.[64] For the majority of women who made the journey to Iraq, return was a highly complex process, underscored by a feeling of division between "there and here," indicating the tension between Iraqi women's multiple belongings, what has been defined as the "dialectics of belonging and longing."[65] Women's ability to reunite with family members did not seem to reconcile fractures, but rather exacerbated anxieties over the future and amplified the difficulties of family separation women experienced. Likewise, returning to their homelands, and more specifically their families, did not have the power to mitigate the sense of rupture women experience in Australia. Some women returning to Iraq reiterated the importance of being close to family members and how, upon return to Australia, they were acutely reminded of this absence and loss. Others, based on notions of personal safety and relative economic security, have become more firmly rooted in Australia, at least for the coming years, despite their marginalized circumstances in Australia and missing family members in Iraq. Some other women feel compelled to return, to be with and share their lives with family members whatever the cost.

Decisions about where to live led to deeper anxieties about where "home" is and where one is supposed to build a future, and what one should prioritize in this decision. The ability to return has added to this dilemma and Iraqi women's accounts of return demonstrate that each return "creates its own logic, contradictions, and possibilities for the future."[66] Research suggests that crossing national boundaries involves a process of re-creation.[67] It is an imaginative process for migrants, because they travel into realms where what has been left behind and future possibilities are continually reimagined and re-evaluated. In addition, it

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involves the re-evaluation of one's past, present, and future locations.[68] Consequently, reassessment of which place is best to be is central to Iraqi women's experiences of migration. However, on an emotional level, wherever one decides to be, one has left some part of oneself in the other place.

Women's narratives of longing, belonging, and return illustrate how the relationships between Iraqi people in Iraq and Australia have changed irreversibly, both by separation over space and over time.[69] Becoming and being a migrant is always embedded in local social and political relations, and made sense of within the social and political frameworks provided by each context. The experiences documented in this article show that it is misleading to draw clear boundaries between the past and the present, here and there, or to juxtapose these terms with Australia on the one side and Iraq on the other. For immigrants, communication continues between there and here, the old and the new, and the past and the present,[70] enabling people to make sense out of the complex relationship between belonging and longing in exile, and the permeable location of home, and the realization that being a refugee might mean not being able to remake aspects of "home" in either place,[71] rendering them both "out of place" and "in place" in both Australia and Iraq. Such contradictions in emotion and affective ties to place lead to considerable ambivalence towards both Australia and Iraq, as countries, cultures, and collectivities of people, or as has been suggested, the contradictions of the migration process are unresolvable through physical mobility, because the feeling of "home" is ultimately an affective and social construction that transcends place.[72]

Notes

1. Fatima is a journalist from Pakistan who migrated to Melbourne in 1998. Also see F. Sehbai, "On Foreign Ground," *The Age* (Melbourne), 2002, 21 March 10.
2. See J. Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–38; R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008); K. Fog-Olwig, "Cultural Sites: Sustaining a Home in a Deterritorialized World," in *Sitting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Subject,* ed. K. Fog-Olwig and K. Hastrup (London: Routledge, 1997), 17–39; and D. Turton, "The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long Term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia" (RSC Working Paper no. 18, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford, 2004) for significant contributions to debates concerning mobility, deterritorialized identities, and diasporic forms of belonging.
3. N. Hyndman-Rizik, *At My Mother's Table: Migration, (Re) production and Return between Hadchit, North Lebanon and Sydney* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).
4. UNHCR, *Global Trends 2010: 60 Years and Still Counting* (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2010).
5. UNHCR, *60 Years and Still Counting;* UNHCR, *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* (Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2002).
6. DIAC, "Australia's Humanitarian Program: Information Paper" (Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011).
7. K. Vasey and L. Manderson, "The Social and Cultural Context of Immigration and Stress," in *Immigration and Suicide, Stress, Psychiatric Disorders and Suicidal Behavior Among Immigrants and Refugees,* ed. L. Sher and A. Vilens (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2010).
8. Hammond has used the term "emplacement" to refer to how people interact with their environment in order to make it feel like home. This involves the inter-working of place, identity, and practice in such a way as to generate a relationship of belonging between person and place. L. Hammond, This Place Will become Home: Refugee Repatriation to Ethiopia (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).
9. D. Turton, "The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement"; and R. Sampson and S. Gifford, "Place-Making, Settlement and Well-Being: The Therapeutic Landscapes of Recently Arrived Youth with Refugee Backgrounds," *Health and Plac*e 16 (2010): 116–31.
10. Sampson and Gifford, "Place-Making, Settlement and Well-Being."
11. L. Manderson and S. Rapala, "Making Sense of Disruptions: Strategies of Regrounding of Ailing Polish Immigrants in Melbourne, Australia," *Human Organization* 64, no. 5 (2005): 350–59.
12. N. Rapport and A. Dawson, *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).
13. Sampson and Gifford, "Place-Making, Settlement and Well-Being";
14. K. Gardner and F. Osella, *Migration, Modernity, and Social Transformation in South Asia: An Introduction* (New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2004).
15. Ibid.
16. K. Gardner, *Age, Narrative and Migration: The Life Course and Life Histories of Bengali Elders in London* (London: Berg, 2002).
17. L. Baldassar, *Visits Home: Migration Experiences between Italy and Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).
18. Gardner and Osella, *Migration, Modernity, and Social Transformation in South Asia*.
19. E. Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).
20. Sampson and Gifford, "Place-Making, Settlement and Well-Being."

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21. G. Kibreab, "Revisiting the Debate of People, Place, Identity and Displacement," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 4 (1999): 384–410.
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26. Sampson and Gifford, "Place-Making, Settlement and Well-Being."
27. VOMA, "Victorian Community Profiles 2001 Census," (Melbourne: Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, 2003).
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30. DIAC, "Australia's Humanitarian Program: Information Paper" (Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011).
31. Johnston, Vasey, and Markovic, "Social Policies and Refugee Resettlement."
32. For ethnographic studies of migrant and refugee return migration, see J. Carling, E. B. Mortensen, and J. Wu, "A Systematic Bibliography on Return Migration" (PRIO Paper, Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 2011).
33. F. L. Ahearn, ed., *Psychosocial Wellness of Refugees: Issues in Qualitative and Quantitative Research* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).
34. J. Powles, "Life History and Personal Narrative: Theoretical and Methodological Issues Relevant to Research and Evaluation in Refugee Context," (Working Paper no. 106, New Issues in Refugee Research, UNHCR, Geneva, 2004).
35. Safria left Baghdad after the Intifada in 1991 and spent several years in Iran before coming to Australia as a "woman at risk" refugee in 1997, where she remarried. At the time of the research she lived in public housing with her husband. Her two grown children lived close by. All her family members have left Iraq and now live in surrounding Middle Eastern countries, Europe, and the US.
36. M. Al-Rasheed, "The Myth of Return: Iraqi Arab and Assyrian Refugees in London," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 7, no. 2/3 (1994): 199–219, 204.
37. Al-Rasheed, "The Myth of Return."
38. Reim fled Iraq following the Intifada in 1991 and spent 12 years in Iran before moving to Australia in 2003. At the time of the research she lived in public housing with her husband and five of her children; two children were left behind in Iraq as they were not granted refugee status. Reim returned to Iraq by herself to see her children after fall of Saddam Hussein.
39. R. Zetter, "Reconceptualising the Myth of Return: Continuity and Transition amongst the Greek-Cypriot Refugees of 1974," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 1 (1999): 1–22.
40. Zara originally came from Najef but left Iraq following the Intifada in 1991 and spent six years in Lebanon. She came to Australia in July 1998, and at the time of the interview she lived in public housing with her husband and three children, who were under eight years old. Her whole family returned to Iraq for a visit after the fall of Saddam Hussein.
41. A. H. Stefansson, *Refugee Returns to Sarajevo and Their Challenge to Contemporary Narratives of Mobility* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004).
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46. Shatha left Basra in Iraq in 1997 and spent several years in Lebanon before coming to Australia as a refugee in 1999. At the time of the research, she was living in public housing with her husband and four children, all under seven years of age. All her relatives remained in Iraq. She returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein.
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48. Shama came from Nasiriyya in Iraq and fled in 1991 to Syria, where she spent four years before travelling to Australia as a refugee in 1995. At the time of the research, she lived in public housing with her husband and four children, all under eight years old. She returned to Iraq with her family after the fall of Saddam Hussein.
49. See also McMichael, "'Everywhere Is Allah's Place.'"
50. N. Al Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007).

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52. J. Rogge, "Repatriation of Refugees," in *When Refugees Go Home: African Experiences*, ed. T. Allen and H. Morsink (Trenton: African World Press, 1994).
53. Jasmine came from Baghdad, but left Iraq after the Intifada in 1991 and spent the next nine years in Syria and Lebanon. At the time of the interview she lived with her husband and three children, all under ten years old. Jasmine, her husband, and their children returned to Iraq for a visit after fall of Saddam Hussein.
54. Sawsan left Baghdad in 1990 and spent six years in Iran before coming to Australia as a refugee in 1996. At the time of the interview she lived with her husband and three children, all under eight years old. Sawsan's family remained in Iraq and she returned to Iraq to visit them by herself after the fall of Saddam Hussein.
55. Zahra came from Nasiriyya but left after the Intifada in 1991 along with 17 family members. They spent three years in the Rafha refugee camp in Saudi Arabia, where she married her husband. Zahra came to Australia in 1995. At the time of the research, Zahra lived with her husband and four children, all under the age of ten. Zahra returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein with her husband.
56. Newman, "Narrating Displacement," 35.
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The author would like to acknowledge the University of Melbourne for funding the research and to Lenore Manderson for her comments and suggestions for this article. I also remain indebted to the study participants.

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Refugees from Inside the System: Iraqi Divorcees in Jordan

Susan MacDougall

Abstract

Based on fieldwork with Iraqi women who married and then divorced Jordanian men and are now registered refugees in Jordan, this study explores the relationship between marriage and immigration laws and refugee status for Iraqis in the country. The legal systems effectively fence the divorced women in, with child custody laws preventing them from leaving and citizenship laws preventing them from securing long-term residency. Jordan's citizenship and immigration laws collude with family law traditions that assume women's dependence on their husbands to magnify divorced Iraqi women's social exclusion. As Iraqi refugees extend their stays in the country, Jordan's "guests" and their needs have become part of the domestic social landscape; structural refusal to acknowledge their presence contributes to their isolation and invisibility. This case suggests that citizenship laws that differentiate between men and women create gendered refugees as well as gendered citizens.

Résumé

Cet article repose sur une étude de terrain effectuée auprès de femmes irakiennes qui se sont mariées avec des Jordaniens, qui se sont ensuite divorcées, et qui sont maintenant enregistrées en Jordanie en tant que réfugiées. L'article explore les relations entre les lois du mariage et de l'immigration et le statut de réfugié dans le cas de ces Irakiennes. Le système légal jordanien limite effectivement les femmes divorcées, puisque les lois sur la garde des enfants les empêchent de quitter la Jordanie, tandis que les lois sur l'immigration et la citoyenneté les empêchent d'obtenir un droit de résidence à long terme. Ces lois jordaniennes sur l'immigration et la citoyenneté fusionnent avec la tradition des lois sur la famille impliquant la dépendance de la femme envers son mari, et ainsi renforcent l'exclusion sociale des femmes irakiennes divorcées. Alors que les réfugiés irakiens prolongent leur séjour en Jordanie, ces visiteurs et leurs besoins spécifiques deviennent une partie constituante du paysage social du pays. Toutefois, le refus structurel de prendre en compte leur présence contribue à leur isolement et leur invisibilité. Cette problématique suggère que les lois sur la citoyenneté faisant la différence entre les hommes et les femmes créent des catégories différentes de réfugiés basées sur le sexe, tout comme elles créent des catégories différentes de citoyens basées sur le sexe.

Universally Different: The Refugee in the Eyes of the State

In 1943, Hannah Arendt described the refugee experience as one of confusion. "The less we are free to decide who we are and to live as we like, the more we try to put up a front, to hide the facts, and to play roles … It is the same story all over the world, again and again," she wrote.[1] Her writing addresses the experiences of European Jews displaced in World War II, but her observations are relevant for many current accounts of the upheaval that refugees experience.

Studies that focus on refugees' experiences also show that displacement demands adaptations in numerous facets of social life, and that this process has an emotional dimension.[2] The "same story" that Arendt refers to is not that which precedes displacement, but that which follows it: the individual being plunged into an unfamiliar environment that then shapes her way of life. Arendt argues that simply being labelled a refugee implies that other identifying details will be relegated to the background, both to the institutions charged with managing refugees and, consequently, for the displaced person himself as he goes about constructing normalcy in a new place. While this generalization makes

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it easier for host societies to regulate the refugee and his brethren, it can make it more difficult to integrate into the host society.

The nature of the regulations is different in every context, though, and while the progression of the story may be the same across locations, local policies define refugee communities in different ways and thus enable different sorts of livelihoods. Liisa Malkki made this fact very apparent in her comparison between Hutu "camp refugees" and "town refugees" in Tanzania, which told the story of two discrete communities with different experiences of life after displacement. Camp refugees, who lived in a secluded area just for displaced people located outside of the city of Kigoma, formed a tight-knit community within its confines and developed narratives explaining Hutu purity and separateness. Town refugees lived among the Tanzanian residents of Kigoma and had the freedom to move about the city, and Malkki found their narratives reflected their varied circumstances in Kigoma rather than a cohesive group narrative like that of the camp residents.

Laws and policies set the terms of refugees' acclimation, and they have the potential to alter refugee communities' and host communities' view of their place in society.[3] While political violence in home countries causes displacement, one does not become a refugee until he or she arrives in the place of refuge, the confines of which shape each person's experience.[4] It is the host country reception of refugees that concerns me here, specifically the influence of the paradigm of a refugee that host countries employ on the experiences of those who do not fit within that model.

The modern state has wide-ranging power to influence through regulation, and it approaches the management of refugees through more than one channel. When an individual seeks services as a refugee, her identity, personal story, and physical health are all subject to interrogation by Western asylum-granting nations, and by intergovernmental agencies like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Those seeking resettlement are required to demonstrate the truth of their accounts,[5] and they undergo numerous interviews, psychological assessments, and medical examinations before receiving it.[6] Aihwa Ong has pointed out that the social and procedural means by which immigrants are incorporated into receiving societies actively place them in existing social categories.[7] In the case of those enduring forced displacement, the homogenizing "minority" status in question is that of refugee—which can be produced through the assignment of status, such as that granted by the United Nations, and is also implied through the presence of special services for people to access. While citizenship anticipates differences in gender, class, and ethnicity, refugee-ness is primarily predicated on two statuses that inspire opposing responses: that of "victim,"[8] which entitles refugees to assistance, and that of the non-citizen,[9] which restricts them to certain kinds of entitlements.

The notion of citizenship and the notion of the refugee are in some ways mutually reliant, to the extent that the nation-state system posits insiders and outsiders.[10] Collier and Ong noted, though, that while citizenship remains the most direct means of accessing rights, it has been unbundled in certain contexts, with refugee status and its associated entitlements one example of a partial rights-granting status.[11] Nations now offer incomplete rights "packages" to people who are displaced, ill, or economically desirable skilled workers; the logic employed to distribute quasi-citizenship destabilizes the original concept as systems adapt to include not just a nation of people but everybody, at least in theory. Refugee status protects people whose citizenship does not entitle them to protection, either because their government cannot help them or because it will not, and offers one avenue toward accessing an approximation of citizens' rights.

Citizens' rights, of course, are context-dependent and often differentiate between male and female citizens. Suad Joseph refers to the production of citizens as a "cultural process of subjectification," the content of which is substantially imbued with gender difference.[12] Both juridical processes and rhetorical notions of the ideal citizen give primacy to the male ideal of a citizen, with females as their complement. Valentine Moghadam points out that the gendering of citizenship is also not purely a domestic project, and within the Middle East, where debates on the modern versus the traditionally Islamic are ongoing, roles for women are conceived as a means of declaring alignment with one perspective or the other.[13] It is important to understand these debates about the appropriate nature of womanhood in light of the role colonizing interests played in depicting Islamic practices such as veiling as uncivilized, thus assigning women an outsized role in the project of creating a national identity.[14] Across the Middle East, citizenship is reliant on local or national notions of gender, and the rights and responsibilities of female citizenship might differ substantially from male.

In this paper, I will discuss the experiences of Iraqi women living in Jordan who were formerly married to Jordanians, and now are divorced and registered refugees with UNHCR, to make the argument that the narrowness of the "refugee" label ignores the diversity of circumstances that characterize Iraqis' lives in Jordan. Since the paths to legal residence available to Iraqis are typically costly, those that cannot afford them are funnelled into the international

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refugee management apparatus, which is ill-suited to meeting their needs.[15]

Methodology

Research for this paper was conducted in Amman, Jordan, between December 2010 and September 2011. During this period I taught two different English classes for Iraqis in East Amman, the lower-income counterpart to more affluent West Amman, and was a volunteer teacher at a community centre that offered kindergarten classes for Iraqi children as well as lectures and discussion groups for Iraqi mothers. I also conducted interviews with NGO directors who were providing services to Iraqis. My intended focus was the relationship between Jordanian law and Iraqi family life in Jordan, and intermarriage between Iraqis and Jordanians emerged as a facet of this topic meriting further exploration. This paper is the result of a series of interviews I conducted with four different Iraqi women who had married Jordanians and subsequently divorced, and quotes are taken from those interviews, though my work with Iraqis in the other above-mentioned contexts also informs the analysis. Two of the women I interviewed were introduced to me by students in my English classes, which were coordinated by a neighbourhood organization offering minimal grants of food and cash assistance, and two through an NGO that provided legal services. I learned subsequently that all four of them were aware of both organizations, and had been in touch with them to request services at different points.

Being introduced to people through the organizations that offer them services added an interesting dimension to my research. Initially, I often found that people—including the divorced women that I interviewed, as well as others that I met through different channels—assumed that my association with the charities meant that I had services to offer. When it became apparent that, other than occasional small gifts of fruit or sweets, I had little to give, the relationship was reversed and they emerged as the ones meant to be helping me. As a young woman living alone in a foreign country, I was perceived as needing guidance and advice, and as people transitioned from seeing me as service provider to care recipient, they shared additional details about themselves, some of them contradicting earlier revelations. I came to see this feature of the work as another instance of the layers of truth and interpretation accompanying fieldwork,[16] particularly in the Middle East,[17] though ongoing engagement on the importance of truth to the refugee experience[18] suggest that this facet merits further engagement.

The fact that all four of these women had arrived in Jordan prior to 2003, and registered as refugees after, ostensibly leaves them out of the widely covered Iraqi refugee "crisis" of 2006 and 2007.[19] Instead, they fit into a longer-term pattern of migration from Iraq into Jordan, and it is the contradiction and insecurity of their experience seeking services as refugees from UNHCR and other NGOs while remaining without a legal status in Jordan that this paper will discuss.[20]

Of Fences and Neighbours: Laws, Borders, Refugees, and Guests

The Iraqi divorcees I worked with live a fenced-in life in Jordan, with a myriad of social and political factors limiting their choices. An Iraqi wife cannot obtain Jordanian citizenship before three years of marriage, and should a marriage not last long enough for citizenship then seeking refugee status through UNHCR is a logical alternative. The long-term solution that it offers envisions a person using Jordan merely as a place of transit, which is not the case for women who have lived in the country for over a decade and have children with Jordanian citizenship. While Iraqis' interactions with official agencies in Jordan turn on their non-citizen status, the divorced women with whom I worked are similarly excluded by organizations whose mandate is to serve Iraqis.

While the extenuating circumstances of Iraq in the present play an important role in shaping Iraqis' experiences of Jordan, their position within the social landscape is one with many layers in the history of migration into the country from Iraq and elsewhere in the region. In particular, the Palestinian presence in the country has been a defining part of Jordanian history and political strategy for nearly as long as it has been a country; Jordan became an independent state in 1946, and the politics of Palestinian refugees and their integration were a preoccupation from the outset. After the establishment of Israel in 1948 and Jordan's annexation of the West Bank, the population of Jordan grew rapidly to 1.5 million, with fewer than 500,000 Jordanians, and all West Bank Palestinians were offered Jordanian citizenship.[21] The question of Jordanian government and society's precise relationships to the Palestinian population then became a sensitive issue, and continues to be politically sensitive. Joseph Massad argues in an investigation of Jordan's laws and legal history, that the Palestinian question's ongoing relevance shaped the government's approach to constructing a Jordanian nationalism, with citizenship and immigration law that differentiated between the groups an important feature of these efforts. The persistent felt need to demonstrate a difference between Jordan and Palestine meant that, following the initial openness toward citizenship, distinctions were maintained between the two groups despite the fact that over half of Jordan's residents were Palestinian. Separating out Jordanians by whatever

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means was a way of engendering nationalism in the absence of existing sentiments.[22] Laws contributed to the making of the new nation by restricting the right to pass on citizenship to men and by placing stringent restrictions on foreigners' acquisition of a Jordanian passport. The originally conceived citizenship laws, which drew substantially on British legal code as it was in the 1920s and 30s, dovetailed with Islamic legal codes for inheritance and marriage to create a separate category of female citizen, which imbued "Jordanian-ness" with values and content.[23] This initial conception of the "Palestinian Other", Massad argues, contributed to the ongoing view of refugees and displaced people—which often rhetorically includes West Bankers who either had or received citizenship—as threatening Jordan's territorial sovereignty.

Massad draws on Foucault's work on governmentality to argue that citizenship laws and nationalism enable one another: once the laws define a group of "citizens" and a group of "non-citizens," nationalism has an opportunity to take root.[24] The citizen does not exist as such until the laws clarify who a citizen is, after which everyone in the country either falls into the citizen category or outside it and fulfills his or her role as insider or outsider. In the Jordanian case, the opposing "refugee" category was present to contrast the emerging notion of citizenship from the early days of the nation; the Other of the Palestinian provided contrast against which Jordanian identity could take shape.

The nature of the Palestinian question in Jordan has given the term "refugee" a specific association with the Palestinian population, and until recently, the word "refugee" was little used to describe Iraqis in the country, either socially or legally.[25] Iraqis' presence in Jordan is hardly new, however. Faisal II, the last king of Iraq, was a cousin of Jordan's King Hussein; following Faisal's assassination in 1958, King Hussein later became a close counterpart of Saddam Hussein until the former's death in 1999. Jordan and Iraq maintained close, albeit sometimes strained, political relations from the days of Iraq's Hashemite monarchy through the sanctions period from 1990 to 2003, permitting cultural exchange and continuous multi-directional migration.[26] The comprehensive international sanctions imposed by the United Nations in 1990 severely restricted the flow of goods into and out of Iraq, first to encourage it to withdraw troops from Kuwait and later to prevent any further military action. The sanctions had a devastating effect on Iraqi economy and society, with an estimated 20 percent of Iraqis living in extreme poverty by 1998.[27] In 1997—well before the 2003 war—an estimated 60,000 Iraqis were living in Jordan.[28] Social ties, as well as perceived differences, between the two groups have deeper roots than the "refugee crisis" rhetoric implies.

Iraqis continue to come to Jordan for a myriad of reasons: to visit relatives, to work, to do art, to transit in and out of Iraq, and to follow their spouses;[29] they also continue returning to Iraq, when they are able, to see family, evaluate the security situation, or to check on property.[30] Géraldine Chatelard argues that highly visible large-scale displacement post-2003 has eclipsed the role that prior migration played in establishing patterns that Iraqi movement in and out of Jordan continues to follow.[31] For all these reasons, a strategy that offers only the options of resettlement or return is an ill-fitting solution to the more complicated cases of women whose parents are Iraqi but who have Jordanian children.

Jordan's Iraqi Community, Past and Present

A brief look at the status of Iraqis in Jordan, past and present, makes clear the confusions inherent in discussions of "Iraqi refugees." Despite the high visibility of the Iraqi refugee issue, accurate counts of their number in Jordan remain a topic of some contention,[32] and the circumstances of the four women whose stories I share here highlight the importance of Jordan as a safe haven for those who have developed strong ties within the country over the past several decades. The women's experiences not fitting properly into either the "guest" or the "refugee" category demonstrate the confusion that has arisen through Jordan's reluctance to explicitly address the needs of a population that has been using it as a second home for some time.

The four women who participated in this research followed similar trajectories, arriving in Jordan during the late 1990s or early 2000s, before the war in 2003, and divorcing after having children without gaining citizenship. Two were married in Iraq and came into Jordan with their husbands, and two came with their families and were married in Amman. Though they have registered for resettlement, the fact that their children are Jordanians with citizenship and extended family in the country makes them both unlikely and unenthusiastic candidates for third-country resettlement. Though conditions continue to improve in Iraq, return is not yet entirely safe.[33] Jordanian policy also permits fathers to block their children's departure from the country with their mother, making exit difficult in some cases.[34] At the same time, their socially and economically vulnerable positions in Jordan mean that they have to seek assistance where it is available, and registering with the United Nations legitimizes their residence in the absence of a permit and in some cases gives them access to monthly cash assistance.[35] Jordanian marriage law, regional migration history, and gendered policies act together to keep them isolated and economically vulnerable, which increases their need to draw on the internationally sponsored services in place.

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While popular media accounts tend to depict displaced Iraqis as having fled sectarian violence in their country following its uptick after 2006,[36] this represents only one trajectory through which Iraqis have arrived in Jordan. Many arrived during the 1990s and earlier[37]—making the rapidity suggested by the term "refugee crisis" a less accurate description of their case. The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, which guides UNHCR's and signatory countries' policies toward refugees, operates under the ostensibly straightforward mandate of protecting displaced people from a "well-founded fear of persecution" in their home country.[38] UNHCR offers protection, assistance, and coordination of their resettlement, repatriation, or integration to the host country; its mandate in Jordan is based on the understanding that refugees will not be residing in Jordan long-term.[39] Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, and provides only limited rights and benefits for refugees. Asylum-seeker or refugee status does not in itself give Iraqis the right to seek employment in Jordan, leaving many either unemployed or working illegally.[40] With a 13.1 percent unemployment rate for Jordanians, competition for work is high and wages are low already.[41] Long-term residence in Jordan does not seem sustainable for those who cannot secure work, making resettlement in a third country a sought-after option for Iraqis despite the fact that it is infrequently granted.[42]

Though some Iraqis who were living outside the country have returned, a lack of appealing opportunities for work and stagnation in job creation and employment discourage people from going back. According to World Bank data from 2010, only 38 percent of Iraqi adults were working due to the absence of jobs and the minimal financial benefits they brought.[43] Baghdad's infrastructure has suffered from years of conflict and inattention, and frequent power outages and trouble accessing clean drinking water contribute to the oppressive conditions in the city; areas outside the capital offer even fewer comforts.[44] Ongoing concerns about the security situation in addition to these other disincentives to relocation make Jordan more appealing, at least for the time being. With neither return nor resettlement viable options, Iraqi divorcees—along with many others—piece together those bits of support available to them in Jordan.

Divorced women represent a mere 0.8 percent of Iraq's population, and 10 percent of households are female-headed.[45] In Jordan, according to the most recent data available, 11 percent of households are female-headed,[46] though since that statistic was published in 2006, the rate of divorce has been increasing[47] and is an active topic for public debate.[48] In both countries, however, female-headed households as well as divorcees represent a minority of cases.

For the women with whom I worked, their Iraqi citizenship entitled them to support for refugees that, had they been Arab women of another nationality divorced by Jordanian men, would not have been available. Their marital status and economic situation were as much a cause of their vulnerability as the political situation in Iraq. The 70 JOD (about $100) monthly cash assistance that UNHCR was providing at the time this research was conducted offers a financial lifeline. The years of waiting that the resettlement process often entails in fact made it a more attractive option, as it let them receive bits of aid without the threat of being transferred out of the country. While the services offered by UNHCR serve to tide them over in the present, the roots of their path into the refugee system extend back before the 2003 war.

Marriage as Refuge: Marriage and Migration in Iraq and the Arab World

By 2003, developments unfavourable to Iraqi women marrying Jordanians had been in motion for several years. Examining these trends reveals entrenched disadvantages for this group of women growing from intertwined systems of marriage, immigration, and social trends. The gendered features of citizenship addressed in the introduction are apparent in the Jordanian context in two ways that significantly affect women's rights in a marriage. First, citizenship is restricted to the patriline, meaning that children are born to the father's nationality, and Jordanian women are not entitled to pass on their citizenship. This privileging of the male right to lineage is not unique to Jordan, and has its roots in the use of Islamic law to create legal codes that buttressed existing nationalist agendas.[49] In Jordan, it is also seen as discouraging marriages between Jordanian women and foreigners, with non-citizen Palestinians included in that category.[50] In addition to discriminatory policies on citizenship, Jordan's personal status law for Muslims also includes the disincentives to divorce that characterize Islamic legal systems,[51] wherein it is easy for men to initiate divorce and difficult for women to contest it. Limited rights for wives make Iraqi brides vulnerable initially, and if they divorce before they acquire citizenship then they remain in the country as foreigners. Islamic inheritance laws, which afford male kin twice the shares of females, have in the past been correlated with endogamy;[52] additionally, "close" marriages are considered a safer choice, a preference reflected in the continued—though declining—presence of marriages between first or distant cousins.[53]

The combination of preferential legal treatment in citizenship laws, marriage contracts, and wealth distribution means Jordanian husbands enjoy much more legal power in marriage than their wives. They inherit more wealth, have

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the right and ability to acquire passports for their children and family, and absent specific stipulations to the marriage contract can decree divorce at will. The laws keeping family wealth out of women's hands—daughters inherit half their brothers' share of a deceased father's wealth, and widows with children take one-eighth of a deceased husband's estate—incentivize families to keep their daughters close to home and to be wary of brides from outside. All of these factors put Iraqi women marrying Jordanians in a vulnerable position legally and socially.

These policies have developed over years of nation-building efforts,[54] in which debates on the proper place of women play an important role,[55] in the context of Jordan's regional economic interdependence[56] and migration flows both into and out of the country.[57] Jordan's position in regional migration streams has led to outsiders from around the region coming almost continuously since 1948. Regional migration follows numerous patterns, and Jordan is a destination for both refugees (Iraqis, Palestinians, Lebanese during the 2006 war and, at present, Syrians) and economic migrants from less developed countries, such as Egypt.[58] Home to some of the region's best hospitals and a more temperate climate than the Gulf, it also draws summer residents from the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Arabs from around the region travel, live, and work in Jordan, making intermarriage a rather common phenomenon, and in response Jordan follows the global pattern of protecting its limited domestic resources by restricting access to citizenship. This limiting makes foreign brides vulnerable to poverty and exclusion following divorce, especially if their natal families are not present in Jordan to advocate for them or support them financially.

Iraqi women faced all of these structural disadvantages in a marriage to a Jordanian during the 1990s, as they do now, and social and economic circumstances in Iraq were also trying during the sanctions period. Women were particularly affected as the Iraqi social system adapted to the oppression and the pressures of dramatic economic deprivation. Marriages in Iraq had tended to follow endogamous patterns prior to that point, but when social and economic circumstances in the country changed, other family configurations became increasingly commonplace.[59] International sanctions from 1990 to 2003 altered the economy drastically, and kin-making practices were adjusted to reflect the circumstances.[60] Many families struggled financially during sanctions, and supporting unmarried daughters became an increasingly unsustainable obligation. The population of young men had shrunk due to high casualties during the Iran-Iraq war, increasing competition for husbands and pushing communities to accept suitors who may have been turned away in the past. Marrying outside kin groups became more acceptable as the importance of potential husbands' income went up. Young men living abroad, who could offer a life outside of Iraq, also became more appealing marriage partners.[61] These shifting priorities in marriage also reflected the closing of paths that had formerly been common for young women, among them predictable marriages within their extended families.

Collateral Damage: Iraqi Divorcees' Social Isolation

Looking at the various rules and patterns that govern divorced Iraqi women's lives in Amman, it becomes apparent that they are located at the intersection of Iraqi, Jordanian, and international rules, and their attempts to fit into any one category are generally followed by rebuffs on account of association with the other two. Current laws, policies, and social arrangements do not leave a place for Iraqi divorcees, and their sentiments of solitude reflect this impression of falling through the cracks. As discussed above, conflict in Iraq and their Jordanian children both make returning to Iraq and to their parents' homes an unlikely resolution; their children, whose fathers and their extended families remain in Amman as well, make third-country resettlement problematic. The women that participated in this project have all filed for resettlement with the United Nations, and their files are at various points in the process. One has been offered resettlement and passed it up; one has seen her file closed; and the others are simply waiting, as are many other Iraqis. Uniformly, their expectations for resettlement are modest. As one woman, Hana, put it, "I am not going to get resettled … You just register because maybe once or twice a year they can help you."

If neither staying in Jordan, returning to Iraq, nor resettlement abroad seems particularly hospitable, it may be because none of these avenues appears to have a place for them. Jordanian laws restrict their ability to earn a living without a husband, and the drudgery of day-to-day survival makes a future anywhere seem a long way off. They perceive Iraq as a door that closed behind them when they left, threatening restrictions beyond what they endure in Jordan. Resettlement holds little more than theoretical appeal; reflecting on life outside the Arab world brings up the threat of language barriers and discrimination against Muslims, which often justify shelving the issue entirely, and if this is not enough to dissuade them, the possibility of the children's father's refusal remains as an obstacle.[62] If women cannot travel with their children to Iraq, then travel to Europe or America or wherever they might be resettled is inconceivable. Doubts that resettlement will ever happen for them keeps the women's commitment to the idea of moving thin. The UN, to them, is as much a centre for collecting

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monthly cash assistance and drumming up extra winter blankets for their children as it is a means toward seeking resettlement.

Dua'a, a 30-year-old mother of two sons, lives in a small apartment in an Amman slum, and most of her time is spent crowded into it alongside her family's belongings. Since there are no cabinets, plastic bags stuffed with clothing and shoes line the walls. Shia from Baghdad, Dua'a moved to Jordan with her parents and siblings in 1999 to escape both persecution and economic hardship. They waited, she told me, until the day after she finished her two-year teaching certificate, but were frightened of what they perceived as the regime's discrimination against Shia, and could not wait long enough for the paper diploma to arrive. After their application for resettlement was rejected by the United Nations, they accepted a marriage proposal for her from their Jordanian neighbour in the hopes that it would lead to a Jordanian residence permit for her and them. In 2002 she was married, and had two sons in two years. She weathered a violent and unstable relationship with her husband until they separated in 2009.

When she and her family left Iraq during the late 1990s, the coincidence of increased educational opportunities for women with a wartime clinging to traditional values meant that divorced women's status became increasingly shameful. "For women, the consequences of divorce do not end with economic insecurity; more significantly, divorced women have to endure social isolation from their families and society," Al-Jawaheri wrote.[63] Dua'a explained it in different terms:

> The negatives of Iraqi marriage? … even if the marriage doesn't turn out well, you have to endure and you have to stay in it. No question. They say to you, forget it, you left your father's house in a white dress and you'll return in a white burial shroud. You have to endure, and divorce or separation is rare. You are patient and you bear the unfairness, even if he turns out to be a bad husband or a bad father, you endure it and you stay committed to your marriage.

The high stakes of a union like hers, which not only bound her to her husband and their future children but also carried her and her parents' residence in Jordan in the balance, made her a vulnerable bride. Her disadvantaged position in the Jordanian legal system, where men enjoy a greater share of rights in a marriage contract, further entrenched her vulnerability. Dua'a described herself as unaware when she got married and too young to evaluate her choice properly. Her family also failed to foresee the difficulties she would face. Her marriage and divorce changed their attitudes about intermarriage with Jordanians, she said, and after her experience, they want her sisters to marry Iraqis.

Dua'a's parents and siblings returned to Baghdad in 2006 and she filed for resettlement again on her own after her divorce in 2009. She said that a UN lawyer informed her that while her case was sustainable, her children's applications for resettlement would be difficult. "Why would they give the rights of a refugee to someone who has a national number?" she said, referring to her children's Jordanian citizenship. "It's hard for them." There does not seem to be a way out of Jordan for her, and as a non-Jordanian without a residence permit, the only work available to her is in the informal economy doing manual labour at low wages. The fact that she does not have her teaching certificate in hand makes her ineligible to apply for work as a teacher. Her establishment in Jordan is more of a default arrangement then anything, with her ties to the community staying at a superficial level. "I have a formal relationship with my neighbours," she says. "Hello, hello, that's it." Her learned suspicion of outsiders and her neighbours' chilly reception of a divorced single mother keep relations distant.

> I have superficial relationships. I go out, I like to go out, but people, when they come, they want a bigger house, furniture, they want you to take them out, these kinds of things. Me, most of my time is for my kids. Some lectures, and for the kids.

The absence of her husband means financial scarcity—here evoked in the small house, and the inadequate furniture—which compounds the small size of her social circle, and the superficiality of the relationships. The home, where she might normally host guests or visitors, is now something to be kept out of view as well. Dua'a treats life in Jordan as something to be endured, though even the little freedom she has to be left alone may not be available to her in Baghdad. Despite the threadbare nature of her days in Amman, divorcees' reception in Iraq is worse, and she is wholly convinced that ostracism would be waiting for her upon her return. A woman living alone in Jordan struggles, but she perceives life in Iraq as presenting further challenges, which she expresses in these terms:

> [In Iraq] They blame the woman for everything. No matter what you've endured already, you have to endure more for the sake of your family. Full stop. (…)
>
> Even if there are disagreements, the important thing is you, the woman. No one asks why you waited things out or why you stayed silent, no. And then when divorce happens, no one welcomes the divorcee. She's divorced. Why did he leave her? He's never in the wrong. They don't give her any excuses. She's so-so, no good.

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> That's why he left her. Or she can't have kids. Or she doesn't know how to raise her kids. They forget any good qualities that a woman might have. It's a man's world more than a humane world.

Dua'a articulates here the ways that social norms perform the task of discouraging divorce more forcefully than the law could do: a woman who fails to keep her marriage together, regardless of what that entails, sacrifices the regard of her neighbours, and so she usually tolerates as much as she is able. Parents do not always support their divorced daughters; one study participant, Zahra, has never told her family that she is divorced. The perception that Iraqi society is even less forgiving than Jordanian for divorced women adds a further reason not to leave Jordan and head home, but the sensation of being isolated in Jordan and ostracized in Iraq compounds the solitude of the divorced women's experiences.

Herself the daughter of a Jordanian mother and an Iraqi father, Hana now lives in a one-bedroom apartment with her five children. Her husband left them without granting her a formal divorce and now lives in a suburb of Amman with his new wife. For her, being alone in a foreign country means a bitter self-reliance that keeps barriers up between herself and her family as well as her Jordanian hosts.

> HANA: Exile is bitter. I'll give you my experience: exile is bitter. It is hard, hard. And their customs here are difficult.
> SUSAN: In Jordan?
> HANA: Very.
> SUSAN: How would you compare Jordanian customs to Iraqi?
> HANA: Iraqi customs are harder. Much harder. Jordanians, eh, somewhat. But the Iraqi customs are much harder. Much harder.

Hana's experiences echo Dua'a's; it is the woman, in both cases, who is expected to carry the burdens of being a wife, and should she divorce it will reflect her failure to do so. In part, relative alienation from the neighbours minimizes the importance of their approval or disapproval. Jordanians, she explained, do not interfere like Iraqis—they can be cold, but they leave one another alone; in this sense, their customs are only somewhat hard. The bitterness of exile that she refers to, then, is tempered with an absence of illusions about the possibilities for returning home, as in fact, the rigidity of Iraqi expectations for women is part of what keeps her in Amman. The fatigue of life in Jordan does not generate nostalgia for life in Iraq; in fact, the opposite: women stay in Jordan because they are acutely aware of what awaits them if they go back.

Hana feels distinctly that when she left her parents' home she left it for the last time. In this sense, Jordan is very much a refuge for her, though it offers only scant comfort.

> There were problems between my family and my husband [after we were married]. I couldn't leave my kids and run behind my family because my brothers were married and my parents, how long were they going to live? So to leave my children, and live with my brothers' wives, and let them take me here and there and away from my kids … it's much better for me to stay in my own house.
>
> (…)
>
> It's been four years since he left us, but I feel that this is my kingdom, this house. I ate, drank, went to sleep hungry, went to sleep naked … no one imposes on me here. With your family, God knows how much time you've spent with your family and how much of your upbringing was with them, but when you get married and go to them, you feel like you've become a foreigner. Tomorrow, you'll get married and you'll feel this feeling. Remember me.

Hana here expresses the finalism of her displacement. Unlike some others, she is not a temporary resident in Jordan merely passing through. At some point, she had the intention of staying, and to return is, in a sense, a regression to her childhood and to a subject position she no longer occupies. Zahra, like Hana, phrases her predicament in terms of social discrimination against divorcees. In her view, all Iraqi-Jordanian marriages were to be regarded skeptically: even if an Iraqi woman is living a good life with her husband here, she told me, you have to wonder how much better things were for her before. The everyday indignities of life as a single mother, such as visiting the school her son attends to speak with the male principal, put her ill at ease. She described running errands more appropriately completed by a husband as embarrassing, marking her as divorced. These everyday trials make her slow to put down roots. Another research participant, Hiba, framed her attitude toward life in Jordan more emphatically: "I don't have any Jordanian friends—My god, they are so prejudiced."

Historical ties between Jordan and Iraq, and personal ties through their children and their in-laws, have not translated into full social integration for these women. Nonetheless, as Iraq remains unstable and life abroad untenable, leaving Jordan seems unrealistic. Thus, they access the minimal benefits available to them, by presenting themselves as refugees if need be.

Refugees or Just Stranded: Challenging Classification

Entwined in their host society in complex and intimate ways, Iraqi women married to Jordanian men are stranded in Jordan, caught between the violence of their home country and laws in their host country. Their displacement is social, not physical. The fact that they came to Amman

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intending to settle there, rather than intending to move on or return, does not diminish their need for refuge. Dua'a's choice between resettlement and her children and Hiba's three postponements of her flight to the United States indicate that transfer out of Jordan does not suit their needs either. These women struggle against violent conditions in their home country, marriage and immigration laws limited in their regard for women's rights in their host country, and stringent standards for resettlement candidates to third countries, which leaves them a limited range of choices. The long history preceding their predicament indicates a need for more reflection on refugees' integration in host societies and the structural, rather than tangible, violence that gives "displacement" such powerful meaning.

The migration patterns between Iraq and Jordan, and the tendency for Iraqis to marry foreigners during the 1990s and after, mean marriages between Iraqis and Jordanians were not unheard of during those years.[64] Marriages between Jordanians and other Arab nationalities (e.g. Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese) are anecdotally common. The attitude of crisis surrounding Iraqis in Jordan is typically attributed to the number of refugees in the country, but their numbers are difficult to ascertain with any confidence and the number tends to shrink every time it is subject to tighter scrutiny. One factor contributing to the crisis proportions of this problem, though, is the use of the refugee funnel as a safety valve for problems that have a domestic element. Iraqi women divorced from Jordanian men are caught in the spiderweb of so many Jordanian institutions, but refugee resettlement remains the most straightforward means of alleviating the challenge they present to the system. The obstacles to their actually leaving speak to the need for a domestically oriented solution.

To call their circumstance the result of a crisis is an incomplete analysis for a situation developed over many years. The number of forcibly displaced people in the world—43.7 million—should suffice to demonstrate that these tragedies happen with enough frequency that continuing to call them "crises," as if they catch the world off-guard, is an inadequate description.[65] The isolation that the women experience and voice indicates that attention to Iraqis' situation that ignores their isolating experience in Jordan will lead to more discontent, with undetermined consequences.

Evidence from the literature demonstrates how complicated a relationship Jordan maintains with its Arab guests, a problem with roots that predate both the Iraqi refugee crisis and the 1948 and 1967 Palestinian refugee crises. In part because of this complex history, Jordan maintains policies that contribute to Iraqi women's feelings of isolation in their marriages to Jordanians, a sentiment reinforced by tensions between native Jordanians and Iraqi guests. The discourse of "crisis" that surrounds Iraqis' presence in Jordan emphasizes divisions and leaves the political and social connections between Jordan and Iraq to one side. For all the above-mentioned reasons relating to domestic, regional, and international aid politics, the legal absorption of Iraqis as Jordanian citizens seems unlikely. Nevertheless, Iraqis like the women represented here are also unlikely to leave Jordan, and recognizing their ties to Jordan by giving them a legal status in the country could avoid exacerbating divisions between Iraqis and Jordanians unnecessarily.

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Migration, Identity, and Social Mobility among Iraqis in Egypt

Elisa Pascucci

Abstract

Based on a small-scale qualitative research project with Iraqis living in 6th of October City, one of Cairo's satellite cities, the paper explores the role shifting social identities play in Iraqis' experience of migration and forced displacement. In doing so, it focuses on three major themes emerging from the ethnographic material. First, it discusses the relation between social change in the homeland and other dimensions of Iraqis' belonging, particularly ethno-religious sectarianism. Secondly, it analyzes the role education and work play in the strategies refugees employ to resist dispossession, as well as in the practices through which other categories of Iraqi migrants rewrite their social identities. Finally, Iraqis' relation with Egyptian society is briefly explored. The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature about social and political change in post-2003 Iraq, but also in contemporary Egypt. In doing so, I hope to contribute to re-embed the study of Iraqi migration within the Middle East in its historical and socio-political context, moving beyond policy-driven approaches.

Résumé

Basée sur une recherche qualitative à petite échelle auprès des Irakiens vivant dans la Ville du 6 octobre, une des villes satellites du Caire, cet article explore le rôle que tiennent les identités sociales changeantes dans l'expérience que font ces Irakiens de la migration et du déplacement forcé. On s'y concentre plus particulièrement sur trois thèmes majeurs ressortant du matériel ethnographique collecté. Premièrement, on examine les relations entre les changements sociaux du pays d'origine et les autres dimensions de l'appartenance irakienne telles que le sectarisme ethno-religieux. Deuxièmement, on y analyse le rôle de l'éducation et du travail dans les stratégies des réfugiés pour éviter l'appauvrissement, ainsi que dans les pratiques employées par d'autres catégories de migrants irakiens pour réécrire leurs identités sociales. Enfin, on y explore brièvement les relations des irakiens avec la société égyptienne. L'auteur met ses observations en relation avec les études effectuées au sujet des changements sociaux et politiques dans l'Irak d'après 2003, mais également avec celles portant sur l'Égypte contemporaine. Cette étude vise enfin à remettre dans son contexte historique et socio-politique l'étude de la migration irakienne au sein du Moyen Orient, tout en dépassant les approches centrées sur les politiques de migration.

Introduction

Research on Iraqis in Egypt has stemmed from the need to provide policy responses to the refugee flow that invested Iraq's neighbouring countries after the 2003 US-led invasion. The size of the phenomenon has been much smaller in Egypt than elsewhere in the Middle East, yet existing research about Iraqis in the country is mostly emergency and policy driven. Géraldine Chatelard suggests that this approach, based on the paradigm of refugees' visibility, conceals historical continuities in over three decades of migration from Iraq.[1] Chatelard argues for re-embedding the study of Iraqi migration, looking at the role regional political and social dynamics play in determining this movement of people.[2] This paper offers a limited contribution to this theoretical re-embedding. Although the size of the study suggests cautions with theoretical generalizations, the findings resonate with some of the insights provided by existing literature on Iraqis in the region. In particular, they highlight the relevance of social mobility in Iraqis' experience of displacement and migration. They point to the importance of understanding how social class intersects

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other dimensions of Iraqis' identity, in particular the ethno-religious one, and how these influence their prospects for further migration and local integration. Finally, they suggest that social, as well as legal and political dynamics in the host country should not be overlooked when accounting for the experience of Iraqis displaced within the region. This is particularly important when considering the strategies refugees adopt to deal with downward social mobility in a protracted refugee situation.[3]

Iraqi Migration to Egypt

Although a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention, Egypt does not have a national asylum law. Kagan defines the legal framework for refugee protection in the country as "regrettably confusing," highlighting three major factors which contribute to this uncertainty.[4] First, implementation of refugee and migration policies in the country has often been the result of arbitrary governmental choices rather than of the application of international laws. Secondly, Egypt has introduced important reservations to the 1951 refugee convention, limiting refugees' access to economic and social rights. Finally, refugee rights have been further limited by the signature of the 1954 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A result of the MOU is that determination of refugee status is carried out by UNHCR exclusively. Upon obtaining refugee documentation from UNHCR (yellow cards for asylum seekers and blue cards for recognized refugees), refugees are expected to report their cases to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter subsequently asks the Ministry of the Interior to issue a six-month residence permit. However, Iraqi refugees who arrived in the country after 2003 have been considered as prima facie refugees and did not go through individual refugee status determination.[5] The policy adopted by UNHCR results from a "favorable presumption" about the legal validity of Iraqis' claims, and significantly improved their living conditions.[6] However, generalized access to refugee status might also have contributed to hide the complex interplay of economic, social, and historical factors that determine this migration. As will be shown below, not all Iraqis in Egypt consider themselves to be refugees. Some of them have access to residence permits as investors or students, and choose not to apply for refugee status. However, migration patterns are complex and mixed migration common.[7] Moreover, self-perceptions and attitudes towards refugee status often shift over time. A brief analysis of available figures confirms this complexity. According to entry data, between 100,000 and 150,000 Iraqis would have settled in the country, mainly between 2006 and 2008, when the Egyptian government put a halt to the issue of entry visas.[8] In 2008, 10,000 Iraqis were in possession of UNHCR documentation, while at the end of 2009 there were only 6,572 registered refugees. This points to the high mobility of Iraqis in Egypt, among whom self-repatriation and resettlement are deemed to be common. In 2010, however, numbers grew again. In 2011, 7,157 Iraqi refugees were reported to be registered with UNHCR.[9] It is likely that many Iraqis avoided registration in the first years of residence in Egypt, perceiving their migration as temporary, and turned to UNHCR at a later time, when both prospects for return and private financial resources deteriorated.

Most Iraqis settled in the Egyptian capital—particularly in the areas of 6th of October City and Madinet Nasr—and, to a lesser extent, in Alexandria. Between 2006 and 2008 they rapidly became the second-largest national group among Egypt's immigrant population, after Sudanese.[10] As a consequence, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working as UNHCR implementing partners put in place services which targeted Iraqis exclusively. Predominant narratives among practitioners describe Iraqis as a cluster of refugees whose demands are particularly difficult to respond to. As the manager of an international charity remarked, "Over 70 percent of the Iraqi families we work with suffer from anxiety disorder and would benefit from some sort of psychological counseling."[11] She added that the causes of this anxiety were rather difficult to understand, as their living conditions generally were better than those of other refugee groups. Interviews with other NGO workers confirm this perception. Concerns about the deterioration of their social and financial status, linked to lack of legal access to work and public services, are reportedly one of the main reasons why Iraqis perceive themselves as vulnerable. Middle-class anxieties about children's education and standards of living characterize Iraqi refugees in the narratives of most humanitarian practitioners in Egypt. However, it should be noted how the majority of them do not belong to Iraq's wealthiest social strata. The post-2003 Iraqi displacement is deemed to have taken place in three major waves.[12] Former regime elites and upper-middle-class professionals and intellectuals would have fled between 2003 and 2005, while most Iraqis in Egypt left their country after the outbreak of sectarian violence which followed the 2006 Samarra bombings. This third migratory movement is deemed to have been the largest, involving people from different ethno-sectarian and social backgrounds.[13] The encounters I had with Iraqis in Cairo's 6th of October City confirm this picture of socio-cultural and religious diversity. Although the majority of the people included in this study were Arabs and Sunni Muslims—reflecting the overall ethno-religious composition of the Iraqi population in Egypt[14]—a minority of Shiites and a small number of Christian families were resident in the neighbourhood

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when the study was conducted. Some of the Iraqis I met had chosen Egypt as a destination for its relatively low living costs, as well as for the availability of resettlement programs.[15] They had therefore applied for refugee status and sought humanitarian assistance since their arrival in the country. Others, however, had moved to Egypt counting on a significant amount of private savings, which they had been able to invest in entrepreneurial activities—from small grocery shops to factories and import-export companies. The ethnographic accounts examined below help to shed light on the relationship between these two different categories of migrants. More importantly, they suggest that class perceptions and performances, influenced by Iraqi refugees contacts with the hosting society, can be productively studied in their dialectic relation with other dimensions of Iraqis' identities. The findings are therefore discussed in the light of historical and theoretical considerations on the socio-economic background of the Iraqi displacement, as well as on the Egyptian social and urban context.

Methods and Research Location

The paper is based on ethnographic research with Iraqi migrants living in 6th of October City, one of Cairo's satellite cities, carried out for a period of about four months. During it, I was hosted by a family of refugees from Baghdad, living in 6th of October City's 7th District, whom I met teaching English as a volunteer to their youngest son. The family members helped me to snowball among their contacts, friends, and neighbours. Volunteer work provided me with opportunities to recruit other participants, diversifying my contacts. In total, I conducted participant observation with three different family units, in addition to in-depth, unstructured interviews with 20 individuals from different social backgrounds. I also interviewed practitioners from six different NGOs working on refugee assistance.

The majority of my Iraqi informants were from Baghdad. Only three of them were originally from other districts in central and southern Iraq. However, all had close relatives living in the capital, or had lived there themselves for study or work. As already remarked, all the participants, with the exception of one family of Christians, were Arabs and Sunni Muslims, reflecting the ethno-religious composition of the larger population. As a female researcher, building a rapport with women was generally easier for me. However, men are slightly more represented among my informants. Shifting gender relations in Iraqis' experience of migration are briefly analyzed in the discussion of the findings. However, an in-depth account of the relation between gender, migration, and social mobility in the case of Iraqis in Egypt would require a theoretical and empirical engagement that exceeds the scope of this paper. Knowing Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial Egyptian, and working with people who generally had a relatively good command of English, in most cases I was able to conduct the interviews by myself. In some others I needed assistance with translation of recorded material from Iraqi Arabic into English.

The choice of 6th of October City as a research location was dictated by its being a well-known local hub for Iraqi migrants. Built at the beginning of the 1980s as a result of plans for industrial development in the Giza desert plateau,[16] about 30 kilometres northwest of the Egyptian capital, 6th of October hosts around one million residents. While workers employed in factories and low-skilled service jobs can be found living in its outskirts, many Egyptians who moved there in the 1980s and 1990s were *nouveaux riches.* Alongside industrial sites and middle-class residential areas, gated communities, Saudi-owned shopping malls, and international hotels mark the local landscape. As several other suburbs and new towns, 6th of October can be regarded as a product of urban and social change in neo-liberal Egypt, characterized as it is by spatialized markers of social stratification and defensive home ownership.[17] Moreover, the place offers insights about the role of international migration in these processes. Egyptian returnees from Europe and the Gulf, who invested their remittances in remunerative commercial activities, traditionally constitute a significant part of 6th of October City's new rich. Since the late 1990s, foreign investors from Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and central Asia, as well as students from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Gulf states, have joined this emerging bourgeoisie, making of 6th of October an interesting example of regional cosmopolitanism. In it, Iraqis are one of the most recently settled, yet by far the largest, national group. In the 7th District, the area of 6th of October City where the UNHCR office is located and the concentration of Iraqis is higher, their presence is rather visible. Although this visibility is reported to have decreased since 2008, due to repatriation and resettlement, Iraqi ethnic stores, coffee shops, and bakeries are still present. The landscape evokes a sense of cohesion and diasporic national belonging which is difficult to find in Iraqis' narratives. The following section explores the dynamics of and reasons for this lack of sense of community among the Iraqis I have worked with. In doing so, I raise some questions on the relationship between ethno-religious identity and economic and social change in contemporary Iraq, as reflected in the Iraqi diaspora.

Ethno-religious Sectarianism, Social Change, and Displacement in Post-2003 Iraq

Sectarianism and sectarian violence are the dominating paradigm in media representations of the Iraqi conflict and displacement. Similarly, in the interviews I conducted

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among humanitarian practitioners, community networks among Iraqi refugees are often described as fragmented along ethnic and religious lines. Overall, my participant observation can not be said to contradict these perceptions. It rather confirms the existence of what a humanitarian worker defined as "an all-permeating feeling of mistrust" that would prevent Iraqis in Cairo from developing a binding sense of community.[18] However, some questions about the nature and roots of these divisions can be raised. The Iraqis I met did mention ethnic and religious differences when discussing their problems in Iraq and Egypt, yet they generally attributed only relative importance to them. This is probably due to the fact that, in their neighbourhood in Cairo, they found themselves in a rather homogenous environment, in which Arab Sunni Muslims are the prevalent group among both locals and immigrants. Nevertheless, some of the interviews also resonate with existing literature that problematizes the category of religious and ethnic sectarianism in contemporary Iraq. Moreover, they point to the role social stratification plays in causing divisions among Iraqi refugees.

Sarah,[19] a single woman in her late 20s from Baghdad's affluent neighbourhood of Hay al Jamaa, provides an interesting example. She was the youngest daughter of a retired engineer employed in the public sector, living with her family in the 7th District. They arrived in Egypt in 2007 and applied for asylum a few months afterwards. Although they did not feel totally comfortable using the term, all members of the family defined themselves as refugees and hoped for resettlement to Canada or the United States through UNHCR. When asked about her relationship with her Iraqi neighbours in Egypt, Sarah explained:

> … If they visit, it is just for courtesy, a social duty. It's false courtesy. We don't trust each other and I don't like to hang out with them. There are jealousy and envy. People envy your apartment if bigger than theirs, are jealous if you can pay for better private education for your children. The fact is, you know, Iraq changed. It is not the country it used to be and people have a narrower mind. They would do anything for money. And if you need a job, you need to have relations, to be affiliated to a political party. To be safe, you need the private militias of the party, of the religious group. If you don't belong to these groups, you have to leave.[20]

Solidarity and mutual help, often explained as resulting from Islamic moral obligations, are present among Iraqis in 6th of October City. It is not uncommon to find groups of university students organizing themselves to help widows living alone in Egypt, or to collect money to be donated to Egyptian orphanages and charitable institutions. Nevertheless, narratives like Sarah's are common. Solidarity and compassion are undermined by feelings of mistrust, suspicion, and envy. These latter are significant to the extent that they often determine choices about where to live, or where to seek financial or humanitarian help. Two of the families included in the study reported avoiding contacts with NGOs employing Iraqis living in their neighbourhood as community facilitators. They did not trust their behaviour and, they said, their sources of revenue were "unclear." It is likely that the decision to avoid contacts with specific organizations prevented them from receiving proper legal assistance, jeopardizing their application for resettlement.

As in Sarah's quote, envy often results from competition over symbols of social status such as the size of one's house and access to expensive private education or lack of it. Among the Iraqis I have worked with, this preoccupation with social status and "appearance" was often reported to have been a characteristic of Iraqi middle-class culture since the sanctions era (1991–2003), a perception which finds an echo in historiographies of contemporary Iraq.[21] In line with Saddam Hussein's nationalistic propaganda, what many Iraqis define as "a culture of pride and dignity"[22], was then aimed at concealing the harsh process of impoverishment the country was undergoing. However, those who, like Sarah, belonged to middle-class families of former state-employed professionals tended to consider competition over economic status as a new phenomenon that had appeared after the war. In their narratives sectarian divisions, moral corruption, and rampant social stratification are strictly intertwined.

Existing literature describes this intermingling of economic liberalization, dismantling of state apparatuses, and institutionalized sectarianism in contemporary Iraq.[23] Similar phenomena have also been observed in other countries in the region. For Fawaz, clientelism and religious sectarianism are the form the "entrenchment of market mechanisms into daily activities" has taken in post–civil war Lebanon.[24] In the case of Iraq, Al Tikriti calls for a more careful consideration of the relation between ethno-religious divisions and policy choices in the aftermath of war. While Iraqi ethnic, religious, and tribal identities have deep historical roots and were institutionalized under Ottoman rule, sectarian violence only broke out in specific moments throughout the country's history.[25] After 2003, policies aimed at dismantling the army and the state bureaucracy had the effect of depriving Iraq of secular institutions. Violence targeting the educated urban middle classes caused massive internal and international displacement among upper social strata. This led to the destruction of the pre-existing social organization in which, as Al Tikriti contends, affiliation to political parties and secularized social identities prevailed over religious sectarianism, at least in

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urban contexts.[26] In the meantime, policies aimed at creating a new social and economic model were enforced.[27] The provision of basic social and infrastructural services was delegated to non-state actors, leading to increasing political prominence of religious organizations. The urban geographies of Iraq were rearranged around ethno-religious segregation, and allegiances to religious parties and militias became a constitutive element of the social fabric.[28] For some Iraqis I met in Egypt, the decision to leave the country was linked to their lack of integration in these new social networks. This was reported to imply not only vulnerability to violence, but also, as Sarah remarked, exclusion from the most profitable sectors of the job market.

Economic reasons are often important in Iraqis' decision to leave their country.[29] After the war, the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies failed in improving employment rates.[30] For large sections of the urban middle classes, this added economic precariousness to what has been defined as Iraq's "generalized environment of insecurity."[31] Economic policies are an important part of the social and institutional restructuring of Iraq. After Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority terminated its mandate in June 2004, power was handed over to the newly formed local government under condition of total adherence to the neo-liberal doctrine.[32] This was "aimed at eliminating all vestiges of the Iraqi centrally planned economy (…) Assets, and indeed the mechanisms of economic governance, were transferred from the public sector to private actors."[33] The new policy included a rapid transition from state-led development to privatizations, dismantlement of large portions of the public sector, market deregulation, and creation of an export-oriented economy. Large-scale plans for economic liberalization, particularly in the agrarian sector, had been promoted by Saddam Hussein's government already in the early 1980s. The effects on working and lower-middle classes had been significant, causing waves of political unrest, internal displacement, and international migration.[34] However, this had been essentially a state-led process, which had preserved state bureaucracy as a source of employment. This process of economic *infitah* (opening) had been interrupted by the imposition of economic sanctions after the 1991 Gulf War, which condemned the country to international isolation.[35] It was thus only after the war started in 2003 that a radical plan of economic neo-liberalization was promoted.

Refugees in Cairo often point to the intertwining of economic privatization, sectarianism, and clientelism in explaining lack of security and social cohesion in contemporary Iraq. This concise historical overview helps to shed light on the complex roots of this perception. The ethno-religious homogeneity which characterizes Iraqis in Cairo does not allow drawing conclusions on the role of sectarianism among Iraqis in general. However, it should also be noted how the interactions observed between the one Christian family I met and their Muslim neighbours were devoid of tensions. None of the members of the family reported having suffered religious discrimination among their national community. Similarly, tensions and conflicts between the Sunni majority and the small number of Shiite refugees living in Cairo were rare. Shiites were rather reported to suffer discrimination by the Egyptian authorities. In 2006, these latter rejected a request to open a Shiite mosque in 6th of October.[36] The episode caused discontent, protests, and fears that Iraqi Shiites may face deportation, and it can be regarded as another example of the role policies play in shaping interreligious interactions, both in the country of origin and in the hosting society.

Overall, both existing literature and ethnographic material suggest caution in attributing lack of community cohesion among Iraqi refugees to religious and ethnic cleavages only. As already remarked, not all the people who left Iraq for Egypt consider themselves as victims of dispossession and lack of social networks, or identify themselves as refugees. Differences between them and refugees often revolve around social and economic status. However, as the next section will show, for both groups reasons to migrate are mixed. Moreover, relations between them are marked by ambivalence, oscillating between resentment caused by real and perceived inequalities and feelings of solidarity resulting from shared national belonging.

Mixed Migration and Iraqi Transnational Economic Migrants

A category of Iraqis living in 6th of October City can be considered as transnational migrants who profited from the economic liberalization Iraq underwent after 2003. The volume of trade between Egypt and Iraq is reported to have grown significantly between 2005 and 2010. According to official statistics, in 2009, 3,196 Iraqi companies were operating in Egypt, amounting to 15 percent of total Iraqi foreign investment.[37] The relation between these transnational economic activities and Iraqi displacement to Egypt is confirmed by a statement made by Mahmoud Mohieddin, the former Egyptian Minister of Investment. During the first joint Iraqi-Egyptian investment convention, held in Baghdad in August 2009, Mohieddin is reported to have commented on the high number of Iraqi enterprises in Egypt, expressing his hope that "those companies will return to Iraq when they have the opportunity. We are following closely what is happening in Iraq."[38] Iraqi migrants engaging in commercial and entrepreneurial activities between the two countries were able to find work and life opportunities in Cairo's

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upscale new towns and residential compounds. As foreign investors in Egypt, they enjoy a privileged visa regime, and do not identify themselves as refugees. On the contrary, they tend to underline their difference through narratives emphasizing their entrepreneurial success and wealthy lifestyle. However, many Iraqi entrepreneurs I met in Cairo do mention political instability and serious safety concerns as reasons for not permanently residing in Iraq or sending their families to live abroad.

Wissam, a man in his late 30s, owned a factory in Upper Egypt but lived with his wife and two children in 6th of October City. When I met him, he ostentatiously showed the signs of his economic fortune through branded clothes and electronic gadgets.

> I am very happy in Egypt. I earn good money, my wife is happy, she can relax, go out, she can afford going to the gym. My situation is completely different from refugees and I never had any contacts with the United Nations.

Yet, as our conversation went on, Wissam disclosed how his reasons to live abroad were also related to Iraq's lack of stability and security.

> I don't care about Iraq, about what happens there. I only go for work, for commercial reasons, do what I have to do and come back. I don't bring my family because it is very dangerous, unlivable, especially for women. I don't care about what happens there.[39]

The case of Iraqis in 6th of October City points to the growing relevance of mixed migration in understanding the Iraqi displacement.[40] Economic concerns and fears of persecution and generalized violence are often intertwined in individual reasons to leave the country. Moreover, Iraqi refugees and migrants in Cairo live in proximity and have close economic, social, and personal relations. My first meeting with Wissam took place in an Iraqi café called Shatt el-Arab, a popular place in the 7th District. Named after the region spanning southeast Iraq and southwest Iran where mostly Sabeans live, it was attended exclusively by Iraqi men to drink tea and smoke *shisha*. The coffee shop appeared to be a rather socially mixed space, an interesting exception in Cairo's strict spatial segregation along class lines. Wissam's social life took place mostly in that coffee shop, hanging out with his countrymen. Some of them were very good friends of his. Others were rather acquaintances who seemed uneasy before his physical and verbal exhibition of richness. However, the socially mixed nature of the coffee shop was largely reflected in Wissam's group of friends. Their case exemplifies the complex social and economic relations between Iraqis who self-identify as refugees and wealthier migrants with different legal status. Solidarity and sense of national belonging coexist with inequalities and conflicts. Although many among his friends were significantly less rich than him, Wissam was bound to them by respect and esteem. They were, he explained, from honoured families with a high educational level and used to have very good professional positions. Wissam appeared to be aware of his status of *nouveau riche*. His relation to his Iraqi neighbours and friends appeared marked by dual feelings. On the one hand he was proud of having been able, unlike many of his fellow citizens in Egypt, to profit from the good opportunities provided by Iraq's and Egypt's neo-liberal economies. On the other, he expressed a sense of solidarity, respect, and even sorrow for people whose cultural capital and respectability used to be somehow superior to his own, but who were facing financial difficulties in Egypt.

As Wissam, Samira, the 22-year old daughter of a wealthy Baghdadi family, was excited about the economic success of her family and happy with her life in Egypt. Yet when I met her for the first time she also expressed concern about the trip to Baghdad her family was planning for the end of the year. During a recent visit, a bomb had blasted near her parents' car while they were driving in central Baghdad. The episode had been very shocking for the whole family. It epitomized the lack of security that still affected their country, and reminded them of the violent destruction they had to flee from. Similar stories, and the associated feelings of anxiety, are common among the richest Iraqis living in Egypt who travel to their home country on a regular basis. Drawing a sharp line between the successful stories of people like Wissam and Samira, and the painful experience of disempowerment of refugees who have been hit by processes of dispossession would be inaccurate. Among the Iraqis I came to know in 6th of October, experiences of violence and loss are common to individuals of all social backgrounds and economic statuses. Moreover, national belonging is one of the most relevant lines along which social interactions are organized in the rather international environment of 6th of October. However, it often conceals a number of unexpressed conflicts and divisions around social status, in which some individuals and households are left to struggle against impoverishment, often without a reliable network of support.

Education, Work, and Social Mobility: The Egyptian Context

The Iraqi refugees I met in Cairo adopted several strategies to resist downward social mobility, although rarely did they prove to be successful. In this regard, the story of Sarah's family is paradigmatic. When I met Sarah, her parents had run out of savings trying to support themselves in Egypt.

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The only two sources of income her father had left were the small pension that, like many other Iraqis in Cairo, he received from Iraq every month, and a similarly small amount of money coming from letting his house in Baghdad. The house was let to a friend for less than the actual market price. This was because, as many Iraqis explained, till 2008 houses let to strangers were often looted, or occupied by religious militias who forced people to move in planned operations of ethno-religious segregation. Letting to relatives and close friends was therefore the only way they had to be sure to have their property back. For Sarah's parents, the two sources of revenues together covered the basic needs of their six children. The parents appeared to be torn between desire to return, which explained their decision not to sell the house, and hope for a better future for their children through resettlement to a Western country. They had done their best to guarantee them the same standard of living they used to have in Iraq, where they could afford a car and spending their holidays abroad. Sarah explained that her father had spent more than $10,000 US in just one year to allow her younger brother to study in one of the many expensive private universities of 6th of October City, attended mostly by foreign students coming from the Gulf region. When the father realized that the debt he was accumulating was too severe, her brother was forced to interrupt his studies, and as a result, according to Sarah, he was drowning in a state of depression.

Education is central in the strategies Iraqis adopt to preserve their social status. Private schools and universities are often the only option available for Iraqis in Egypt, where refugees face restrictions in enrolling their children in public education.[41] However, many Iraqi families I spoke to affirmed that, even if they were allowed to, they would not send their children to Egyptian public schools. The quality of the education these provide was perceived as extremely poor, especially in foreign languages and technical and scientific subjects. The idea—widespread among middle-class Egyptians—that public schools are for the children of the poor and the uneducated seemed to prevail. It is arguable that the choice of expensive private education is for Iraqis in Egypt a "reconversion strategy." Bourdieu defines this as "the set of outwardly very different practices whereby individuals or families tend, unconsciously or consciously, to maintain or increase their assets and consequently to maintain or improve their position in the class structure."[42] As in Bourdieu's description, the aim of conserving or improving the family's social position is often pursued by exchanging one form of capital with another. Investing financial capital into education is fundamental for middle-class Iraqis.[43] This seems to apply both to those hoping to preserve a cultural capital threatened by impoverishment, and to the new rich attempting to acquire new middle-class legitimacy.

However, for families of refugees like Sarah's, these attempts are often difficult to sustain. Also in this, their experience mirrors that of local educated urban middle classes. The Egyptian market for private education is fast-growing and increasingly expensive. Only people with remunerative entrepreneurial careers or employed in the upscale, internationally oriented sectors of the job market are able to afford the kind of investment in education which guarantees to their children access to good employment opportunities.[44] This process of social stratification invests Iraqi refugees in Cairo. Access to private education also corresponds to inclusion in circuits of globalized belonging and upscale consumption cultures.[45] In one of our meetings, Samira and I had a conversation which helps to illustrate this aspect. Her father, she explained, ran a successful business which allowed her and her brothers to study in private technical faculties. Alongside her major in pharmacy, Samira took private lessons in English and informatics.

> English is essential nowadays, for any job you want to do, in Iraq, Egypt, in any other Arab country. And I love speaking English, and have many European friends that I meet every time I go to Sharm El Sheykh, about twice or three times a year.[46]

Samira's case is also an interesting example of how migration provides wealthy Iraqi women in Egypt with increased opportunities to study, work, and engage in social and recreational activities outside of the space of the home. Like her, some of the women I met attributed this to the absence of gender and sectarian violence in Egypt, generally perceived as a safe country. However, this feeling was altered by the uprising started in January 2011, which pushed a significant number of families to temporarily leave the country. Shifts in gender relations also affect families of refugees with lower social status. In the cases I had the chance to observe, these changes are often linked to policies of humanitarian assistance. Services in Egypt are often designed around a "feminized" refugee subject, conceived as being in a position of need and passivity.[47] As a result, women are often privileged interlocutors in the relation with humanitarian agencies. This has ambivalent and potentially negative effects. On the one hand, it seems to increase their power within families. On the other, it contributes to further relegate women who are often well-educated and with successful working histories in the homeland to the exclusive role of caregivers. The relation between gender, refugee condition, and social mobility among Iraqis in Egypt can not be thoroughly explored here, and would deserve further research.

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As access to private education and related spaces of socialization become increasingly exclusive, a category of young Iraqis in Cairo struggle to find other venues of local inclusion. For those who have no other option to support themselves, access to the lower sectors of the job market is mediated through networks of national solidarity. The restrictions Egypt applies to the 1951 convention exclude refugees from access to regular employment. As a result, some of them rely on informal, casual jobs in small ethnic businesses such as coffee shops and restaurants, but also in factories. Access to these networks of employment is also gendered. Social and parental control often prevents young women from accepting jobs which are deemed to be degrading, or not adequate to their qualifications and social status. However, some of the young women I met were employed as secretaries or shopping assistants in local Iraqi and Egyptian businesses.

Hamed was a young man with a degree in engineering. He had arrived in Egypt in 2006 with his parents and brothers, all registered with UNHCR. His work experience in a big supermarket owned by an Iraqi entrepreneur was recalled as frustrating.

> In the supermarket, he [the employer] used to exploit me. Still, he used to exploit Egyptians much more than me. I got a better treatment cause I was Iraqi. With me, he would pay me more, EGP 800 [$135] per month, while Egyptians would earn 600 per month. Still, it was ridiculous. 12 hours per day, every single day, from 2 or 3 pm to 3 am, no holiday at all. No Aid, no Friday, no Sunday, nothing at all. If I sick, I don't get paid. […] I had that life for one year. Then, Ousama [his brother] and me decided to share, for the boss was OK. We would share and work 6 hours each, everyday, no holidays as I told you, for EGP 800 per month.[48]

Hamed's narrative is interesting for at least three reasons. First of all it provides another example of the ambiguities that characterize the relationship between refugees and wealthy Iraqi migrants. While he had been able to find a job thanks to networks within his national community, the working conditions had proved to be rather exploitative. Secondly, it offers interesting insights on labour conditions in Egypt and how they affect the less wealthy among young Iraqi refugees. Hamed describes the job environment in factories, supermarkets, and shopping malls in 6th of October City as mixed: "You find Egyptians, Africans and sometimes Iraqis, but only those who have less money." According to him, foreign workers in the supermarket were employed informally, but many Egyptians had no regular contracts either. Finally, Hamed's experience sheds light on the mutual perceptions which shape the relation between Iraqis and locals. Egyptians, Hamed explained, are paid less because they are deemed to be poor and, unlike Iraqis, used to low-skilled jobs in dirty and unsafe environments. These impressions mirror local perceptions of Iraqi migrants. In 6th of October, Madinet Nasr, Heliopolis, and Rehab, all middle-class areas of Cairo where Iraqi families have settled, Egyptians commonly consider Iraqis as wealthy and successful intruders. Their affluence is often blamed for rising estate prices. In this regard, it is important to remember how the booming Iraqi oil economy of the 1970s saw the immigration of millions of Egyptians, employed in the extractive and industrial sectors.[49] Mutual perceptions of richness and poverty are largely shaped by this shared migration history. According to the practitioners I talked to, Egyptian stereotypes of Iraqis would be a result of the generalized lack of knowledge about refugee problems and rights. However, they also reflect the complex, mixed nature of Iraqi migration to Egypt, as well as the local processes of social stratification it intersects.

Conclusions

The policy categories imposed on the Iraqi displacement conceal differences between refugee flows and other forms of migration. People lacking social and financial capital are forced to flee Iraq and rely on assistance to find durable solutions to displacement. However, others have the assets to successfully engage in forms of transnational mobility and economic activity.[50] An approach which re-embeds the study of the Iraqi displacement in its socio-historical context helps to grasp differences and continuities between these different kinds of migration. In the case here analyzed, mixed motivation and frequent economic and social relations between these two categories of migrants does not allow drawing sharp distinctions. However, feelings of inequalities and tensions are common among Iraqis in Cairo. These often revolve around changes in social status caused by displacement and post-conflict policies in the homeland. Existing literature confirms that these new social mobilities deserve further attention, and that their relation with ethno-religious sectarianism should be problematized. Finally, the paper has offered insights on how social stratification in Egypt influences the experience of Iraqi residents in the country. A re-embedded approach to the study of Iraqi migration in the region cannot but benefit from a thorough analysis of socio-economic change in hosting societies.

Notes

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I would like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their comments on the first draft of this paper. An earlier version was presented at the XIII conference of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM 13th, July 2011). I am indebted to all the participants who provided me with comments and questions, particularly to Michael Collyer and Katie Walsh. I am also grateful to the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and to the School of Global Studies, University of Sussex, for funding the research upon which this paper is based.

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The Humanitarian Regime of Sovereignty: INGOs and Iraqi Migration to Syria

Sophia Hoffmann

Abstract

This article considers the activities of international, humanitarian NGOs in Syria focused on Iraqi migrants. The analysis questions how these INGOs were positioned towards modern state sovereignty, and sovereignty's particular constructions of territory, population, and government. Arguing that most INGOs operated firmly within the social relations stipulated by modern sovereignty, the article uses rich ethnographic data to demonstrate how INGO activities treated Iraqis according to sovereign exclusions and ideas about citizenship, even though Iraqi life in Syria visibly contradicted these ideas. Only smaller, amateur INGOs that stood outside of the professional humanitarian sector were found to work outside of sovereignty's norms.

Résumé

Cet article se penche sur l'activité des organismes internationaux non gouvernementaux humanitaires auprès des migrants irakiens présents en Syrie. On y analyse comment se positionnent ces ONGI quant au discours et aux politiques de l'état moderne, et en particulier en rapport avec ses conceptions relatives à la construction du territoire, à la population et au gouvernement. On y soutient que dans la majorité des cas, les ONGI travaillent pleinement dans le cadre de la structure sociale obéissant à ces conceptions renforcées par l'état souverain, incluant des conceptions d'exclusion et de citoyenneté. Les riches données ethnographiques étudiées permettent à l'auteur de montrer comment les activités des ONGI ont conséquemment traité les irakiens selon ces représentations d'exclusion et de citoyenneté, même si la vie irakienne en Syrie les contredisait en pratique. Seules les OGNI plus petites, moins expérimentées et actives hors du réseau humanitaire professionnel semblent avoir travaillé en-dehors de ces conceptions.

Despite their variety, all humanitarian, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) need to position themselves towards state sovereignty, in their management of the limits and opportunities that sovereign exclusions and boundaries pose for their operations. This article demonstrates how a small number of very different INGOs, all involved in the management of Iraqi migrants in Damascus, embedded themselves in the particular relationships of bureaucracy, money, emotion, and violence that, partly, constituted state sovereignty in this context. The article argues that INGOs played a small, but key, role in constructing state sovereignty vis-à-vis the potentially sovereignty-disturbing event of Iraqi migration. Field research found only small instances of "anti-sovereign" practices among NGO workers, which transcended the framework of social relations imposed by sovereignty.

This article is situated in the field of critical IR literature, which has in the past two decades attempted to apply Foucauldian methods in order to show how the lived reality of state sovereignty is created through minute practices of daily life.[1] Migration, especially forced migration, has been recognized by critical IR scholars as a key area of contestation to the spatial and political organization of state sovereignty.[2] Migration therefore provides an exceptionally rich field of study for daily-life practices through which migrants are managed and channelled into sovereignty-conform modes of life. The particular contribution of this article lies in the rich ethnographic detail that it provides to show how this managing and channelling of migrants is achieved

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through non-state agents, through practices of power that frequently lie in highly personalized interactions in areas of life not generally considered as the remit of state power. As this article shows, this development does not result in a diminishing of state sovereignty, but in a transformation of the modes of power and locations through which it becomes the hegemonic way of ordering society. As this article also shows, the diffusion of agents and loci of power that enable state sovereignty in fact make it harder to oppose, than when all or most power emanates from state institutions. Syria, where the liberal forms of power exercised by international NGOs were new, as the state had for decades used more visible techniques of violence and insecurity to rule, was a particularly interesting setting to study such transformations.

The notions of "sovereignty" and "sovereign power" are complicated by the overlapping ways in which they are deployed in a variety of social science literature to describe different concepts. In this article, "state sovereignty" describes the social, spatial, and political organization that is created by, and creates, the international system of sovereign states, as well as the domestic sovereign order of individual states. This organization rests on the one hand on the hegemonic belief that a unity of territory, government, and population—each bound to each other through politics of representation—is the natural and correct way for human life to be ordered on a global scale. This hegemonic belief is referred to in this article as the "sovereign ideal." On the other hand, state sovereignty rests on an enormous range of behaviour—practices—that transmits the sovereign ideal into the lived reality of daily life. This article mobilizes detailed ethnographic findings to show how exactly such practices, that turned hegemonic ideas about state sovereignty into lived power relations, worked in the interactions between Iraqi migrants, the Syrian state, and international NGOs. Governments—and, as this article will show, also a range of other actors—rely on a variety of techniques of power to instruct and coerce human beings into behaviour that accords with the demands of state sovereignty. What Foucauldians refer to as "sovereign power," i.e. the violent, spectacular punishment of digressions against the ruler, is one such technique. To avoid confusion, this article does not use the phrase "sovereign power" in this way. In this article, "sovereign" refers to the idea that the state should be the exclusive arbiter of life on its territory and over its population.

The final, sovereignty-related point of importance to clarify in the context of this article is the dynamic interaction between international and domestic space. While domestic space encompasses actual, geographical locations, the "international" is necessarily imagined and conceptual. The international is a purely imaginative construct that is acted out through particular behaviour and performances in geographical locations that necessarily belong to the domestic sphere of some state. Interestingly, as the clashes between the way that international NGOs constructed Iraqi migrants and the way these were integrated by the Syrian government made clear, while the practices that construct the "international" are closely related to the idealized version of state sovereignty as the territory-government-population triptych, the practices that enforce domestic sovereign orders are much more varied and context-dependent. This means that while acting as members of the "international community," NGO workers or state officials behave according to the notions of the "sovereign ideal," as if the idealized social relations of unified territory, governance, and population were a universal, lived reality. Yet when acting as members of a specific domestic order, people adjust to the particular techniques of power that are prevalent under different governments: the manner of rule in Germany is very different than that in Syria.

Professional INGOs were prevented by the Syrian government from amassing knowledge about the Iraqi population and could not conduct the "needs-assessments" that usually form the basis of aid projects. INGOs in Damascus thus based their interventions largely on *assumptions* about the Iraqi population, which flowed from established ideas and tropes about refugees, intimately connected to sovereignty and sovereign exclusions.[3] In this way INGO practices revealed how the "sovereign ideal" of territory, nation, and government informed techniques of migration management, which in turn reproduced this ideal.

The results from field research lead to the conclusions that INGO activity transformed such social developments that destabilized sovereignty (in this case Iraqi migration) into sovereignty-conform situations. INGOs operated within the territorial and population divisions of sovereignty and maintained them. While in general INGO activity may weaken the stability and power of particular governments and may have a transformative effect on the micro-relations through which sovereignty is constructed, there appears to be no indication that, especially in the humanitarian field, INGOs weaken the ideal of sovereignty and the forms of power that flow from it.[4]

Empirically, this article is based on direct observations of INGO activities in Damascus, as well as "indirect" observations obtained through conversations and interviews with Iraqi migrants, foreign and Syrian INGO staff, and foreign UN staff. INGO documentation about activities for Iraqis in Syria, such as websites, funding proposals, and annual reports, was widely consulted and analyzed, to understand how the ideas and attitudes expressed in these documents related to INGO practices.

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This article is divided into four main parts. The first section will give an overview of INGO activity focused on Iraqi refugees in Damascus. The second section analyzes the practices of professional INGOs that were officially registered with the Syrian state and characterized by the ideas and language of professional humanitarianism. The third section concentrates on unofficial, semi-professional, or amateur INGOs that ran projects for Iraqis. Displaying a greater variety of approaches, these organizations' positions towards sovereignty was eclectic; sometimes confirming, sometimes undermining sovereignty. The article closes with a conclusion aiming to summarize the most important elements of the analysis.

1. Another Consequence of the Invasion of Iraq: INGOs in Damascus

The link between post-2003 Iraqi migration to Syria and the sudden and unexpected expansion of INGO presence in Damascus has been noted repeatedly.[5] This expansion, made possible chiefly through the construction of Iraqi migration as a humanitarian catastrophe and the lobbying efforts of international advocacy organizations, was also linked to political developments in Syria, such as a growing openness among prominent government figures towards foreign NGOs and their role in economic development.[6] The rapid and large-scale funding provided by North Atlantic states to UNHCR Syria for its Iraqi program, and UNHCR's need to find implementing partners to run projects, increased the pressure on the Syrian government to allow the registration of INGOs.[7] Consequently, by 2009–10, 13 INGOs were established as partners to UNHCR in Damascus; and around half a dozen church organizations (with international links) and a small number of private or less official international organizations operated independently.[8] No public register for organizations working with Iraqi migrants existed, and despite increasingly streamlined, bureaucratic registration processes, (I)NGOs still maintained various channels with the state to authorize their activities.[9] My research collected information on 10 very different INGOs, to varying extent. On two occasions, I was able to conduct repeated and intensive participant observations; on four occasions, in-depth interviews plus limited observations; at other times information was collected through informal conversations and/or interviews with INGO staff, beneficiaries, or third parties.

INGO projects ranged from professionalized services delivered by experienced, large organizations, to semi-private projects run by amateurs. Apart from the divergence among INGOs in terms of programs, staff, and set-up, a common thread was that their operations established Iraqis as recipients of either goods or services. The stated reasons for the delivery of goods/services was that Iraqis needed assistance and help to survive, and to lead meaningful and healthy lives, as reported by the numerous INGO reports on the needs and sufferings of the Iraqi community in Syria.[10] This "needs-based" view of Iraqi life was also the standard argument with which INGOs justified funding requests, and was the general perspective that at least the professional INGOs used in their aid projects worldwide. In Damascus, professional INGOs generally maintained a centrally located head office, but conducted their operations in Iraqi-populated suburbs, such as Saida Zainab, Jaramana, or Yarmouk, more rarely also in cities outside Damascus such as Homs and Aleppo. Smaller, less formal INGOs were run from private flats, church facilities, or with no central location. The range of programs broadly covered medical help, education, leisure activities, and the building of infrastructure (new schools or hospital facilities).[11]

Accessing INGOs in Damascus proved difficult during field research. Other than I had expected, the sudden enlargement of the INGO sector had not led to increased ease of communication and transparency. Instead, many INGO employees, especially those of large organizations with little experience in Syria, were too worried about state surveillance to meet me, despite the very general and relatively non-controversial focus of my research. While initially frustrating, these experiences became valuable information in their own right, as they expressed ways of control and self-preservation exercised by INGO employees, and related to questions about Syrian state sovereignty.

2. Professional Humanitarian INGOs

Professional INGOs were those organizations that already had a large portfolio of aid projects in Asia and Africa, and for which Syria simply represented the entry into a new "market," where previous experiences could be adapted and rolled out. For these organizations, which formed part of the global, professional humanitarian sector, entry into Syria was simply an expansion of their existing programs elsewhere. As will be argued and demonstrated, their practices, beliefs, and set-ups intimately connected them to the political, social, and spatial organization of the sovereign ideal of a unity of territory, government, and population, as well as the idea that the government-citizen relationship is one of mutual rights and duties, and protection. Such organizations included Danish Refugee Council, Terres des Hommes, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Première Urgence, established bureaucratic apparatuses and players in the global humanitarian sector.[12] Their modus operandi included standardized regulatory requirements, including a degree of transparency, financial accountability,

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and bureaucratic continuity, which significantly influenced their interactions with the Syrian state.[13]

One of the few professional INGOs that responded to my requests for an interview was the IRC, one of two US-based INGOs operating in Damascus.[14] The interview took place at IRC's inconspicuous office behind a main road in central Damascus, located in a typical, French-style Damascus flat on the first floor, with wide stone floors and high windows. Three employees, two Syrian, one European, provided me with an overview of the organization's activities with Iraqi refugees, which at that time consisted of projects in the education sector. IRC was renovating and improving a number of schools in deprived suburbs and offering remedial classes for Iraqi pupils.[15]

Three main ideas emerged from the interview: firstly, that Iraqi pupils faced problems when trying to attend school in Syria and in turn created problems for the education sector; secondly, that Syria was a new and difficult context for IRC to operate in due to the control exercised by state institutions; and thirdly, that funding constraints and opportunities were a central concern for IRC. The expatriate director conveyed a businesslike attitude, focused on the managerial challenges faced by IRC such as the obtaining of funds, the hiring of staff, and compliance with government regulations.

A Deviant Population

One of the Syrian staff explained that there were around 1.5 million Iraqi refugees in Syria and that 60 percent of Iraqi children did not attend school, adding:

> As you might have read, Syrian schools suffered from overcrowding. First, the Iraqis face many challenges when it comes to schooling. For example, with the English language, in Syria we start in year one, whereas in Iraq they only start in year seven, so there is a very big gap there. Then there are the financial problems, this is probably the biggest problem. Often children have to work and families live off their wages.[16]

This rhetoric closely reflected the language and information about Iraqis on IRC's website and the organization's press releases and reports.[17] Iraqis in Syria were presented as hopelessly troubled and in desperate need of the world's attention and aid. IRC's language was, even compared to that of other NGOs, extreme in this regard; however, it nevertheless represented broadly the tone of most INGO publications on Iraqi refugees, as illustrated by the selection of texts below.

The Danish Refugee Council's website depicted Iraqi life as follows (similar wording in the organization's quarterly reports):

> *Humanitarian needs*
> Due to their illegal status, the Iraqi refugee population in Syria is facing a difficult situation being both illegal and out of funds, and their possibilities of living a decent life are limited. The influx of refugees has created additional inflation and pressure on the job market in the country. Criminality has increased, and prostitution of young Iraqi women in need of cash support has become a reason for resentment by the host community. The Syrian education system is also struggling to cope with the increased numbers of children and the access to secondary or tertiary health care systems for Iraqis with chronic diseases is very limited.[18]

The website of Terres des Hommes Switzerland, which supports a number of health-projects in Syria, carries the following description:

> *Regional assistance to Iraqi refugees*
> The Iraqi groups who have taken up temporary refuge in Syria and Jordan are in great distress. They have very few rights and no access to adequate services, in particular in the field of psychology. However, this is where their needs are greatest because of the trauma experienced during the war, while fleeing and also during their stay in the country which has taken them in. TdH is providing psychological and social help to these children and their families in Jordan, where it has opened a centre. Two partner relief organizations are working in Syria.[19]

These images of Iraqi migrants, which are focused exclusively on the negative elements of their life and migration experience, cast the population as problematic and in need of correction. The notable focus on psychological trauma and sexual deviance (an often repeated trope in INGO publications on Iraqi refugees) located Iraqis' problems firmly inside their own minds and bodies, implying and highlighting the need for interventions targeting Iraqi lives and individuals, rather than the external, political circumstances that were contributing to Iraqi poverty. Unsurprisingly, this was indeed the form that many professional INGO projects took.

Crucially, the connection between Iraqis' problems and the fact that they were migrants/refugees was made throughout these texts. Emphasis was placed on the assumed illegality of Iraqis in their states of exile and their lack of rights. The act of migration to another state, and the existence as a refugee, was portrayed as an existence of last resort, an unnatural existence, as it placed Iraqis outside of the sovereign norm, according to which humans must reside on the territory of a government offering them a legally binding relationship of rights (which the Syrian government, which operated a policy of renewable, temporary residency permits in addition to tolerating transgressions against work

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prohibitions and outdated permits, did not).[20] Crucial to the argument of this article were the implicit and explicit constructions of state sovereignty as the accepted, correct, and existing political organization that emerged from these statements, and the assumed impossibility of a good life outside the home state. These constructions implied that a clear, legal connection to a protective sovereign state were a fundamental requirement for leading a secure and stable existence. The act of crossing state borders was understood as outside the norm and only to be taken in extreme circumstance, with severe consequences such as illegality and the need for outside help. Iraqi existence outside of Iraq's territory was not taken as an indication of the lack of truth of the stipulated, sovereign unity of government, territory, and population, but as a wrong, bad, and dangerous state of affairs that needed to be corrected so that the (fictional) correct, good, and safe situation of sovereignty could be regained.

INGO rhetoric and practice was here firmly within the discourse of the modern ideal of sovereignty and neither weakened nor deconstructed it. Descriptions of Iraqi activities in exile that contradicted the sovereign ideal, and that placed into question the notions of sovereign legality, citizenship, and nationality, were absent from INGO rhetoric and, broadly, from their programs—even though such activities were highly visible in Damascene suburbs at the time. Despite the troubled situation in their society of origin and their often horrible recent past, Iraqis in Damascus were also thriving: through their own strength and due to a political, social, and cultural context that did not produce them as hopeless, non-sovereign outsiders. But in INGO texts, the natural and ideally best location for Iraqis was the territory of Iraq and the sovereign space of the Iraqi state, and it was only highly exceptional circumstances that had undone this natural and baseline situation. Through this selective portrayal of Iraqi existence in Syria, INGOs strengthened the construction of the sovereign ideal in a context where the lived reality of Iraqis in Syria placed it in question.

State-NGO Relations

Returning to the IRC interview, the second important point concerning professional INGOs and sovereignty that emerged was the interaction between IRC and Syrian state institutions. When I asked whether I could visit one of their projects, IRC's expatriate director warned me:

> This is not a regular environment for NGOs, I will request approval and I'm sure that there will not be a problem but we will have to see. In a different context we would take you along and show you everything, but here … [21]

The IRC interlocutors explained that their actions were closely monitored by officials from the Ministry of Education, with whom they met every week to discuss progress and to request approvals. After broad approval had been received, further requests had to be made regularly even for small activities, such as distributing leaflets to inform Iraqi students about projects.

The schools that IRC was rebuilding and renovating, located in the suburbs Harasta, Qudseya, and Bila, had been chosen by the Ministry of Education, rather than by an independent needs assessment. Concerning the information and statistics about Iraqi pupils, according to which the schools had been identified (Syrian government statistics are notoriously poor and/or non-existent), the IRC staff explained that it was not easy to get information, as the statistics of the ministry were old, and that IRC used a mixture of government and UNHCR statistics for their purposes. The knowledge and figures about Iraqis, which IRC staff so confidently provided, thus appeared largely as assumptions, rather than empirically researched. In this particular case, IRC's choices and projects were so closely related to those of the ministry that the boundary between governmental and non-governmental appeared blurred.

The close monitoring and control exercised by Syrian ministries over INGO activities and knowledge was further described in an insightful report by the Middle East Institute, as illustrated by the following extract, describing INGO registration procedures:[22]

> One condition to be accredited is to present proof that the organization is fully funded. The second step is to submit a project proposal to SARC without being able to a conduct preliminary needs assessment. After SARC approves the proposal, it signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the INGO. The MoU was particularly challenging for the first INGOs that signed agreements with SARC: these agreements included the obligation for INGOs to share a common bank account with SARC, and the need for SARC's approval for any disbursement or the payment of 2 percent of the NGOs' budget to SARC in compensation for expenses related to the partnership. A few months later, these financial arrangements were lifted after SARC realized that they were time consuming, impractical, and unacceptable by donors and INGOs [*sic*].[23]

The described restrictions partly explained the reluctance of INGO representatives to meet with me as a researcher. More importantly, the quote demonstrates that professional INGOs transported norms, ideas, and behaviours onto Syrian territory, which were different to those expected by state officials. Further, the highlighted tensions show how clashes and squabbles over the "way to do things" could lead

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to changes in practices and beliefs on both sides, resulting in new micro-practices that could gradually produce social and political transformations to the way the Syrian government was able to enforce the Syrian state's sovereignty over its territory and the people residing on it.

The importance of the tense relationship between professional INGOs and Syrian state institutions for analysis of sovereignty concerned both the domestic and international sovereignty of the Syrian state. Domestically, INGO programs and procedures changed, on a minuscule level, the way state institutions intervened in private lives in Syria, introducing new forms of power into the sphere of Syrian domestic sovereignty. INGO projects developed new public spaces, which remained heavily state controlled, through the operation of community centres or women's shelters, and ran unprecedented programs focused on the inner life of individuals, such as psychosocial counselling or parenting skills. These new forms of social organization and interventions included new governance techniques, in which the Syrian state appeared in various, and new, forms. For example, the existence of foreign and Syrian INGO staff, and spaces associated with INGOs, created new opportunities for state officials to demonstrate the state's presence in these newly created domestic spheres. Again, INGO activities thus did not weaken the sovereignty of the Syrian state over Syrian territory; however, they changed the way this sovereignty could be performed and experienced.

Professional INGO programs also introduced a strict conceptual distinction between Iraqi and Syrian "beneficiaries," as their project proposals and reports stipulated percentages for both. This practice made the national division, a key organizing principle of modern sovereignty, visible and fixed to all involved in the programs and elevated it to new importance.[24] Particularly in the field of education projects, the continued distinction made between Syrian and Iraqi children, the latter described as the reason for the overcrowding of schools, was striking. To use the example of Première Urgence's description of its school rehabilitation program, in an announcement concerning the completion of two new school buildings:

> These two schools, with a capacity to host 1.050 pupils, will allow the development of a response to the overcrowding of Syrian public schools and will promote the enrolment of Iraqi refugee children. Over 33.500 Iraqi children are enrolled in Syrian schools and over 75% of these are attending schools in the greater Damascus region. (…)
>
> "We are proud of this result and are now eagerly looking forward to the creation of educational programmes with the support of the Syrian ministry for education, with the goal to ensure the future of Syrian and Iraqi children" explained Sandar Bachrach, Première Urgence's chief of mission in Syria.

In this text, Première Urgence is not simply concerned with easing the lives of disadvantaged youngsters, but is also focused on promoting a distinction between Iraqi and Syrian children. The reference to overcrowding and the figures, percentages, and locations of Iraqi children imply that Iraqi children are somehow alien to the Syrian education sector. Given that the raison d'être of INGOs' presence in Syria was the existence of "alien," Iraqi refugees, promoting their distinction was in fact existential to these organizations. This observation again points out that INGOs working on refugee issues were closely bound to the exclusions of sovereignty, rather than standing outside or even opposed to such exclusions. In the Syrian context, what made these INGO practices all the more striking were how they differed from the opportunities for integration that were offered by the Syrian government's policies towards Iraqis. The ease with which Iraqi children could register with and attend Syrian schools stood in stark contradictions to the portrayal of these children by INGO texts and programs. The Syrian government did not mobilize elements of the state (in this case the education system) to systematically exclude Iraqis and in this way demonstrate the unity and homogeneity of the Syrian national population. Such exclusions were not an integral part of the repertoire of power through which the Syrian government emphasized the state's sovereignty. Instead, this sovereignty was created through practices of insecurity and violence that applied to everyone residing on Syrian territory, be they Syrian or foreign passport holders. These contradictions demonstrated how humanitarian approaches to population management can transform the way governments view and act upon migration and can introduce different, more subtle forms of power through which the order of state sovereignty is created and maintained. Yet the Syrian situation, in which INGOs also had to adapt to requirements by the Syrian government, also highlighted that such changes occurred through dynamic exchange, in which both sides influenced each other's room to operate.

3. Semi-official and Unofficial INGOs

In addition to the large, professional INGOs described above, in 2009–10 a number of organizations operated aid projects for Iraqis in Damascus that were neither officially registered with the Syrian government nor reliant on professional staff. These organizations did not maintain regular, close contact with Syrian ministries; their staff possessed a deeper, more intuitive knowledge of Syrian government red lines, and were open to meeting me as a researcher and

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allowing me to participate in and observe their programs. All organizations maintained a very low profile.

Iraqi Student Project

The "semi-official" INGO that I had closest access to, and which was the most intriguing of all, was an organization called Iraqi Student Project (ISP). This organization had been set up by a retired couple from the US, to help gifted Iraqi high school graduates receive scholarships to liberal arts colleges in the US. Apart from a single paid employee in the US, where ISP was registered as a non-profit organization, this INGO was funded entirely through the couple's income from social security and donations of time and money from a small group of supporters in the US and Syria.[25] The organization was run out of the couple's rented, two-bedroom flat in central Damascus, which functioned as a live/work space, where volunteer teachers—often American or British TOEFL teachers working at the American Language Institute close by—ran classes to prepare the selected students for their study and life in the US.[26]

The central fascination that developed from the participant-observation at ISP concerned the intense and complicated power dynamics between the elderly directors, the volunteers, and the young Iraqi students. After several severe conflicts at the organization, in which students were expelled from the program for unclear reasons, I became aware of how the power imbalance between directors and students worked underneath the egalitarian and peaceful veneer. Given this article's focus on the construction of sovereignty through INGO programs, the following paragraphs aim to tease out how ideas and practices of sovereignty were present in the relationships at ISP.

The selection process for students was based on several standard items, such as being Iraqi, not having been accepted for UNHCR resettlement, having a good school record, and expressing an interest to return to Iraq after finishing college to contribute to the country's future. In addition, selection depended on assessments of the candidate's family environment, his/her psychological stability, and potential for coping alone in a foreign country. These assessments were carried out in a relatively informal manner by the two directors, through home visits and interviews. If selected, candidates joined a program of classes and were subjected to continuing, broadly informal monitoring by the directors and volunteer teachers. Should a student become considered as "not ready," she or he could be required to complete a further year of program, or could be expelled at any time.

The personal nature of these assessments is illustrated by the field note excerpt below, reporting a conversation with one of the directors about several of the students (all names have been changed):

> He talked about Ibrahim and how he was such a great kid. "This guy's essays, they are just so good, his use of English. … If I could speak directly to any of the people in admission at the colleges, I would really tell him to take this guy, he's just going to take off and flourish over there." It's clear that Ibrahim is one of the director's favourites and I just can't get it out of my head that it has to do with his pretty tough story of 1.5 years in poverty in Jordan, during which he was alone with his father and had to take care of the household etc. (…)
>
> He named Radi as one of the students that he had some doubts about having the maturity to success "once he is alone over there". While he acknowledged that Radi was very passionate about his subject and very good in class in getting the others to participate, he somehow doubted that Radi had the toughness to "hack it" once out there in the states by himself. I was quite surprised by this assessment, as Radi lives on his own in Syria and is managing his affairs by himself, and while there is indeed something quite "young" about him, I personally definitely found him quite tough and grounded.[27]

The two directors' personal view of students held enormous sway over their future, as most students considered their success in the program as monumentally important. One Iraqi young woman described how, at the time that she was being considered for ISP, her alternative option would have been a job as a waitress in one of the new malls of Damascus, highlighting how the chance to complete a university degree in the US was an extremely desirable exit from a dead-end existence in Syria. This desire to succeed, coupled with the arbitrary and personal control exercised by the program directors, created pressure to conform. The following extract from a conversation with one of the Iraqi students, which occurred in the immediate aftermath of the sudden and unexpected dismissal of another student, highlights this situation.

> The thing with Hussein was such a shock. With Huda, ok, it was kind of predictable that they wanted to kick her out, but with Hassan it was a complete shock. Everyone likes him, he is such a friendly and smart guy. And they did not give him a warning. After this, everyone feels insecure, no one knows what is going to happen. (…)
>
> I feel so afraid now. Do we have to depend on her moods? Everything can change, I don't know how to behave so that she likes me. Today when she said something about my trousers, I thought oh no, I'm not going to wear these trousers again. Does

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> she not like my hair the way it is? Does she not like my nose today? Or if I write an essay that she does not like … First we were under pressure in Iraq, then we were under the pressure of the Syrian government, when we don't know whether they will kick the Iraqis out and now we are under the pressure of ISP.[28]

This statement crystallizes how personal relationships at the program were fused with wider, political relationships of sovereignty that strongly influenced the power dynamics at work. The nature of the relationships at ISP could only be explained with reference to the material and imagined realities of sovereignty, indeed they *were* sovereignty in the sense that they replicated and confirmed the particular divisions of territory, population, and government that lie at sovereignty's heart. Materially, the power exercised by the ISP directors was directly linked to their US citizenship which, in accordance with sovereignty, bonded them to the US government, which provided them with the money required to run their organization. Their security and power was inversely reflected by the insecurity and weakness of the Iraqi students, whose Iraqi citizenship bonded them to the Iraqi government, which provided them with neither opportunities nor money. In this way, the ISP program reinforced and magnified the sovereign ideal in an environment in which Iraqi migration in fact often blurred it.

The constructions of sovereignty on the level of imagination and ideas that emerged at ISP were much harder to pin down, and full of contradictions. Students were frequently encouraged to express their national pride as Iraqis, and numerous books about Iraq's rich history and maps were displayed in the ISP flat. But representations of Iraq as a place of destruction and hopelessness also abounded, in which the US appeared as a safe haven, the only chance for these students to lead meaningful lives. The ISP directors were frequently cynical and critical about US politics in the Middle East, but strongly celebrated other instances of US culture, such as the 1960s peace movement (which they remembered fondly) and the civil rights campaigns, and encouraged the students to celebrate these too. Students were also encouraged to abandon certain cultural traits, and there was a narrow framework of behaviour that made someone a "good ISP kid." The following extracts from conversations with the ISP directors develop some of the complex understandings of the US and Iraq as separate spaces that were present throughout the ISP programs:

> The students get taught for one year by voluntary teachers to improve their English and to prepare them for the way teaching is done in the US. In Iraq, students generally learn information off by heart and reproduce it in the text. In the US, they have to learn critical thinking and analysis and to write good essays. There are classes every day. Once a week my wife [one of the directors] does a writer's workshop which focuses on essay writing skills. […]
>
> For many Americans it is an experience to meet an Iraqi. It becomes a real place for them. One of our students was at immigration, when the officer stopped short at the passport and did a double take, then expressed surprise that this girl, who does not wear the hijab and wears modern clothes, could be from Iraq. "You can walk around like that in Iraq?" Yes you can. "Is that a tattoo?" Yes. "You can have a tattoo in Iraq?" Yes you can.[29]

Iraq and the US emerged as two distinct educational spaces, in which knowledge and knowledge-production functioned, were understood, and were valued differently. In order to succeed in the US, the students had to abandon aspects of their previous, "Iraqi" learning and acquire new modes of knowledge and thinking. Modern state sovereignty closely links knowledge-production to questions of legitimacy and government. Distinct epistemologies connect citizens to the imagined sovereign in a particular way and establish the citizen's home-state as different (and often better) than all other states; the fundamental boundaries of security and global hierarchy are established through discourses about what constitutes valuable, useful, dynamic and creative learning and knowledge, as much as through other media.[30] In this sense, knowledge and education have replaced, or have been added to, oaths of allegiance and/or religion as ways of connecting populations with their rulers.[31]

Such distinct forms of knowledge became visible at ISP seminars, during discussions about representations of Iraq and the schooling the students had experienced in the past. The recordings of a number of classes showed that, of course, Iraqis did indeed learn a form of "critical thinking" in Iraqi schools; however its form and content would probably be dismissed as uncritical and simplistic anti-Western propaganda by most "Western" observers. Most of the students reflected critically themselves on the image of a rapacious and imperialist US waiting to steal Iraq's oil they had been taught.[32] Crucially, these observations demonstrated that knowledge and its content were linked to territory and government, and were forms of power controlled by state institutions, through which the state's sovereignty and the unity of its government, population, and territory were created and demonstrated. To "fit in" and succeed at US colleges, Iraqi students had to acquire the modes of knowledge production intimately tied to US sovereignty, that indicated US territory as a separate physical and conceptual space. It was remarkable that the ISP directors considered it necessary that the students at ISP (who had already been preselected according to criteria of education and personality that made

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them conform more with US college life) received months of training to achieve an appropriate standard; their experience of several students failing in the US had taught them that students needed much more than English language training to "make it."

Native without a Nation

In a different way, education also played a central role for the activities of the small, informal INGO Native without a Nation (NWN), created and run principally by an Iraqi man called Firas. NWN's activities, which consisted of IT-skills and creative workshops for children and teenagers, home visits to depressed and/or hard-up families, and Skype exchanges between Iraqi and US youngsters, had developed out of Firas's personal social activism since his arrival in Syria in 2006. Further, NWN ran a website, on which Iraqi teenagers could publish their stories and art work.[33] A small group of US-based supporters helped organize the Internet exchanges with a school in upstate New York, US; funding was restricted to occasional donations of equipment from friends and small cash donations.[34] Although NWN's projects helped Iraqis, thus making a distinction based on national identity, the organization's close focus on personal narratives, friendship, and non-judgmental compassion made it an example of international solidarity that did not depend on reconstructions of the sovereign ideal or the categorization of people into sovereign types.

Although (or because) Firas, who had in-depth personal experience of UNHCR's application of sovereignty, and that of the Syrian state, was heavily affected by all manner of sovereign regulations, NWN's "humanitarian" activities emphasized personal expressions of the persons involved in the projects. There was little or no indication that broad assumptions were drawn about people's "needs" or deviations due to the categories, values, and exclusions of sovereignty. NWN's website presented the stories of some participants without judgment-laden introductions or texts about the situation of Iraqis as such, their illegality, and so forth.[35] Many narratives concerned memories of violence experienced in Baghdad, but many also articulated instances of empowerment and independence. One of Firas's stated aims was to develop a platform for young Iraqi people to express themselves in their own words and thoughts. The following quotes from the website illustrate their diversity and the aim of self-expression:

> *Othman Abd Al-Rahman Mohammad*
> My name is Othman Abd Al-Rahman Mohammad. I am an Iraq pupil and I am proud of being an Iraqi. Despite the fact that I live in my second country Syria, I love this country so much as well as its generous people. I love to study in a perfect way. I love my school, my family and my relatives who are away from me due to the cruel circumstances. I also love helping my father with the housework.
>
> *From Noor, Muna and Anfal*
> Since the first art show we had in Damascus, we felt admiration and encouragement from the audience to continue painting, and talk about the mixtures of colors. We were often asked if we ever went to art schools. The answer always is " We never studied art, it's just what we do and like to do. We do express what we feel and we convert it on our paintings." (…) At the end of the meeting we agreed that we have to be strong and keep getting better. We noticed the difference between the first and last art show, our paintings became stronger and more expressive through the subjects and the colors. Every painting had story. Now we are preparing for another art show, with new paintings, new stories, and new style.
>
> We will never stop looking forward. We will never be silent.
>
> *Mustafa, 17*
> (…)
> I will never forget that accident. I no more want to be in Iraq so that I don't have to face any of this again. That doesn't make my situation any easier as I have heart failure and the medical care is basically non-existent. All I hope for is to know my future after registering with the UNHCR as a refugee.[36]

Sovereignty's divisions are not absent from these self-representations, and sovereign boundaries, both physical and imagined, structure the thoughts and practices of these young people. However the key point concerning NWN's activities was that they did not reproduce or use sovereignty as a reference point in the same way as other INGOs; they did not contain regulations or classifications according to people's position vis-à-vis an assumed, protective sovereign. NWN did not run programs that were predesigned according to ideas about refugees based on the sovereign ideal. NWN's semi-spontaneous interventions relied on in-depth personal knowledge of persons who were interested in support. Rather than aiming to guide or change these lives in any particular direction, this support created small instances of success or positive feelings, which empowered people to continue struggling against the often overwhelming way in which sovereignty's exclusions were affecting them. By ignoring sovereignty's framework in these small ways, NWN's practices used an alternative lens through which Iraqis in Syria were not consistently recast as outside sovereignty, but simply as fellow humans who had fallen on hard times.

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A similar dynamic could be observed during the web conferences that NWN organized between Iraqi youth in Damascus and a school class in upstate New York, US. These conferences, held about every six months, were conducted via the Internet-telephony program Skype, and included video-calling, so that the partaking individuals could see each other. During the calls, the children and teenagers would introduce themselves and show each other art work they had made, or narrate items they had recently studied. The focus on shared, enjoyable activities among individuals (rather than divisive, negative experiences of imagined collectives) created a basis of understanding of one another's humanness, regardless of sovereignty's territorial, governmental, and population divisions. The empowering aspect of the Internet's territory-undermining technology, which can create non-territorial communities and nations, was a crucial aspect for this project.

4. Conclusion

Research conducted among INGOs in Damascus in 2009–10 found that most INGO activities were based on and promoted modern state sovereignty as the normal, safe, and correct form of political organization. Iraqis in Syria, who were the raison d'être for INGOs' presence in Syria in the first place, were continuously depicted and treated as alien, illegal, and helpless, due to their location outside of the territory that their nationality allocated to them. Rather than considering Iraqi life in Syria as an indication for the fiction and weakness of the assumed unity of population, territory, and government, INGO activities consistently portrayed it as an instance in which this unity had been tragically broken. From this perspective, Iraqis in Syria could never be regarded as normal instances of human life, but were necessarily cast as deviant and in need of protection and correction through INGO interventions.

The rich ethnographic detail provided throughout this article demonstrated how highly personalized interactions, and social programs focused on areas of life ostensibly outside of the remit of state intervention, contributed to the maintenance of state sovereignty's political, social, and spatial organization. Unlike the frequent assumption, state sovereignty not only was upheld through power exercised by state institutions, but, in the case of international NGOS, was carried out through diffuse and non-violent techniques of power that were much harder to discern than, for example, the highly visible violence exercised by the Syrian government as a means of creating sovereignty.

Research found that INGOs conducting aid projects for Iraqis broadly fell into two separate groups. The first group consisted of around a dozen professional and officially registered organizations, such as Danish Refugee Council or International Rescue Committee. These INGOs were established members of the global, professional humanitarian sector and had standard procedures and regulations on how to set up projects, raise and organize funds, publish annual reports, recruit staff, and so on. The language and programming of these organizations were fully sovereignty-conform; this was particularly visible from the highly selective portrayal of Iraqi life in exile, from the INGOs' tense relationship with the Syrian state that revealed transformation to how sovereignty was exercised on Syrian territory, and from their dependence on funding from North Atlantic states that carried with it a narrow framework of action.

The second group of INGOs was typified by their informality, their lack of official registration with state authorities, and their reliance on volunteers rather than paid professionals. This divergent group of organizations included a semi-professional INGO with several dozens of volunteers as well as one-man outfits with little external support. Consequently, these organizations' position towards sovereignty was eclectic. One organization, focused on helping young Iraqis access US colleges, demonstrated how education and knowledge was linked to sovereignty, as Iraq and the US were understood as separated by different epistemologies and forms of learning. Here, educational practice was revealed as linking citizens to territory and government, according to rules set by the state. A second informal INGO ran projects emphasizing the commonalities among Iraqi and US youth, without reifying Iraqi life in exile according to familiar humanitarian tropes. In this way, sovereign exclusions were overcome by simple expressions of human solidarity and by a form of organization in which roles of provider and beneficiary, of leader and led, were blurred and unclear.

Notes

1. This article stands in conversation with critical and anthropological analyses of modern state sovereignty as a particular, historically evolved, organization of political life. See, for example, Richard K. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990): 367–416; Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, eds., *State Sovereignty as Social Construct,* Cambridge Studies in International Relations, no. 46 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Galina Cornelisse, *Immigration Detention and Human Rights Rethinking Territorial Sovereignty* (Leiden and Boston: Martin Nijhoff, 2010); Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–1967* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Michael Foucault, *Security,*

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Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Aiwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
2. Mark B. Salter, "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31, no. 2 (2006): 167–89; Didier Bigo, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27, no. 1 suppl. (2002): 63–92; Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).
3. Emma Haddad, "The Refugee: The Individual between Sovereigns," *Global Society* 17, no. 3 (2003): 297–322.
4. Ole Jacob Sending and Iver B. Neumann, "Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2006): 651–72.
5. See for example Katherine Kraft, *Two Changing Spheres: NGOs and Iraqis in Syria* (Brea: Middle East Fellowship, 2008); Geraldine Chatelard, "What Visibility Conceals: Re-Embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq," in *Dispossession and Displacement: Forced Migration in the Middle East and Africa,* ed. Dawn Chatty (London: British Academy, 2009).
6. See for example the speech of Syria's first lady at Syria's first conference on NGOs and Development, organized under her lead. The speech is available at: http://www.presidentassad.net/ASMA_AL_ASSAD/Asma_Al_Assad_News_2010/Asma_Al_Assad_NGO_Conference_Inauguration_2010.htm.
7. UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Signs Landmark Accord in Syria with International NGO," press release, UNHCR Syria, 8 May 2008.
8. UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2009", in *UNHCR Syria Updates* (Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2009).
9. Kraft, *Two Changing Spheres.*
10. Patricia Weiss Fagen, *Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University, 2007); Frauke Riller, *On the Resettlement Expectations of Iraqi Refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria* (Beirut: UNHCR / International Catholic Migration Mission, 2009); Salome Philmann and Nathalie Stiennon, *10,000 Refugees from Iraq: A Report on Joint Resettlement in the European Union* (Brussels: ICMC / International Rescue Committee, May 2010); IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, *A Tough Road Home: Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq* (New York: IRC, February 2010); Elizabeth Ferris, *Going Home? Prospects and Pitfalls for Large-Scale Returns of Iraqis* (Bern: Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2009).
11. For a good overview of the sector see OCHA, *Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees* (New York: United Nations, 2010).
12. Terres des Hommes presents a slightly special case, as a Syrian branch of TdH Lausanne has been active in Damascus since decades, originally focusing on helping refugees from Palestine. TdH Syria/Lausanne became involved with Iraqi refugees in 2007 when UNHCR was looking for any established organizations that would be able to implement Iraqi refugee projects.
13. Enza Di Iorio and Martine Zeuthen, "The Benefits of Engaging and Building Trust with a Reluctant Government: The Experience of Community Center for Iraqis in Syria," in *Iraq Study Group* (Washington, DC: Refugee Cooperation / Middle East Institute, 2011).
14. Interlocutors with INGO experience in Syria reported on an existing ban on US-based INGOs stated in Syrian government documents; it remains unclear why IRC was allowed to register.
15. Interview at the IRC, 19 October 2009.
16. Ibid.
17. IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, *A Tough Road Home Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq* (New York: IRC, February 2010); IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, *Five Years Later, a Hidden Crisis* (New York: IRC, March 2008); "IRC Press Release: International Rescue Committee Set to Begin Aid Programmes for Iraqi Refugees in Syria," IRC, 2 September 2008.
18. Danish Refugee Council, *Quarterly Report (Syria) July-September 2010* (Damascus: DRC, 2010); DRC *Quarterly Report (Syria) October-December 2010* (Damascus: DRC, 2011).
19. See Terres des Hommes, http://www.tdh.ch/en/countries/syria-jordan.
20. I do not wish to belittle the suffering of Iraqis in Syria. The aim is to point out that INGO rhetoric reduced the extremely varied existence of Iraqis in exile, which also included successes, opportunities, strength, health, and self-help, to that of suffering and weakness, and in this contributed to the construction of sovereignty. It is also important to point out that the reasons to remain in exile, after the initial flight, were very varied, including cultural, economic, and social preferences for staying in Syria, not just fear.
21. Interview with IRC, 19 October 2009. Incidentally my follow-up emails were never answered.
22. Di Iorio and Zeuthen, *The Benefits of Engaging and Building Trust with a Reluctant Government.* Note: SARC refers to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, a government controlled health organization.
23. Ibid.
24. I recall visits to a number of aid projects in 2007 run by churches, who were reporting an increase in attendance of Iraqi visitors (i.e. these were pre-existing projects aimed at all poor people). While the project attendants were certainly aware of who was an Iraqi, they emphasized their openness to anyone in need and did not keep tabs on Syrian and Iraqi visitors, due to a firm conceptual distinction of their social roles.
25. It should be noted that the couple running ISP was by no means wealthy or that they benefited from a large

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retirement. Both had worked in education and/or publishing to not highly lucrative gain.
26. See the organization's website, www.iraqistudentproject.org.
27. Field note, 16 January 2010 (all names changed).
28. Field note, 8 February 2010 (all names changed).
29. Field note, 22 October 2009 (all names changed).
30. David Campbell, *Writing Security—United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Mark B. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).
31. Michel Foucault, Mauro Bertani, and Alessandro Fontana, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).
32. This point is clearly an invitation to reflect on the forms of uncritical propaganda taught in US schools, which cannot be elaborated on here.
33. http://nativewithoutanation.blogspot.com/.
34. In 2011, the organization had collected around $ 2,800 USD, according to the website.
35. And interestingly, the few tropes about Iraqis in Syria exhibited by the website, in the familiar, humanitarian language, were evidently written by the overseas supporters.
36. All texts taken from http://nativewithoutanation.blogspot.com/.

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Paternités en exil : Une expérience thérapeutique père-enfant avec des réfugiés irakiens en Jordanie

Muriel Génot, Muath Asfoor et Hala Hammad

Depuis une quinzaine d'années, la prise en compte du rôle des pères dans le développement psychoaffectif de l'enfant commence à avoir droit de citée dans le cadre d'interventions périnatales au niveau microfamilial[1]. On sait par ailleurs que le fonctionnement de l'unité familiale est déstabilisé par l'expérience traumatique d'un ou de plusieurs de ses membres[2], et se complique sous les effets du déracinement et de l'exil[3]. Néanmoins, lorsqu'il s'agit de s'attacher aux questions des conséquences transgénérationnelles du traumatisme, les études et pratiques se portent généralement vers les dyades mère-bébé[4]. Aussi le travail thérapeutique père-enfant constitue-t-il un terrain vierge pour la pratique humanitaire, particulièrement dans le cadre d'interventions psychosociales auprès de populations réfugiées[5].

Rappelons que les expériences traumatiques — il serait plus juste de dire *traumatogènes* — ont pour principe d'action sur la psyché humaine de rendre le futur inaccessible, en ouvrant grandes les portes du passé sur le présent. Représentons-nous en effet que le traumatisme psychique est, comme son étymologie grecque le rappelle, « une blessure par effraction ». C'est l'événement qui a fait effraction. Alors que cet événement devient un événement du passé, une « menace interne » demeure installée dans la psyché sous la forme d'« une image traumatique »[6]. Comme le décrit si clairement F. Lebigot, cette image « ne se comportera pas comme un souvenir : elle restera intacte au détail près et lorsqu'elle surgira à la conscience […] ce sera toujours au temps présent, comme un événement en train de se produire »[7]. Le temps ne progresse plus et ne débouche alors plus sur rien. Ces conséquences individuelles d'une exposition traumatique, à fortiori lorsqu'il s'agit d'expositions multiples en temps de guerre et/ou résultant de la torture, nécessitent souvent des soins psychologiques[8]. L'évaluation de tels besoins parmi la population irakienne ayant trouvé refuge en Jordanie a justifié que l'organisation internationale Centre for Victims of Torture (CVT) ouvre un programme qui d'emblée accueille une grande proportion de *clients*[9] masculins. Si, depuis son ouverture, 78 pour cent des clients ont été suivis en thérapie de groupe (dont une moitié de groupes d'hommes), une proposition de soin individuel (alternative ou complémentaire au groupe) a été faite à 30 pour cent des clients. Les clients qui ont bénéficié du seul soin individuel sont en majorité des hommes ; cette modalité d'intervention est généralement privilégiée dans les cas les plus sévères (le plus souvent des survivants de la torture). Au sein de l'équipe clinique, le constat a rapidement été établit que les interventions visant les conséquences individuelles doivent être accompagnées de dispositifs psychothérapeutiques complémentaires. C'est ainsi qu'ont été mis en place des dispositifs spécifiques accueillant des mères et leur bébé, des couples, et le dernier né des dispositifs, des pères et leur enfant.

Cet article rend compte de ce dernier type d'intervention. En l'absence de réflexions et d'expériences préexistantes pour travailler en groupe avec des couples père-enfant, le CVT n'a eu d'autre choix que d'inventer un dispositif psychosocial qui met l'écoute au centre de sa pratique.

Cette présentation analyse le processus thérapeutique sous un angle thématique, afin d'éclairer trois séries de problématiques qui ont émergé comme le produit de l'interaction entre les clients et l'équipe d'intervention : *la maison, le refuge et le voyage* ; *la fonction de père* ; *la boîte de Pandore des questions* (*ou* le sens donné aux événements du passé). Ces problématiques peuvent en particulier éclairer les débats en cours dans le champ des sciences sociales

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sur la question de «la capacité d'action» (*agency)* des réfugiés dans une situation temporaire qui perdure (ici dans le refuge urbain, ailleurs dans un camp, dans l'attente d'un retour ou d'une réinstallation dans un pays tiers). Notre approche thérapeutique montre que le temporaire n'est pas seulement une période où les réfugiés sont dans l'incertitude (*dans les limbes*) et dans l'incapacité d'être acteurs de leur propre devenir.

Contexte et mise en place de l'intervention

La population reçue par le CVT en Jordanie

Les données qui sont commentées ci-dessous ont été collectées depuis l'ouverture à la fin de 2008 d'un programme de soins psychologiques pour les survivants de la torture et les traumatisés de guerre. Les deux centres de soin[10] du CVT ont accueilli à cette date 1 200 clients irakiens. Parmi ces clients on compte 53 pour cent d'hommes pour 47 pour cent de femmes. Cette proportion est remarquable au regard des normes attendues lorsqu'il est coutume de penser qu'un homme, à fortiori originaire du monde arabe, est peu enclin à chercher le soutien d'un psychologue[11]. 34 pour cent des clients traités ont traversé une expérience de torture[12] (qu'elle soit ou non doublée d'une expérience traumatique liée à la guerre) dont deux tiers sont des hommes.

Les clients[13] sont en majorité d'un niveau d'éducation supérieur, appartenant avant leur départ d'Irak à une classe sociale moyenne supérieure citadine. Nous reviendrons sur les conséquences de ces origines dans l'exil. Pour la plupart, ils vivent avec leur famille dans une grande ville en Jordanie. Or, 73 pour cent d'entre eux rapportent qu'ils n'ont plus suffisamment de moyens pour subvenir aux premières nécessités du foyer, notamment pour envoyer les enfants à l'école. Seuls 9 pour cent de nos clients ont actuellement un emploi ; 3 clients sur 4 reçoivent une assistance humanitaire autre que celle du CVT. De l'autonomie financière en Irak, ils sont donc passés à la dépendance humanitaire en Jordanie.

Presque tous les Irakiens suivis dans nos centres sont enregistrés auprès du Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (HCR) où ils ont généralement déposé une demande de réinstallation dans un pays tiers[14]. Ceux dont les demandes aboutissent seront vraisemblablement réinstallés aux États-Unis, le pays accueillant la majorité des demandeurs d'asile irakiens aujourd'hui. Une écrasante proportion de nos clients (81 pour cent) a quitté l'Irak à cause du conflit et vit l'exil depuis en moyenne trois ans. Leur récit fait généralement état de menaces reçues qui ont précipité le départ : menaces de mort ou d'enlèvement à l'encontre d'eux-mêmes ou de leurs proches (leurs enfants notamment) du fait de la politisation des identités tribales, confessionnelles et ethniques dans le conflit irakien ou du fait de leur proximité supposée ou réelle avec l'ancien régime de Saddam Hussein ou/et avec les forces de la coalition menée par les Américains. Les clients ayant subi la torture ont tous été détenus pour des durées variables après un enlèvement ou une arrestation arbitraire. Il n'est pas rare d'entendre que des rançons et autres dessous-de-table ont été payés, et que le commerce ou la maison familiale ont été spoliés ou détruits. On comprend que ces événements sont venus grever les économies et les ressources de la famille qui ne sont plus disponibles pour faire face aux nécessités de l'exil. Quelles que soient leurs expériences, les clients sont 83 pour cent à ne pouvoir s'imaginer retourner en Irak.

Principes et naissance du dispositif père-enfant

Ces éléments de contexte posés, il est temps de nous pencher plus avant sur leur impact psychosocial et en particulier lorsque l'on considère nos clients masculins. Le père dans la société irakienne est généralement reconnu comme une figure «d'autorité absolue», position qui s'assortit d'un nombre conséquent de devoirs[15]. Il est attendu des pères de famille en situation d'exil qu'ils remplissent le rôle de pourvoyeurs[16] dans lequel ils se réalisaient pleinement en Irak (du fait de leur bonne situation socio-économique), et qui leur est socialement et culturellement dévolu. Cette attente émanant de l'entourage et de la société converge sur les pères qui eux-mêmes étaient accoutumés à se reconnaître dans ce rôle. De même, ils sont responsables d'assurer matériellement la continuité du développement des enfants (de l'apprentissage à la socialisation qui inclut la récréation et l'accès à certains biens), qui sont traditionnellement une ressource et une fierté[17]. De ces charges, dont les pères sont souvent en mal de s'acquitter, il ne reste plus que le poids d'une sorte de déchéance. Réfugiées en ville, les familles que nous recevons y trouvent une offre de consommation, de loisirs et de pratiques sociales au sein de laquelle elles savent rapidement s'orienter. Pour autant, faute de moyens, cette facilité leur demeure inaccessible, lorsqu'elle l'est pour d'autres Irakiens plus aisés et plus visibles dans l'espace urbain jordanien.

La perte de la sécurité matérielle ne trouve qu'une maigre compensation dans l'assistance. Cet aspect est particulièrement bien illustré dans l'étude récente[18] réalisée auprès de 41 réfugiés irakiens réunis en groupes focaux par l'organisation AVSI : «Pour les participants, l'assistance humanitaire a pour objectif essentiel de restaurer la dignité et de permettre la construction d'un futur. Ainsi, quel que soit le montant de fonds qu'un programme reçoit ou les statistiques qu'il fournit, les organisations seront toujours évaluées par les participants à l'aune d'une comparaison entre ce qui a été gagné et ce qui a été perdu dans le passé». La pointe ultime de la fonction paternelle qui dresse un cadre protecteur en voyant plus loin dans le temps, en programmant

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le futur avant qu'il ne soit, se dissout dans l'incertitude de l'attente. La lenteur et le manque de transparence des procédures de demande d'asile, l'incertitude d'une réinstallation transforment le futur en *rêve américain* dont la réalisation semble toujours reportée à une échéance indéterminée.

À mesure que l'expérience permet au CVT d'affiner sa connaissance des besoins psychosociaux de sa clientèle, les indicateurs convergent pour justifier une proposition spécifique destinée aux pères. Indicateur extrême, des violences intrafamiliales dont les pères sont le plus souvent les acteurs nous sont parfois rapportées[19]. La violence domestique est un phénomène complexe et multifactoriel auquel le dispositif père-enfant ne se donnera pas pour objectif de répondre de manière spécifique. On peut néanmoins faire l'hypothèse que cette violence s'inscrit dans la longue mise en faillite d'une fonction paternelle à l'épreuve des traumatismes et de l'exil[20].

La naissance du dispositif père-enfant du CVT trouve son origine dans les propos rapportés par J. au cours de ses premières séances de thérapie individuelle : « Depuis que je suis *revenu de mon expérience de torture,* je ne sais plus jouer avec ma fille ». Ayant dit cela, J. se présente au centre pour la séance suivante avec sa petite fille de 6 ans. Le père et sa fille ne pouvant se résoudre à être séparés, cette dernière l'accompagne dans la salle de consultation (où elle n'a pas réellement sa place).

J. évoque spontanément un autre problème pour lequel il ne trouve pas de solution. Il a été enlevé par une milice alors qu'il était sorti pour une simple course domestique et maintenu en détention pendant un mois durant lequel il a été très sévèrement torturé ; sa fille l'a vu disparaître brutalement puis réapparaître physiquement et psychologiquement brisé. Ni le père, ni sa fille — dit-il — ne sont dupes du roman familial (« papa était en voyage d'affaire ») inventé pour faire face à l'indicible. Mais quelle est l'alternative ?

Nous[21] saisissant de ces deux niveaux de problématique, nous avons décidé de créer un dispositif qui permettait de les aider en parallèle. Avant de le décrire brièvement, nous présenterons en quelques mots les membres des groupes thérapeutiques impliqués. Chaque groupe est constitué de six membres, trois couples ou dyades père-enfant. Les six pères (dont J. fait partie) sont âgés de 25 à 50 ans et les six enfants (deux garçons et quatre filles[22]) ont entre 5 et 6 ans. Ce qui a présidé *au choix* des enfants, c'est leur âge : des enfants d'âge préscolaire qui ne peuvent encore compter sur un fonctionnement cognitif leur donnant plein accès à la rationalité au moment des séances[23]. Les enfants avaient entre 2 ans et 3 ans quand le conflit irakien s'est immiscé dans le cercle de leur intimité pour déstabiliser durablement l'équilibre familial et finalement provoquer l'exil (entre 2009 et 2010). Si quatre des pères parmi les six ont traversé un épisode spécifique de torture, qui s'est répété pour certains, les deux autres n'en rapportent pas, bien qu'ils aient été l'objet de menaces de mort en raison de leur affiliation familiale ou leur activité professionnelle. Qu'il s'agisse de menaces ou de torture, elles ont causé une séparation familiale plus ou moins longue (avant l'exil), les pères menacés ayant eu à s'éloigner pour tenter de préserver leur sécurité et celle de leur famille.

Tous les pères occupaient, avant que la situation de violence ne les en empêche, des emplois leur permettant de subvenir confortablement aux besoins de leur famille. Ils se retrouvent en situation de précarité financière en Jordanie et sont dans l'attente d'une réinstallation permanente dans un pays tiers.

Au moment où les séances commencent, les enfants ne fréquentent pas l'école. Aucun d'eux n'a été confronté à des expériences traumatiques repérées comme telles par les pères (même s'ils sont nés et ont grandi dans un contexte général de peur et d'insécurité qui s'est soldé par l'exil). Si ces dyades bénéficient de ce dispositif, c'est que les pères expriment eux-mêmes des difficultés dans leur interaction avec l'enfant, difficultés qui sont confirmées par l'entretien dyadique initial[24].

Objectifs, description et règles de fonctionnement du dispositif

Le dispositif père-enfant est conçu comme un *espace potentiel d'observation et d'expérience mutuelles.* Il s'agit de promouvoir la capacité des pères à observer : l'enfant (le leur, un autre, plusieurs autres et pourquoi pas celui qu'ils portent en eux) et l'adulte (les autres pères, les thérapeutes) en interaction. La séance s'entend comme une parenthèse spatiale et temporelle au cours de laquelle il sera possible de se surprendre, d'être surpris et de prendre plaisir à être là (une invitation pour tous, adultes et enfants). Elle se présente aussi comme un espace de socialisation et de jeu pour les enfants. Une attention particulière est portée à l'agencement de la salle accueillant le groupe : un salon destiné aux pères ouvre, sans séparation visuelle, sur l'espace de jeu destiné aux enfants[25].

Quelques règles, peu nombreuses mais essentielles, sont explicitées pour garantir la sécurité psychique de tous les membres du groupe (adultes et enfants) : la séance s'inscrit dans un cadre temporel prévisible ; nous nous réunissons à heure et jour fixes pour une durée d'une heure et demie chaque semaine et pour un nombre préétablis de séances (six au premier cycle, dix au deuxième)[26]. La porte qui se referme en début de séance matérialise le fait que nous nous situons dans un espace où la confidentialité est de mise. Chacun y est libre de ses mouvements, de ses actions et de ses dires dans la mesure où ils ne nuisent pas à l'un des membres du

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groupe et qu'ils respectent l'intégrité des êtres et des lieux (on ne juge, ni ne crie, ni ne bat). Les objets contenus dans la pièce y demeurent pour la séance suivante et sont remis en ordre avant la clôture. Enfin, le dispositif n'est surtout pas une école pour les pères comme pour les enfants, mais il est pensé comme un temps de découverte et de nouveauté.

L'explicitation détaillée des implicites théorico-cliniques du dispositif, bien qu'ils existent, n'est pas l'objet de cet article[27]. Il s'est agi d'une co-création dans la mesure où, sans que cela ne leur soit jamais demandé explicitement, les adultes comme les enfants ont joué un rôle décisif dans l'orientation du processus. Des interrogations ont émergé de la résonance dialectique entre nos hypothèses cliniques et la pratique; nous les avons élaborées en amont et en aval des séances.

Problématiques saillantes apparues au cours du processus thérapeutique

Le thème de *la maison* fut l'un des tous premiers à émerger lors du travail en groupe (première séance du premier cycle); *la fonction de père* s'est invitée dans un deuxième temps (au début du second cycle); *la boîte à questions* fut ouverte lorsque nous avons abordé le milieu du second cycle. Il est bien entendu que ces trois thèmes s'articulent les uns aux autres et les présenter séparément vise à faciliter leur analyse. Préciser leur ordre d'apparition au cours du processus permet néanmoins de mieux saisir les enjeux d'emboîtement auxquels se confrontent ces paternités en exil au-delà de trajectoires strictement individuelles.

La maison, le refuge et le voyage

Les réfugiés ont par définition quitté leur maison. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour eux ?

> ***Vignette 1**: Lors de la toute première séance, la consigne est donnée à chacune des deux dyades présentes[28] de créer ensemble quelque chose qui les représente. Les enfants prennent l'initiative et dessinent une scène similaire: un enfant qui joue à l'extérieur. Une façon pour eux de figurer la tâche de leur père: les regarder jouer. Il faut trouver un titre à chaque scène et un premier père nomme le dessin de sa fille «la maison du futur» (il précise «aux États-Unis»). Lorsque nous lui demandons où se trouve la maison qui n'est pas représentée, il la dessine lui-même. L'autre enfant, un garçon, a dessiné une scène où une voiture menace de renverser un enfant qui joue[29]. Lorsque la thérapeute pose la question: «Y a-t-il un endroit où on peut se sentir en sécurité ?» — le père et le fils dessinent ensemble une maison puis le fils demande au père de les représenter tous deux à l'intérieur. La scène est nommée de l'association de leurs deux prénoms.*

De cette séquence, *la maison* se dégage comme référent commun aux pères et aux enfants. La maison est d'emblée manquante ou absente parce qu'elle a été perdue dans le passé et qu'elle existe au futur comme un rêve. Mais la maison est aussi garante de sécurité (au regard des dangers du dehors) et de continuité (si l'on peut s'imaginer y vivre plus tard, ailleurs), et ce sont aussi deux nécessités du présent. Comment réussir à reconstruire dans l'exil temporaire ces fonctions essentielles? C'est en prenant la mesure de ce besoin que la lecture d'un récit illustré, *La Tempête*[30], a été proposée à nos groupes. Ce livre raconte l'histoire d'une enfant-souris dont la maison est emportée par la tempête. Son lit d'enfant-souris se transforme en tente-radeau de sauvetage, ballottée par les flots, au creux de laquelle viennent se réfugier le père et la mère souris. La famille se serre autour des quelques objets familiers que le père a pu sauver des eaux. L'histoire se termine sur une question de l'enfant à sa mère:

«Il demande: — Qu'est-ce qu'on fait maintenant?
— On voyage, dit Maman».[31]

> ***Vignette 2**: Pour la séance évoquée ici, il a été décidé de diviser le groupe en deux sous-groupes, les pères d'un côté, les enfants de l'autre, occupant chacun un espace de notre pièce habituelle. Avec le soutien d'un thérapeute dans chaque sous-groupe, ils sont invités à évoquer un moment de séparation d'avec l'autre. Parmi les pères (qui, dans ce premier cycle, ont tous été enlevés et torturés), un seul est vraiment en mesure de répondre à la consigne en évoquant, à mots couverts, cet évènement extrême. Un autre, comme pour en conjurer le danger existentiel, nie purement et simplement la possibilité d'une séparation: «Je ne peux pas me séparer [de mes enfants] sinon je perds le sens de ma vie.» Les deux autres pères s'engouffrent alors dans son sillage et font référence à la norme sociale: «Dans notre culture […] un père doit être présent à la maison.» Du côté des enfants, ce sont les dessins qui parlent pour refuser la séparation: ils se sont représentés aux côtés de leur père; et sur chaque dessin à côté du couple père-enfant, il y a un avion ou un vaisseau volant.*

L'évocation de la séparation ramène à l'indicible du passé, à ce qui n'aurait pas dû se passer et *in fine* à ce qui a été perdu. Dans un élan vital, les enfants se mettent en mouvement dans l'intention d'oublier ce passé et de transformer l'exil en voyage pour lequel juste un moyen de transport est nécessaire.

> ***Vignette 3**: Lors du deuxième cycle, nous introduisons une tente pour enfant dans la salle de consultation. Spontanément ceux-ci y trouvent refuge pour le rituel qui clôture chaque séance en musique. Se soustrayant quelques minutes au regard de leur père, les enfants élisent cette maison-tente pour faire le voyage de la séparation. Les*

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deux enfants présents lors de la toute dernière séance y emporteront d'ailleurs le livre de La Tempête *pour les derniers adieux.*

Vignette 4 : *Lorsque nous le rencontrons une année après la fin des séances, l'un des pères nous rapporte que l'histoire de* La Tempête *fait désormais partie du quotidien dans sa maisonnée. Ce père et sa fille se la racontent de mémoire, cette dernière le réprimandant s'il oublie de mentionner l'un des objets ramenés dans le lit-radeau par le père-souris de l'histoire.*

Il y a là matière à réfléchir sur ce qui fait l'isolement de certaines familles réfugiées en milieu urbain, et qui font parfois tout pour éviter de quitter leur maison. Ce ne serait pas forcément l'insécurité objective dans le pays d'accueil qui produit ce confinement. Explorer l'implicite des faits — *un réfugié a quitté sa maison et s'en cherche une nouvelle* — permet de saisir ce qui est en jeu, en deçà et au-delà du bien matériel et de sa perte. On ouvre alors la porte à ce que, même dans le refuge temporaire, quelque chose se restaure des fonctions de contenant et de protection attachées à la maison. La relation au père peut jouer un rôle de refuge et permettre aux enfants de se sentir des passagers en sécurité.

La fonction de père

Vignette 6 : *« Le bien être du père est intimement lié à celui de l'enfant », « ma fille est capable de me faire sortir de mon humeur maussade … vous prenez en votre enfant ce qu'il y a de fort … ils ont la capacité de vous faire oublier. » Ce qui se dit d'emblée du côté des pères, c'est l'intensité du lien qui les unit à l'enfant. Puis les mots glissent vers le champ des représentations, celles que les pères se font d'eux-mêmes en relation avec leurs enfants : « Je suis incapable de faire respecter les droits de mon enfant », « Nous sommes faibles mais nos enfants ne nous voient pas comme cela » ; et aussi en relation avec leur propre géniteur : « Mon père était violent et je n'ai pas voulu faire comme lui », « Nous ne pouvions pas nous opposer à nos pères », « Je me souviens que j'avais peur de mon père ».*

Ces pères regardent la paternité sous deux angles, celui du présent et celui de l'héritage. *Le présent* dessine une hiérarchie des pouvoirs inversée par rapport à celle qui serait attendue : le pouvoir exercé est celui de l'enfant sur le père. Quant à *l'héritage,* il ne semble pas être une ressource.

Vignette 7 : *Le présent se raconte au travers des questions que les pères formulent séance après séance : « Comment imposer notre point de vue à cette enfant qui s'y oppose ? Comment faire pour que notre fille accepte de se séparer de nous, lorsqu'il s'agit d'aller se coucher ou de se rendre à l'école ? » Le présent se donne aussi à voir en séance sous les traits de l'interaction conflictuelle opposant un père et sa fille : un père malmené et tyrannisé sous nos yeux par sa fille pour qu'il accepte, avec elle et pour elle, d'enfreindre les règles (sortir en cours de séance, emmener un jouet chez elle). Elle parviendra à ses fins une fois en mettant dans la main de son père un petit morceau de pâte à modeler qu'il glissera dans sa poche de guerre lasse. Un geste dérisoire et désespéré, passé inaperçu du reste du groupe et que nous choisirons de ne pas mettre au jour ; le geste d'un père qui se définit lui-même comme « expert en sa fille » mais qui précise aussi « qu'ils grandissent ensemble ».*

Une tension du quotidien qui s'invite dans le groupe en quête de soutien et qu'un des pères résume avec humour : « Nous nous découvrons pères à temps plein ». S'occuper des enfants de telle manière est une activité à laquelle personne ne les a jamais formés ni destinés. Un « métier » dont les femmes ont la prérogative, en particulier lorsqu'il s'agit des jeunes enfants ou des petites filles, sans que n'existent de modèles alternatifs socialement acceptables auxquels les pères pourraient se référer[32].

L'héritage sera parcouru dans le rire grâce au *Catalogue de parents pour les enfants qui veulent en changer*[33]. Planche après planche, ce catalogue présente une panoplie de modèles parentaux sous les traits de diverses espèces animales humanisées. Quelle que soit sa culture d'origine, chacun peut se projeter dans ces portraits humoristiques pour en dégager une personnalité et une couleur émotionnelle qui résultent d'une lecture subjective. Les noms attribués par l'auteur à ces couples n'ont pas joué de rôle dans le jeu des identifications puisque leur sens échappait à nos clients qui ne sont pas francophones. Bien qu'il ait *aussi* été écrit à l'usage des enfants, les thérapeutes décident de présenter ce livre aux pères.

Vignette 8 : *D'abord décontenancés par notre proposition décalée, ces pères irakiens reconnaissent leur propre père, en un mélange de rire et de gêne, dans le couple des « kostodabors », où le père est représenté sous les traits d'une sorte de rhinocéros au regard inquiétant. Ils s'identifient eux-mêmes avec moins de difficulté et dans une représentation signifiante de leur questionnement : les « compliqués », le couple, qu'ils ont élu sans en comprendre le nom, est représenté par deux corps inextricablement entremêlés. Les pères expliquent que cet entremêlement illustre leur propre représentation du lien père-enfant.*

S'ils s'autorisent une prise de distance par rapport à l'héritage du modèle paternel, cet héritage semble cependant les laisser seuls aux prises avec un mandat idéal qui les dégage difficilement de l'emprise mutuelle avec l'enfant. On peut se demander, en effet, si ces pères, comme ceux que M. Lamour a rencontrés en France dans son expérience à la crèche[34], qui « consciemment, se différencient de leur propre père, [ne sortent pas] vulnérabilisés de cette rupture

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dans la transmission». En fin de cycle, pourtant, des indicateurs laissent à penser, qu'en rebond, ils tentent d'introduire une dimension nouvelle dans leur relation avec l'enfant.

Vignette 9: *Au cours des dernières séances, nous constatons que chaque dyade peut s'absenter à l'intérieur du groupe pour un moment de jeu complice et authentique. Cette qualité de présence à l'autre se confirme lors des sessions d'évaluation dyadique une fois les séances terminées: dans chaque cas, nous observons une interaction père-enfant beaucoup plus riche et spontanée que lors de l'évaluation initiale. Le plaisir du jeu est là de part et d'autre.*

Mais ce plaisir n'est pas qu'un jeu d'enfant. Selon leurs propres mots, il procède du «soulagement» ressenti par les pères qui expliquent: participer à ces séances «c'était faire quelque chose de bon pour ma fille», «pour la première fois», rajoute l'un d'eux. Il apparaît également que la limite a repris du sens, au-delà de son sens de limitation: «Ici, il y avait des règles et ma fille était calme» (c'est le père *que sa fille menait par le bout du nez* qui s'exprime ainsi)[35]. On peut lire ces mots paternels comme une restauration à l'œuvre. Alors que le modèle de référence se rapporte au père pourvoyeur et autoritaire, les pères ici concernés semblent émerger du processus, plus à même de jouer un rôle qu'ils étoffent et s'inventent peut-être par là même, à la source d'autres référents.

La boîte de Pandore des questions

Nous l'avons montré ci-dessus, ces pères n'ont pas été en reste de questionnements. Pourtant parmi les interrogations qui émergent spontanément aucune n'aborde le passé. C'est donc nous qui, en fin de second cycle, en ouvrons la boîte avec la clé suivante: «Pouvez-vous identifier parmi les questions que pose votre enfant, celles auxquelles vous ne savez pas répondre ?»

Vignette 10: *Toutes ces questions ont trait à l'Irak. L'une des fillettes demande régulièrement à son père: «Quand retournerons-nous à X ?». Le père nous explique qu'X est un lieu que la famille a visité lorsqu'elle a dû fuir temporairement vers le nord de l'Irak les menaces dont il était l'objet. C'est un lieu auquel la petite fille est attachée par un souvenir marquant qu'elle évoque fréquemment avec son père en lui rappelant: «C'est là-bas que la rivière a mangé ma chaussure.» Le père prend conscience en rapportant ce propos quotidien au sein du groupe que la mémoire de l'enfant s'est aussi empreinte de la menace, à sa manière. Un autre père évoque un événement récent qui s'est produit en Irak: une explosion dans une église a causé une cinquantaine de morts, faisant la une de l'actualité. Le soir même, il a voulu en savoir plus et a demandé à sa fille d'interrompre son dessin animé pour regarder les informations télévisées sur une autre chaîne. Comme il n'est pas coutumier du fait, sa fille a insisté pour savoir ce qui était si important. Le père s'est alors entendu lui dire: «Il y a eu une explosion avec beaucoup de morts à Bagdad.» Les questions de la petite n'ont alors pas manqué, auxquelles le père s'est trouvé incapable de répondre.*

Si ces conversations avec les pères ont lieu en présence des fillettes sans que celles-ci ne nous portent une attention apparente (comme cela aura fréquemment été le cas), en fin de séance leur humeur tourne à la colère qui se déverse sur les pères, comme en manière de signifier leur désaccord pour ce retour vers un passé douloureux pour tous. Les séances suivantes seront perturbées de tant d'absences qu'il sera impossible de cheminer plus avant. Ces absences peuvent aussi être comprises à la lecture faite ici de la colère des enfants.

Malgré les résistances et désirs d'oublis, nous ne doutons pas que le dispositif père-enfant soit un lieu de choix pour accompagner une sortie négociée du silence qui semble inévitable. Nous observons que ces expériences de violence et de rupture (du traumatisme à l'exil) ne se laissent pas empaqueter dans les greniers de la mémoire ou abandonner comme un jouet au rebut. Les pères que nous avons rencontrés l'ont compris et sont favorables à une levée du silence qui ne les laisse plus seuls en charge. J. le confirme lorsque nous le rencontrons avant la rédaction de cet article. Il rapporte les questions de sa fille après la fin du groupe: «Pourquoi ces marques sur ton corps? Où est ton magasin en Irak? Pourquoi es-tu venu en Jordanie?» Autant d'indicateurs que *le roman du voyage d'affaires* a fait long feu. La construction du sens pour l'enfant demeure une fonction paternelle essentielle à soutenir.

Comme il ne nous restait qu'à inventer, il nous reste désormais à continuer. Des questions essentielles sont restées en suspens qui pourraient se formuler en une seule: «La guerre d'Irak peut-elle être expliquée à mon enfant?» Nous réfléchissons aux modalités qui pourraient nous permettre de lui apporter une ou des réponses. Elles se devront d'être créatives et impliqueront la participation active, il va sans dire, de pères et d'enfants irakiens vivant dans le refuge jordanien.

Conclusion

À l'étape où nous nous trouvons, nous pouvons faire le bilan suivant: grâce à ce dispositif, une intelligence de la situation du père et de l'enfant a pu être mobilisée. Pères et enfants y ont trouvé, chacun pour leur compte, la preuve de ce que l'un était prêt à faire *avec* et *pour* l'autre, tout comme la mesure de ce qu'il ne pouvait encore accomplir. Mais quelque chose d'un processus de pensée a été remis en route à travers lequel les pères assument un rôle même s'ils cherchent encore à le définir. En ce sens, la proposition

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que le CVT leur a faite a répondu, à sa manière, au constat préliminaire d'une paternité mise en défaut.

Nous avons eu la preuve qu'il est possible d'engager des pères (qui ont pourtant été mis à rude épreuve) dans la quête de leur fonction. Ils nous ont surpris, à bien des égards, par leur ouverture et leur désir de transformation. Ils sont venus puiser en eux-mêmes une qualité qu'ils croyaient perdue ou qu'ils ne soupçonnaient pas. Pourquoi d'autres pères réfugiés ne seraient-ils pas prêts à prendre un chemin similaire, en Jordanie et ailleurs ?

L'intervention aura montré que le refuge peut être un temps plein mis au profit d'une reconstruction personnelle et familiale et d'une reconstruction seconde, celle du sens, au cours d'un processus qui ne pouvait se faire avant (dans l'orbe de la violence) et qui ne sera pas la priorité de l'après (dans un pays tiers ou de retour en Irak). La reconstruction du sens après la violence pouvant prendre bien d'autres chemins n'est surtout pas l'apanage des psychologues et demeure une pierre angulaire dans le rétablissement des droits humains et de la capacité à vivre ensemble.

Nous comprenons que ce travail peut et sûrement doit se faire selon des modalités transgénérationnelles au sein desquelles les pères, épine dorsale de bien des fonctionnements sociaux de par le monde et dans cette région du Moyen-Orient en particulier, doivent pouvoir jouer leur rôle.

Notes

1. Voir les recherches menées par Elisabeth Fivaz-Depeursinge dans son Centre d'études de Lausanne, portant spécifiquement sur les interactions familiales *triadiques*. Se référer également aux travaux français de Martine Lamour dans une même filiation théorico-clinique, en particulier : Martine Lamour, « Co-construire la paternalité : une expérience de recherche-action-formation à la crèche », in Jacques André et Catherine Chabert, *L'oubli du père,* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2004).
2. Michel De Clerq et François Lebigot, *Les traumatismes psychiques* (Paris : Masson, 2001), 110–114.
3. Les souffrances psychiques liées à l'exil sont identifiées et prises en charge depuis plusieurs décennies par nombre de cliniciens. Voir les travaux et propositions thérapeutiques développées en France sous l'impulsion de Marie Rose Moro et de Cécile Rousseau au Canada, qui ont largement publié sur ces questions. Pour un regard critique sur ces dispositifs « pour migrants » voir les travaux d'Olivier Douville qui diverge des courants *dits* transculturels et propose d'autres réponses de soin.
4. Thierry Baubet, Christian Lachal, Lisa Ouss-Ryngaert, Marie Rose Moro, *Bébés et traumas* (Paris : La Pensée Sauvage Editions, 2006).
5. Il n'est qu'une expérience canadienne dont nous ayons connaissance développée autour de la problématique de la paternité dans le cadre d'une vaste initiative sociale pour la ville de Montréal : Martine Barrette, *Rapport intérimaire d'activités du projet « Grandir sainement avec un père détenu »* (Montréal : Maison Radisson Inc., 2003).
6. Ibid. supra, note n°2, 15–16
7. Idem
8. Une réaction psychologique nécessitant un soin appartiendra classiquement à l'un ou plusieurs des trois grands ensembles de troubles suivants : troubles anxieux, troubles dépressifs et troubles post-traumatiques. Ces derniers sont les plus étudiés : pour une population donnée, un taux de prévalence des PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) est évalué. Nous retenons les données suivantes de la revue complète de la littérature épidémiologique réalisée par A. Jolly : « Parmi des enfants irakiens âgés de 4 à 8 ans, réfugiés en Suède depuis un an, 21,4 pour cent souffrent d'un PTSD, tandis que 30,9 pour cent présentent un PTSD incomplet. (Almqvist et al.,1997). […] Sur des victimes, kurdes pour la plupart, d'actes de torture, la prévalence du PTSD est estimée à 51,7 pour cent (Van Velsen et al., 1996). » Pour l'ensemble des données, se référer à : A. Jolly, « Epidémiologie des PTSD », *Journal International de Victimologie* 2.1 (2003), accessible en ligne http://www.jidv.com/njidv/index.php/jidv05/111-jidv05/275-epidemiologie-des-ptsd.
9. Le terme *client* s'est imposé aux Etats-Unis pour désigner une personne bénéficiaire de soins. L'organisation du CVT l'a adopté pour les bénéficiaires de ses projets de par le monde. C'est pour cette raison que le terme a été conservé dans cet article. Dans un contexte francophone, nous aurions privilégié le terme *patient* couramment en vigueur. Précisons que *les clients* sont soignés gratuitement dans les centres du CVT.
10. Le centre principal est situé à Amman dans le quartier populaire de Hashemi Shamali ; un centre plus modeste a reçu des clients jusqu'à récemment à Irbid ; ce dernier a fermé ses portes dans le cadre d'une nouvelle stratégie d'intervention en clinique mobile.
11. Nous ne disposons pas de données chiffrées évaluant la fréquentation masculine des consultations psychologiques au Moyen Orient. Dans les pays occidentaux, les hommes restent sous représentés parmi les consultants, alors que les représentations communes associées aux soins psychiques y ont peu à peu évoluées vers moins de stigmatisation (ce qui est encore loin d'être le cas dans le Moyen-Orient où le *majnun — fou* en arabe — rôde encore comme un spectre). En outre, le modèle identificatoire le plus accessible pour un homme arabe, celui du dominant/fort, laisse facilement entrevoir les obstacles qui se présentent lorsqu'il s'agit pour lui de s'ouvrir à un psychologue au sujet de ses *faiblesses.*
12. L'organisation du CVT se réfère à la torture en adoptant la définition de la Convention des Nations Unies contre la torture et autres peines ou traitements cruels, inhumains ou dégradants, de 1984 : Y a-t-il une référence à un texte ou législation plus précise ?

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13. Nous nous appuyons sur les informations disponibles à ce jour dans la base de données du CVT. Elles concernent un échantillon représentatif de 315 clients (âgés de 18 à 75 ans). Lors de l'entretien initial, des informations socio-économiques et historiques ont systématiquement été collectées pour les 1200 clients traités, mais, au jour de cette rédaction, elles n'ont pu toutes être informatiquement traitées.
14. 8 pour cent seulement de nos clients nous sont référés par des organisations partenaires. La principale source de référence demeure notre personnel de terrain (58 pour cent des clients); viennent ensuite nos propres clients (18 pour cent) et leur famille ou amis (9 pour cent); enfin 7 pour cent de bénéficiaires potentiels se présentent d'eux-mêmes.
15. Il est, à notre connaissance, peu d'études qui se soient attachées à décrire spécifiquement le rôle des pères dans la société irakienne. On y trouve quelques allusions dans le document d' Helen Chapin Metz, *Iraq: A Country Study.* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988), notamment dans le chapitre « Famille et Société ». Nous empruntons à cet auteur le qualificatif « d'autorité absolue », numéro de page ?.
16. Ce rôle recouvre le fait d'assurer la pérennité et la sécurité financière et matérielle de la famille, mais aussi de la satisfaire dans ses désirs au-delà du nécessaire. La dépense procure en outre un certain statut de par sa visibilité sociale et inscrit par la même la famille dans un réseau de socialité. Pourvoir signifie aussi, *et tout autant,* concrétiser son affection paternelle et manifester sa compréhension de l'enfant. S'il satisfait au présent, le père ouvre aussi les perspectives d'une réussite future pour ses enfants (scolarité, union maritale).
17. Les enfants (particulièrement les garçons) ont culturellement pour mandat de perpétuer la famille et d'assurer son lignage, de même que de prendre soin de leurs ascendants une fois devenus adultes. La taille de la fratrie force généralement le respect dû à son géniteur.
18. AVSI Foundation Jordan (2011), *Hope is Gain: Aligning Humanitarian Programs to the Needs of Displaced Iraqis in Jordan as They Define Them,* p. 38, disponible sur demande à l'adresse suivante: amman@avsi.org.
19. Lorsque la situation de violence rapportée se caractérise par une mise en risque majeure de l'un ou plusieurs des membres de la famille, le CVT facilite l'accès des victimes aux services de protection disponibles au niveau national.
20. La réalité des violences domestiques parmi les populations exposées à la guerre et à la violence collective a été peu étudiée. Citons néanmoins deux recherches réalisées en 2006 et 2007, respectivement en Afghanistan et au Sri Lanka, par C. Catani et collaborateurs : elles concluent à un « lien systémique » entre les effets traumatiques de la guerre et la propension des pères à user de violence à l'encontre de leurs enfants, voir Claudia Catani, Elisabeth Schauer, et Frank Neuner, "Beyond Individual War Trauma : Domestic Violence Against Children in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka", *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (April 2008), disponible à l'adresse suivante: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3658/is_200804/ai_n25500535/?tag=mantle_skin;content
21. Le *nous* fera référence, dans ce texte, *aux thérapeutes.* Cette appellation ne reflète pas la diversité des diplômes et du niveau d'expérience des différents intervenants. Il suffit de mentionner que Muriel Génot a occupé le rôle de thérapeute principal, garante de la qualité du soin. Impliqué dès son origine (de sa conception à ses réalisations), Muath Asfoor, conseiller psychologique, a apporté une riche contribution en qualité de co-thérapeute. Pour le premier cycle, Muriel Génot était assistée d'une traductrice extérieure à l'équipe, traduisant de l'arabe vers l'anglais et inversement. Il a été préféré pour le second cycle la participation d'une jeune conseillère, Hala Hammad, ayant fraîchement rejoint l'équipe à l'époque. Assurant la traduction, elle bénéficiait dans le même temps d'une expérience clinique riche d'enseignement pour elle et à laquelle elle a contribué par la finesse de ses observations. C'est à ces titres que Muath Asfoor et Hala Hammad sont mentionnés comme coauteurs de cet article.
22. Les pères de ces groupes ont grandi dans une société qui encourage l'interaction père-fils au privilège de celle entre père et fille, en particulier lorsque l'enfant atteint l'âge de socialisation. Que quatre pères sur six se soient déplacés *pour* un soin *avec* leur fille est pour le moins révélateur de leur engagement et de la nécessité qu'il ont ressentie.
23. Si l'on se réfère au modèle piagetien décrivant le processus de développement cognitif de l'enfant.
24 Chaque dyade a été évaluée individuellement avant et après le cycle de séances en groupe. Cette évaluation s'est appuyée sur une grille d'observation mesurant la qualité de l'interaction père-enfant au cours d'une activité ludique.
25. Sont à disposition : un jeu de poupées reconstituant la composition familiale, une maison et des moyens de transport, des animaux, des cubes de construction, un éventail de soldats et équipements militaires, des livres d'histoires illustrées, de la pâte à modeler et de quoi dessiner.
26. Un premier groupe pilote (premier cycle) s'est tenu pour 6 séances du 28 juin au 26 juillet 2010 (durée limitée par le calendrier du Ramadan) ; il a accueilli 3 couples père-enfant. Tous les pères inclus dans ce groupe accomplissaient en parallèle un travail de thérapie individuelle qui était en cours ou achevé au moment des séances de groupe. Le deuxième groupe s'est réuni pour 10 séances du 4 octobre au 22 décembre 2010, accueillant 3 autres couples (deuxième cycle). Les pères de ce deuxième groupe n'ont pas été suivi en thérapie individuelle soit parce qu'ils ne le nécessitaient pas, soit parce qu'ils n'y étaient pas prêts. Chaque groupe devait accueillir 4 dyades qui avaient été identifiées et évaluées comme pouvant bénéficier positivement d'un tel dispositif. À chaque cycle, une dyade a fait défaut, un taux d'abandon duquel les programmes psycho-sociaux sont coutumiers.

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27. Précisons seulement qu'il se situe en filiation avec les principes de fonctionnements de « la maison verte » pensée originellement par Françoise Dolto et déclinée sous de multiples formes de par le monde. Nous avons conçu l'espace et le temps de la séance comme « une aire potentielle d'expérience transitionnelle » à la manière dont D. W. Winnicott l'a conceptualisée. Enfin, nous nous sommes imprégnés des réflexions de Paul Barrows lorsqu'il se penche sur les dispositifs impliquant les pères dans la psychothérapie de l'enfant.
28. La troisième dyade ne sera présente qu'à partir de la deuxième séance.
29. Le garçon nous livre la clé de cette scène : elle est associée dans son esprit à un accident dont son frère a été victime.
30. Florence Seyvos et Claude Ponti, *La tempête* (Paris : L'École des loisirs, 1993).
31. Idem : 31–32
32. Ce dispositif spécifique ne nous a pas permis d'explorer l'impact identitaire de ce nouveau statut de « père à temps plein » qui ne pourrait se faire que par le biais d'entretiens individuels avec les pères. La suite de l'article rend compte néanmoins d'une réorganisation de ces pères faisant face à une réalité inédite dans leur rôle vis-à-vis de l'enfant.
33. Claude Ponti, *Catalogue de parents pour les enfants qui veulent en changer* (Paris : L'École des loisirs, 2008).
34. Ibid. Martine Lamour, note n°1, 106
35. La limite est reconnue par les psychologues dans ses effets structurant et rassurant pour l'enfant. La limite, entendue comme un interdit universel, s'applique à tous (adultes comme enfants) et balise le possible et l'impossible. Souvent, ce sont les pères qui sont mis en charge de relayer cet impératif sociétal au sein de la famille. C'est une tâche difficile pour tout parent, parfois irréalisable lorsque la société ne les étaye plus (dans une société en proie à la violence et à la guerre, l'impossible est parfois devenu la règle) ou lorsque les contraintes les cernent de toutes parts (comment dire non à cet enfant qui a déjà tant à souffrir ?). En s'identifiant aux thérapeutes, les pères de nos groupes ont pu (re)faire l'expérience qu'un interdit, lorsqu'il est posé dans une relation (et non dans le rejet et la violence), est aussi un message de confiance ou de considération envoyé à l'enfant qui est alors perçu et se perçoit comme capable de composer avec sa frustration.

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Muath Asfoor et Hala Hammad : Conseillers pour l'organisation CVT en Jordanie.

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Displaced Iraqis in Jordan: Formal and Informal Information Flows, and Migratory Decisions in a Context of Uncertainty

Adam Saltsman

Abstract

While it is not uncommon for humanitarian organizations, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to implement information campaigns about forced migrant rights, the assistance available to them, and options for the future, these efforts often meet unintended consequences. Forced migrants have, at times, rejected, misinterpreted, and condemned the information they get from these sources. This paper argues that official information campaigns often falter for two crucial reasons beyond resource scarcity. First, those agencies disseminating information are often under pressure to curb the outflow of migrants from the Global South, and as a result, information provision has tended to be coloured by efforts to control or protect against forced migrants' movement or desires. Second, these agencies do not typically consider or engage with migratory capital, including migrants' informal networks for sharing knowledge about the migratory process. As a case study, this paper relies on qualitative interviews and focus groups with Iraqis displaced in Jordan to explore their lived experiences vis-à-vis both the official information from humanitarian agencies and their informal networks that are transnational in nature.

Résumé

Alors qu'il n'est pas rare que les organisations humanitaires, telles que le Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (UNHCR), mettent en place des campagnes d'information sur les droits des migrants forcés, l'aide accessible et leurs options d'avenir, on constate que ces efforts ont souvent des conséquences inattendues. En effet, ces migrants peuvent à certains moments rejeter, mal interpréter, et condamner l'information qu'on leur donne. Cet article montre que ces campagnes d'information échouent principalement pour deux importantes raisons, qui dépassent de loin le manque de ressources. Premièrement, les agences qui transmettent l'information travaillent souvent sous la pression qu'elles ont de freiner le nombre de migrants de l'hémisphère sud, avec la conséquence que l'information se trouve déformée par l'intention sous-jacente de contrôler les mouvements et désirs des migrants forcés. Deuxièmement, ces agences ne prennent pas en compte le capital migratoire, incluant les réseaux informels des migrants qui se transmettent leur connaissance du processus migratoire. L'étude de cas que constitue cet article se base sur une série d'entrevues qualitatives et de groupes de discussion avec des Irakiens réfugiés en Jordanie, afin d'explorer leurs expériences face, à la fois, à l'information fournie par les agences humanitaires et à celles obtenues à travers leurs réseaux informels et qui sont en soi transnationaux.

Introduction

In the context of humanitarian intervention, safeguarding the basic human rights of forced migrants requires the dissemination of information about their rights, the assistance available to them, and options for the future.[1] United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Inter-Agency Standing

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Committee (IASC), recognize "the right to seek, receive and impart information" for all individuals, including forced migrants.[2] These agencies also promote the widespread dissemination of information because of their regard for human dignity and because they see information sharing as a means to build trust and respect with refugees.[3] "The more information shared with refugees about issues of concern to them," states UNHCR, "the more involved, engaged and empowered they will be."[4] Stemming from this position are numerous "information campaigns," where UN agencies charged with providing humanitarian assistance create or support such informational initiatives as radio programs, television spots, cultural performances, education programs, and—perhaps most commonly—posters and leaflets, all with the purpose of informing refugees about available services and options for their future.[5]

Despite such efforts, these agencies transmit little concrete information about temporary or permanent solutions to forced migrants' displacement, and their campaigns lead to unintended consequences in countries of first asylum as forced migrants have, at times, rejected, misinterpreted, and condemned the information they get from international humanitarian agencies. Instead of feeling empowered, forced migrants have felt disenfranchised and objectified, increasingly desperate at the uncertainty of their situation.[6] Scholars have noted the cyclical nature of mistrust in contexts of displacement; agency staff and forced migrants become more suspicious of one another's intentions as both groups clash over the allocation of limited resources.[7]

This paper argues that official information campaigns often falter for two crucial reasons beyond resource scarcity. First, supra-state agencies charged with the protection and assistance of refugees find themselves torn between this mandate and pressure from state governments to curb the flow of migrants from sending countries, particularly those in the Global South.[8] As a result, UNHCR has explicitly framed its commitment to information provision as a tool to encourage displaced persons to stay in or return to their home country[9] and the agency has developed global protocols that reflect a need to protect against the inherent pressure of forced migrants wishing to resettle to the Global North.[10] Second, agencies typically fail to give attention to migrants' informal networks for sharing knowledge about the migratory process. Far from passively waiting for official word from state or supra-state agencies, forced migrants actively rely on their own networks to comprehend their options, and the knowledge in these networks often contradicts the "official story." This article seeks to address both of these assertions through a case study of Iraqis displaced in Jordan negotiating with state and supra-state bureaucracies, their own insecure circumstances, and their transnational networks of informal information to decide their next step.

The first part of the article argues for consideration of transnational migratory capital, particularly in terms of knowledge construction, as the key for the transmission and reception of crucial information forced migrants use to make decisions about the future. The second part outlines the history of Iraqi displacement in recent decades, followed by a presentation of methods used in this study. The next part explores how respondents experience both official information and the informal knowledge of their transnational networks in a context of vulnerability and insecurity.

Migratory Capital, Information Provision, and Iraqis as Transmigrants

To date, there is little research about the relation between official information programs and informal networks for the exchange of knowledge in contexts of displacement. Khalid Koser highlights the extent to which information constitutes a key element in forced migrants' decisions about repatriation. Focusing on knowledge communicated informally between refugees, Koser describes a trajectory beginning with the initial displacement when little information is available followed by floods of rumours as the displaced population increases, and, finally, the establishment of durable social and kin-based networks for information exchange. Koser notes that refugees evaluate received information according to fluid notions of the information transmitters' trustworthiness and relevance.[11] Amy West and Lydia Wambugu show how the tendency of humanitarian and state agencies to limit the quantity and quality of information reaching encamped forced migrants exacerbates the proliferation of informal information networks, which they consider dangerous because of the rumours they circulate. According to West and Wambugu, as one source of information becomes limited, another less reliable one proliferates. Critiquing the UN refugee agency and the government of Tanzania for restricting the flow of important information to forced migrants, they write, "their actions have created a parallel system, forcing refugees to view both as yet another threat to their survival, instead of legitimate guarantors of their security and well-being."[12] Such work challenges the notion that migrants are passive; that they do not employ a variety of resources to manage their circumstances. Yet even while focusing on agency among refugees, this work nevertheless depicts the flow of informal information as largely erroneous, misleading, and correlated with formal information.

My study views the informal exchange of information among migrants and between them and both their

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communities of origin and official bodies as migratory capital reproduced and exchanged transnationally.[13] This formulation leaves open the question of whether official or unofficial sources constitute the most reliable information. Instead, I focus on exploring which information is most consequential for the decision-making process of forced migrants.

Originally considered as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement,"[14] transnationalism has, in recent years, called for a deterritorialization of relations across space.[15] A range of factors associated with the contemporary political, social, and economic landscape push and pull relationships beyond nation-state boundaries so that they are flexibly rooted in transnational social fields.[16] As such, transnational networks are conduits for the global flow of knowledge and resources, both material and virtual, and they lead to the formation of logics that are more transnational than national.[17]

Part of what causes transnational elasticity is the broad impact of supra-state governance structures, economic and political multilateral collectivities intimately connected to the fact that there are currently over 30 million people stateless or displaced[18] and millions more undocumented migrants whose lives are regulated by entities of global governance as well as authoritarian and liberal democratic states.[19] Within migrant populations, there are many who are regularly or repeatedly on the move by varying degrees of choice and coercion.[20] As many migrants in precarious circumstances find themselves "thrown out of the family of nations,"[21] repeated displacement over time requires them to depend on and further construct circuits of information, resources, and contacts formed over generations of group migration.[22] These networks span communities of origin, locales of displacement, and occasionally new communities of long-term settlement.[23] Forced migrants must rely more completely upon their accumulated collective migratory capital,[24] that is "knowledge of how to go about migration, how to deal with brokers, traffickers, border officials and bureaucrats, how to develop and maintain contacts in receiving countries, and how to find accommodation, secure social security entitlements or gain employment."[25] Thus, it is important to focus on the ways in which such individuals "find in mobility a resource, not only a constraint"; on the ways in which "an initially imposed dispersion is turned to advantage."[26] Adopting this perspective, this paper gives attention to the ways in which displaced persons discuss their utilization of the socio-cultural resources they mobilize in response to exile.[27]

Addressing questions of how the regulation of official information relates to the management of the migrant population, Dorothy Smith asserts that institutional knowledge serves as a tool of governance.[28] Smith distinguishes between two forms of knowledge. First, the knowledge of the local and the particular is knowledge generated through experience. The notion of "local" here is taken to be not necessarily a spatial reference, but rather an exchange between and among individuals and collectivities of experiential accounts. Second, the objectified knowledge of the "extra-local" is that which has been abstracted from lived experience to be useful on an institutional and administrative level.[29] As such, objectified knowledge subjugates the knowledge of the local and the experienced as irrelevant, chaotic, or even dangerous. To Smith, the governing processes of society construct a knowledge for the purpose of management and control in which "issues are formulated because they are administratively relevant, not because they are significant first in the experience of those who live them."[30] Such processes "eliminate the presence of subjects as agents."[31]

In terms of migration, official information consists of the knowledge of migrants' experience objectified through processes of institutional assessment of migrants' claims. These official assessments subject the lived experience of migrants to multiple levels of bureaucratic analysis of criteria for refugee status and resettlement to Global North nation-states. To be deemed a refugee—and one eligible for resettlement—is contingent on the ways in which nation-state and supra-state actors categorize migrants' lived experience on an institutional level.[32] When Iraqi forced migrants look toward the agencies and organizations regulating resettlement for information, they are in a sense attempting to learn how their lived experiences have been or may be categorized into official knowledge, what this implies for their future and, for those intent on resettling, how they can best account for their lived experience in order to end up categorized as "eligible."

The Context of Iraqi Displacement in Jordan

Chatelard has written on the establishment and maintenance of networks among Iraqi forced migrants who have experienced multiple waves of displacement.[33] She refers to Amman and Baghdad as "translocal spaces," in which individuals have moved and continue to move between the two locales to conduct business and politics, attend school, and visit hospitals among other activities.[34] Iraqis have long included Jordan as a destination for translocality or merely for transit.[35] Large-scale forced migration has taken place primarily since the mid-1990s in the aftermath of the first Gulf War and subsequent sanctions.[36] There were believed to be between 250,000 and 350,000 Iraqis in Jordan by 2003.[37]

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The outpouring over the last seven years of forced migrants from Iraq into neighbouring countries constitutes one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. There are believed to be five million displaced Iraqis, about half of whom fled beyond the borders of their country and a portion of whom were displaced over previous decades.[38] While the total number of Iraqi forced migrants in Jordan is heavily debated, there are approximately 60,000 registered with UNHCR,[39] while there are more than 200,000 registered in Syria and an additional 10,000 in Lebanon.[40] It is believed that tens of thousands more are unregistered in each country.[41] Beyond these numbers are several thousand more who have used neighbouring countries as places of transit before migrating elsewhere.[42] For the last four years, Iraqis have constituted the largest group of asylum seekers in industrialized countries.[43] However, the journey to seek asylum in the European Union and elsewhere is often a dangerous one ending in detention and deportation, directly or ultimately to Iraq.[44]

Jordan as a Vulnerability Context

Jordan—and the other first countries of asylum—constitutes what has been termed a "vulnerability context,"[45] in which host country laws and policies, public and private refugee support networks, and broader public attitudes toward forced migrants lead to particular sets of opportunities and constraints for the refugee communities. In urban settings, such as Amman or Damascus, the vulnerability context is contingent on both forced migrants' legal status and their access to livelihoods.[46] During a 2009 evaluation, UNHCR determined that the primary constraints for the Iraqi forced migrant population consisted of punishments for violations of immigration policy, *refoulement* (forced return to a context of persecution), a lack of access to health and education services, limited financial resources/employment, and relations with the host country.[47] Additional assessments have identified gender as an important variable for determining this population's vulnerability.[48]

The legal rights of Iraqis displaced in Jordan remain highly limited, despite advocacy on their behalf by rights-based organizations.[49] Residency and legal employment remain significant challenges. In May 2008, the Jordanian government issued new visa rules requiring Iraqis to obtain Jordanian visas from Iraq before arriving at the border.[50] Visa and livelihood expenses are difficult to pay for those with dwindling financial resources, especially since the Jordanian government has continued to prohibit the employment of Iraqi forced migrants without residency and work permits. There are many Iraqis in Jordan without residency who work in the informal economy, but they are often subject to poor working conditions, arbitrary dismissal, and deportation by Jordanian security officials.[51] And while Iraqi school-aged children are now permitted to attend Jordanian public schools and while Iraqis have access to Jordan's health-care system, the difficult financial situation has led to debt, exploitation in the informal economy, and unhealthy living conditions.[52]

A study by Fafo, the Norwegian research centre, found that in 2007 approximately 20 percent of households were female-headed and these were concentrated among the poorer households. Other studies have pointed to increased instances of sexual abuse and exploitation and domestic abuse against women as a result of displacement.[53] Despite this, Iraqi women have been found to be more resilient than men in first countries of asylum.[54] Finally, Sassoon highlights that many Jordanians see the influx of Iraqis to be causally related to greater inflation, higher housing prices, and the undercutting of Jordanian wages. This has led to widespread public resentment of the Iraqi forced migrant population.[55]

On the international level, the humanitarian community has responded to this most recent Iraqi refugee crisis by establishing a protection and assistance regime. This comes in the form of cash assistance, the provision of non-food items, psychosocial counseling, vocational training, community development, refugee status determination, and resettlement. As Iraqis continue to flow in and out of countries of first asylum and as assistance programs grow or shrink according to donor priorities and resources, concerns about the future are increasingly becoming a source of tension and desperation.

Resettlement and the UN's Policy on Information Provision

Each country of resettlement has its own criteria upon which it relies to screen Iraqis. UNHCR considers these criteria and makes referrals of individual cases to the appropriate countries. Currently the international community considers resettlement the primary viable solution for Iraqi refugees; the governments of neighbouring countries do not permit formal integration into their societies and only relatively small numbers have officially returned to Iraq.[56] Since 2007, UNHCR has referred approximately 82,000 Iraqi refugees from the region to 17 different countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Sweden.[57] The United States has taken the bulk of those resettled, approximately 19,000 in 2009.[58]

When it comes to decisions about resettlement, UNHCR stresses that the whole process should be "transparent vis-à-vis refugees."[59] To this end, "information meetings may be held to inform refugees and resettlement partners of the

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standards and procedures governing the resettlement process in a given Field Office."[60]

However, UNHCR also stresses the need to manage expectations:

> With limited information about the nature and limitations of resettlement as a durable solution, refugees may develop unrealistic expectations about resettlement. Such expectations could potentially result in increased desperation on the part of refugees and excessive pressures on an [UNHCR] Office, and eventually undermine the resettlement process as a whole.[61]

The latter reveals a fundamental paradox in UNHCR's guidelines: their desire to empower and protect the freedoms of refugees is tempered by an awareness that uncontrolled, forced migrants will damage the very resettlement process set up to help them. On some level, protection entails "guarding" refugees from themselves. In this sense, information provision should reduce unrealistic expectations. Thus, there may be certain official knowledge or experiential information about the migratory process that should be kept from migrants, in the name of protecting migrants as well as the staff and mission of UNHCR. For example, state and UN agencies have articulated their need to manage refugee expectations in terms of "shopping," i.e., the search for the asylum or resettlement site with the best resources.[62] Of course, there may also be some questions from forced migrants to which UNHCR simply does not have the answer. UNHCR and others have noted that they are frequently inundated by phone and in-person queries from Iraqis.[63] An escalation of requests or demands could make it more difficult for UNHCR to manage the displaced group, given limited resources.

Additionally, while UNHCR resettlement policy states that the refugee or whoever referred her or him to UNHCR "should be notified *in writing* that the refugee will not be considered for resettlement,"[64] when it comes to granting an individual case access to her or his file, UNHCR also notes in an internal document:

> UNHCR needs to weigh its own interests (such as staff safety considerations or protection of UNHCR's sources of information) against the [refugee's] legitimate interest, for instance, to know the reasons for any decision that affects her or him.

Such a guideline may be understandable and appropriate; however, in the context of Iraqi displacement, UNHCR's decision to withhold this key information from those Iraqi forced migrants who will not be referred for resettlement has led many within this population to react in unanticipated ways.

Methods

This article is based on semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted during the summer of 2009 and spring of 2010 with 25 Iraqis displaced in Jordan, a purposive sample from a larger *n* of approximately 60 Iraqis who participated in a broader study focused on resettlement and information. This research represents the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and the researched. Given my position as a Global North researcher working in Jordan among displaced populations, participants and I were aware of the vast asymmetry that lay between us. This challenges concepts of consent and threatens to render the interview a reproduction of unequal power relations.[65] I conducted this fieldwork not only for academic research, but also for an NGO concerned with international policy on resettlement for Iraqi forced migrants; research participants were informed of this dual purpose. As somebody working with an NGO and conducting empirical research, I acknowledge that while negotiating the "activist-scholar divide," my study reflects a dual imperative: my interest in conducting an academically rigorous study and my commitment to action research.[66]

Of the 25 research participants, 13 participated in in-depth, open-ended interviews, while 12 participated in focus group discussions. Ten focus group discussions were conducted for the larger study. A slight majority of participants were women (52 percent; n=13). Forty percent (n=10) of the participants were between 18 and 30, 56 percent (n=14) were between 30 and 50, and one participant was 64. All research participants are Iraqi nationals, though they differ in terms of their place of origin; a majority of participants were from Baghdad. Close to 65 percent of participants came from a middle-class socio-economic background with professions like engineer and teacher, while the remainder were from working-class backgrounds and had had jobs in Iraq such as mechanic and vendor. This study did not measure religious or sectarian breakdown among participants for a variety of reasons,[67] though it is important to note that according to a 2007 survey, 60 percent of the Iraqi households in Jordan are Sunni, 18 percent are Shiite, 15 percent percent are Christian, and 5 percent are those that follow other religious traditions, particularly Sabean and Yedizis.[68] As a purposive sample, participants were recruited from the community centres and reception rooms at international humanitarian NGOs in Amman and one Jordanian community-based organization located in Baqa'a, a Palestinian refugee camp 20 kilometres outside of Amman. Thus, 20 out of 25 participants came from urban parts of Jordan.[69] Visiting Jordan several times between June 2009 and July 2010, I was able to recruit respondents in three iterations according to the themes emerging from initial analyses

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of my data, a partial theoretical sample;[70] partial because iterative recruitment was constrained by my limited visits during which I had to meet the goals of the NGO for which I worked. All the names of respondents have been changed to pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted in Arabic with English interpretation in private within the offices of the organizations where recruitment took place. An interview guide was produced in English, translated into Arabic, and then checked for linguistic equivalence.

In analyzing interview and focus group transcripts, I conducted line-by-line and focused coding to build inductive and interpretive theoretical assertions that stem from my understanding of participants' explanations of lived experiences.[71] This form of analysis reflects the initial coding stages of a more constructivist version of the grounded theory method upon which I relied in designing and developing this research. Despite this reliance on constructivism in my design and interviewing processes the current research does not include the development of a new theory per se.[72] I also, less subjectively, analyzed thematic codes to locate respondents' voices within the vulnerability context discussed above in order to highlight how this study's respondents are situated in relation to the literature (see Table 1).[73] This should not be conflated with respondents' articulation of their perceptions of vulnerability.

Migrant Experiences with Official Information and Local Knowledge

Initial and focused coding yielded specific analytical themes. Codes clustered around the topics of trust, security, and options for the future in terms of institutional and official sources of information and participants' own reliance on and contribution to local, experiential knowledge. Analysis reveals that migrants' experience with uncertainty, real or perceived insecurity, and their mistrust of the institutions regulating migration are all interconnected. The first part of this section deals with the connection between being in a vulnerability context and the ways in which Iraqis experience official sources of information. Second, I examine how the respondents' ability to rely on networks of experiential knowledge relate to their context and their perception of official information.

Insecurity, Vulnerability, and Experiences with Official Information

Sixty percent of the research participants who noted a lack of access to information had also experienced a range of difficulties in Jordan from abuse and deportation to overcrowded and unhealthy living situations and limited access to healthcare. Table 1 illustrates the factors contributing to a sense of insecurity, highlighting several of the indicators noted in the previous section. While the table reports certain indicators related to gender, information about female participants' experiences with sexual and domestic abuse and exploitation is not available due to methodological constraints.

As the table indicates, many of the participants, both women and men, experience economic hardship in Jordan. While this table is not intended to be representative of the Iraqi forced migrant population in general,[74] it relates to the factors of a vulnerability context mentioned above and it frames a context in which they interpreted their experiences trying to access official sources of information.

Eighty percent of participants described using or attempting to get official information, often in the form of details about their status, the structure of the resettlement process, or conditions in resettlement states. During interviews, research participants shared their experiences trying to get in touch with UN or other agency offices. The more participants portrayed their interactions with official sources of information, the clearer it became that these experiences were influenced by and also heightened their sense of insecurity.

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Table 1: Indicators of Insecurity

Indicators	% Participants	Male	Female
Financial resource/employment			
Unhealthy living conditions	32	4	4
Debt	40	6	4
Overcrowded housing	32	2	6
Below the Jordanian poverty line[a]	36	3	6
Labour exploitation	8	1	1
Health			
Physical health problems	24	2	4
Gender			
Female-headed household	20		5
Single female below poverty line	16		4
Gender (other)[b]	8		2
Relations with host community			
Problems with neighbours	20	2	3
Immigration/legal status			
Deportation	0	0	0
Police harassment	12	3	

a. According to USAID, the poverty line in Jordan is USD $439 per capita annual income.
b. This category refers to a range of gender-related issues which respondents faced and that indicate their vulnerability, such as generalized disenfranchisement in decision-making as a result of one's gender.

As 27-year-old Jaber noted:

> When I go to meet with the social counselor [at UNHCR], she says that she doesn't know where my file is and that I need to call by phone if I want to find out something related to my status. But when I call, they keep me on hold forever, like an hour, transferring me from one person to the next, until I run out of phone credit. And then that's that.

Forty-nine-year-old Nadia, who has been living in Jordan for two years, also felt that the environment at UNHCR is less conducive to information sharing and more about information extraction:

> I would like that everything can be made more clear. My last interview was like an argument. They said they didn't know anything and we said that we needed to know the information. It is like an investigation—they just take notes and say that they need to know this and that, but what is the use of this information?

Such excerpts from across the sample of participants construct a narrative of inaccessible and unwelcoming institutions; even if such institutions truly do not "know anything," the context is one of such extreme insecurity that it is impossible for some participants to believe no answer exists to questions regarding their future. Other comments reflect the notion that while these institutions do give out some information, it is not tailored to meet migrants' needs. As 30-year-old Saphir put it:

> The only information we are getting from the UN is from the brochures and from the advertising and other than that we don't have any kind of information. If we need to ask, we can't ask, we are only getting … getting … we are only getting information that they want us to have, not what we are asking about.

The brochures mentioned here are informational pamphlets about services available to Iraqis in Jordan and about repatriation. Several of the research participants had seen the larger posters or pamphlets distributed by UNHCR regarding financial support for those who wish to return to Iraq. However, as 33-year-old Sharin explains it, this information is only partial:

> I read about assistance for repatriation. I read that the UN will give $100 for people volunteering to go back. I also heard this while waiting at Caritas. I heard that it is $100 per person and the family will get no more than $500.00. I've not heard anything about what happens to people who go back.

For some, like Nadia who attended information sessions, receiving institutional details was only secondary to the fact that "I just want to know where my file is—this uncertainty means I don't know what my life will be like two months from now."

For 28-year-old Ahmed, it is his tenuous ability to remain in Jordan that causes him anxiety because of what he fears in Iraq:

> I heard that for my process [with the UN] I need to present documents, which I did. Also if I received some death threats, I need to show the paper which the threat was written on or I need to show photos that prove my situation. I presented my case three years ago and haven't gotten anywhere. In the meantime a year and a half ago my uncle was murdered in Iraq. Two months ago, my other uncle was murdered. I got the death certificate for this to prove it. But now they are sending death threats for my father.

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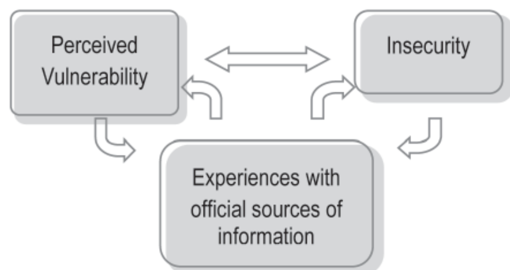
> I gave all of this information to UNHCR but I still haven't heard anything from them.

Figure 1: Influential links affecting experiences



Ahmed had been receiving cash assistance from one humanitarian organization in Jordan before their program ended and as a result this form of support evaporated. Unable to work, in debt, and with no income from remittances, Ahmed lost his apartment and moved into an empty office building where he lived without a bathroom or kitchen.

In this state of insecurity, Ahmed expressed frustration at the international community. "I didn't receive any information about anything," he said. "No resettlement and no help. I get monthly assistance from the UN but that's it and it's not enough … I am hanging by a thread here." Frustrated with this perceived silence and delay from the UN, Ahmed has frequently called and visited their offices to get some further details about his case. "A year ago I contacted the UN and asked about my file and they said that it was under study," he said. "A month ago they said the same thing … I want to know what the process is. What is the procedure? I just want a reply, yes or no. I feel devastated."

It is the uncertainty in and of itself that causes Ahmed such stress as he reflects on possible next steps:

> I have definitely thought about going illegally. I know a lot of people who have been contacted by an individual saying that if given money they can give you a visa. If he comes and talks to me, I'll go for it. There is no other way and I can't go back to Iraq.

This could include any manner of risky travel where, as mentioned above, migrants are often subject to exploitation, theft, and abuse at the hands of smugglers, traffickers, and government officials they meet or upon which they rely along the way.

These accounts reflect the ways in which being in a "vulnerability context" is directly connected to a sense of insecurity, which in turn compounds frustration with these agencies' perceived lack of transparency. Figure 1 illustrates this interconnection.

While these links are not causal, they reflect the ways in which participants' vulnerability and sense of insecurity relate to one another and to their experiences attempting to acquire official information. In Ahmed's case, his initial state of vulnerability leads to a sense of insecurity, both of which colour his experience at the UNHCR office. In turn, his experiences at the UN—and his frustration with these experiences—heighten his sense of insecurity, which influences his decision to migrate irregularly, an option that would drastically increase his vulnerability.

Mistrust and Negative Perceptions of Official Sources of Information

Participants demonstrate that their sense of insecurity also leads to a mistrust of the institutions regulating resettlement and repatriation. Some consider institutional information highly valid, but their situation has pushed them to question the role of the agencies providing protection and assistance. A number of participants felt a loss of trust precisely because of their lack of access to information. Feeling that institutions managing the resettlement process are withholding information, giving it only partially, or forsaking their Iraqi beneficiaries led many participants to label these agencies as untrustworthy:

> We need to have a mechanism to give beneficiaries information about their cases so that they will know what the timeline is for everything because the UN tells you sometimes that in nine months you will be in the United States, so … but you stay for a year and a half and nothing happens so you get worried about that. I know that they have a lot of pressure and a lot of refugees in Jordan and this makes a lot of work, but this is not … they need to explain their mechanism so people would relax a little bit and because … uh … it is not trustworthy anymore, we can't depend on the information anymore.

In this excerpt, Saphir links the condition of uncertainty and waiting—a condition shown above to be interconnected with vulnerability and insecurity—to a growing mistrust of the information that comes out of agencies such as UNHCR. During a focus group with four middle-aged Iraqi research participants, the following discussion builds on Saphir's point:

> Adam: What have been your experiences meeting officials to talk about your options for the future?
>
> Do'a: A lot of social workers and case managers came and asked us the same questions each time they met us. They want details about us, but then nothing happens and we don't get services. I

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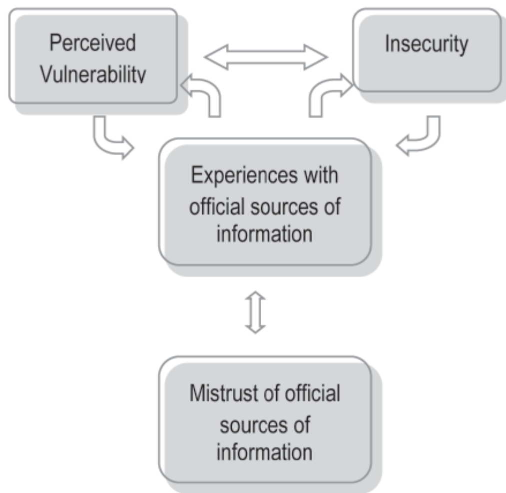
feel tired out from all of this and if I could get something from this whole process if there is some benefit, then let me see it, otherwise you are wasting my time.

ZAINA: It's not just about losing trust. It feels like there's neglect of us. In general, Iraqis don't have trust in the people we meet during our appointments and we don't trust the information that is given to us.

Figure 2: Mistrust, information, and vulnerability



At another point during the same focus group, the conversation returned to trust:

ABU MOHAMED: When we go to the UN, nobody tells us the truth. Nobody answers our calls, or at least this is how it was a few months ago. Maybe it's improved since then.

DOA'A: Right.

OM NOOR: Right. They just give us information to calm us down, they just give us useless information.

DOA'A: We want information about immigration.

ABU MOHAMED: Yesterday I called UNHCR to ask about taking my son to the doctor and nobody answered. The operator was busy. I wanted to get the phone number for Caritas, but the person at UNHCR didn't give me the information.

Here, participants associated a feeling of neglect with a sense of mistrust—an outcome of a collapse in the belief that these organizations would fulfill their purported commitment to providing protection and/or assistance to migrants. Following his accusations of neglect and opaqueness, Abu Mohamed's story in which UNHCR's inaccessibility got in the way of his taking his son to the doctor reflects the relationship between vulnerability and mistrust. Mistrust also stems from the perception that official institutions solicit information but do not give it or deliver on the promises that come implicitly with such inquiry. Finally, Om Noor appears angered at the notion that agencies use information as a tool to control and pacify Iraqis. Adding to Figure 1, Figure 2 illustrates the role of mistrust in this dynamic.

As this diagram shows, the mistrust participants expressed toward official sources of information is a result of their experiences with the institutions regulating resettlement and return. However, the relationship is cyclical in that growing mistrust then colours subsequent experiences at state and supra-state agencies.

Ongoing Reliance on Local Knowledge Networks

Perhaps one of the largest factors shaping participants' experiences with official sources of information is their use of local knowledge networks for co-constructing experiential accounts of the migratory process. The term "local" here is adopted from Smith's notion of "local knowledge," mentioned above. These networks exert an influence and are influenced by migrant perceptions of official institutions. But, just like their perceptions of state and supra-state agencies, migrants' use and perception of local knowledge networks are also subject to the pressures of an unstable situation. As Geraldine Chatelard asserts, Iraqi migrations are positioned along networks established and maintained through multiple waves of displacement.[75] Iraqis migrating outwardly have maintained connections in Iraq, have diasporic relations with Iraqis in multiple parts of the world, engage in cross-border political activities, and—when conditions allow—have travelled back and forth between homes in Iraq and abroad. These transnational relations form communication networks that serve as migratory capital for the exchange of local knowledge.

Through conversations with resettled refugees and Iraqis who have lived abroad for decades, Iraqis displaced in Jordan have a chance to hear first-hand accounts of the life one faces abroad. Research participants described a reliance on the stories told by other Iraqis going through the resettlement process in Jordan or Iraqis who have been to resettlement countries:

ADAM: Where have you heard information about resettlement and repatriation?

SAMIR HAMDI: I heard from people who went already or those who have relatives there.

SUN: From people who have been there and described the situation.

MAI: My cousin has been living in America for four years. I got information from there.

KALB HAZN: I got information from street talk. From a group of Iraqis. This is the only topic that we ever discuss.

MOHAMED: I called two people who have resettled in different

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> states. One said that it is ok and the other said it is terrible; he is devastated. Generally I get information from the streets.
> Samir Hamdi: Like when we visit homes, we talk about this.
> Mai: We don't go and ask IOM or UNHCR for information. You get information from there only after you are accepted for resettlement. They have a class, but it is very vague and simple. And the information was very discouraging.

Participants gather local experiences in multiple ways. Mohamed locates his base of knowledge "on the streets." This seems to be an analogy for informal sources on a local level, whether they are close in proximity or far away in other countries. Mai specifies her reliance on relatives abroad for details about their experiences. In terms of questions about repatriation, Youssef put it:

> My family in Iraq tells me that the best thing I did was to leave and keep my family safe. In terms of services, those who are already there do not get any services at all so how can there be services for you if you come back. It is better to stay away, even if it means being apart from your family. Things are worse than before with the US leaving. Things are upside down. Now that the US pulled out, there is no way to return.

In this case, his use of familial contacts in Iraq proves sufficient to discourage Youssef from returning at this time.

To some extent, these networks thrive on the humanitarian spaces provided by non-governmental organizations and international and state agencies:

> Adam: So you hear from people who come from Iraq to Jordan and then how do you know these people?
> Saphir: For two years I've worked with humanitarian organizations in Jordan. Of course from people who come to CARE and other organizations. Because anyone coming from Iraq was in a hurry and doesn't have the money in order to live here in Jordan so they come here or to the United Nations. Directly, they go to UNHCR. Because of course these people will go to UNHCR and UNHCR will give them brochures and information about organizations that give services to Iraqi refugees, when they come to CARE or other organizations, I meet them and I hear the news from them. And Amman is a small city so people know each other. People go to organizations and meet each other. One tells the rest of the people information that he experienced in Iraq or if someone went to the USA and returned to Jordan he will tell people.

As Saphir explains, the physical spaces of international NGOs become impromptu locales for the exchange of experiential knowledge. As Iraqi forced migrants sit waiting in reception rooms, they have the opportunity to co-construct knowledge about options for the future. These exchanges are more than just knowledge transactions. Forty-two-year-old Noor finds herself utterly alone in Jordan, having lost her husband and five children to the conflict in Iraq:

> When you find that you don't have a country and you find somebody from your country, you like to gather with them to hear the language, to feel like you have a family and also to talk about immigration, IOM. We meet in the NGOs.

Thus displaced Iraqis have the opportunity to widen their social network, their migratory capital, and their community support structures via the space of humanitarian organizations. Research participants, like 33-year-old Moi, assert that these exchanges, which are established in the space of NGOs or refugee camps, turn into networks spanning geographical boundaries when contacts resettle or continue some other way onto the next step of their migration. Moi notes that he has friends all over North America and in Europe:

> Adam: Where are some of the contacts you rely on for information?
> Moi: America. Friends in the US. West Virginia, Pennsylvania. Also in Canada, my friend is there, and in England I have friends. They are all friends, not relatives. Only my brother in the United States, in Pennsylvania. I call them and they call me. They are from here. I know them from here. In Baqa'a, in Jordan. And from Jordan they go, they get resettled to the USA, to Canada, and to Europe and we stay in touch by phone.

The informal interactions taking place between Iraqis in humanitarian spaces are in a context in which official information is also available. Several international NGOs have recently set up "information centres" throughout Jordan primarily to further the proliferation of information about repatriation, though some focus on resettlement. The physical spaces in which this official information is available also remain ideal locales for the co-construction of local knowledge.

In addition, there are certain agency actors who may occasionally deviate from their duty to give only scripted information to Iraqi forced migrants. For 38-year-old Farah and her husband, the knowledge leaked from UNHCR staff was a deciding factor:

> I asked a UN worker to explain what I might find in America, whether the kids get monthly assistance. The answer was no, that neither we nor our kids get assistance. They cover us for three months and then we are on our own. After we heard that we felt down and started really thinking about not going… . Later we asked for our file to be pulled and when they asked us why we did that, we told them it was for financial reasons.

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According to research participants, Iraqi forced migrants maintain local knowledge networks predominately through phone or in-person discussion. However, 12 percent of participants (3 out of 25) reported relying on online networks to email contacts living outside of Jordan or participate in a web discussion forum for Iraqis:

> This forum has information about people's experience … They tell their stories about what's happened with them, what happened at the airport, what did the agency give them when they got to the airport, how much did they give them, about the food stamps and the medical thing … People from all countries, Lebanon, Syria, US, and Australia—all these kind of countries, they tell the stories about … how everything went with them and [they] explain it to people in the forum.

Insecurity, Mistrust, and Local Knowledge

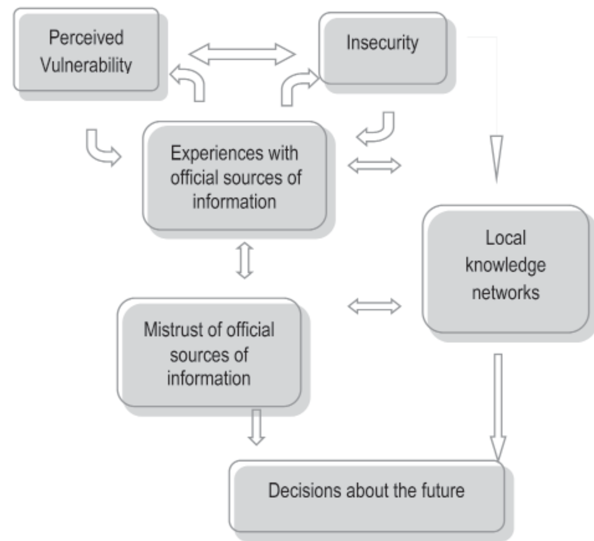
Participants' sense of insecurity and their mistrust of state and supra-state agencies influenced use of and contributions to the circulation of experiential knowledge. Research participants became acutely aware that refugee processing involved textualizing lived experiences to render them measurable according to administrative and legal standards in part by relying on accounts heard from other displaced Iraqis.

For example, as 45-year-old Mara'a put it, "I have heard very strong rumors that if you lie and dramatize your story, then you will get resettled, but if you tell the truth then it is likely that they will reject you." Echoing this, 47-year-old Youssef said:

> Each case is different. It depends on what happened for that person in Iraq. But there are many people who present fake photos and CDs with videos or photos on them that illustrate persecution or death threats. There are forged certificates of certain experiences. It's funny because the people who bring these forged documents and photos are the ones who get accepted for resettlement and they leave for America while a family with a son that has real documents and proof of his persecution will be stuck and will not get accepted.

This reflects suspicion of both the institutions managing migration and of other Iraqis who seem to have committed fraud and succeeded. These lines should also be read as signals of uncertainty; research participants searched for meaning in the fact that they may have been rejected from resettlement or forgotten about by humanitarian agencies despite having had—or continuing to have—life experiences with insecurity that warrant a need for international protection. As much as these excerpts are accusations of a

Figure 3: Interaction between local knowledge & official information



fraudulent resettlement process, they are also demonstrations of how participants relied on others' accounts as they formulated perceptions of their testimonies' utility during the official and systematic processing of data on refugees.

Many of the stories shared by participants constitute hearsay about the resettlement process. Both personal accounts and stories passed along from person to person influenced participants. Participants also tended to rely on hearsay when it came to stories about projected insecurity. According to 39-year-old Sun,

> I got through the process of resettlement. I did the procedures—I am waiting for the final result but still hesitating. I don't know if I should stay or go. I am terrified of going … But I am scared that if I say no, the UN will take away my papers and I will have to go back to Iraq. My sister is in Sweden and they told me that I couldn't go be with her. They told me to just take my opportunity for resettlement or leave it.

In this case, Sun considers information from UNHCR, rumours and accounts from other Iraqis, and her own sense of insecurity as she tries to make up her mind. For some research participants, their growing mistrust of the institutions regulating migration is what leads them to favour experiential knowledge. As Saphir stated,

> I know that on a personal level I don't trust the information given from the UN and the IOM but the thing is that as a person I like more to get information from people with experience that … they got resettled and they went to the countries. Why? Because I imagine the path of my life and what is going to happen to me and

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> how everything will go. But that doesn't mean that the information that we have from the UN or IOM websites and all kind of resources is not important because it is. It is the formal kind of information and it is very important for the refugees. We have some kind of code in Arabic: "you can ask someone with experience and not ask the doctor" like we trust someone with experience more than we trust the doctor.

Despite recognizing that at times accounts from other Iraqis may not be accurate, Saphir reflects, "I take them more seriously because they may not be true 100%, but because they are real experiences."

The cyclical relationship between living in a state of insecurity, experiences with official sources of information, mistrust of these sources, and negotiating the local knowledge circulating among Iraqi forced migrants led to real consequences for several research participants. Sixteen percent of participants reported that they had declined an offer of resettlement in the recent past. In most cases, these decisions were made strategically to preserve or enhance physical or psychological security. As Doa'a's words below indicate, these decisions were also often made based on experiential knowledge and hearsay, sources of information that are more trusted than those official locales:

> I got accepted to the United States and I refused to go based on the information I got from a relative there. She told me that you only get 3 months of assistance and don't get any help after that and you can't survive.

To add to the model shown in Figures 1 and 2, Figure 3 illustrates the link between vulnerability, insecurity, mistrust, and participants' experiences with official sources of information.

As this model shows, decisions about the future for research participants are based on far more than the information they get from official sources of information. These decisions are also based on more than local knowledge networks. Rather they appear to be products of an interface between the two as processes affected by trust, notions of security, and an overall context of vulnerability. Reliance on experiential knowledge is not necessarily causally linked to the unavailability of official information as West and Wambugu suggest.[74] Rather it takes place parallel to what happens with official information and each tends to influence the other.

Conclusion

Despite an overarching organizational commitment to providing information about options for the future to displaced persons, a restrictive framework nevertheless emerges when the stability of administrative processes prevails over individual forced migrant requests. Actual practices regarding information suggest an institutional desire to remain in control of the migratory process and it appears to assume that Iraqi forced migrants have no recourse to such information through alternative means. The defensive posturing on the part of these agencies may be an important safeguard for agency staff, but in terms of information, research participants have described how this reticence constructs an adversary relationship.

Despite this tendency, there is a proliferation of local knowledge exchanged transnationally. The study locates its lens at the nexus of lived experience and official information, pointing to the ways in which Iraqi forced migrants may see their lived experience and that of other migrants turned into the objectified information of institutions that regulate migration. At the same time, participants demonstrate that they call upon a variety of resources that are available via transnational communication networks. These networks provide the local knowledge of thousands of Iraqis whose lived experiences constitute migratory capital for those forced migrants attempting to make a decision about where to go. While participants will likely always depend on their networks for experiential knowledge, current and projected insecurity clearly has an impact on how they see this knowledge and how they put it into dialogue with their perceptions of state and supra-state agencies. As humanitarian agencies restrict the flow of official information, they are unwittingly engaging both forced migrants' senses of insecurity and their reliance on transnational networks. The attention to trust and security in this paper should guide subsequent work to look at the experiences of displaced Iraqi women regarding access to official information and local knowledge networks. Women forced migrants as a category experience a higher level of violence and vulnerability,[75] a point Nasrallah and Washington underscore in their report on Iraqi women in Syria who are sold into or who engage in sex work.[76]

This study has pointed to an understudied component of displacement, mobility, and the management of migrating groups. A transnational focus on the migratory capital of research participants brings greater clarity to how Iraqi forced migrants build and maintain social networks with one another.[77] As Van Hear states, the challenge for agencies like UNHCR is to reconcile their mandate and ways of working "with recognition that transnational connections and practices provide important means for sustaining people caught up in conflict, displacement, and its aftermath."[78] Thus, the study aims to highlight the value of supporting initiatives contributing to migratory capital, a set of resources on which forced migrants often depend just as

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much as they rely on the protection of international agencies. Rather than relying on a model of universal protocol, UNHCR and other agencies should both increase their transparency vis-à-vis the refugee and engage the sorts of local and transnational initiatives that spring up as survival mechanisms in contexts of displacement. The failure to do either will only aggravate the unintended consequences of humanitarian interventions instead of consolidating greater regulatory power for the international refugee regime over the forced migrant population.

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31. Ibid., 31.
32. As migrants experience assessment and categorization, they are also experiencing the discretion of what Lipsky refers to as "street-level bureaucrats," those actors who perform the implementation of policy through their interactions with and management of the public; Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980).
33. Geraldine Chatelard, *Protection, Mobility and Livelihood Challenges of Displaced Iraqis in Urban Settings in Jordan* (Geneva: International Catholic Migration Commission, 2009); Chatelard, "What Visibility Conceals"; Geraldine Chatelard, "Jordan as a Transit Country: Semi-protectionist Immigration Policies and Their Effects on Iraqi Forced Migrants" (New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper No. 61, UNHCR, Geneva, 2002).
34. Chatelard, *Protection*.
35. Ibid.
36. Joseph Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Chatelard, "Jordan as a Transit Country."
37. Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees*; Fathi Arouri, "Irregular Migration in Jordan 1995–2007," CARIM Analytic and synthetic notes 2008/71, European University Institute, Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, 2008, accessed October 26, 2010, http://hdl.handle.net/1814/10116.
38. International Crisis Group, "Failed Responsibility: Iraqi Refugees in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon," Middle East Report No. 77, 2008, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/iraq/077-failed-responsibility-iraqi-refugees-in-syria-jordan-and-lebanon.aspx.
39. UNHCR, *Statistical Report on registered Iraqis in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt*, 2008, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/491959312.pdf. This number is believed to be relatively stable as the number of newly arrived asylum seekers counterbalances the number of refugees leaving for resettlement.
40. UNHCR, *Statistical Report*; International Crisis Group, *Failed Responsibility*.
41. Fafo, UN Population Fund, Government of Jordan, *Iraqis in Jordan 2007: Their Number and Characteristics*, 2007, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.fafo.no/ais/middeast/jordan/IJ.pdf. The statistic for the number of Iraqis in this

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report comes from Jordanian immigration statistics, phone subscribers, and a household survey conducted in May 2007. It is important to note that Fafo published this number as an adjustment to their initial findings of 161,000 (see p. 7).

42. Chatelard, *Protection*.
43. "Iraqis, Afghans, and Somalis top list of asylum seekers in industrialized world," UNHCR Press Release, October 21, 2009, accessed April 27, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/4adf24079.html.
44. Human Rights Watch, *Stuck in a Revolving Door: Iraqis and Other Asylum Seekers and Migrants at the Greece/Turkey Entrance to the European Union* (Washington, D.C.: Human Rights Watch, 2008), 27. See also "REFUGEES: UNHCR concerned over Iraqi deportations," IRIN, September 29, 2010, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/d8c7a728fce0cc6c240297a9be421c1a.htm.
45. Karen Jacobsen, "Editorial Introduction: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Areas: A Livelihoods Perspective," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 3 (2006): 273–86; Machtelt DeVriese, *Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence* (UNHCR EPAU/2006/04); Benedikt Korf , "War, Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Sri Lanka," *Development and Change* 2 (2004): 275–95.
46. Jeff Crisp, Jane Janz, and José Riera, *Surviving in the City: A Review of UNHCR's Operation for Iraqi Refugees in Urban Areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria* (UNHCR PDES/2009/03); Jacobsen, "Editorial Introduction."
47. In UNHCR's evaluation, these constraints were not listed as primary indicators of vulnerability, but were listed as indicators for the improvement of protection space in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria for Iraqi forced migrants. They can thus be seen as current gaps in protection to be addressed by UNHCR; thus they are also indicators of vulnerability. See Crisp, Janz, and Riera, "Surviving in the City."
48. Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees*; Women's Commission for Women and Children, *Iraqi Refugees in Jordan: Desperate and Alone*, 2007, accessed October 26, 2010, http://womensrefugeecommission.org/docs/iq_brief.pdf).
49. Human Rights Watch, *The Silent Treatment: Fleeing Iraq, Surviving in Jordan* (Washington, D.C.: Human Rights Watch, 2006), accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11107/section/1; International Rescue Committee, *Five Years Later: A Hidden Crisis*, 2008, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.theirc.org/sites/default/files/migrated/resources/2008/iraq_report.pdf; Amnesty International, *Rhetoric and reality: The Iraqi refugee crisis*, 2008, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info /MDE14/011/2008/en; Nina Gora, "Provision of Legal Services in Jordan" (Legal Aid, unpublished report, 2009, on file with the author).
50. Amnesty International, *Rhetoric and reality*. Iraqis who are not investing in Jordanian businesses must prove that they have the equivalent of $150,000 in a Jordanian bank account.
51. One respondent for this study who was an engineer in Iraq reported being caught by Jordanian authorities for consulting with an engineering firm in Jordan. Jordanian authorities deported him to Iraq and he later snuck back into Jordan. See also Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugee Crisis*; Fafo, *Iraqis in Jordan*.
52. Crisp, Janz, and Riera, *Surviving in the City*.
53. Women's Commission, *Iraqi Refugees in Jordan.*
54. Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugee Crisis*.
55. Ibid.
56. International Organization for Migration statistics state that in 2008, there were 1,370 Iraqis who voluntary repatriated, 266 of whom received assistance from UNHCR. IOM, "Table 5. Refugees and people in refugee-like situation, excluding asylum-seekers, and changes by major origin and country of asylum, 2008," 2009. It is likely that a number of those counted in this statistic only returned temporarily as some Iraqis return to check on the situation, meet with family members, or do business.
57. Crisp, Janz, Riera, *Surviving in the City*.
58. International Rescue Committee, *Iraqi Refugees in the United States: In Dire Straits*, 2009, accessed October 26, 2010, http://www.theirc.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/irc_report_iraqcommission.pdf.
59. UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook (country chapters last updated September 2009)* (Geneva, 2004), Ch.6, p. 3, accessed April 21, 2010, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b35e0.html.
60. Ibid.
61. UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook*, Ch. 8, p. 24.
62. Such insights emerged through informal interviews with representatives of UNHCR, various state embassies, and other international organizations during the collection of data for this study. In addition, see Ingrid Boccardi, *Europe and Refugees: Toward an EU Asylum Policy* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2002), 43–44, for a discussion on the EU's efforts to halt "asylum shopping." See also Ann Maymann, "Challenges of Temporary Protection in Syria," *Forced Migration Review* 23 (2005): 42–43.
63. UN News Agency, "Syria assures UN it will not forcibly deport Iraqi refugees under new visa system" (September 4, 2007), accessed October 4, 2010, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=23683&Cr=Iraq&Cr1.
64. UNHCR, *Resettlement Handbook*, Ch. 6, p. 13.
65. Hyndman, *Managing Displacement.*
66. Charles Hale, ed., *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008); Karen Jacobsen and Loren B. Landau, "The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration," *Disasters* 3 (2003): 185–206; Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, eds. *Handbook*

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of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice (London: Sage, 2001).

67. Chatelard, *Protection* has noted that those Iraqis who migrate to Jordan are predominantly secular and because inquiring about this topic was deemed too politically sensitive at the time of the study.
68. Fafo, *Iraqis in Jordan*, 10; see also Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugee Crisis*.
69. One might argue that while Baqa'a is technically a refugee camp, it is also an intensely urban environment.
70. Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., ed. Norm K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000); Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*, ed. Sharlene N. Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 496–521.
71. Norm K. Denzin, *Interpretive Interactionism* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989); Amedeo Giorgi, "Phenomenological Psychology," in *Rethinking Psychology*, ed. Jonathan A. Smith, Rom Harre, and Luk van Langenhove (London: Sage, 1995), 24–42.
72. Charmaz, "Grounded Theory."
73. Because I locate respondents' thematic codes within a model of vulnerability provided by academic literature, this part of the analysis represents a more objectivist take on grounded theory, a version particularly found in such works as: Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008).
74. In particular, there are important class differences between Iraqis displaced in Jordan and it is likely that those with greater financial means are less likely to visit NGOs for humanitarian assistance.
75. Chatelard, "Jordan as a Transit Country"; Chatelard, *Protection*.
76. West and Wambugu, *Left to Their Own Devices*.
77. M. B. Lykes, "No Easy Road to Freedom: Engendering and Enculturing Forced Migration," in *Driven from Home: Protecting the Rights of Forced Migrants*, ed. David Hollenbach (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009); Shana Swiss and Joan E. Giller, "Rape as a Crime of War," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 5 (1993): 612–15.
78. Roula Nasrallah and Kate Washington, "Iraqi Women Refugees in Syria: Impact of Protracted Stay in Asylum and Protection Concerns" (International Catholic Migration Commission, unpublished, 2009, on file with author).
79. Van Hear, "Refugees in Diaspora," 12. This paper's conclusion echoes in some ways Van Hear's suggests making transnational networks a focal point in UNHCR's search for permanent solutions.
80. Ibid., 14.

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Displaced Iraqis: Predicaments and Perceptions in Exile in the Middle East

Dawn Chatty and Nisrine Mansour

Abstract

Much has been written about Iraqi refugees in the eight years since the March 2003 Anglo-American invasion of the country. Most of this work tries to understand the refugee crisis which followed from the perspective of "top-down" governmental and institutional factors such as interstate relations, state fragility, and regional insecurity. The key innovation of this paper is that it explores "bottom-up" factors. The focus of this paper is on the perceptions, interests, and perceived predicaments of displaced Iraqis themselves as contrasted with the perceptions of them by international players locally based in the Middle East region. As such the paper focuses on factors such as: livelihood strategies, economic engagement, protection rights, and alternatives to refugee/forced migration statuses. By reorienting analysis to local people-based perceptions the paper provides new ways of understanding not only the conditions of protracted displacement but also a broader scope for durable solutions.

Résumé

On a beaucoup écrit au sujet des réfugiés irakiens durant les huit années qui nous séparent de l'invasion anglo-américaine de l'Irak en mars 2003. Une grande partie de cet article tente de mieux comprendre la crise des réfugiés favorisée par des facteurs tels que les relations internationales, la fragilité des états, et l'insécurité nationale et dont la source est au sommet de la société. Cet article innove en explorant aussi les facteurs dont la source est à la base de la société. Ainsi, on se penche sur les perceptions, les intérêts, et les situations difficiles des Irakiens déplacés, en comparaison avec les perceptions qu'ont de ces derniers les acteurs internationaux actifs régionalement au Moyen Orient. Plus particulièrement, l'article se concentre sur des facteurs tels que la recherche de moyens de subsistance, l'engagement économique, les droits de protection, et les statuts alternatifs à ceux de réfugiés et de migrants forcés. En réorientant l'analyse sur les perceptions des personnes impliquées localement, cet article présente de nouvelles façons de comprendre non seulement les conditions des déplacements prolongés, mais offre aussi une approche plus large permettant de trouver des solutions durables.

Much has been written about Iraqi refugees in the eight years since the March 2003 Anglo-American invasion of the country. Most of this work tries to understand the refugee crisis which followed from the perspective of "top-down" governmental and institutional factors such as interstate relations, state fragility, and regional insecurity. Top-down approaches tend to be concerned with the three durable solutions (voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement). Hence, top-down analyses and policy implications are confined within this framework and fail to explore other people-centred possibilities for unlocking the crisis. A key innovation of this paper is to prioritize an exploration of the "bottom-up" factors that affect the protracted Iraqi crisis. Here the focus is on the perceptions, interests, and perceived predicaments of displaced Iraqis themselves as contrasted with the perceptions of them by international players locally based in the Middle East region. As such the paper focuses on factors such as: risk and livelihood strategies; social and economic engagement, residence, and protection rights; and the growing reality of alternatives to refugee/forced migration statuses. By reorienting analysis to local people-based perceptions we provide new ways of understanding not only the conditions of protracted displacement and but also a broader scope for durable solutions. Based on fieldwork conducted

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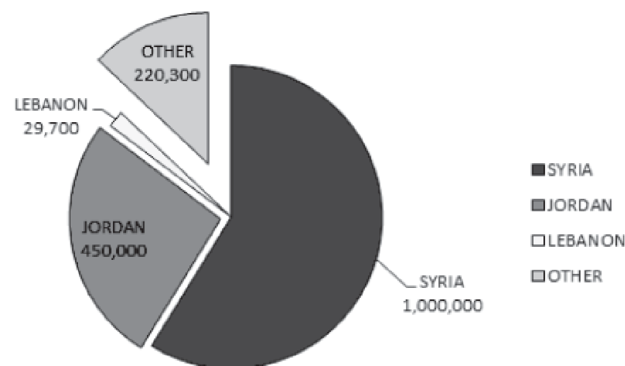
Figure 1. Outflow of refugees to neighbouring countries



UNHCR, *2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons,* Division of Programme Support and Management, UNHCR, 2010 (last visited 15 June 2011), http://www.unhcr.org.hk/files/unhcr/news/2009%20 Global%20Trends.pdf.

between April 18 and May 6, 2011, with locally based international players (UNHCR, IOM, UNRWA, Caritas, and the Canadian Mission), government and national NGO officials (i.e. Red Crescent), as well as with Iraqi asylum seekers, refugees, and temporary guests in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan this study brings to light the variations in understandings and interpretation between locally-based international players and Iraqi forced migrants themselves.

1. Background

The displaced population from Iraq now constitute one of the largest refugee population worldwide. Of nearly 5 million Iraqis displaced by invasion, armed conflict, and insecurity nearly 1.7 million are refugees[1] and 2.8 million[2] are internally displaced within their own country. Iraqis are the second-largest group of displaced people seeking asylum in industrialized countries[3] yet Western countries remain resistant to accepting them as refugees. The spatial separation of previously mixed sectarian and ethnic populations has rendered internal displacement a semi-permanent feature within Iraq, whilst those who have crossed international borders show little inclination to return except in very small numbers.[4]

Most of Iraq's exiles are in the Middle East. Their refuge in the neighbouring countries of Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon is rapidly approaching the five-year mark generally defined as a "protracted crisis." Evidence, so far, suggests that the tolerance of their host governments will continue. This sanctuary, however, is a temporary reprieve and will not go on indefinitely. Unwilling to return and largely unable to emigrate further west, Iraq's refugees are in a perilous situation which needs to be addressed by the Western powers who created this humanitarian crisis.[5]

Iraqi refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have confounded the West from the beginning of the crisis which culminated in the mass flight of millions of people. Their predicaments and their perceptions have been poorly understood. Their risk strategies for survival and their willingness to remain "unsettled" have also perplexed humanitarian actors. In the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, few Iraqis actually had fled their country. The international aid regime had miscalculated the Iraqi peoples' response to the invasion; the empty emergency camps were dismantled and pre-positioned food and equipment were removed. Three years later in 2006 the West was caught off-guard as hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fled their homes to escape the deadly sectarian violence which had escalated in the February of that year. Nearly 4 million Iraqis fled their homes in 2006 and 2007 with 1 to 1.5 million crossing national borders into Syria and Jordan. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and affiliated NGOs raced to set up reception centres and to provide emergency aid.

Despite a reduction in violence and conflict since a peak in 2006–7, Iraq is far from stable and the Iraqi government has not been able to create the conditions for successful return, of either refugees or IDPs. Moreover, displacement is predominantly to urban locations, constituting a new challenge to humanitarian actors seeking to unlock the conditions of protracted displacement. Furthermore, the insecurity currently being felt in Syria has given rise to some return movement. Even if this proves to be of a temporary nature, it will further challenge humanitarian assistance efforts in the region.

Despite a concerted effort over the past four years, UNHCR in Syria has registered only just over 200,000 Iraqis. The reasons these figures are so low can only be guessed. Some Iraqis claim to fear involuntary repatriation to Iraq if they formally register with the UN agency. Others fear returning to a country where the mixed ethno-religious communities and the legacy of Ottoman tolerance have been wiped away. The targeting of Christians in 2010 through the bombing of Iraqi churches in Baghdad clearly points to the continuing "unmixing" of peoples.

The Iraqi displacement crisis has reached a critical stage. International interest in Iraq is declining. Yet the lack of security, continuing civil conflict, and economic uncertainty make it unlikely that a mass Iraqi return will occur. More likely, Iraqi refugees will remain in neighbouring states under increasingly difficult circumstances. As their savings diminish and their movements into and out of Iraq to make

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money becomes more precarious, it is likely that irregular and long-distance migrations will occur in larger numbers. Unlocking this protracted crisis of displacement requires an understanding of the perceptions of solutions, durable and not so durable, among all stakeholders: Iraqi refugees and exiles, international humanitarian aid agencies, national NGOs, and host governments. The main aims of this study are to link existing research which emphasizes "top-down" governmental and institutional factors such as interstate relations, state fragility, and regional insecurity with an exploration of the "bottom-up" factors. After a brief review of the existing literature, this paper focuses on the perceptions, interests, and perceived predicaments of displaced Iraqis themselves and factors such as: livelihood strategies; social and economic engagement, residence, and protection rights; and the growing reality of alternatives to refugee/forced migration statuses. By linking a state/regional level analysis with local people-based perceptions (i.e. top-down and bottom-up) we anticipate increasing the potential to provide new ways of understanding not only the conditions of Iraqi displacement but also a broader scope for unlocking them. Responses of international players and national government officials were gathered through interviews with national NGOs and international organizations working on Iraqi resettlement in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. At the local level, interviews with Iraqi asylum seekers, refugees, and temporary guests were conducted in all three countries. A total of 21 interviews were conducted during the three-week period between 18 April and 6 May 2011.[6]

2. Current Literature on the Displacement of Iraqis

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and increasingly since the February 2006 bombing in Samarra', it is believed that between 4 and 5 million Iraqis have been forced to leave their homes under conditions of violence and persecution in search of security elsewhere.[7] Within this context, an estimated but not easily verifiable 2.8 million Iraqis have been internally displaced, and another 2 million have sought refuge abroad.[8]

It is widely understood that forced displacement is not a new phenomenon in Iraq. Displacement was effectuated in several waves that reflect the political trajectory of the country.[9] Decades of political persecution and devastating sanctions have pushed various groups of Iraqis to flee their homes and become internally displaced or exiled in the region and beyond. Indeed, Iraq has experienced periods of forced migration in the past and it is documented that well over 1 million Iraqis were already internally displaced or living in exile prior to the invasion.[10]

A mass displacement of Iraqis did not occur after the April 2003 invasion;[11] instead, it was the precipitous breakdown in security in 2006–7 which prompted the current crisis. The general consensus is that the displaced Iraqis have fled "as a consequence of a conflict in which they have no stake but of which they were made victims."[12] Beyond ethnic or religious identity and minority status, reports cite employment by the United States or other foreign forces, personal wealth, and professional association as additional risk factors.[13] Compounding the real and perceived threats of violence, countless publications emphasize the widespread impoverishment of people within Iraq, and notably the middle class, as an important factor prompting out-migration.[14]

The Iraqis seeking refuge in neighbouring countries are faced with a hybrid model of protection that is reflected in a precarious legal status.[15] Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon are not signatories to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and lack the domestic legal procedures for dealing with "refugees" or granting asylum.[16] Initially Syria and Jordan welcomed their "Iraqi brethren" in the tradition of Arab brotherhood, classifying them as "guests" or "temporary visitors" and thus affording them temporary protection.[17] In January 2007, the UNHCR opted to grant prima facie refugee status to all Iraqi nationals from central and southern Iraq, a designation accepted by the Syrian government but not the Jordanian state.[18] Nevertheless, the generosity shown by Syria and Jordan to the Iraqi refugees is widely recognized, standing in stark contrast to the negligence of donor countries and Iraq itself.[19]

Many reports have assessed the increasingly burdensome impact of Iraqi refugees on their host countries and drawn analogies to the protracted Palestinian displacement of the 1950s.[20] Across the board, reports indicate that local media and citizens blame the Iraqi refugees for their own deteriorating quality of life (rise in real estate prices, traffic jams, price rises, and utilities shortages) and perceive a far larger number of refugees than is actually present.[21] The governments of Syria and Jordan cite massive expenditures on Iraqi refugees; with Syrian officials claiming costs of over $1.5 billion per year and Jordanians quoting $1 billion, there is little doubt that the Iraqis have induced tangible economic pressures.

That said, the actual picture is more nuanced as excessive blame is placed on Iraqis for issues that existed beforehand, and alongside economic pressures has also come economic growth and investment.[22] Furthermore, skilled and educated Iraqis with proper work permits substantially contribute to the regional economy.[23] However, the negative perceptions cannot be ignored, nor can the actual costs incurred by the Syrian and Jordanian governments be dismissed—hostility towards Iraqis based on their perceived or actual burden on society is on the rise.[24]

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The prospect of refugee return to Iraq has garnered significant attention recently, as improved security within Iraq has received global media coverage.[25] The government of Iraq has introduced financial incentives to encourage Iraqis to return and has urged the European Union to drop calls for taking in refugees to this effect.[26] Yet despite these vocal political initiatives, humanitarian and human rights advocates are extremely sceptical, pointing to a perilous security situation and asserting that it would be "reckless" to encourage return before there were genuine and sustained improvements in security and the service provisions of the state.[27] One small survey by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) that canvassed the opinions of refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria demonstrated that none of the 95 Iraqis interviewed believed that Iraq would stabilize in their own lifetime.[28] At present, the sentiment is that "Iraq's own government should start tending to the displaced population it has, rather than making political on the subject—and at the expense—of refugees."[29]

The assistance and accommodation (local integration) of Iraqi refugees in their host countries is an issue of concern among humanitarian organizations. The ambiguous nature of Iraqis' legal status as "guests" prohibits them from gainful employment, pushing them into the exploitative informal sector or, in some cases, "partnerships" with locals.[30] Even those with legal status (residence permits or temporary visas) struggle to obtain work permits.[31] There is widespread unemployment, with some Iraqis risking brief and dangerous visits to Iraq to keep their businesses operating, collect pensions and food rations, and other activities for raiding income.[32] There has emerged a "climate of anxiety and fear of deportations among Iraqis" in some states.[33] It is the lack of employment opportunities which is cited as one of the main factors imperilling Iraqis' livelihoods and curtailing their ability to afford suitable housing, health care, and education services.[34]

Even though the UNHCR has called upon the international community to do nothing that will compel the refugees to return to Iraq prematurely,[35] there is very little material that investigates the views and willingness of Iraqis to opt for third-country resettlement.[36] That said, it has been found that one in five Iraqis in Jordan had concrete plans to resettle in a third country, while 80 percent of the refugee population in Jordan (and Lebanon) do not intend to integrate into the host community, perceiving their stay as temporary.[37] Family reunification was also found to be a decisive factor when Iraqi families choose to flee from Iraq to neighbouring countries.[38]

Humanitarian and relief agencies, academics, advocacy and policy institutions have sought to elucidate the obstacles that exist to the provision of aid, assistance and protection, repatriation, and the possibilities of third-country resettlement. Yet few studies have paid attention to the motivations of Iraq's exiles for return, resettlement, or extended temporary residence in exile.

3. Local Level Perceptions: Policy Makers, Practitioners and Iraqi Exiles

During fieldwork in April and May 2011, we were able to ascertain that while the profiles of Iraqis coming to the attention of the humanitarian agencies in Syria and Jordan consistently included families, Lebanon has witnessed a shift from largely young single men and unaccompanied minors to families seeking third-country resettlement. In the recent period, UNHCR Lebanon has witnessed a surge in registration of Christian families fleeing the wave of violence directed at the Iraqi Christian community in 2010. Policy makers also reported variations in the refugees' motivations for selecting host countries despite a general drive for resettlement. They reported, and this was generally confirmed in our interviews with Iraqis, that those with links to the previous Iraqi regime and thus with slim chances for resettlement tended to opt to go to Syria or Jordan for long-term residence. Lebanon appeared to be sought after as a short-term destination, mainly by Christian refugees seeking resettlement.

All the interviewed policy makers remarked that none of three host states are signatories of the Geneva Convention; each state has adopted different policies for hosting Iraqi refugees. Generally these are entertained with a careful eye to the long-term concerns regarding *Tawtiin* (integration or naturalization) and the forced migration of Palestinians in the region. Generally, these policy makers reflected that the policies of the Syrian state were largely accommodating of Iraqi refugees—relaxed visa regime, open access to health and education, and easy entry into the informal economy. Jordan, they saw as less accommodating; it had recently tightened its policies regarding movement across its borders due to security claims. Unexpectedly, they felt, Lebanon has adopted the strictest policies in order to counter any claims for naturalization by Iraqis. In their official discourses, both Syria and Jordan consider Iraqis as temporary guests (*duyuf*) and are reluctant to use the term "refugees." Iraqis themselves do not regard themselves as "refugees" and do not apply the term to describe their conditions.

Beyond the rhetoric, policy makers remarked that each of the three states imposed a different set of legal measures regulating Iraqis' residence, summed up by an initial tourist visa, and a long-term residence permit. Short-term tourist visas were relatively accessible. Since 1 February 2011, Iraqis could get a Syrian visa at the border, while they needed to secure them before arrival to Jordan and Lebanon. Once in

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the host countries, Iraqis could renew these tourist visas for up to a year in most cases. The process was fairly straightforward but could become discretionary when implemented by the border controls. As one Iraqi man explained the tight checkups on his legal status:[39]

> Once a civil officer stopped me and asked for my ID, I showed him my UNHCR documents and he insisted on seeing my ID, he said "what is this?", he didn't respect an old man, I told him "I don't have my passport with me, and that all the information is in UNHCR document, if you suspect with the information, call UNHCR they know everything", and he asked me if I was Sunni or Shi'a. He has no right to do so. I told him "we are all Muslims, that is not your business, why are you asking?". This happened to me, I don't know if they do that to others.

Conversely, the residence type of visa was reported to be much harder to secure. Syrian regulations were the most lenient and granted refugees a three-month, renewable residence permit. However the procedures could become complicated. For example, refugees were required to submit official proof of residence through tenancy agreements. In some cases, landlords were reluctant to issue this document because they operated within an informal letting market.[40] As a result, some Iraqis do not manage to secure residence permits. Alternatively, Iraqis can secure work residence permits, but this incurs high costs and requires a national employer as a guarantor. Most importantly, the work permits are exclusively restricted to certain less skilled and non-professional employment categories.

Within these restrictive legal frameworks, a large number of these Iraqi exiles are undocumented or have had their visa status lapse. Beyond a small portion of wealthy Iraqi families who settled mainly in Jordan, there is a large proportion of middle-class professionals who have become increasingly impoverished due to the protractedness of the crisis. An Iraqi woman, who fled to Lebanon with her family, explains their deteriorating financial situation:[41]

> My husband used to be the representative of the Minister of Justice after 2005. […]. We received threats, calling him a conspirator with the Americans, a conspirator with the Cross, everything of this sort. […]. I had some gold. I sold it and I came with the money. I used it to leave Iraq […]. I need food, I need medication. We have nothing.

Iraqis are increasingly turning to the UNHCR and registering as refugees as their savings dry up. However, a sizable proportion of Iraqis prefer not to be identified because they had political links with the former regime. They have little trust in UNHCR's confidentiality standards and fear that their details would be passed on to the Iraqi or US governments.[42]

In Lebanon, Iraqis are considered work migrants. The Lebanese Directorate of General Security has been actively persecuting and detaining over-stayers. Even when the government grants occasional amnesty, it applies only to refugees who entered the country illegally and not those who overstayed their residences. As explained by one policy maker in Lebanon, there are around 100 detainees—found working without the correct papers—among registered refugees at any one time in Lebanon. These tight measures disadvantage Iraqis who do not have the means to finance their stay or find a guarantor employer. As a result, Iraqis in Lebanon are forced to take up informal jobs and are often exploited by employers. For example, a 45-year-old Iraqi arts teacher explains the constraints of his and his family's movement resulting from overstaying their tourist visa:[43]

> No, we are not legal. We do not even go out like the people who go out to have fun. We are afraid honestly, even my children. They thank God, I have raised them well. They are young people, 22 and 21 years old, young people. They don't go out, only to work and back home because they are convinced that if one of us eight [him and his family] is caught, we will all be affected.

Low Rate of Voluntary Return

In all three countries policy makers stated that prospects for voluntary return do not seem promising; very few Iraqis have accepted the voluntary repatriation packages that have been offered. UNHCR recently adopted a deregistration system in an attempt to assess numbers of returnees or onward-migrants. Syria and Jordan offices deactivate files if the refugees do not show up for assistance over a period of six months or a year respectively. UNHCR Jordan saw the numbers of "active" registered refugees drop in the past two years from 60,000 to 32,000, while the numbers in Syria have remained relatively stable—as Iraqis return to Iraq, others leave. UNHCR Lebanon assumed that voluntary return figures in Lebanon would be very low.

UNHCR does not promote voluntary return and only offers minimal return packages of 100 to 200 US dollars in addition to transportation costs. In Syria fewer than 200 individuals used them in 2010; in Jordan 200 families used them in the past three years; and in Lebanon 42 individuals used them in 2010. NGOs operating similar schemes have also faced little interest in return. Caritas, Jordan, for instance, had two families approach them for assisted return in 2010. One of the families spent a few months in Iraq and then moved back to Jordan shortly thereafter. As a

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result of this low demand, Caritas discontinued the voluntary return schemes.

However, the low official figures of return do not take into account a more fluid and informal circular movement between Iraq and neighbouring countries. A Lebanon-based NGO conducted an internal assessment of the movement of 2,000 Iraqi beneficiary families in 2010. Results showed that 400 families informally returned to Iraq either temporarily or permanently. However, the scope and dynamics of this informal movement are discouraged at the official level as host states' policies vary in terms of promoting or encouraging return. Jordan and Lebanon discourage return or "back and forth migration" by imposing a strict five-year ban on refugees who leave the territory. Syria maintains practically an open door policy with many Iraqis moving back and forth regularly.

All Iraqi refugees—and most of the policy makers and practitioners we interviewed—regarded the precarious security situation in Iraq and the Iraqi government's lack of support as the major reason for the low demand for assisted return schemes. Refugees who returned reported that their neighbourhoods have been segregated along sectarian lines, and experienced ethnic cleansing through threats and confiscation of property:[44]

> [My sister and I] used to work as inspectors in the church, we came out of the house in the morning, we saw an envelope in front of the house, there were 3 bullets in it. We were scared to death. We didn't know what to do, but we had to go to church for inspection […]. But after one month we received another threat, a paper in front of our door, threatening us: either we leave or we will be killed. After these threats we understood that we were not threatened because of our work, but most probably because we were Christians, that is why we decided to leave Baghdad. […]

Many of the refugees we spoke with reported that targeted persecution—the main driver of their flight from Iraq—remained a concern and prevented them from seeking return. These refugees revealed that this category of refugee is diverse and includes Christian and other religious minorities, in addition to those from Sunni and Shi'a backgrounds who were persecuted either because of their affiliation with the former regime, their involvement with the coalition forces, or the mixed marriages they contracted. Sometimes these factors were combined:[45]

> As I was a university student, then I was a member of the party […]. Our loyalty is for the country. We started receiving threats. And then we decided to leave, my father and I only. We left without anything. Only with the clothes I was wearing. We felt like we were thieves. I don't know what to say. People were threatening us for what? And you didn't do anything. Only because you were loyal to the nation? Only because you were a party member? So we had to leave. My family was divided. My mother as a Shi'a went back to her family, to her parents. She had to. She was forced to […]. It was hard. So we decided to leave.

Map 1: One Iraqi refugee migration pathway between Iraq and host

Overall it appears that the reduction in reported violence in Iraq in the last few years challenges the classical definitions of a "refugee" as one fleeing but not returning. The growing circularity of migration among Iraqis in the Middle East challenges these ideas and definitional assumptions. According to one policy maker in Jordan, the relative reduction in violence increased the movement of Iraqis who returned home for specific reasons such as to check on their relatives, sell their assets, collect their pensions, and assess the security situation, first-hand. These return visits, he added, do not imply that Iraqi refugees feel safe to return permanently. He explained further, "As far as we can tell they go in, do their task and come out, and if you ask them about the situation, they have taken a risk, it's a calculated risk. For some people the risk hasn't paid off, they got killed."[46]

As a result, many Iraqis return—temporarily—to Iraq without informing the organizations involved. For example,

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some male heads of households go on their own to assess the situation, and later relocate their families accordingly.

Ongoing Local Accommodation in Lieu of Official Local Integration

Our interviews indicate that the boundaries between long-term humanitarian assistance in protracted refugee situations and the prospects of "local integration" are blurred. The sensitivity to the protracted Palestinian refugee crisis has meant that the term "integration" is generally rejected by policy makers, practitioners, and Iraqis alike. However, the case of Iraq's exiles and refugees suggests that a continuous process of accommodation is taking place locally, with important implications in terms of the relations between host and refugee communities.

UNHCR has adapted a variety of forms of assistance in each country to respond to what it perceives is the scope of the refugee crisis in the state. Iraqi refugees are provided with food and cash distribution in Syria, cash distribution in Jordan, and food coupons in Lebanon. In Jordan, for example, UNHCR provides cash assistance to almost half of the active registered refugees (13,500), while some service providers such as Caritas reported steady numbers of Iraqi beneficiaries at around 8,000. In the three countries, NGOs provide skills and language training to men and women: technical training such as computer maintenance for men; while training for women focused on conventional skills such as hairdressing and sewing. In Lebanon, several NGOs provide legal services for detainees and assistance in securing work permits.

Despite the restrictive legal frameworks and the rejection of "local integration" as a durable solution, Iraqi exiles reported an ongoing process of accommodation in the three countries. This process was the outcome of new patterns of inter- and intra-social relations between host and refugee communities and within Iraqi communities. This ongoing accommodation was not problem-free as tensions between local and refugee communities were reported. While refugees complained about meagre entitlements, locals felt threatened by competition over job opportunities, social provision, the rise in cost of living, and security.

Third-Country Resettlement

Third-country resettlement of Iraqis has faced many challenges in terms of burden sharing and refugees' expectations. From the start of the crisis, Western countries' responses have been unpredictable and varied. Their roles and responsibilities with regard to the Iraq War do not seem to have played a part in determining national resettlement quotas for Iraqi refugees. In the past few years, quotas for resettlement have dropped dramatically, mainly due to the withdrawal of European countries from the program. As one policy maker in Syria explained, "Iraq is the black spot that people want to sweep under the carpet and forget about. But the reality for Iraqi refugees is quite crisp."[47]

Iraqi respondents felt that the Western states had an obligation to fulfill as an outcome of their roles in the war on Iraq. The majority of Iraqi refugees are reportedly interested in third-country resettlement. Whether due to general insecurity in Iraq, or targeted persecution, Iraqi refugees were creating transnational social networks as a way of ensuring their safety and reducing the risks they and their families face in exile. Dispersion along a vast transnational network including the US and Canada was increasingly common.[48] The case of one refugee in Lebanon illustrated this point. He was one of four siblings who were all dispersed in various countries at various periods in the past 15 years. He was based in Lebanon, with one brother in Jordan, another in Malta, and a sister in the US.[49]

Policy makers we interviewed clearly associated third-country resettlement with the national economic, social, and political interests of the Western states. As one senior diplomat explained:[50]

> Resettlement is not asylum. No country has an obligation to resettle a refugee from a third-country. So it is not about providing protection in the legal sense. […] And every country that I am aware of, including Canada has criteria based on whether or not you need protection as a refugee, but there are also some criteria that represent other national policy objectives. […] Some of these criteria involve protecting the safety and security of Canadians.

Policy makers were at times informally critical of selective criteria that disqualified various categories of Iraqi refugees. For example, several states exclude nationals associated with the former regime. This was seen as a particularly problematic exclusion as many of the middle-class professional Iraqi exiles were required to belong to the Baath party in order to work under the former regime. In some cases, Western resettlement criteria are set according to sectarian affiliation. Germany and France were reported to be interested in resettling Christian refugees only, an issue opposed by UNHCR.[51]

The resettlement selection process also disadvantages the widespread Middle Eastern preference for extended families and households. Most resettlement missions are directed at nuclear families with children less than 18 years of age. This excludes adult children who usually live with their parents and elderly relatives such as grandparents. These criteria add to the pressure on Iraqis who face leaving their family members behind. One elderly Iraqi in Jordan said:[52]

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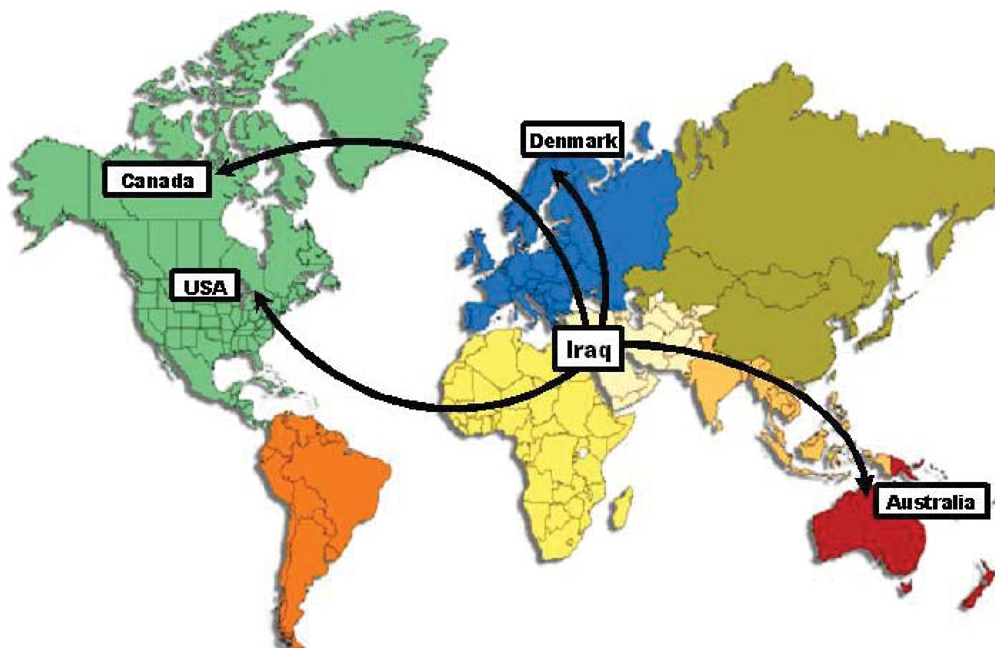
Map 2. One family, transnational destination: Migrations of the extended family of an Iraqi respondent (REFSYR1)



> As for the USA, I told them, I have a son in Syria who submitted his papers there. He is waiting his turn. If they allow me to go with my son to USA I will go. But I do not want to die alone, and be buried by others from another religion. I want to travel with my son; it is very difficult for someone of my age to live alone in America.

Policy makers believed Iraqi refugees to be quite knowledgeable about the criteria for resettlement of various countries. Interviews with refugees, however, contradicted these assumptions. We found that refugees constructed knowledge of the conditions and criteria of resettlement schemes based on conflicting information circulated in their social networks. Refugees get caught up a cycle of trial and error and often resort to informal channels leading them to use irregular routes of migration to Western countries and seek asylum in them.[53] Furthermore, refugees indicated that they did not receive regular updates about the status of their application. In Lebanon for instance, waiting times can go over a year without notification. This issue was particularly distressing for refugees who were "left hanging" for extended periods. One refugee in Lebanon likened the resettlement process to a matter of life and death:[54] "One is waiting like hanging between the earth and the sky. If the string breaks you either fall on the ground and someone picks you up, or you go to the sky."

Policy makers also pointed out that the conditions of resettlement at the country of destination included challenges in terms of expectations of self-reliance, adaptation, and support. While 70 percent of registered refugees were university graduates, they reported that refugees found it hard to settle for menial or less qualified jobs in their resettlement country.[55] Refugees were also subjected to anxiety and stress in certain contexts as support packages varied from country to country. For example, the US offered resettled refugees a support package for six months, after which time they were expected to work and repay it as their "loan." As a result, many resettled Iraqis, especially the older generation and some vulnerable women, were giving up and returning to the host countries.[56]

4. Conclusion: Constraints, Innovations, and Accommodations

Three broad areas emerged from these local-level interviews in the exploration of the conditions and predicaments as well as possibly innovative solutions in this protracted crisis: reconceptualizing the term "refugee"; clarifying asylum and resettlement criteria; and encouraging local accommodation.

Policy makers, practitioners, and Iraqis we interviewed considered that a liberalized view of refugee movement was needed. The perceptions of policy makers reflected a nuanced understanding of the realities of the protracted refugee crisis. They did not completely subscribe to the dominant humanitarian framework of the three classical solutions. Equally they held a balanced view of the issues faced by refugees, agreeing with some and contesting others. They all regarded security in Iraq as the major constraint

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hindering Iraqis' return to the country. They also recognized that the fluid movement of Iraqis back and forth to Iraq was an important mechanism for improving life opportunities and reducing family risk. Relaxing regulations on border crossing across the three countries was considered potentially useful for the long-term solution to the crisis as it would allow members of refugee households to return temporarily and get a sense of the situation in Iraq. This mobility was a common feature of Iraqi exiles' transnational networks, as one refugee mapped out:[57]

> My parents are abroad; […] my siblings are abroad. My brother is a naturalised American, and my mother needs a few more months to get it. My brother and sister are in Canada. My uncles are in Michigan. My uncle is in Australia; my cousin in Australia. My cousin is in Denmark and so on, we are an international family and you can find us everywhere.

On the ground, international policy makers recognized the need to clarify and share information related to the criteria of resettlement. Several policy makers mentioned that the lengthy and unclear procedures of third-country resettlement kept "refugees hanging."[58] Some suggested the creation of a user-friendly manual of the requirements and criteria of resettlement would be valuable for use across all three countries.[59]

Policy makers also recognized the heavy baggage around ideas of local integration—a term widely rejected by the host states. They all recognized that there was a growing category of Iraqis who were becoming "stuck" in host countries. This group included some of the most vulnerable categories such as the elderly left behind after nuclear family resettlement, or less skilled young adults. For this group—especially the young—policy makers were concerned that work permits or a relaxation of labour laws should be considered by the host states to lessen Iraqi refugees' dependency on humanitarian aid. Refugees echoed these concerns. As one refugee in Lebanon stated:[60]

> If I legalise my situation, I can go and come back as I want. I would be able to work in bigger firms. Now I have a computer maintenance diploma, and I know a lot about these things. I went and applied to a company in Jounieh. They fix satellites and things like that. They needed a work permit. And the salary was good salary, more than $1,000 […]. If I had a residency permit, I would be able take up this job. But instead, I am working as a house keeper in a hotel. Is that a job for me? No it's not, but what can I do?

The "refugees" of the Iraqi crisis do not fit with Western conceptualizations of refugee law. Their flight has been a steady outflow for more than a decade, peaking in 2006–7. The migration is not "one-way"; it is often circular and involves movement in and out of Iraq as well as across wider transnational networks in the Middle East and further afield. This mobility is a result of the protractedness of their situations and includes a strategy of managing life risks by dispersal of family members along pre-established social networks whenever possible. Iraqi mobility is part of the reality of this protracted refugee crisis. It needs to be recognized as a risk management strategy for refugees for whom the three classic durable solutions are largely inapplicable. Unfortunately this mobility is often looked at sceptically by many in the humanitarian aid regime as it raises questions regarding how well Iraqis fit into the "category" of refugee.

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50. Interview with senior diplomat (SENDIP1) in Damascus, Syria, 18 April 2011.
51. Interview with PMSYR3.
52. Interview with REFJOD5.
53. Interview with PMSYR2.
54. Interview with REFLEB3.
55. Interview with PMJOD4.
56. Interview with policy maker (PMJOD5) in Amman, Jordan, 4 May 2011.
57. Interview with Iraqi refugee (REFLEB2) in Beirut, Lebanon, 5 May 2011.
58. Interview with PMLEB4.
59. Interview with PMSYR3.
60. Interview with REFLEB2.

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Attempting Return: Iraqis' Remigration from Iraq

Vanessa Iaria

Abstract

The voluntary repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons is interpreted as evidence of restored security and political stability, improved civil-state relations, and public confidence in reconstruction efforts in war-torn countries. The findings presented in this article indicate that Iraqi refugees' decision to return is driven less by improvements in Iraq than by their desire to rebuild their lives back home and overcome the difficult legal and socio-economic conditions in neighbouring countries. The article explores Iraqi returnees' experiences based on accounts of their return and subsequent remigration to Syria and Jordan. The micro- and macrotransformations occurring in post-Saddam Iraq have a strong bearing on refugees' return and reintegration in their home communities. In the absence of permanent solutions to protracted displacement, the Iraqis engage in transnational mobility and livelihood strategies and participate in the socio-economic developments in home and host countries through the constant multidirectional flow of economic, social, and human capital.

Résumé

Le rapatriement volontaire des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées localement est interprété comme un signe de la restauration de la sécurité et de la stabilité politique, de l'amélioration des relations entre l'état et les citoyens, et d'une augmentation de la confiance dans les efforts de reconstruction des pays déchirés par la guerre. Les résultats présentés dans cet article indiquent que la décision des Irakiens de retourner dans leur pays est moins le résultat d'une meilleure conjoncture en Irak que de leur désir de reconstruire leur vie dans leur pays et de fuir les difficultés légales et socio-économiques qu'ils rencontrent dans les pays voisins. On y explore les expériences des Irakiens qui sont retournés au pays, sur la base des récits de leur retour et de leur ré-émigration en Syrie et en Jordanie. Les micro- et les macro-transformations ayant lieu dans l'Irak d'après Saddam ont en réalité beaucoup de poids sur le retour et la réintégration des réfugiés irakiens dans leur communauté. En absence de solutions durables aux déplacements prolongés, les Irakiens s'engagent dans la mobilité internationale et la recherche de moyens de subsistance, et contribuent ainsi au développement socio-économique de leur pays et des pays voisins par le flux multidirectionnel économique, social et humain qu'ils créent.

Introducing Return and Transnational Mobility in the Iraqi Displacement Context

The voluntary repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) is generally interpreted as evidence of progress in a series of post-conflict issues, including restoration of security and political stability, improvements in civil-state relations, and public confidence in reconstruction and development goals in war-torn countries.[1] In contrast, the protracted presence of displaced populations challenges the legitimacy of post-conflict states.[2] The findings presented in this article indicate that Iraqi refugees' decision to return is driven less by improvements in the country of origin than by their desire to rebuild their lives back home and to overcome the difficult socio-economic and legal conditions in the countries of first asylum: Syria and Jordan.

The persistent lack of political stability and security in Iraq not only complicates the repatriation of Iraqi citizens but also limits academics' and practitioners' ability to investigate the return experiences of Iraq's forced migrants. This article attempts to address this problem by offering a qualitative study of the experiences of externally displaced Iraqis

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who tried to return and reintegrate into their home societies and who, for a host of reasons, have decided to re-migrate to Syria and Jordan, the neighbouring countries of refuge. Drawing upon the concept of Returnee's Preparedness and Resource Mobilization,[3] this article defines "return" as an act that entails not only a clear and open choice on the part of the refugee, but, above all, a proof of readiness supported by the gathering of sufficient intangible and tangible resources, indispensable for sustainable reintegration. Iraqis' willingness to return and their resource-mobilization potential, as well as their pre- and post-return conditions, affect their reintegration and their role as agents of social change and development at home. On the other hand, the micro- and macrotransformations occurring in war-torn Iraq have a strong bearing on the success or failure of refugees' repatriations.

The Transnational Mobility and Social Networks[4] approach is applied here to explore Iraqis' cross-border mobility and networks, which they have developed as alternative livelihood strategies to overcome difficult socio-economic conditions in the host countries, and the contextual factors that led to their remigration. Refugees' potential role as agents for socio-political and economic development is not solely related to their permanent return. The Iraqi migrants contribute to rebuilding the economic infrastructure and the socio-political fabric of their home country by exposing sending and receiving areas to a constant multi-directional flow of economic and social remittances.[5] The home and host governments and the international refugee regime have acknowledged the importance of Iraqis' spontaneous cross-border movements and networks. However, they have yet to incorporate them into context-specific return and reintegration assistance policies that maximize the role of returnees and members of the receiving communities as key agents in the national reconstruction process.

Research Methods and Participants

This study is based on first-hand interviews with Iraqi refugees conducted during a period of field research in Syria and Jordan between January 2010 and March 2011. The discussion is mainly based on Iraqis' accounts of their repatriation and their subsequent remigration. The experiences of Iraqi refugees were observed within the transnational social fields in which they are embedded. Transnational social fields are defined as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, information, goods, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed.[6] Conceptualizing Iraqis' livelihoods as taking place within transnational social fields allows the analysis to expand beyond the refugees in neighbouring countries to those who stayed behind but are connected to them through the networks of social relations, established and sustained across borders. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 14 respondents, 7 in Damascus and 7 in Amman. The interviewees have been recruited through a snowballing system: the researcher met participants through friends, colleagues and the UN agencies and NGOs where she worked as a volunteer both in Syria and Jordan. All interviews were conducted in standard Arabic, recorded and translated into English, with the essential support of Arabic-speaking assistants. The sample of participants includes Iraqi individuals and families who:

1. fled Iraq after 2003,
2. are or are not registered with the UNHCR and sought or did not seek resettlement to a third country of asylum,
3. have adopted transnational livelihood strategies,
4. come from any ethno-religious, educational or socio-economic background,
5. have resided (legally or illegally) in the host country for at least six months, and
6. have returned to any area of Iraq.

The 14 respondents fled between 2003 and 2009, following the US-led invasion and the consecutive escalation of ethno-sectarian violence across the country. Before flight, 11 participants resided in different areas of Baghdad; one in Al-Falluja, Al-Anbar; one in Al-Emara, Misan; one in the city of Basra. Their length of stay abroad varied from six months to over three years. In Damascus research participants were six men, aged between 25 and 68, and a 64-year-old woman. Their level of education varied: five male participants hold university degrees or diplomas, the female participant has a secondary school degree, and the 25-year-old interviewee left Iraq before completing his high school education. In Iraq the female participant was a housewife and the rest of the male participants, with the exception of the student, worked as salaried professionals in schools, universities, and government ministries.

In Amman, respondents were five men, aged between 22 and 63; and two women, aged 30 and 44 years. The five male participants hold university degrees and the two female participants obtained high school diplomas. In Iraq, one of the female participants ran a beauty salon and the other was unemployed; three male participants worked in universities, another male participant owned a supermarket, and the 22-year-old participant was a student. Despite the high educational level among the Iraqis interviewed in Syria and Jordan, only two managed to find regular work opportunities in the host countries, owing to difficulties to obtain work permits. Their well-being depends on transnational kinship ties and other social networks of solidarity and

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financial support, international organizations' cash and in-kind assistance, informal work in the local labour market, and migrants' engagement in cross-border income-generating activities between Iraq and the countries of refuge. Mason[7] correctly highlights how Iraqi refugees' socio-economic circumstances determine their ability to secure legal status and consequently enhance their physical mobility. The inability to freely move across borders reduces migrants' access to resources and opportunities available in Iraq and in other countries, thereby impeding their socio-economic betterment.

The asylum and immigration status of respondents is therefore a key factor influencing their living conditions in exile and their decisions about return. Before repatriation, five participants interviewed in Jordan held an annual residence permit and two had overstayed. Only three of these participants had sought refugee status through the UNHCR. In Syria, all participants held a temporary residence permit, allowing them to travel between the home and the host country. All interviewees met in Damascus were registered with the UNHCR and sought resettlement to a third country of refuge. Holding a valid residence permit was a precautionary measure that allowed them to visit Iraq and re-enter Syria and Jordan at any time, without facing immigration restrictions.

Participants' decision-making processes about return also depended on the religion, socio-cultural values, and gendered power relations in the Iraqi families and communities. With the exception of the female participant from a Christian Chaldean background, the remaining respondents interviewed in Damascus and Amman are Arab Muslims. In Jordan, five respondents are Shiites and two are Sunnites. In Syria one participant is Shiite, three are Sunnites, and the other three Muslim participants refused to disclose their sectarian affiliation, asserting their Iraqi identity and expressing strong disapproval of the ethno-sectarian identity politics causing divisions and violence in their home societies. The migratory trajectories of refugees' return and their reintegration experiences have been affected by the phenomenon of ethnically-based territorial and administrative polarization that has forced some participants to abandon their houses and jobs and move from religious and ethnically mixed areas to homogeneous ones in search of safe havens. Among the female participants only one embarked on the migration and return process unaccompanied. The remaining female participants went back with their families and were interviewed in the presence of their husbands, who, conforming to Iraqi socio-cultural customs, tended to lead the interview and speak about the return experience on behalf of the whole family. This may have reduced the women's freedom to express their opinions and discuss their personal experiences in greater depth.

The findings presented below are not representative of the entire Iraqi refugee populations in Syria and Jordan or generalizable to other displacement crises. A more comprehensive study of Iraqis' migration experiences and future trends would need a larger sample and greater operational support in the data collection. This article, however, contributes to understanding the complex individual and societal dynamics involved in refugee returns by offering a qualitative analysis of the variety of Iraqi returnees' profiles and experiences. It illustrates how under specific circumstances, Iraqi refugees' transnational livelihoods and social networks have emerged as spontaneous survival mechanisms and opportunities to participate in the economic and socio-political developments in Iraq and in their host countries.

Desire to Return and Lack of Alternatives

The decision to return to areas affected by insecurity and by lack of infrastructure and public services is extremely difficult. Within the limits of available information, legal and socio-economic uncertainty, and constraints in host and home countries, Iraqi refugees evaluate their human conditions and life circumstances and take critical decisions about their future. The participants in this study expressed differing degrees of willingness to return, but, given the absence of security and rule of law in their country, all shared the apprehension that by going back they were exposing themselves to the risk of abuse and violence.

Some participants have fled, alone or with their families, in order to avert becoming victims of the armed conflict and the economic depression associated with it. Their initial intention was to find temporary shelter in neighbouring countries until the situation at home improved and they could return and resume their "normal" lives. Their lack of interest in permanent resettlement in a third country and their greater willingness to return is driven by the lack of family ties abroad. For them, the resettlement experience entails more compromises and losses than advantages: it takes immense courage to travel far from the homeland and rebuild lives from scratch in a different society where migrants are likely to face communication barriers, economic hardships, and socio-cultural integration problems. The high costs and challenges of living in a foreign society combine with migrants' strong desire to reunite with the families and friends whom they have left behind, recoup their lost rights and properties, and resume their pre-war activities in their home communities.

Other participants have left Iraq after being targets of persecution or violence, or witnesses of killings, kidnappings, and forced removal of family members. They attribute

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the gross human rights violations they have suffered to the operations launched by the US-led military forces and the subsequent escalation of politically incited ethno-sectarian violence. The physical abuses they have endured left them with irreversible physical damage, severe burns, disfigurement, scarring, and broken bones. Physical disabilities are aggravated by traumas derived from the tragic loss of loved ones, their houses, land, properties, and jobs. For these refugees return is not a matter of "free choice" but more a reaction to the lack of alternatives. The precarious legal status and means of subsistence in neighbouring countries of asylum, combined with the scarce opportunities for resettlement in the West, have led them to consider return as the only available option.[8]

The lack of progress in resettlement applications is a critical factor in Iraqis' decisions about return. The reluctance of third-party governments in the West to resettle high numbers of refugees, combined with the limited resources and operational capacity of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to deal with a substantial amount of resettlement applications, has led to backlogs in the allocation of resettlement places.[9] In Syria, a number of participants have expressed disappointment and frustration at the UNHCR's delay in examining their refugee files, many of which have been pending for over three years. The long hours spent outside of UNHCR offices, queuing to listen to an overworked UN employee saying "come back in six months, your case is still under scrutiny," crushes their hopes and leaves the migrants in a wearing state of uncertainty about the future. Some have made the decision to go back, overwhelmed by the psychologically and physically challenging living conditions in exile.

In Syria and Jordan, most Iraqis feel trapped in legal and physical limbo. The Syrian Arab Republic and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have not ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Iraqis are not granted refugee status and are hosted as "temporary guests." Their presence is regulated through temporary residence permits, subject to frequent changes depending on regional and internal politico-economic developments and Syria's and Jordan's relations with the Iraqi government and international donors. In late 2006 Jordan imposed visa restrictions on Iraqi nationals as a result of an increasing fear of a spillover of the sectarian and anti-occupation violence raging in neighbouring Iraq. Syria's imposition of visa requirements on Iraqi refugees in 2007 was less driven by national security concerns than by an attempt by the regime to pressure the US and the Iraqi governments to share the financial burden of the refugee crisis.[10]

The protracted presence of a large number of Iraqi migrants in the two host countries has exerted significant pressures on national infrastructure, water supplies, public services, and housing. The UNHCR has launched several appeals for financial support from developed countries, especially the states directly involved in the 2003 US-led invasion, to assist the Syrian and Jordanian governments to meet the immediate needs of the Iraqi refugees. International financial assistance for the Iraqi refugees hosted in the near abroad has materialized unevenly; Jordan received nearly twice as much as Syria and 1.4 times as much as Lebanon.[11] The Syrian and Jordanian governments, already struggling to provide basic services and opportunities for their own citizens, have therefore adopted a series of selective policies that discourage Iraqi migrants from integrating permanently into the host societies.

Such policies are driven by host countries' security concerns and calculations of the long-term impact of migrants' presence and cross-border activities on host countries' socio-economic development. The relationship of interdependence between the three neighbouring countries is confirmed by historical bilateral trade and investment agreements in the energy, transit routes, and transportation sectors.[12] For Syria and Jordan, hosting Iraqi transnational migrants, especially wealthy and powerful Iraqi politicians, businessmen, and merchant families, who have controlled Iraq's agricultural and industrial sectors for the past century, guarantees continued profitable transactions with Iraq. Van Hear has emphasized that involuntary population influxes can bring great benefits to receiving societies in terms of acquisition of human, social, and economic capital needed for local development.[13] Yet these potential benefits depend upon the existence of a propitious normative environment in the host countries that maximizes the positive impact of migrant capital influx.

In Jordan, Iraqis have to meet stringent requirements such as possessing major in-country investments or currency deposits in local banks to obtain annual residence permits. With the exception of wealthy investors and highly skilled migrants employed in the Jordanian private sector, Iraqi people cannot secure long-term residency and work permits. Those who cannot afford the costs involved in attaining residency overstay their visas and reside irregularly in Jordan. They are subject to accumulative fines and, because of their irregular status, they cannot travel abroad or pay temporary visits to Iraq. The inability to move across borders reduces migrants' access to resources and opportunities available in Iraq or in other countries, thereby causing their socio-economic immobility and downward assimilation in host societies. Since 2008, the Jordanian authorities have granted a number of amnesties to irregular Iraqi residents including the reduction of accumulated fines by 50 percent for those who wish to remain in the country

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and waiving fines for those who wish to return home. It has been reported that these initiatives have been ineffective in augmenting the number of Iraqi returnees[14] but there are no accurate and independent statistics to verify this claim. Other sources suggest that the unstable security situation at home discourages the Iraqi people's permanent return and there is a widespread perception that once they leave it would be extremely difficult to re-enter Jordan.[15]

The Syrian authorities, in contrast, have granted annual residence permits to members of the Iraqi Ba'ath party, traders, businessmen, families with children enrolled in local schools, and highly skilled Iraqis employed in the local labour market. Those who do not belong to these categories possess a permit of stay on humanitarian grounds, valid for three months and renewable, at no cost, at the Immigration and Passports Department. In Syria, as in Jordan, the lack of regular employment and the high costs of investment and higher education opportunities discourage Iraqi families' permanent integration in the host society. Syrian immigration and residency policies towards the Iraqi forced migrants may reflect strategic economic speculations, political calculations against US and international pressures and sanctions, attachment to international financial assistance in a period of economic crisis, and ambitions to deepen political influence and trade relations with Iraq.[16] Syria's flexible immigration and residency rules are nevertheless facilitating Iraqis' circular movements, their transnational livelihood strategies, their decisions and preparation for return. In contrast, Jordan's more selective regulations have induced many Iraqi migrants into illegality and consequently prevented them from embarking on cross-border movements and activities. Restrictions on Iraqis' freedom of movement across borders hamper their ability to personally assess the situation at home, take decisions, and prepare their sustainable return.[17]

The Preparedness of Iraqi Returnees

Cassarino[18] introduces the concept of Returnees' Preparedness which refers to return as a voluntary act that must be supported by the gathering of sufficient intangible and tangible resources to facilitate the sustainable post-return reintegration experience. The gathering and mobilization of resources prior to repatriation requires time and depends on a number of interconnected variables: migrants' pre-flight circumstances, their living conditions in the host countries, and the available information about return and reintegration challenges and opportunities.

Information about socio-political and economic developments in the areas of return plays a key role in shaping Iraqis' expectations about home and influencing their decision-making processes. All the participants in this study obtain information from Iraqi satellite TV channels, phone calls and email exchanges with family and friends in Iraq, visits to and from home areas, and word-of-mouth communications among the Iraqi people living or transiting in the host countries. The Iraqi participants filter the information disseminated by the media and institutional sources since it is perceived as manipulated by competing political forces. The inability of international humanitarian agencies to provide accurate and reliable advice to potential returnees derives from their limited presence and operational capacity in the areas of origin.[19]

In the absence of reliable institutional sources, the participants trust information generated by themselves or by trustworthy informal sources, who produce news oriented towards their own personal concerns.[20] Refugees' decision-making processes are strongly influenced by the available information about conditions in home areas, how it is circulated amongst them, and how they subjectively evaluate and react to it.[21] The information acquired through these social networks contributes to raising refugees' expectations about their post-return experience.[22] In some cases, refugees have realized only upon their return that the information obtained by informal sources is less accurate or objective than they expected. The respondents who have not visited Iraq before their repatriation claimed that it is impossible to gather sufficient and accurate information about transformations that have occurred at home during their absence. They feel ill-prepared to plan their return a priori; they need to personally assess the situation at home. The forced migrants who have adopted cross-border livelihood strategies have the opportunity to assess the local realities at home and weigh the costs and benefits of repatriation. Some participants personally witnessed the lack of improvements in their home areas and had low prospects concerning their return experience. Nonetheless, the unsustainable way of life and the lack of stability and future prospects in the host societies had a greater impact on their decision to return than their concerns about the insecurity and political volatility at home.

The personalized information received by Iraqi migrants is only one critical factor influencing their plans and resource mobilization before repatriation. Migrants' pre-flight circumstances and living conditions in host countries also affect their ability to prepare for return. Before flight, some participants were targets of military operations or ethno-sectarian violence. They were severely injured and lost their loved ones, their houses and jobs. They arrived in the host countries to seek assistance from humanitarian organizations that provide costly and specialized medical care, unavailable in Iraq. Given the losses they have suffered and their struggle to survive in the host countries, they

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have limited potential and independent means to mobilize resources prior to repatriation. The emotional and material losses they endured are inestimable and they have received no compensation for the harms suffered. The sustainable return and reintegration of these migrants requires proactive institutional intervention in the form of effective reparation schemes that include not only financial and material compensation for damaged and expropriated properties, but also the provision of adequate physical and mental health services and specific rehabilitation programs that offer education and employment opportunities to people with special needs.

Other respondents have not experienced the same degree of violence, destruction, and deprivation before flight. Yet their stay in the host countries is similarly characterized by legal precariousness, lack of employment, and scarce opportunities for socio-economic advancement. In such circumstances, the mobilization of financial and material resources is extremely limited and the migrants rely on available resources at home in order to return and reintegrate. Their well-being depends on money transfers from Iraq and other countries, services subsidized by the host governments, assistance from humanitarian organizations, and casual jobs in the local informal market. In the absence of regular income-generating opportunities in the host societies some refugees have decided to take the risk and return to Iraq, with the expectation to find or resume their old professions and earn wages substantially higher than in neighbouring Syria and Jordan. Post-Saddam Iraq is in a period of high political uncertainty and slow economic growth. In 2008, the Iraqi government granted a large wage increase in the public sector to compensate for the erosion of real wages that had occurred during previous years.[23] Since mid-2009, oil export earnings have returned to pre-2003 levels and government revenues have recovered and are increasing, along with global oil prices.[24] Attracted by the news of economic progress, the Iraqi migrants decide to return, despite the difficult security and political circumstances, to earn higher incomes to support their families.

Wealthier and more educated Iraqi families depend on income generated through salaries or state pensions, family businesses, and the income from rents and sales of properties and land in Iraq. The flow of significant financial capital from Iraq allows them to optimize their forced migration experience and turn it into an opportunity to develop and diversify their skills. In Jordan, for instance, some participants have enrolled in higher education programs in local private universities and can afford covering their families' living expenses in the host country for the entire duration of their studies. As long as they are registered students, they are entitled to annual residency permits, granting them freedom to travel to Iraq and to other countries and to engage in cross-border business and other activities. The Iraqis with university degrees and several years of work experience have found a remedy to the lack of employment opportunities in the host countries by working online from home. Some others actively engage in human rights advocacy, fund-raising campaigns, training sessions, and consultancy work, at times in the form of private firms, at others in coordination and partnership with national and international humanitarian organizations, whose field offices are staffed with paid Iraqi volunteers.[25] Working in such a dynamic and multicultural environment enables them to cultivate social remittances that they invest to promote social change in both sending and receiving countries. Social remittances include enriched individual and collective identities, new ideas, values, behaviours, forms of knowledge, and attitudes towards democracy, human rights, and social justice.[26] These participants use the material resources at their disposal not only to ensure a safe shelter and the fulfillment of their basic needs but also to acquire qualifications, new skills, and values that they plan to employ to participate in the reconstruction of the economic and social fabric of their country.

In favourable post-return environments, returnees' personal aspirations and their educational and professional advancement may facilitate their reintegration process, their upward social mobility, and their innovative role in their home communities. Some participants have gained consistent financial capital, remittances, transnational business, and social networks which, supported by apposite and well-developed commercial laws, could become the basis for new investments and boost the creation of employment opportunities and economic development in Iraq.[27] However, the capacity of returnees to invest their assets, skills, and experiences and bring about changes has been affected by the profound socio-political and environmental transformations in the home country. They have had to interact with a new socio-political order in the societies of origin. Adapting to the changing circumstances at home sometimes entailed tough compromises, even forsaking the skills, values, and identities acquired abroad. Those who could not achieve a satisfactory adjustment with the changing conditions at home faced integration challenges and problems and eventually opted for remigration.[28]

Attempting Return and Re-migration from Iraq

After living in the safety of neighbouring Syria and Jordan for a prolonged period of time, some participants have had difficulties in adapting to the unsafe and poor living conditions in war-torn home areas. Upon return, participants' nostalgic memories of Iraq's beautiful cities and natural

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landscapes have been replaced by images of destruction and dilapidation of historic streets, buildings, and national heritage sites with few visible signs of reconstruction. Some participants described areas of return as "enormous piles of dust and dirt," where high concrete walls and numerous checkpoints hamper people's freedom of movement, divide cities into homogeneous ethno-sectarian areas, and create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion among former neighbours. For some participants, physical reintegration was an exhausting and frustrating process given the unreliable provision of electricity, health care facilities, and other essential public services. They could not bear the general lack of security and the harsh climate and living conditions in their home country. After the end of the "liberation" war, the US Coalition Provisional Authority and the following Iraqi governments disappointed the expectations of Iraqi citizens by neglecting their claim for the right to human rather than military security.[29] Iraq's transitional period has been characterized by uneven distribution of national resources, socio-economic inequalities, high levels of unemployment and destitution, and a lack of legal protection. These factors caused widespread popular discontent and a growing involvement of Iraqis in conservative religious groups and insurgent movements, which took up the role of alternative guarantors of physical and human security.[30]

Some participants went back to their areas of residence before flight where they own a house, which has not been damaged, expropriated, or occupied by others. They were not afraid of their neighbours; they feared the violence resulting from the power struggle between political parties and their respective militia groups. Others were not able to return to their home areas because their properties have been destroyed or occupied in the course of the episodes of ethno-sectarian cleansing that occurred during the last conflict. The Iraqi mosaic of ethno-religious groups have co-existed in relative peace for centuries and Iraqi families and tribal confederations are the product of inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian marriages.[31] The pre-1963 Iraqi nationalist movements were cross-ethnic in nature and prioritized domestic development over membership in a supranational Pan-Arab entity. Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim (1958–1963) was the main promoter of a form of inclusive and pluralist Iraqi nationalism. The succeeding Ba'ath regimes endorsed instead a Pan-Arab unity discourse emphasizing a xenophobic and chauvinist interpretation of Arabism that promoted Sunni Arab domination of Iraqi politics and society, repressing Kurdish and Shiite claims to ethno-sectarian self-determination.[32] Qasim Hussein Saleh[33] explains that under Saddam Hussein (1968–2003) the Ba'ath regime indoctrinated the people to believe that the Iraqi nation was equivalent to the president or that being loyal to Iraq meant being loyal to Saddam. For over three decades the Iraqi people were exposed to this equation through the state-controlled media outlets, its educational institutions, and its party cadres. When in 2003 the dictator fell and hid in a hole under the ground, Iraqis' feelings of loyalty disappeared with him. After the "big tent" of the state collapsed and law and order turned into chaos, panic spread among the people who divided and sought protection from families, tribes, clans, religious authorities, civil groups, political parties, and any other force or power that could shelter them. The feeling of belonging to the Iraqi nation was suspended and replaced by innumerable loyalties that started competing to achieve a place of authority in the new political power structure. The US Coalition Provisional Authority and the subsequent Iraqi governments enforced constitutional laws and policies such as the 2005 electoral law, the de-Ba'athification order, and the dissolution of the Iraqi national army that reinforced ethno-sectarian divisions and led to the territorial polarization of previously religious and ethnically mixed areas and communities.[34] The Iraqi society is now struggling to escape a trap set up by foreign powers, local parties, and religious leaders through the political manipulation of ethnic and religious feelings.

For some respondents the relationships with family members and friends who stayed behind has changed along with the surrounding environment. The time spent sheltered in the host countries has offered the forced migrants room to recover from the traumas of the conflict, regain health, learn new things, and look forward to a more hopeful and peaceful future. In contrast, they have depicted their relatives and friends who remained in Iraq during and after the war as "fearful," "worried," "stressed," and prone to suspicious and aggressive behaviours as a response to the multitude of dangers and the depriving living conditions. During the Ba'ath era, there was a single centre of power and social control and Iraqis could recognize and thereby avoid the sources of threats. In contrast, after the fall of the regime, they feel they can no longer guarantee their safety, since they are exposed to unknown perils from several sides. The US military troops, foreign terrorists, and the various political and religious parties ruling the country are ready to use arbitrary force to impose their power and control over national resources. One of the alleged goals of the US-led invasion was to bring democracy and freedom of expression to the Iraqi people. Almost nine years since the end of military operations in Iraq, these objectives have evidently not been achieved. The US disengagement strategy has progressively left the country in the hands of conservative religious authorities and political parties, which repress citizens' freedom of expression and have committed gross human rights violations, including the arrest and

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detention of thousands of civilians without charge and fair trials.[35] Some participants in this study have remigrated after being subjected to abuses of power committed by the very authorities that were supposed to protect them. One of the returnees owned a supermarket in Baghdad and the local police harassed him and the other shop owners in the area and extorted bribes in exchange for protection. He made the brave decision to report the injustices he was enduring to the governorate authorities. As a result, his shop was destroyed, and he was physically assaulted by security officers and had to escape again from Iraq to protect his family.

Some participants faced difficulties interacting with other members of their home communities, which, during their absence, had become increasingly religious and conservative. After more than four decades of largely secular Ba'athist rule, radical factions in Iraq's Sunnite and Shiite communities have asserted political control over society, leading to the prevalence of conservative religious values and habits such as pressures on women, including Christians, to wear the veil. One of the female returnees was forced out of Iraq for the second time after renewed death threats by a group of unknown armed men, who, the previous year, attacked her because she ran a *Haram* (forbidden) beauty salon. The assaulters brutally beat her and threw sulphuric acid at her face, causing disfigurement and the loss of one eye. The perpetrators of this horrible act remain at large; the police never opened an investigation into this violent crime.

Other returnees felt neglected by the new Iraqi government, which adopted a series of policies and measures that promoted social inequalities and discrimination rather than national reconciliation and rehabilitation. One of this study's participants returned with his family to Baghdad to reclaim his house, which had been expropriated by members of the new Iraqi National Guard. He was forced to go back to Syria after his failed attempt to seek justice and the restitution of his property. While victims of the former regime have access to mechanisms for land and property rights compensation,[36] Iraqi victims of land and property rights violations after 2003 have no other option but to seek justice through the ordinary Iraqi court system. They have to go back and file a reclaim with no guarantee of being compensated for the harms suffered. Despite the great need for protection and compensation for their losses, the lack of confidence and mistrust towards public authorities prevents returnee families from registering with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement for reintegration assistance. Afraid of being identified and located by potentially dangerous agents, many returnees avoid state authorities altogether. This type of return and reintegration assistance favours one group over another and is likely to have a negative impact in terms of national reconciliation and peace building since it may sow the seeds for future strife.

The situation of one of this study's participants subject to the Accountability and Justice Law was even more sensitive. He felt he was victim of a grave injustice; the de-Ba'athification regulations were applied to his case based not on evidence of his individual responsibility but rather on the assumption that being a Ba'ath party member he shared the responsibility for the crimes of the previous regime. As a result, his properties were confiscated, he was forced out of employment, lost his pension rights, and upon return he was again exposed to threats and retribution from elements of the Bader Organization linked to the Shiite Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI). The government has used the Accountability and Justice Law as a weapon of collective punishment and a means to eliminate potential agents of dissent or opposition to the newly established political order in Iraq.[37]

Some returnees gave up their rights to social welfare and services from state institutions in order to preserve their dignity and avoid the frustration of dealing with the disorganized and corrupted Iraqi bureaucratic system. In order to obtain support from local authorities some respondents had to pay bribes or use their *wastas* or personal recommendations and connections with the sectarian political groups, which controlled the various ministries and public offices. The system of patronage and widespread corruption has developed and rapidly proliferated since the 1990s, in reaction to the protracted wars and the devastating effects of the 13 years of UN economic sanctions against Iraq, when state employees received salaries as low as two dollars per month and depended on bribes to sustain their families. Obtaining job opportunities and access to welfare and social protection schemes did not depend on individual needs, qualifications, and skills but on the right connections and affiliations.[38] Indeed, the change of regime has not brought improvements in this sense. Before, Iraqi people had to be members of one single institution, the Ba'ath party, in order to ensure employment and socio-economic mobility. Now the new ethno-sectarian political order has reshaped the system of patronage into multiple channels of political loyalism that hamper people's rights to equal opportunities. This situation has led one of the interviewees to claim: "Today, corruption is the only institution that can be called national in Iraq; it involves Iraqis from all ethno-sectarian backgrounds and there is coordination between them."

These institutionalized practices prevent the socio-economic reintegration of those who are qualified for certain positions but do not wish to be associated with any religious or political group and refuse to be part of this system of ethno-sectarian discrimination. The participants

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who returned with the intention to actively contribute their knowledge and skills to the national reconciliation dialogue and the reconstruction process have been prevented by the prevailing system and by new threats of persecution and violence. One of the respondents holds a PhD in political sciences and returned to work in a university in Baghdad. During a conference on the role of religious parties in national politics he made a contribution for which he was assaulted by the outraged audience. After this episode, he had to leave the country and his job again and resettled with his family in Jordan. This experience convinced him that the Iraqi society is not yet ready to offer him an open and democratic work environment, where he can freely express his opinion without fear of subsequent retaliation.

What Happens after Re-migration?

Under the above mentioned circumstances, these Iraqi migrants' attempts to return were unsurprisingly unsuccessful. Nonetheless, the failed return experiences produced diverse reactions among the research participants. The abortive returns made some lose hope of ever re-establishing their lives back home and have spurred them on to seek onward migration opportunities and an alternative "home" in a Western country, where they hope to achieve personal security, stability, and a better future. After remigration they have resettled temporarily in the neighbouring countries, where they check the progress of their asylum applications with the UNHCR. Some of the respondents employed in Iraqi institutions resigned from their posts, having decided not to return to their old jobs or found more attractive employment opportunities in the host countries' private sector. They have sold their properties in Iraq and invested the money from the sales in houses and businesses in Jordan and Syria. One participant bought two apartments in Amman and has started a car import-export business in collaboration with a network of Iraqi partners based in the US, Jordan, and Iraq. Taking advantage of Jordan's investment promotion laws, the group of investors purchase new cars from the US via the Internet and import them to the Iraqi market through Jordan. Despite their desire to settle permanently in their first countries of asylum and the economic opportunity to do so, the legal and living conditions of Iraqi families in Jordan and Syria are as uncertain as the renewal of their temporary residency permits. Without being granted a longer-term residency status, investing in future projects in the host countries is a hazardous undertaking. The precarious migration status induces the Iraqi families to seek resettlement opportunities in a third country, where they hope to achieve full citizenship rights and long-term integration opportunities.

On the other hand, the challenging post-return experiences in the home areas have not dissuaded some other participants from returning to Iraq. After unsuccessfully seeking compensation for the physical, emotional, and material losses suffered, some participants have re-migrated to Syria and Jordan. However, they keep going back and forth in order to collect assistance from family and friends in Iraq and assess developments at home. They plan a new attempt to return when the situation stabilizes and the Iraqi government enforces the laws and measures necessary to facilitate their safe and dignified repatriation. One participant lives and works in Iraq for roughly two months and then goes back to Damascus to visit his family and bring them the money he earns. Several months after his return to Iraq, another interviewee moved back to Jordan, where he has been offered a PhD place in a Jordanian private university. His wife and children have permanently resettled in Iraq, where they enjoy the protection and support of their extended families and tribe. Every three months he visits them in Iraq and upon the completion of his doctoral studies he plans to join his family and find work in an Iraqi university. His aspiration is to use the postgraduate qualification and skills he is acquiring in Jordan to contribute to the nation-building process in his country. The former civil servant subjected to the Accountability and Justice Law has found employment in Erbil, in the Kurdistan autonomous region in the north of Iraq,[39] where he took up a teaching position in a private university. He has embarked on the migration experience alone, while his wife and children have remained in Damascus. These coping mechanisms include refugees' transnational lives, circular migration, and cross-border activities as a livelihood strategy. Nyborg Sørensen[40] identified two typologies of mobile livelihoods, namely "staggered repatriation" and "revolving returnees." The former includes fragmented families, with one or two members, usually male, returning to the home country in search of socio-economic opportunities, while women and school-age children remain in the country of asylum. Such livelihood strategy is perceived by the migrants as a safety net, since it allows them to reduce the economic and security risks of return. Revolving returnees are instead migrants who plan to return permanently but are forced to re-migrate for economic and security reasons, or due to their failure to reunite with the other members of their families in the country of origin. The information that migrants acquire during their periodic repatriation and the experiences and obstacles they face have a strong impact on their decisions and plans to return permanently.

Before repatriation most respondents do not close their refugee file with the UNHCR since they are uncertain about the security situation at home. In this way, they can go back

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and personally assess conditions in return areas without losing their prima facie refugee status[41] and the related assistance that they receive in the countries of first asylum. Another precautionary measure adopted by most participants, registered or not with the UNHCR, is renewing their residency permits in the host countries before their departure to Iraq. Holding a valid residency permit allows them to move freely between the home and host countries, without facing immigration restrictions and without being charged expensive entry-visa fees.

The UNHCR has reported these spontaneous cross-border movements: "[R]ecent increases in no-show rates for food and cash assistance may be an indicator that significant numbers of Iraqis are traveling back and forth to Iraq without deregistering from UNHCR."[42] The agency did not organize 'go and see visits' since a growing number of refugees arrange visits to Iraq by relying on their own means and social networks. The international refugee regime, represented by the UNHCR, has acknowledged the importance of mobility to increase the protection space for Iraqi forced migrants in neighbouring countries.[43] These policy recommendations, however, have yet to be incorporated in more effective UN-funded assistance programs for the Iraqi refugees and returnees from Syria and Jordan.[44] In policy and practice the three durable solutions of "resettlement to a third country," "local integration in the first country of asylum," and "voluntary repatriation" are still regarded as discrete options or stages in a refugee "cycle."[45] The governments of Western countries of resettlement consider the Iraqi asylum seekers who have adopted cross-border livelihood strategies less eligible for refugee status. Forced migrants' circular movements reduce their chances to be granted resettlement. The asylum claims of Iraqi circular migrants are dismissed as lacking credibility because it is assumed that the real "refugee" is unable to return to Iraq. Iraqis' return movements are interpreted as an indicator that the circumstances that caused their displacement no longer exist and therefore asylum applicants who engage in transnational mobility should not be treated as refugees but as normal migrants. In interviews with UNHCR resettlement officers, Iraqi asylum seekers are advised not to pay frequent and lengthy visits to Iraq in order to be eligible for resettlement.[46]

The individual case management system set up by the UNHCR in October 2008 to facilitate the Voluntary Assisted Repatriation of Iraqi refugees from Syria and Jordan[47] is based on the assumption that "returnees" voluntarily re-establish permanent livelihoods in their country of origin.[48] Accordingly, access to the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation assistance is conditioned upon (1) the cancellation of beneficiaries' refugee status and the consequent loss of access to the associated international protection and assistance and (2) the cancellation of beneficiaries' residency permit in the host country.

Considering that the Iraqi people engage in cross-border mobility and livelihood strategies to compensate for the insufficient means of subsistence in host countries, and considering that they go back to Iraq under conditions of persistent insecurity, political instability, and slow progress in reconstruction efforts, the assumptions and conditions attached to the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Assistance are unrealistic and counterproductive. Instead of supporting refugees' safe and dignified return by protecting their right to free movement and their legal status in the host countries, the Voluntary Repatriation policies increase migrants' legal vulnerability and restrict their ability to move across borders and make informed choices about return.

Not surprisingly, between 2007 and 2011 only 4,479 Iraqi refugees returned facilitated by the UNHCR while the estimated number of unassisted returns in the same period reached 201,307 individuals.[49] This raises critical questions about dominant understandings and operational approaches to refugee return and transnational mobility. Is return a sedentary and permanent end-state or a process that takes time and entails various degrees and forms of transnational mobility and livelihood strategies? Is it possible to establish absolute and exclusive distinctions between voluntary and involuntary migration? Should the refugees accommodate the bureaucratic categories adopted by the international refugee regime or should institutional approaches be revised to be more responsive to the experiences and needs of forced migrant populations? How do national migration and asylum systems interact with international asylum norms to address the realities of refugee and migrant return and transnationalism?

The UNHCR and some third-party governments discourage Iraqi asylum seekers' circular migration between Iraq, Syria, and Jordan, since this practice hampers national governments' and international organizations' ability to manage highly mobile displaced communities.[50] A growing number of Iraqi forced migrants nevertheless disregard the institutional requirements and adopt transnational livelihoods as an enduring survival and risk diversification strategy and a way to explore opportunities for the future.

Conclusive Remarks

The study of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan offers interesting answers to theoretical and empirical questions concerning the relationship between refugees' return and transnational migration. Iraqis' return movements and transnational livelihood strategies are not the product of international multilateral agreements or of regional legal

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refugee protection frameworks. Iraqis are returning despite the limited national and international attention and institutional assistance in their support. Not having signed the 1951 Geneva Convention and having limited resources, the Syrian and the Jordanian governments have incorporated mobility as a key component of their strategic management of the Iraqi protracted displacement. Host authorities' attitudes and migration policies are driven by national security concerns and calculations of the impact of forced migrants' long-term presence and cross-border movements on the socio-economic developments of the home and host societies.

The lack of resettlement opportunities and difficult living conditions in neighbouring countries influence refugees' decision-making processes and migratory plans. Iraqi refugees' return depends on migrants' varying degrees of willingness and readiness to interact with the socio-political and economic transformations occurring in areas of return. The legal and socio-economic obstacles faced in Syria and Jordan limit the ability of forced migrants to mobilize resources before repatriation. Consequently many refugees have to rely on pre-existing resources in order to return and reintegrate in their home areas. The migrants with enough financial and material resources optimize life in exile and turn it into an opportunity to acquire skills and experience that they could employ to facilitate their post-return reintegration and their participation in Iraq's reconstruction.

Iraqis' potential and commitment to return and engage in developments at home is affected by the social, economic, and political changes that have occurred in Iraq during their absence. Repatriation rarely results in the achievement of full citizenship rights. Transitional governments face great challenges and are seldom able, or willing, to grant returning refugees their fundamental rights and freedoms. Post-war economies and receiving communities have limited absorptive capacity to integrate returnees and meet their demands for basic services, employment, and development opportunities. The institutional neglect of the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi returnees increases their vulnerability and threatens the sustainability of their return inducing some to re-migrate.

Refugees' flight, return attempts, and following remigrations are integral and interactive phases of the complex forced migration experience. The protracted wars in Iraq caused progressive fragmentation and global dispersion of Iraqi families and established transnational linkages and practices connecting Iraqi migrants in various countries of the world. In the absence of strong family ties in the home areas, some Iraqis have low motivations and support to re-establish permanent livelihoods in their home communities. Yet they may still wish to return to recoup their lost citizenship rights and properties in order to integrate them into their transnational livelihoods. The international refugee regime is concerned with governing the movement of refugees after repatriation. Stopping returnees' remigration, however, may hamper the natural transnational practices that refugees develop as alternative livelihoods in the absence of other, durable solutions.

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Bordering on Conventional: The Politics of Iraqi Resettlement to the US and Europe, 2003–2011

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Abstract

Of some 2.5 million Iraqi citizens internationally displaced in the wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom, less than 100,000 have achieved permanent international resettlement. This paper compares US and EU policies regulating the selection and admission of Iraqi refugees since 2003, focusing on the divergent political priorities and structural considerations underpinning variations in resettlement levels during this time. I argue that US resettlement of Iraqi refugees is primarily an element of foreign policy, defined by strategic objectives in Iraq and the surrounding region, whereas admissions to the EU reflect ongoing intra-European debates surrounding the construction and modification of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Whereas resettlement to the US increased drastically following a "strategic" reframing of the Iraqi refugee crisis in 2007, failures in the implementation of CEAS's "standardization" agenda, compounded by enhanced European restrictions on refugee movement, have limited Iraqi admissions to Europe during this time.

Résumé

Des quelques 2,5 millions de citoyens irakiens déplacés internationalement suite à l'Operation Iraqi Freedom, moins de 100 000 ont réussi leur réinstallation permanente dans un autre pays. Cet article compare les politiques américaines et européennes réglementant la sélection et l'admission des réfugiés irakiens depuis 2003. On s'y concentre sur les différences de priorités politiques et de considérations structurelles qui sous-tendent les différences dans le nombre de réfugiés installés. On avance que l'installation des réfugiés irakiens aux États-Unis relève surtout d'une politique des étrangers définie par des objectifs stratégiques en Irak et au Moyen Orient. En comparaison, leur admission en Europe dépend des débats européens sur la construction et la modification du Régime d'asile européen commun (RAEC). Alors que les États-Unis accueillaient beaucoup plus de réfugiés irakiens suite à une refonte stratégique de leurs politiques en réponse à la crise des réfugiés de 2007, au même moment, les échecs dans la mise en place des objectifs standardisés du RAEC, de pair avec les restrictions européennes sur le mouvement des réfugiés, ont limité l'admission de réfugiés irakiens en Europe.

Introduction

June 2011 marked the 60th anniversary of the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which laid down protective standards for displaced Europeans in the post-war era and established refugee *non-refoulement* as a premier principle of contemporary international law. Along with its 1967 Protocol, the Convention has spawned a host of diverse legislation in signatory states[1] pertaining to the selection and integration of foreign refugees. Individual resettlement policies vary widely in the number of refugees accepted annually and in the character of rights and services available to new migrants, and each national resettlement program is subject to a unique set of fiscal and political prerogatives.

Whereas the original European "refugees" found ample opportunities for life, work, and citizenship in the United States and Western Europe, their experience has been seldom replicated in the Convention's 60-year history. Today's refugees—some 15.4 million of them worldwide, according

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to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)[2]—face first-world resettlement quotas that pale in comparison to demonstrated need. Iraqis who have fled personal and political violence since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 are no exception.

Though accurate numbers are difficult to come by, the Congressional Research Service estimates that up to 2.5 million Iraqis have sought international refuge since 2003,[3] with a vast majority still living precariously in Iraq's neighbouring states. Studies show that a preponderance of Iraqi refugees oppose returning to Iraq in the near future,[4] and UNHCR has corroborated their position in several reports outlining the hardships of Iraqis who prematurely repatriate.[5] Recent multinational aid programs[6] have sought to ameliorate the living conditions of displaced Iraqis as they await a permanent solution, but as the ongoing sociopolitical costs of refugee hosting produce more restrictive policies in Syria and Jordan, Iraqis trapped in the region are becoming more vulnerable to marginalization and abuse. The challenge for the international community remains to permanently resettle those Iraqis who are unable to integrate locally and unwilling to return to Iraq.

In this article, I compare the Iraqi resettlement efforts of the United States and the European Union since 2003, highlighting divergence in the fundamental political priorities underpinning admissions quotas, asylum recognition criteria, and other policy choices impacting the admission of Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers. I argue that US resettlement of Iraqi refugees is primarily an element of foreign policy, defined by strategic objectives in Iraq and the surrounding region, whereas admissions to the EU reflect ongoing intra-European debates surrounding the construction and modification of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Whereas the reframing of Iraqi resettlement as a matter of "strategic interest" caused a drastic increase in US Iraqi admissions after 2007, persistent failures in the implementation of CEAS's "standardization" agenda, compounded by enhanced restrictions on refugee movement, have resulted in an overall stagnation of Iraqi admissions to Europe.

The Strategic Dimensions of Resettlement: Iraqi Refugees and Foreign Policy in the US

Accounting for some two-thirds of UNHCR's annual global resettlement,[7] the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is by far the world's largest third-country resettlement scheme. The US has been resettling Iraqis since the early 1990s, with over 100,000 resettled as of May 2011;[8] 18,838 were accepted for resettlement in FY 2009, and another 18,016 arrived in FY 2010.[9] Yet a review of Iraqi resettlement levels in the post-invasion era reveals a severe lull in resettlement levels corresponding with the apex of Iraq's civil war and the heights of the Iraqi emigration, precisely as wide refugee flows compounded by a scarcity of foreign aid and resettlement options forced major host states such as Syria and Jordan to shut their borders with Iraq.[10] Explaining this seemingly counterproductive dearth of resettlement options at a time of mounting need requires an understanding of the ways in which US resettlement policy has traditionally been dictated by broader foreign policy goals.

America's unique position of relative geographical isolation and her consequent reliance on overseas refugee processing has allowed successive administrations to manage the nationalities, ethnic identities, educational backgrounds, and other qualities of refugees arriving on US shores. The US Executive Branch establishes yearly admissions quotas for each major sending state, making a refugee's nationality the single most important factor determining his or her chances of achieving US resettlement. Historically, the formulation of these quotas has relied heavily on an administration's perception of the strategic benefits of resettlement, which range from shaming the sending state to forestalling the spread of conflict via militant refugees. Resettlement programs during the Cold War prioritized refugees from communist countries in Eastern Europe and Asia while maintaining lower quotas for refugees of strategically unimportant wars in the Middle East and Africa.[11] Similarly, the US admitted some 30,000 Iraqi opponents of the Ba'ath regime during the sanctions period in Iraq,[12] at an average yearly resettlement rate far outstripping that of the 2003–2007 period.

Perhaps most importantly, US resettlement levels tend to correlate negatively with ongoing US military engagement in a particular sending state, regardless of the severity of the refugee crisis in question. It was not until after the US withdrawal from Vietnam that America began the process of resettling some 322,000 Indochinese refugees;[13] likewise, resettlement from both Iraq and Afghanistan decreased significantly after the initial US invasions of those countries.[14] Refugee resettlement (or a calculated lack thereof) remains one tool among many in the diplomatic and strategic arsenal of the United States on a global scale.

In this section, I discuss the foreign policy bias apparent in US policy towards Iraqi refugee resettlement since 2003, identifying a "reframing" of the refugee discourse towards one of strategic concern in 2007–2008, and finally analyzing structural problems that cause actual Iraqi arrivals to frequently fall short of stated quotas.

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US Admissions 2003–2007: The "Refugee Crisis" That Wasn't

The experimental nature of Operation Iraqi Freedom—and the purported applicability of regime change followed by state building as a model for future US engagements in the region—provided strong impetus for the Bush administration to downplay the humanitarian costs of the Iraq war. As Sanders and Smith of the Brookings Institution wrote in a 2007 article, "Addressing the Iraqi refugee crisis implies an acknowledgement that the US-led coalition and the Iraqi government have been unable to provide security within the country."[15] The Bush administration employed a strategy of public denial for as long as politically expedient: instead of applauding nearby states for providing safe havens, the Bush administration accused Syria of harbouring "insurgent terrorists,"[16] implying that Iraqis fleeing the country were doing so for reasons other than personal safety. UN Ambassador John Bolton denied any correlation between Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Iraqi refugee crisis;[17] administration officials responded to criticism of this position by explaining that Iraqi displacement "predates the current conflict."[18] Funding followed suit; in 2007, the US spent just under $200 million on displaced Iraqis—less, as Sanders and Smith pointed out, than the roughly $280 million spent per day on the Iraq war.[19]

Despite dire UNHCR predictions to the contrary, the initial invasion of Iraq failed to produce more than several thousand refugees, mainly wealthy ex-Ba'athists fleeing in comfort to Syria, Jordan, and the Gulf States.[20] Outflow of Iraqis increased in response to US operations in Fallujah in 2004 and peaked dramatically in 2006 and 2007, as large portions of Iraq disintegrated into sectarian violence following the bombing of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra.[21] US Iraqi resettlement efforts during this period of increasing crisis can be characterized by a general dearth thereof: only 66 Iraqis were resettled in 2004, 198 in 2005, 202 in 2006, and 1,607 in 2007.[22]

Ironically, the category of "refugee" was invoked repeatedly in early humanitarian justifications for the Iraq war via the trope of "return"—the post-war repatriation of some 60,000 Iraqi refugees from the 1980s and 1990s.[23] The relative invisibility of Iraqi flight during the immediate post-war period allowed the US to focus its refugee-management faculties on these "returnees," who tended to align themselves politically against the Ba'ath regime. Until 2006, State Department funding for displaced Iraqis prioritized returnees over Iraqis remaining in or fleeing to nearby states.[24] Moreover, Iraqi "return" lent legitimacy to the common anti-resettlement argument of "brain drain," the idea that displaced Iraqis should not be removed from the region lest their skills and expertise become permanently unavailable to the faltering Iraqi state-building project.[25] The US government's preferred solution for Iraqi refugees residing in neighbouring Arab countries has always been eventual repatriation, an option that is less costly in financial and political terms than large-scale Iraqi resettlement to the United States.[26]

Finally, the US refused until 2009 to send resettlement representatives to Syria, which has hosted a plurality of internationally displaced Iraqis since 2003.[27] Ongoing discursive combat between the US and the Syrian state during the early 2000s—possibly compounded by the suspicion that Iraqis in Syria are more sympathetic to Ba'athist and anti-American platforms—resulted in strikingly low admissions from Syria proportionate to the number of refugees residing there. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials rejected "an unusually high percentage" of UNHCR referred refugees from Syria in 2007 without explanation, including 70 percent of women deemed in need of priority resettlement.[28] Of 1,608 Iraqis resettled to the US that year, only 242 came from Syria.[29]

During the 2003–2007 period, the US did resettle handfuls of Iraqis with professional links to the US government by way of a translator relocation project active in both Iraq and Afghanistan. These early admissions were justified in terms of maintaining US access to Iraqis with vital language skills; as US Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker explained, a dearth of US assistance to former translators, contractors, and fixers meant that fewer Iraqis would be willing to work with the US in the future.[30] Yet these programs suffered from severe administrative disarray—refugees were often asked to verify their service with documents to which they had no legal access[31]—and from the extensive Homeland Security protocols that prevented many refugees of Middle Eastern and Central Asian origin from reaching the US during the early 2000s.[32] The "enhanced security review" established for Iraqis in 2003 was so exhaustive, and the percentage of Iraqis deemed "inadmissible" so large, that UNHCR briefly stopped referring Iraqis to the United States.[33] The "securitization" of US Iraqi resettlement in the immediate post-invasion period both compounded the general scarcity of resettlement places and justified it, by promulgating a view of Iraqi refugees as potential arbiters of conflict and terrorism. The concept of Iraqi refugee "rights" remained submerged in this discourse of "security" for several years onward, with detrimental effects on Iraqi admissions quotas to the United States.

US Admissions 2008–2011: The Strategic Imperative of Iraqi Resettlement

By the end of 2007, political pressure was mounting on the Bush administration to make broad changes to its policy of

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minimal action regarding Iraqi refugees. Numerous high-profile journalistic and NGO reports emerged on the crisis, and refugee advocates in major research institutions argued for a special US responsibility to Iraqi refugees, above and beyond standard levels of funding and resettlement allocated to other crises.[34] Meanwhile, leading members of the newly Democratic Congress and Senate sought to reframe American political discourse on Operation Iraqi Freedom by initiating a series of committees examining its full range of humanitarian fallout. The refugee issue was front and centre. Invited to testify before Congress in late 2007, Director of Human Rights Watch's Refugee Division Bill Frelick charged George Bush with abandoning the presidential tradition of incorporating refugee resettlement into customary displays of American moral leadership on a global level. Addressing the resources already allocated to certain groups of Iraqi refugees, Frelick stated bluntly:

> Band-aid assistance and token resettlement might make Americans feel less guilty about the destruction and suffering this war has caused, but it will not be sufficient to make a difference in saving the lives of the vast majority of innocent civilians whose lives are still at risk.[35]

Yet accompanying this framework shift in the terms of US humanitarian responsibility was a sharp discursive recourse to the vocabulary of American interest and regional security. The prevalent concept of displaced Iraqis as a regional "conflict contagion,"[36] however inaccurate in terms of actual violence perpetrated by these refugees, drove home the potential of the refugee crisis to further endanger the Iraqi state-building process by destabilizing nearby countries, threatening US cooperation with their governments, and providing an ample recruitment pool for would-be insurgents. A bipartisan Iraq Study Group chaired by James Baker and Lee Hamilton warned that "Iraq and the region could be further destabilized" if immediate action was not taken to address the refugee crisis,[37] and UNHCR officials pleaded that rising volatility in Syria and Jordan stemmed from a lack of international burden-sharing assistance.[38] The Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, introduced by the late Senator Edward Kennedy in June 2007, cited the Baker-Hamilton conclusion and added: "If [refugees'] needs are not quickly and adequately met, these populations could become a fertile recruiting ground for terrorists."[39] By framing the Iraqi refugee crisis as a potent source of instability at a time when Iraq's civil war was just beginning to subside, refugee advocates found a strategic justification for Iraqi resettlement that resonated with the crisis-control tactics being deployed on the ground in Iraq. Resettlement once again became a diplomatic and strategic tool, rather than an under-resourced humanitarian sideshow.

Signed into law in February 2008, the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act included several measures to increase and expedite US resettlement of Iraqi refugees. In addition to raising resettlement ceilings for Iraqis in general, the bill authorized 5,000 annual Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), intended to cover US-affiliated translators and contractors. Although the program has struggled to meet its quotas—641 visas were processed in FY 2008, and 3,028 in FY 2009—SIV admissions levels have been significantly higher than those of previous translator relocation initiatives.[40] The US also established Overseas Processing Entities (OPE) in Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq—later to be supplemented with offices in Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria[41]—such that US-affiliated Iraqis as well as families of special humanitarian concern could apply directly to the United States without passing through an external referent such as UNHCR.[42] Although limited in capacity, the OPE office in Baghdad eliminates the need for certain well-placed refugee applicants to exit Iraq, an act that has become increasingly difficult due to the restrictive border policies of nearby states. Iraqi resettlement increased nearly tenfold between 2007 and 2008, with 13,822 Iraqis making up nearly 23 percent of all US refugee admissions that year.[43] As of May 2011, 58,811 Iraqis had been admitted under the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act.[44]

Lacking the previous administration's imperative to defend US actions in Iraq, President Obama's statements on the Iraqi refugee crisis have echoed the Baker-Hamilton report,[45] blending humanitarian imperative with recognition of strategic benefits. Newly elected, he referred to Iraqi refugees as "living consequences of this war," stating that "America has a strategic interest—and a moral responsibility—to act."[46] The Obama administration's cautious reconciliation with Syria has also resulted in increased cooperation on behalf of Iraqi refugees, including the establishment of an OPE office in Damascus. While repatriation remains the US government's preferred solution for Iraqi refugees, official reports have begun to reference UNHCR's declarations that Iraq is not yet safe for large-scale return. According to the State Department's 2011 Proposed Refugee Admissions report, "The long term US strategy for Iraq's displaced is to help Iraq develop the capacity to reintegrate returning Iraqis into stable neighborhoods, while maintaining resettlement for the most vulnerable"[47]

Problems remain, however, in the selection and integration of these "most vulnerable" due to ongoing structural inefficiencies in US Iraqi resettlement. Although "security" procedures for certain Iraqis—namely SIVs—were relaxed in 2007, the DHS continues to spar with the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

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(PRM) over the admissibility of certain Iraqis, resulting in an average processing period of 10 months.[48] According to a Government Accountability Office report, USRAP lacks capacity for strategic planning as well as a mandate to demand any streamlining of the security vetting process.[49] Furthermore, USRAP bases its distribution of funds on past refugee flows, rather than present or projected ones;[50] funding levels in 2008 and 2009 therefore reflected the far lower Iraqi resettlement quotas of 2006 and 2007,[51] to the obvious detriment of the Iraqi admissions program. The US economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures have also affected USRAP, with the US FY 2010 budget allocating fewer funds for Migration and Refugee Assistance than the FY 2009 budget.[52]

As a result of these ongoing problems, scale-backs of target resettlement levels have been common in the post-2007 era. In FY 2009, for example, the US government issued only 2,389 SIV visas out of an authorized 11,050.[53] The fiscal and organizational sloppiness of Iraqi refugee admissions to the US implies that despite amended intentions vis-à-vis the humanitarian fallout of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraqi refugee resettlement has remained a secondary priority, trumped by the ongoing financial and human resources allocated to US engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. And as critics of US resettlement are quick to point out, USRAP admissions have yet to make a sizable dent in the refugee crisis for which, they argue, the US maintains ultimate responsibility. As of 2010, Iraqis constituted the second largest refugee group worldwide, second only to displaced Afghanis.[54]

A "Race to the Bottom" or a Race to the Border? European Resettlement of Iraqis under CEAS

Whereas nearly all Iraqi refugees reach the United States by virtue of resettlement initiatives,[55] UNHCR referrals and other overseas processing programs account for a small minority of European admissions from the MENA region. A large majority of Iraqis reach Europe by land or sea,[56] claiming asylum according to regulations set forth by individual states and by a series of EU directives pertaining to where, when, and on what grounds Iraqis may achieve refugee status. Iraqis have been seeking European asylum in large numbers since the 1990s,[57] and have comprised Europe's largest group of asylum seekers since 2007, accounting for some 38,000 or 17 percent of all applications.[58]

The 2003 dismantling of Saddam Hussein's regime had little immediate impact on previous European policies of Iraqi asylum and resettlement, which have long remained a subset of Europe's interior policy rather than its foreign relations. With the possible exception of the UK, the contemporary Iraqi refugee policies of EU states reflect far less on the politics of regime change in Iraq than on the structural complexities and intra-European debates surrounding the construction of the Common European Asylum System. Inaugurated in 1999, the CEAS regime intends to increase burden-sharing among EU Member States through the "liberalization" and "harmonization"[59] of their individual refugee protection standards, and to facilitate cooperation in regulating the movements of refugees into and around Europe.[60] The past decade of EU resettlement policy can be characterized as an era of experimentation within these dual imperatives of liberalization and control, with Iraqi refugees serving as preliminary test subjects.

Some scholars of asylum have characterized European refugee policies in the contemporary era as a "race to the bottom," [61] arguing that the 1986 evisceration of Europe's internal borders set in motion a long-term process of states re-establishing population control by alternative means. By this logic, states that have lost the sovereign capacity to control population movement through their borders establish indirect methods of limiting migration, such as restrictive asylum criteria and low social benefits for non-Europeans. As states compete to redirect refugees towards their neighbours, their policies become more and more illiberal, leaving asylum seekers with limited prospects for resettlement and integration. Other scholars have extended this line of questioning towards skepticism about the principles of CEAS, arguing that any "harmonized" multi-state asylum regime will eventually achieve the lowest common denominator, as states that are unfit or unwilling to reform their asylum policies drive common protective standards ever lower. Satvinder S. Juss has described this shift as one "from uncoordinated liberalism to harmonized restrictionism."[62]

Some evidence from the experience of Iraqi refugees in Europe supports these arguments, particularly the resettlement trajectory of Sweden, which has dismantled its exemplary Iraqi admissions program due in large part to the perceived burden-sharing failures of its neighbours. Indeed, UNHCR recently reported that "the relative importance of Europe as a destination for asylum-seekers has declined in recent years," citing a precipitous drop in Europe's share of asylum applications worldwide from 60 percent in 2005 to 45 percent in 2009.[63] But as I argue in the following sections, the present state of the European refugee regime does not corroborate flaws in the theory of asylum policy integration so much as it reflects on CEAS's uneven implementation, where failures in the enforcement of "liberalization" coupled with an overt focus on "control" have narrowed the traditional options of asylum seekers prior to the fruition of sustainable alternatives.

In the following sections, I will detail the effects of standardization procedures and territorial control initiatives on

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Iraqi asylum seekers since 2003. I argue that intra-European cooperation has been more effective in the latter category, with consequently greater impacts on prospects for Iraqi resettlement in Europe. I then review nascent European efforts to "externalize" refugee policy along US lines by prioritizing overseas refugee processing—as opposed to the traditional European model of processing asylum seekers after their arrival to EU territory—and by employing foreign policy tools to impact the number of refugees arriving at Europe's borders.

Standardized and/or Liberalized? Iraqi Refugees and Asylum Policy Harmonization

In keeping with the agenda of asylum liberalization, the European Parliament supports the prima facie refugee status bestowed by UNHCR on refugees from southern and central Iraq. A 2007 resolution centred on improving the reception of Iraqis in Europe and standardizing EU Iraqi refugee response protocol called on Member States to "[o] vercome their position of non-action regarding the situation of Iraqi refugees and to fulfill their obligations under international and community law to give Iraqis in Member States the opportunity to lodge asylum applications."

Yet Iraqi recognition rates since the height of the crisis have varied widely, from some 82 percent in Sweden and 85 percent in Germany to 13 percent in the UK and less than 1 percent in Slovenia and Greece.[64] Resettlement levels and percentages tend to be highest in Nordic states, while southern and eastern European states reject far more applicants than they resettle. Britain presents a somewhat unique case, based both on its active involvement in the Iraq war and on its sensitivity to projects of European policy harmonization.[65] UK asylum recognition rates are far lower than those of other European states within the same wealth bracket, and the UK's translator relocation program is far weaker than Denmark's, which admitted nearly 100 percent of its quota within a year following the Danish withdrawal from Iraq.[66] EU directives pertaining to policy harmonization allow "a wide amount of discretion and flexibility in a large number of areas,"[67] noting ongoing variation in recognition criteria, in the condition of detention centres and hosting facilities, and in refugee access to employment. In short, Member States continue to base their Iraqi asylum policies on unique national priorities rather than the EU agenda of "harmonization" and "liberalization"; while some are unilaterally liberal, others fall short. A 2011 report by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles expressed acute disappointment with CEAS's harmonization progress, describing the current state of asylum in Europe as "not the progress that we hoped for."[68]

The recent history of Sweden's Iraqi asylum regime demonstrates the ongoing failure of asylum policy harmonization in Europe and its corrosive effects on states with generous admissions policies.[69] Sweden by 2006 had granted protection to more Iraqis than all other Member States combined,[70] earning a reputation as Europe's most generous country of Iraqi asylum. Sweden was also foremost among European governments urging fellow Member States to liberalize their own asylum policies so as to spread the burden of asylum processing more evenly.[71] When these calls went unheeded, Swedish officials spoke out against the idea that Swedish policy is "more liberal" towards Iraqis than other European states, complaining that the resulting "pull factor" had caused asylum applications in Sweden to rise to unmanageable levels.[72] Policy modifications followed; a 2008 ruling established that Iraqis had to prove *individual* persecution in order to qualify for Swedish resettlement, driving Sweden's recognition rate for that year down to 40 percent.[73] From 2007 to 2009, Sweden's share of Iraqi resettlement in Europe dropped from 64 percent to 13 percent,[74] a trend attributed by UNHCR to "a drop in recognition rates and a potential shift in flows from Sweden to its neighbors."[75] Sweden continues overseas resettlement of Iraqis on a relatively generous scale,[76] suggesting that Stockholm is not opposed to admission of Iraqis per se but has rather sought to counteract the pull factor driving Iraqis in Europe to set their sights on Sweden alone.

The apparent failure of CEAS to "trim national influence"[77] in asylum policy can be attributed to the weakness of positive measures intended to incentive harmonization. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) facilitates informational exchange and practical cooperation among states already keen on Iraqi resettlement, but cannot take a role in the decision-making processes of individual states.[78] The European Resettlement Fund (ERF), from which Member States can request up to 4,000 euros per head to assist in resettlement costs,[79] has also proved too weak to incentivize more protective policies. Eiko R. Thielemann calls the ERF "symbolism rather than substance," a small consolation prize for Europe's southern and border states, many of which oppose asylum policy harmonization.[80] Moreover, asylum seekers in Europe contend with post-9/11 security protocols that mirror American laws in language and effect, such as a December 2001 ruling requiring Member States to vet asylum applicants "for the purpose of ensuring that the asylum seeker has not planned, facilitated or participated in the commission of terrorist acts."[81] The elasticity of this law as it pertains to Iraqi migrants has allowed several European states—including both wealthy governments such as the UK and less resourced ones such as Greece—to justify the indefinite detention of Iraqis under auspices of the "vetting"

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process.[82] CEAS's institutions lack the enforcement capacity to intervene.

The Territorial Prerogative: Iraqi Refugees and Europe's Borders

Whereas the US maintains de facto territorial control vis-à-vis inflows of Iraqi refugees, Europe's geographical proximity to the Middle East and its uniquely porous internal borders have shaped a strong European concern with controlling the physical movement of migrants and asylum seekers into and around Europe. A central goal of CEAS is to enhance collective control of Europe's peripheral borders such that the weak law-enforcement systems of southern European states might cease to facilitate unregulated entry to the EU. Further initiatives have focused on forestalling "secondary movements"[83] of asylum seekers between Member States, both positively (through the harmonization efforts described in the previous section) and through prohibitive regulations on refugee movement. Reduced access to European territory and reduced movement within Europe are therefore two of the greatest factors shaping the experiences of Iraqi asylum seekers in Europe.

Numerous studies of CEAS have found greater concentrations of fiscal and organizational resources allocated to "control" initiatives as opposed to "harmonizing" ones.[84] Europe continues to strengthen the mandate of FRONTEX, its border control agency, in terms of patrolling capacity, detention facilities, and cooperation with the security forces of states such as Turkey, a major country of transit for Iraqis en route to Europe.[85] The EC has also launched regional cooperative border patrols such as RABIT, a coalition of guards from Member States gathered in 2010 to assist the Greek government in forestalling "illegal" migration.[86] Both FRONTEX and RABIT lack specific mandates vis-à-vis the recognition of asylum seekers, leading rights groups to speculate about violations of Iraqi *non-refoulement* on Europe's borders. Amnesty International in 2009 reported on FRONTEX's "targeting" of Iraqi "illegal migrants," implying that contrary to the European Parliament's support for prima facie status, at least some Iraqis are not being considered as asylum seekers upon arrival to Europe's borders.[87]

Europe has also expanded its means of deterritorialized migration control, including complicated visa regulations—to enter Europe legally, Iraqis need a G-series passport only available in Baghdad[88]—and fines for airline carriers transporting unregistered migrants to Europe.[89] Aside from outsourcing the preliminary steps of the asylum recognition process to foreign bureaucracies and private companies, these control mechanisms have resulted in an incremental "criminalization" of asylum seeking, where refugees often have to break the law in order to reach Member States where they can claim asylum.[90] While international refugee law contains no specific language prohibiting either of these regulations, policies that conflate UN-recognized asylum seekers with illegal migrants violate the non-penalization clause of the Refugee Convention, which obliges states not to "impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who … enter or are present in the territory without authorization."[91] Application levels to Europe in the late 2000s have reflected the increasing difficulty of reaching European territory. From 2009 to 2010, Iraqi asylum applications to EU states dropped by 19 percent.[92]

Foremost among EU policies regulating the internal movement of Iraqi asylum seekers is the Dublin II regulation, which stipulates that a refugee must apply for asylum to the European country in which he or she first sets foot, and allows Member States to deport asylum candidates back to their original state of entry. Dublin II was introduced in 2005 to counteract the phenomenon of "asylum shopping"—where refugees travel through Europe in search of a hospitable asylum regime—thereby counteracting the magnet effect of liberal regimes such as Sweden's. In reality, Dublin II has increased pressure on the weak asylum regimes of Europe's southern and border states, where protection standards have fallen even lower as a result of functioning overcapacity.

Opponents of the Dublin II regime cite the case of Greece, whose border with Turkey and 18,400 kilometres of coastline are major points of entry for Iraqis seeking EU asylum. Dublin II's implementation caused a major surge of asylum applications to Greece; levels increased by 105 percent from 2006 to 2007, at a time when applications to Europe overall rose only 11 percent. (Out of 25,000 applicants to Greece in 2007, some 5,500 were Iraqi.[93]) The EASO has attempted to improve Greece's protective standards and its asylum-processing capacity using a volunteer team of Member State "consultants," while the RABIT program has somewhat successfully decreased the number of asylum seekers for whom Greece is the initial point of entry.[94] Yet Greek recognition rates for Iraqis continue to hover below 1 percent,[95] and a series of high-profile NGO reports have condemned the ongoing detention, deportation, and abuse of Iraqis and other refugees in Greece.[96] Little more than five years into Dublin II's lifespan, both UNHCR and the European Court of Human Rights have issued statements urging Member States to suspend the transfer of asylum seekers to Greece. (Norway, Sweden, and Finland had already begun doing so of their own accord.[97]) Collaboration in the prevention of Dublin II deportations to Greece is a small yet welcome sign of protective "harmonization" among EU states, but one

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which nonetheless highlights the failure of CEAS and the EASO to effect liberalization in the most dire of scenarios.

According to the ECRE, Dublin II is "based on the myth that protection standards are equivalent throughout the EU,"[98] in which case an asylum seeker's obligation to apply to one state or another would have little bearing on his chances of achieving refugee status. Yet Dublin II's premature application to Europe's present-day asylum system effectively mandates asylum applications to states with clear records of migrant abuse. Dublin II epitomizes CEAS's misguided implementation, where burden-sharing mechanisms based on the restriction of refugee movement—rather than the reform of Member State policies—result in the deterioration, rather than liberalization, of refugees' rights in Europe. Just as border control initiatives "criminalize" the process of arriving to Europe, Dublin II puts the onus on refugees, rather than governments, to effect greater equilibrium in application levels among European states.

Whither Asylum? Iraqi Refugees and "Externalization"

Despite Europe's long-standing reputation as a continent of asylum rather than overseas processing and resettlement, the border-tightening measures discussed above as well as recent initiatives in overseas processing may suggest a gradual shift in Europe's refugee policy towards the American model.[99] The prospect of "externalizing" European refugee policy has gained traction among policy makers who view overseas processing and foreign policy action to address "root causes" of refugee flows as alternatives to a liberal European asylum regime.[100] "Externalization" holds both positive and negative possibilities for the rights of Iraqi refugees in Europe. While it is still too early to determine whether this nascent trend will take root, it is fair to say that the outcomes of "externalization" will depend, like CEAS, on the means and the priorities by which it is implemented.

Recent European resettlement initiatives have framed extraterritorial processing—European missions mimicking the US OPE offices—as a proactive substitute for open borders, one which would establish greater control over levels of Iraqis and other refugees in the European processing system.[101] Direct resettlement from host states such as Syria and Lebanon has indeed increased since the onset of the crisis; whereas 8 Member States admitted 3,300 Iraqis in 2007 and 2008 combined, 12 EU countries offered 5,100 resettlement spots in 2009 alone.[102] Following a 2008 Justice and Home Affairs Council decision that Member States should jointly resettle 10,000 Iraqi refugees "on a voluntary basis,"[103] several states with no prior Iraqi resettlement programs began accepting UNHCR referrals. During that same year, Germany and France signed ad hoc agreements with UNHCR, agreeing to resettle some 500 to 2,000 Iraqis each according to specific criteria laid out by those governments. Both states initially expressed preference for "minority" Iraqis, though they amended this criterion to focus on the "most vulnerable," such as female-headed households.[104] The growing European preference for joint resettlement programs, rather than asylum policy harmonization, points to a desire for greater control over the Iraqi admissions process. States can maintain individualized admissions criteria while cooperating on the structural level to facilitate the selection and transportation of refugees.

The popularity of multilateral interventions in the early 1990s raised the prospect of "prevention" as an element of refugee policy, where Western states would act preemptively to halt refugee-producing conflicts before the onset of mass emigration.[105] While policy formulation along the lines of "prevention" has always been limited, the use of foreign aid, bilateral agreements, and other foreign policy tools to preclude refugee movements remains a popular principle in European thought, if not an active one in European policy. Foreign aid to Syria and Jordan to assist in provision for displaced Iraqis predates the Joint Resettlement Initiative by several years,[106] though at levels insufficient to impact the need for third-country resettlement. Other bilateral initiatives of a more manipulative nature provide fiscal support to the border fortification programs of major refugee sending states; prior to the 2011 NATO action against the Gaddafi regime, for example, several European states were conducting negotiations with Libya over a framework agreement to stop seaborne departures to Europe.[107] Such partnerships under the guise of "externalization" have prompted rights groups to challenge the direction of Europe's refugee and asylum policy, accusing the EU of seeking to sequester asylum seekers abroad regardless of the validity of their claims.

Conclusion: Asylum, Resettlement, and the Future of Iraq's Refugees

Aside from highlighting divergence in their political positionalities vis-à-vis Iraq and the surrounding region, comparing US and EU Iraqi refugee admissions demonstrates the structural dissimilarity between in-country asylum systems and resettlement via overseas processing. "Resettlement" is a top-down process that facilitates the political manipulation of refugee flows; admissions levels can very easily be expanded, decreased, or halted altogether, as the United States has done vis-à-vis Iraqis since the 1990s. Asylum, by comparison, is messy. The relatively open borders that characterize asylum systems diminish host-state control over the numbers, nationalities, and other characteristics of potential new residents, and raise difficult questions about the legal status of failed asylum seekers

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who remain in host-state territory. States that liberalize their asylum policies can find themselves overwhelmed by unregistered migrants, whose claims upon the state necessitate an independent infrastructure of courts, bureaucracy, and hosting facilities. The fiscal and sociopolitical cost of asylum can grate harshly on the tolerance of host state populations; Sweden's election of a right wing, anti-migrant government in 2006 provides a stark example. If US decisions regarding Iraqi refugee admissions seem comparatively straightforward, it is because resettlement via overseas processing allows for a unique level of state control over the refugee admission process.

Yet asylum as an institution more closely mirrors the goals of the UN Refugee Convention, where the right of persecuted individuals to cross international borders is not contingent on the political whims of a particular host state. The comparative visibility of refugees in asylum systems obliges action on the part of the host state, whereas states that practice overseas processing only can easily ignore mounting need in remote places such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, states whose refugee-to-population ratios are some of the highest on earth. The Bush administration's deliberate blind eye towards Iraqi refugees from 2003 through 2007 exemplifies the easy subjugation of refugee rights to host-state interests in systems of overseas resettlement. Had a handful of European states not maintained generous asylum policies for Iraqis during these years, options for Iraqi resettlement worldwide would have been scarce indeed.

For these reasons, the growing European preoccupation with border fortification and deterritorialized migrant control is a worrisome trend. Though the referenced "liberal European asylum tradition" is somewhat mythological, Europe has historically served as an important site of asylum for refugees that the US has not considered strategically important. A prospective lockdown on Europe's periphery—to say nothing of partnerships aimed at sequestering asylum seekers in states with known records of migrant abuse—heralds an effective end to European asylum. As the ECRE points out, "The best protection regime will be of little use if refugees are unable to reach the EU's territory."[108] Though it remains unclear whether "externalization" will overtake asylum as Europe's primary model of refugee management, it is certain that overseas processing will have to increase dramatically if the overall effects of externalization are not to be severely deliberalizing.

Doing justice to the topic of Iraqi asylum in the EU requires investigating the unprecedented effects of the Single Europe Act on the concept of territorial sovereignty in Europe and on corresponding regimes of migration and asylum. Some view the CEAS's failure to "harmonize" European asylum as a referendum on European territorial integration, where previously unilateral choices relating to migration and resettlement have become a de facto point of intra-European tension and debate. The CEAS framework institutionalized these debates rather than resolving them, and the decisive lack of "harmonization" progress during the program's inaugural decade speaks to the tenacity with which many Member States seek to maintain individual policies of asylum.

Achieving burden sharing in the Schengen context requires both facets of CEAS "cooperation"; Europe's peripheral border must be regulated (though not closed off), and asylum policies must be integrated (if not harmonized) to avoid future asylum shutdowns such as Sweden's. Yet comparing the impact of institutions such as the European Refugee Fund with regulations such as Dublin II reveals the weakness of the CEAS's "liberalization" and "harmonization" measures as compared to their control-oriented counterparts. Moreover, the underwhelming outcome of EASO's intervention in Greece demonstrates that harmonization initiatives without enforcement mechanisms have little possibility of success. Many scholars pay homage to the "norm of protection"[109] promulgated by European institutions, but that norm's bearing on the experience of refugees is strictly a matter of implementation.

Finally, comparing US and EU policies vis-à-vis Iraqi refugees raises questions about states' accountability for refugee-producing policies, and about the corresponding levels of aid and resettlement required to offset this "responsibility". While Europeans opposed to Iraqi resettlement have argued that the US should have sole responsibility for Iraqis' humanitarian needs, Bush officials have justified policies of minimal resettlement through a causational delinking of the US invasion and the ensuing refugee crisis. The ambiguity of "responsibility" for refugee crises may be one reason why the UN Refugee Convention places no onus on "responsible parties" to shoulder the burden of refugee aid and resettlement alone. Indeed, "burden-sharing" favors the even distribution of refugee hosting among Convention signatory states—according to capacity, and without any consideration of guilt.

Still, it is worth re-examining the arguments of US refugee experts who were able to transpose demands for a "special responsibility" towards recognition of a "particular interest" in Iraqi resettlement. As the primary international party invested militarily and financially in the flailing Iraqi state-building project, the US has finally become—as it should have been from the outset—foremost among states working towards the gradual resolution of the Iraqi refugee crisis. As evidenced by the resettlement of nearly 100,000 refugees per year in the 1990s,[110] the United States has extremely high capacity for refugee absorption. While organizational

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failures can determine the frequency with which US administrations meet their own resettlement objectives, refugee quotas themselves reflect calculations of pure international political interest. Iraqi refugee admissions to the US since 2003 have been—for better and worse—inseparable from the broader goals and strategic imperatives of US involvement in Iraq. So long as the mass displacement of Iraqis continues to impact social and political stability in Iraq and her neighbouring states, we can expect US resettlement of Iraqis to continue on a broad scale.

Notes

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2. UNHCR, *Global Trends 2010,* accessed June 6, 2011, http://www.unhcr.org/4dfa11499.html.
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4. A majority of Iraqi refugees interviewed by the International Rescue Committee in February of 2011 expressed opposition to repatriation, preferring permanent residency in their Arab host state or international resettlement. International Rescue Committee, "Iraqi Displacement: Eight Years Later Durable Solutions Still Out of Reach" (February 2011), accessed May 16, 2011, http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/Iraqi%20Displacement%20Eight%20Years%20Later.pdf.
5. UNHCR, *Note on the Continued Applicability of the April 2009 UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers* (July 2010), accessed May 15, 2011, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4c4fed282.html.
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15. Sanders and Smith, "The Iraqi Refugee Disaster," 23–28.
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23. By the end of 2003, the over-stretched Coalition Provisional Authority was attempting to adjudicate the citizenship and property claims of nearly 60,000 Kurdish returnees in temporary shelters. David Romano, "Whose House

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52. Ibid., 11.
53. Ibid., 13.
54. UNHCR, *Global Trends 2010*, 2.
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105. Christina Boswell, "The 'External Dimension' of EU Immigration and Asylum Policy," *International Affairs* 79, no. 3 (May 2003).
106. European aid to Syria has been particularly impactful, as the United States refuses to directly fund the Syrian state, and Syria in particular suffers from a dearth of foreign money supporting its social service provision to Iraqis.
107. European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *ECRE Memorandum on the Occasion of the Hungarian Presidency of the EU*, 7.
108. Ibid., 8.
109. Haddad, "The External Dimension of EU Refugee Policy: A New Approach to Asylum?", 199.
110. Singer and Wilson, "From 'There' to 'Here': Refugee Resettlement in Metropolitan America," 1–4.

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There's No Place Like a Refugee Camp? Urban Planning and Participation in the Camp Context

Anne Stevenson and Rebecca Sutton

Abstract

The past half-century of urban studies has demonstrated that the design of human settlements is a potent tool of governance. Active involvement in place shaping has also been shown to be a key empowerment mechanism for citizens and a strong means of creating cohesion in communities. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee camps are a unique form of human habitation, temporary spaces created "between war and city." Drawing from urban planning theory, camp management tools, and migrant narratives, this paper will explore the dynamics of the spatial relationship between camp residents and the international governance bodies who manage them. As we will demonstrate, this approach offers important insights into how the relationships between camp residents and aid agencies are negotiated, and the implications for governance in societies camp inhabitants later (re)settle in.

Résumé

Les études d'urbanisme des cinquante dernières années ont démontrés que la planification d'établissements humains est un outil potentiel de gouvernance. Il a été également montré que l'organisation active de l'espace peut être un mécanisme d'implication des citoyens et un moyen puissant de créer les cohésions communautaires. Les camps de personnes déplacées localement et de réfugiés sont une forme spécifique d'habitation humaine, correspondant à des espaces créés temporairement « à mi-chemin entre la ville et la guerre ». En se basant sur des théories de planification urbaine, des outils de gestion de camp, et des récits de migrants, cet article explore les dynamiques des relations spatiales entre les résidents de camp et les organisations gouvernementales internationales qui les gèrent. On y montre que cette approche permet de mieux saisir comment se déroule les relations entre les résidents de camp et les agences humanitaires, ainsi que les conséquences que cela implique pour la gouvernance des sociétés dans lesquelles s'installent ensuite ces résidents de camps.

> … . it is possible to use the experiences in exile to transform a society as long as those who assist them do not remove from them the authority to do so.
>
> —*Barbara Harrell-Bond*[1]

1. Introduction

The past half-century of urban studies has demonstrated that the design of human settlements is a potent tool of governance. The layout of the built environment is a primary mediator in people's access to services, feelings of safety and connection to the wider community.[2] Active involvement in place shaping has also been shown to be a key empowerment mechanism for residents and a strong means of building citizenship.[3] Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee camps are a unique form of human habitation, temporary spaces created "between war and city"[4] that play a formative role in residents' migration story.[5] However, in focusing on the protection and survival of inhabitants, the international agencies that run these camps rarely empower residents to act as citizens of them.[6]

Drawing from urban planning theory, camp management tools, and migrant narratives, this paper will explore the dynamics of the relationship between camp residents

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and the international governance bodies who manage them; particular scrutiny will be devoted to citizenship practices as they relate to the built environment of the camp. We will argue that the rights claims and service demands camp residents make, and how they negotiate their relationships with aid agencies and government are important: they impact migrant experiences in the camp itself, and may (re)shape expectations of governance in the societies they later settle in as they begin the process of rebuilding their lives.

A number of field manuals have been developed to guide the management of refugee and IDP camps, and three will form the basis of this analysis: the UNHCR's *Handbook for Emergencies* (the *Handbook*); the Shelter/MSF guide, *Camp Planning Guidelines* (the *Guidelines*);[7] and the Norwegian Refugee Council's *Camp Management Toolkit* (the *Toolkit*). References to these documents will be used to illustrate current guidance on resident participation and spatial planning in camps, considered through the lens of urban planning theory.

2. Basic Principles of Urban Planning

Urban planning theory is, in its essence, the exploration of the relationship between people and the physical spaces around them. From the time of the emergence of the world's oldest cities in Mesopotamia roughly 4,500 years ago, there have been competing interpretations of the control and ownership of cities. The very origins of the word "city" capture this dynamic precisely: derived from the Latin *civitas*, cities have been seen as both places of state power (civilization) and shared purpose (citizenship).

The past century of urban planning has been witness to a shift between these two paradigms. In the early decades of the twentieth century, human settlements were dominated by the notion of city as civilization, where the structure of the city was imposed from the top down by civil engineers and technocratic planners. The emphasis on efficiency, function, and a rational approach to the city was embodied in the modernist movement and its most well-known champion, Le Courbusier. His notion of the house as a "machine for living" extended to his grand urban planning projects, including a master plan for downtown Paris (never implemented) and Chandigarh in India. The layout of streets and buildings was strictly aligned, based on logic visible only from the air. Each part of the city had a rigidly defined function in the system. Different uses, such as housing, office blocks, and industrial areas, were separated and kept at a prescribed distance from one another. With the planners' tight control of the built form, there was little room to consider how residents themselves might wish to inhabit their city spaces.

As time wore on, it became apparent that the modernist approach delivered little in terms of quality of life for urban dwellers. The strict segregation of uses inconvenienced people—the separation of housing from other city functions entailed travel to work, heralding the beginning of the commute. The modernist city also led to social isolation, as its inhabitants lacked opportunities to interact with others in spontaneous meetings. Roads were viewed as conduits for vehicles and pedestrians only, with little thought to the other functions of a street such as market place or a social gathering spot to meet with neighbours. This failure to capture the diversity of uses of different urban spaces is perhaps the most serious shortcoming of this approach, and modernism's failure to appreciate the complexity of the city led to growing criticism of the movement.

The writings of Jane Jacobs are emblematic of the challenge that began to be mounted against modernism in the 1960s. Jacobs questioned the aerial, omnipotent perspective of the modernist planner and instead began to explore cities from the bottom up, looking at how people actually used urban spaces. In observing her own neighbourhood, typically assumed to be "disorganized, inefficient, and economically backward," she found instead an intricately orchestrated ballet of the streets. This unplanned area of the city was rich, active, and safe, in stark contrast to the modernists' rigid structures that led only to "the mild boredom of order."[8] It was Jacobs who coined the phrase "eyes on the street," noting that residents acted as informal monitors for those around them, not only curbing dangerous behaviour, but creating a sense of belonging and community. She emphasized that the production of space was a potent embodiment of power relations, the built form being an explicit recognition of who made the decisions.

These observations informed the current canon of urban theory, where planning is not only about deciding where things should go, but also a process of education, engagement, and empowerment. In the same spirit of the UN's Local Agenda 21,[9] the planning profession has increasingly shifted away from the top-down approach of the modernists towards a bottom-up, participatory, and citizenship-based model for city design.

In this framework, participatory planning is a general process in which community members have an opportunity to act out their citizenship in decisions relating to the built environment. The Prince of Wales, a seemingly unlikely advocate of community empowerment, captures the underlying principle of this approach, stating that "people are not there to be planned for; they are there to be worked with."[10] This approach might include city planners seeking input from the community about new buildings in their area, how a new housing development might be laid out, and even how

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neighbourhoods and cities should develop over a long period of time. In addition to any actual outcomes that result from these exercises, the process by which decisions are reached is increasingly recognized as significant.

A major, though somewhat counterintuitive, benefit of the participatory approach is that it can help create more efficient cities than the top-down approach. This is because communities can often identify their needs more accurately than a planner doing a technical assessment. For example, many municipalities have requirements for the amount of park space that should be provided per resident. Planners may be able to recognize a quantitative shortfall in park provision, but they are less capable of assessing qualitative deficiencies. Does the community need a quiet garden in which to sit and relax or an open field for sports and play? It has been shown that without residents' input, resources can be wasted on amenities that do not meet the needs of the community, consequently increasing the likelihood of these facilities being damaged or falling into disrepair.

In addition to creating an environment that is better suited to its residents, the evidence is overwhelming that participatory initiatives also have a positive social impact on those who engage in them. An early observer of this approach noted that "when dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contribution … both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being."[11] It is widely recognized that "when people feel they 'belong' to a neighbourhood which is theirs through their own efforts, then … people will safeguard what they have helped to create."[12] Participatory planning has also been shown to be an important entry point for wider governance processes. As noted by one community member, "community planning gave us the opportunity to work alongside the powers that be, have our say and feel, for the first time, that we were really being listened to. Residents now feel much more connected with decision-making and things are really beginning to improve around here."[13]

It is these insights from participatory urban planning that we wish to explore in the refugee or IDP camp context. The next section will examine the appropriateness of applying urban design theory to the camp context.

3. Urban Planning and Refugee Camps: A Valid Theoretical Framework?

Considerable debate surrounds the question of whether or not camps can be considered true "cities." If it were purely a matter of numbers, then in some places such as Chad and Darfur, camps would likely be viewed as urban—many of the IDP and refugee camps have greater populations than the towns and cities nearby.[14] Yet population alone is not enough to convince actors that camps constitute true urban spaces.

An initial argument against viewing the camp as a city is the impermanence of its existence, a notion quite easily disproven. For example, the *Camp Management Toolkit* states, "Camps may be needed for only a matter of months. Often the reality is that camps last for years and sometimes even for decades."[15] Explanations in mainstream media are similarly awkward: "Camps are only meant to be temporary solutions … However, organizers have learned to plan for the long haul because refugees often end up living in the camps for much longer than expected."[16] Indeed, the evidence shows overwhelmingly that protracted refugee situations remain the norm.[17] A 2006 UNHCR report highlights that there are still over five million refugees in protracted situations,[18] and camp-based population make up over 85 percent of today's refugees.[19] Moreover, the average duration of stay in these protracted situations increased from 9 to 17 years from 1993 to 2003.[20]

While a decade may seem inconsequential in a city's existence, it represents a transformational number of years in an individual's life. Children grow to be adults, people marry and procreate, the elderly pass on. A description of Kakuma refugee camp on the camp website runs as follows "Inside this small city at the edge of the desert, children age into adulthood and hope fades to resignation."[21] We also hear a 70-year-old Bhutanese refugee describe his experience of raising eight children for 19 years in a camp in Nepal—a camp he says he will not leave even if he is the last man in it.[22] These testimonies belie the notion that a camp is "temporary" in any practical way to its inhabitants. Camps constitute an enduring feature of the global order in general and the refugee experience in particular.

Camps are also often portrayed as extreme spaces. The focus is on the major events that give rise to the camps, the security threats that plague them, serious sanitation problems or outbreaks of communicable diseases. Yet many of the same individuals facing difficult conditions in the camp will have spent their entire lives enduring hardship in their communities of origin. This is not to downplay the very real threats to their security and well-being, but from the perspective of the individual or household in the camp—as with any village, city, or town—their location also plays host to the mundane. Drawing on Lefebvre's notion of social space, [23] we contend that camps gain meaning as a place by acting as a backdrop to residents' lives, as they find ways to cope and adjust their own daily rituals, routines, and patterns to the camp setting.

No matter how contrived or ephemeral the settlements may be, the dynamic between residents and their physical environment will shape behaviours and outcomes within

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and beyond the confines of the camps. Consequently, we believe refugee and IDP camps are fertile ground for the application of urban design theory and that important insights in the management of camps can be gained through this approach.

4. Current Practice in Camp Planning: Participation

As outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, physiological and safety needs are foundational and will often take precedence in a situation of crisis or insecurity. However, the hierarchy includes reference to individual needs of love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization.

Given the limited resources available and the stated role of refugee camps, few would agree that it is the role of the camp to provide "love" for its inhabitants, or to help people "reach their full potential." However the essential point to take from Maslow's hierarchy is a recognition of the latent desire of individuals to participate in daily life, and the importance of the formation and maintenance of a community for individuals' sense of well-being. Without this meaningful participation, in the camp context there is a risk that the *process* by which basic care and protection are provided may lead inhabitants to feel disempowered, alienated, disrespected, and resentful.

In *Imposing Aid,* Barbara Harrell-Bond asserts that camps induce a sense of powerlessness and despair, which, as others have noted, is often interpreted by aid organizations as dependency and laziness.[24] It has also been widely noted that if not exerting any real influence over their space, inhabitants will likely feel quite passive in the camp, as though it is a place not formed by them but rather that happens to them, a place they must adapt themselves to in order to access services and meet their needs. As Zetter remarks of refugee behaviour in the host society, they must acquiesce, at least to some degree, to their bureaucratic identity in order to secure access to benefits and protection.[25]

Encouragingly, the importance of participation is highlighted in camp guidance documents. Of the three analyzed here, namely the *Handbook,* the *Guidelines,* and the *Toolkit,* each gives consideration to the important role of participation in the camp context. The *Handbook* and *Toolkit* consistently emphasize the importance of community involvement in camp planning and management as a means of ensuring the self-respect of individuals in the camps. The *Toolkit* expresses this perhaps most clearly: "whilst there is no universally accepted concept of the term dignity, in practice, it means that the thoughts and wishes of displaced communities are respected."[26]

The *Toolkit* also stresses that interventions should build on local capacity without undermining people's own coping strategies. The *Handbook* similarly notes the management "plan must strengthen the refugees' own resources and self-reliance and avoid creating dependency."[27] While the guidance on camp resident involvement in the *Guidelines* is not detailed, it does extol the importance of maximizing the participation of the displaced population in camp management and maintenance[28] and stresses the need to identify existing coping strategies of the camp residents.[29] Emphasis is also placed on the need to facilitate true participation, rather than mere consultation. As put so aptly by the *Toolkit,* "the ultimate goal of participation is a feeling of ownership—that residents feel they are investing in, and responsible for, the camp and the activities that take place within it."[30]

As the brief overview above indicates, the camp guidance documents and the broader literature acknowledge the risks of disempowering camp inhabitants and the importance of ensuring genuine participation. However, the language employed to describe and refer to the identity of these inhabitants often seems incompatible with genuine empowerment. In aid literature, we find businesslike references to the camp's "clients" and "end-users"[31] or, as noted by Goodwin-Gill, the rather statistical descriptors of "units of flight" or "units of displacement."[32] Both the *Handbook* and the *Guidelines* refer to camp inhabitants variously as "persons of concern," "refugee community members," "displaced population," and similar variations on this theme. The *Toolkit* alone consistently refers to individuals as residents of the camp, explicitly recognizing their status as users and inhabitants of the camp space.

Within this myriad of labels, one that is never used is "citizens" of the camps. While this is to some extent logical given their displacement and, in the case of refugees, their legal status in the host country, it stifles thinking about what kind of substantive participation might be possible in camps. This is not merely an issue of semantics: the formulation of the (ascribed) identity of camp inhabitants has crucial implications for whether the practice on the ground reflects—or could reflect—the theory regarding camp participation. Indeed, by looking at the guidance for the physical layout of the camp, we see evident limits to the genuine involvement of residents in the shaping of their communities. As the next section explores, the concept of participation is not consistently or successfully integrated into guidance on the spatial planning of camps.

5. Current Practice in Camp Planning: Built Environment

Literature specifically focused on the physical planning of refugee camps is limited, but a notable commentator on the current approach is Herz. There are some limitations in his analysis, specifically his incorrect statement that the

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Handbook's single chapter is the only guide for spatial planning in camps. His assertion that the physical planning guidance "largely ignores the social and political consequences that planning decisions have in this critical context" also seems misplaced, as there is in fact clear recognition throughout all three guidance documents that "the physical organization of the settlement will markedly affect the protection, health and well being of a community."[33] Yet Herz's general point is a valid one, as all three guidance documents fail to graft their notions of community involvement effectively onto processes surrounding the creation of the built environment.

Herz observes that the prescribed camp layouts are suggestive of the "early modernist idealized city of the 1920s: structured organization, low density, clear separation of functions and uses." This is certainly reflected in the three guidance documents in question. For example, the *Handbook* recommends the development of a camp master plan, which is intended to take physical factors, like climate, topography, and safety, into account when laying out the camps. It recommends building on the basic unit of the family, where 16 households create one community, 16 communities create one block, four blocks make one sector, and four sectors a camp. The ideal population is seen as being 20,000 people with 30 to 45 square metres per individual.

The *Toolkit* largely echoes the *Handbook* formula for camp set-up, following the community/block/sector/camp approach, and also stresses 20,000 as an optimal number of residents per camp.[34] The Shelter/MSF *Guidelines* go the furthest in exploring different spatial organizations for camps. Building on the *Handbook's* community structure of roughly 16 family units per community, the *Guidelines* then go on to provide three different layouts for the community block, including the Hollow Square Plan, the Staggered Plan, and the Community Road Plan.[35]

What is noticeable in all three guidance documents is the perspective of the camp is a decidedly modernist, aerial view, planned from above both literally and figuratively. Even the *Guidelines,* with their more nuanced and adaptable approach to site planning, still ultimately present a uniform and relatively inflexible framework; plots are identically sized, streets are gridded, and only residential uses are spatially planned for at the block level.

It is interesting to note that the smallest unit of planning in all three guidance documents is consistently conceptualized as the family unit, rather than the individual. While there is certainly some justification for this, it begs the question of how camps are physically designed for those individuals who do not fit into a traditional family grouping. The *Handbook* notes the high prevalence of unaccompanied minors or lone elderly that are often present in the camp.[36] Basing physical planning around the family unit literally leaves no space in the camp for those who do not fit the family model.

The *Toolkit* acknowledges this problem and stresses that it is generally inadvisable to locate lone individuals apart from the rest of the community as "it isolates these groups and leaves them without the protection of the community at large."[37] The *Handbook* also recognizes this challenge, noting for example that unaccompanied older people are often put into tents with strangers due to the common practice of assigning five people per tent.[38] However, no satisfying spatial solution is provided to this problem.

Further to this point, the guidance documents are generally silent on how plots are allocated. The *Handbook* refers to "allocating tent/shelter plots in the camp" during registration,[39] but it remains unclear what factors might influence decisions around allocation. It has been noted that practical measures like keeping village units together in a camp setting could play a major role in social cohesion, and are more useful than disease or trauma-centred approaches.[40] Yet the guidance documents do not provide any clear instruction on how this might be facilitated in practice.

The guidance documents also reflect the modernist approach to planning in the strict zoning of different uses at the community level. Community layout grids contain only residential blocks and some essential services, such as water-taps and latrines. No spatial guidance is provided on the integration of schools, markets, and other communal facilities into the community blocks. Spaces for socialization and economic activity are mentioned in the guidance documents but not addressed in a spatial way beyond recommendations for garden plots that could be used for income generation.

The *Guidelines*[41] and *Toolkit*[42] both mention the informal services and facilities that often emerge in camps, noting for example that small community-level corner stalls may be established. These spontaneous elements, reminiscent of Jane Jacobs's "organized complexity," however, are unattended to in the modernist camp layout plan where each square metre appears tightly programmed. The guidance documents do not offer any advice about how these informal services might be spatially planned for or, more importantly, how camp communities might be encouraged to participate in their creation.

As an extension of the zoning aspects of modernist planning, major camp services in both the *Handbook* and *Toolkit* are envisioned in centralized compounds. It is recommended that each camp of 20,000 have one feeding centre and one market per camp. Health centres are also proportioned at one per camp. These recommendations appear at odds with the *Handbook's* explicit statement that "the

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overall physical layout of a site should reflect a decentralized community-based approach."[43] While both schools and distribution points are provided in a slightly more dispersed manner, there is little visible evidence of a decentralized approach in guidelines for the physical form of the camp.

A likely reason for this inclination towards consolidated services can be found in the *Handbook's* stated benefit of planned communities: "services can be provided to a large population in a centralized and efficient way."[44] The question is, for whom is this centralization efficient, the residents or the agencies who manage them? There in fact seems to be an insistence on separating resources from inhabitants. As mentioned in one source, warehouses should be located near administrative centres for security reasons, preferably "near the entrance of the camp so supply trucks do not have to drive through populated areas."[45] As noted by Herz, "the actual physical spaces where humanitarian aid is provided in the camps, such as medical centers, are located at a distance from the refugees, to make for an easy escape, in case the refugees should start an unrest."[46]

In keeping with Jane Jacobs's notion of eyes on the street, the *Handbook* points out that isolated areas create safety concerns in the camp, specifically for the most vulnerable inhabitants. This public security mechanism is alluded to frequently in the guidance documents. For instance, a justification for one community layout in the *Guidelines* is that "providing access to family plots via semi-private roads will facilitate casual "neighbourhood watch," thus increasing security."[47] This logic, however, is not carried over to the broader camp context to consider how adjacent residents might overlook, and consequently protect, communal service areas. Given that a main aim of the camp setting is to provide safety for inhabitants, this is an unfortunate result.

The centralized provision of major services also undermines a core value expressed by the guidance documents, that of equal access for all. Individuals who have to walk further to reach services inevitably have less access to them. The *Toolkit* notes this almost accidentally: "Camp communities situated near centralised facilities will have more traffic. Other areas will feel isolated and have a greater turnover in population or more abandoned shelters."[48] The latter statement is particularly striking from an urban planning perspective. It recognizes that proximity to services has an impact on the desirability of the shelters in that area and that residents enjoy different benefits depending on their location in the camp. Despite this, there is no corresponding consideration on how the layout could be adapted to reduce these isolated areas.

The *Guidelines* take a less prescriptive approach to the location and provision of major services, noting that warehouses may be located centrally or dispersed around the camp. While this approach to spatial planning is more flexible, there is no mention of involving residents in these decisions. This weakens the credibility of recommendations made elsewhere in the guide that residents should be active participants in the running and management of their community. If they have no say in how these major services are provided, how much control can they actually exert?

There appears to be correspondingly little agency accorded to residents when it comes to selecting their location in the camp. Plots are simply allocated to new arrivals, with no suggestion that people could make this choice themselves. This omission is particularly striking given the *Guidelines*' recommendation to "avoid making decisions and performing tasks that could be handled by the community."[49] There is some irony in the failure to democratize a process that elsewhere occurs (at least in its early stages) spontaneously in the complete absence of aid agencies and the international community.

Table 1. From *Norwegian Refugee Council*, Camp Management Guidelines, 81

Degree of Participation	Definition
Ownership	The community controls decision making.
Interactive	The community is wholly involved in decision making with other actors.
Functional	The community fulfils only a particular role with limited decision-making power (for example, forming a water committee which is then supervised by an NGO staff member).
Material Motivation	The community receives goods or cash in return for a service or role.
Consultation	The community is asked for their opinion on what they would like to see, but their opinion has limited sway in decision-making.
Information Transfer	Information is gathered from the community, but they are not involved in the resulting discussions which inform decisions.
Passive	The community is informed of decisions and actions, but have no say in either the process or the result.

Because of these and other omissions, it remains unclear how the participation envisioned by the guidance documents is enacted on the ground. By the *Toolkit*'s own standards (shown in Table 1) the participation recommended in the built environment—the most visible and tangible

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structure of the camp—would only rank at the "passive" level. The community has no say.

What are the implications of this? As noted earlier, from an urban planning perspective disassociation from the physical environment also means alienation from a central part of the social life of the community. Additionally, we would assert that there are significant implications in individuals' experiences beyond the confines of the camp. In her study of Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, Napier-Moore finds that the relationships between refugees and governance bodies such as UNHCR and state government in camps are somewhat rigid, and also significant in shaping migrant expectations. These relations, she contends, "create a trajectory for similar future relations"[50] between the residents and future governing bodies. Building on this idea of a trajectory we contend that if left passive in major decisions that impact their surroundings in the camp, displaced individuals may find themselves again disempowered after leaving the camp, lacking the skills to change their situation. Conversely, active engagement in camp planning constitutes a learning opportunity for residents, to be applied when negotiating with their fellow community members and governing bodies in their lives after the camps.

6. Reasons for the Current Approach

These potential opportunities for involvement in spatial planning must, of course, be considered in the context of the challenging realities that characterize camps. Even where service providers and aid agencies endeavour to transcend the typical "emergency action" mode, they may be subjected to any or all of the following constraints: pressure from donor agencies, resource scarcity, time limits, budget limits, and a poor understanding of the local context. These tangible limitations often push service providers to take a "deficit focused approach"[51] emphasizing what is common or universal about the refugee experience.[52] The reduction of human needs to compartmentalized data is also one way of managing competing demands.[53] While this may be grounded in valid pragmatic concerns, it is antithetical to the notion of active participation.

Another reason for the status quo—and this relates closely to the role and function of refugee camps—is widespread discomfort with the durability of camps. As mentioned earlier in this paper, there is empirical evidence that clearly indicates the protracted nature of displacement and the length of stay in camps. However, camps continue to be framed as temporary spaces that simply go on for "much longer than expected." This rhetoric actually serves an important purpose: it simultaneously accommodates the needs of diverse parties. It enables agencies such as UNHCR to espouse a commitment to "durable solutions," it encourages host governments to allow the camp in the first place (as few would likely do so if it was announced from the outset that the camp might remain for decades), and it allows the state from which individuals have fled to maintain that the displaced will return home "soon," in the advent of peace or greater stability. Encouraging camp residents to become more invested in the structure of the camp would undermine these convenient positions.

At first glance, the notion of spatial governance presented below may seem to constitute a radical reconceptualization of refugee camps that directly conflicts with the status quo and its accompanying rhetoric. However, we maintain that it is merely an extension of existing guidance on participation, one that weds participation more concretely to the physical environment. In the following section we will explain how spatial governance has the potential to work within recognized confines, strengthen existing practice, and provide opportunities for improved governance following departure from the camp.

7. Opportunities for Spatial Governance

The theories around participatory planning referenced earlier articulate the fact that people will have a greater sense of ownership over parts of the built environment that they control or feel a part of. This is recognized explicitly in the *Handbook,* which talks about the benefits of having place-based necessities, particularly water-taps that are shared within a defined community group of 16 households. It is noted that "experience shows that water distribution to small, socially cohesive groups of eighty to 100 people considerably reduces water wastage and destruction of taps, standposts and concrete aprons."[54]

While such dynamics are recognized, creating a sense of ownership on a wider scale may be difficult to envision. We offer a series of recommendations below that could be useful in implementing a more place-based approach to camp planning and management.

A first step would be consistently linking participation to specific spaces. The physical layout promoted by all three guidance documents results in arbitrary spatial divisions of communities, blocks, sectors, and overall camps. Arbitrary delineation is in no way unique to camp planning and is a regular facet of urban planning in most municipal administrative systems. But the guidelines largely miss the opportunity to maximize the benefits that these arbitrary divisions may have, namely as a decision making unit or basis for participation and community involvement.

In the guidance documents there is some recognition of the important role that spatially organized participation can play. The *Toolkit* notes that, in the absence of traditional structures, "it is helpful to [organize people] by having

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geographic block or sector leaders. For very large camps, it may be necessary to encourage several hierarchical tiers (for example, having community, block and sector leaders)."[55] This astute observation goes no further, however. While the *Toolkit* mentions consultation with focus groups, camp committees, and special interest groups, there is no clear mechanism for consulting with a physically-based community about issues that are specific to the physical area they share. No reference is made to geographic groups as a valid category of consultation.

Similarly, the *Handbook* notes that representation should "be consistent with the physical divisions of the layout of the site."[56] Yet the guidance on distribution points for food and non-food materials suggests how little the community division is embedded in daily practice. The *Handbook* recommends a group-based distribution method, noting that the group usually consists of about 20 heads of family. This suggestion does not map onto the recommended physical infrastructure, which has communities composed of 16 households. If there is a reason why distribution could not be centred around the same community divisions created in the physical planning of the camp, it is not made clear. This is a missed opportunity, as aligning camp activities with a consistent physical grouping could build more of the sense of ownership and belonging. [57] Reference to physical grouping would also help to set members of each group on equal footing, avoiding the pitfalls of organizing people exclusively according to their needs, deficiencies, and vulnerabilities. The latter approach sets residents up as victims rather than citizens with a stake in their community.

The above discussion may be considered as a "soft" approach to spatial governance; nothing on the ground is visibly changed, but the mechanisms of input have been shifted to consistently consider residents in relation to the space they inhabit. This can be considered the first order of spatial governance and roughly relates to bottom tier of degrees participation outlined in the *Toolkit:* "passive," "information," and "consultation." Going beyond this to a second order, we might delve deeper into how a sense of ownership could be fostered.

Decentralization of services could be a first element in this approach. As noted above, people felt a stronger sense of ownership and protection over community-based water points. This is illustrative of a well-documented phenomenon of people tending to care and connected more to amenities, places, and people that are physically close to them. With more, smaller distribution centres, people would have easier access to them and would likely feel a stronger sense of ownership. It would also provide opportunities for community members to work in those centres, resulting in more local control and, on a practical level, increased opportunities for volunteer or paid service—the latter relates to the "material motivation" degree of participation outlined in the *Toolkit.* One might argue that this would create more openings for clientelism or theft, processes which are well known to already occur in camps. On the contrary, we would argue that the more the community can feel ownership over the service, the more likely they are to respect and protect it from misuse.

Another step would be to have people involved in the layout and construction of their community, again with varying degrees as are practicably allowed. The *Handbook* recommends getting residents involved in the construction of their shelters where possible.[58] We would stress the importance of this guidance point and would also suggest that this could also extend to the layout of the community. An excellent example of how this could be achieved comes from the architectural practice Elemental in Chile. Although more applicable for self-settled camps, it highlights how community involvement can contribute to ingenious solutions to resident needs.

The Chilean government tasked Elemental with rehousing 100 squatter families on the same 5,000 square-metre site they had been occupying for the past 30 years, an area known as Quinta Monroy. The architects worked with the community to come up with a plan for the space. While the aspiration among all residents was single-family, detached homes, it was recognized that this would mean only about 30 families would be able to remain on site. Rejecting this option, the community worked with Elemental to establish a set of guiding principles; all the families had to be accommodated on-site, everyone was to have direct street access (rather than a high-rise building) and housing units needed to be expandable and adaptable as families grew. The solution was a series of row houses that made efficient use of the site and met the guiding principles. Most striking about this project was its built-in capacity for personalization and adaptation. Rather than completed, fitted-out dwellings, the houses were rough shells that were eventually fitted out and expanded by the residents themselves. While driven by budgetary constraints, this led to diversity and a true sense of ownership among the residents.

This project is indicative of a degree of participation that the *Toolkit* would designate as "functional": even though the decision to build new houses was decided by the Chilean government, residents played an active role in shaping their new community. As with the paid service opportunities mentioned above, this type of involvement can also be understood in a "material motivation" degree of participation in the *Toolkit.* As noted in the *Toolkit,* "most people would rather spend their time looking for ways to support their own households, and for many camp residents this

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in itself is challenging enough."[59] It is through this type of active involvement that participation can result in direct benefits for participants—as well as the agencies that work with them—and make them more inclined to become and stay involved.

We might say the camp, as any city, is in a continual process of becoming. One of the most important, and also most challenging, functions of greater spatial governance in camps is therefore to facilitate opportunities for creating spaces that are truly flexible and adaptive to changing realities on the ground. There are ways for camp management organizations to plan, counterintuitively, for the sort of organized complexity purported by Jane Jacobs. This we might term the third order of spatial governance, and it requires governing bodies to consciously yield authority over the production of space, within certain proscribed limits.

An urban planning example of this approach comes from Colombia where Enrique Peñalosa, then the mayor of Bogota, recognized that the city was going to grow through the expansion of informal settlements. Rather than trying to control this process through land allocation or mass public housing construction, Peñalosa instead made the strategic decision to install essential infrastructure that informal settlers could build around. A pedestrian and biking highway was constructed out into the undeveloped fields where expansion was expected. As people began building out their community, it grew around the pre-placed highway, ensuring this essential piece of infrastructure was integrated into an otherwise unplanned community. This approach allowed residents control over the development of their community while still ensuring key services were provided.

A similar model could be contemplated in the camp context. Rather than marking out plots, camp planners could put in the main infrastructure (standpipes), set certain parameters (for example, the number of people "belonging" to a standpipe), and then allow camp residents to make the detailed decisions on layout. This method would be very much in keeping with the *Toolkit*'s highest level of participation where the community controls the decision making. In addition to creating a strong sense of ownership, this method has the potential to be more efficient; rather than rigid plots being provided for any shape and size of family, units could be more appropriately delineated according to the individuals and their needs.

This more extreme approach is open to challenge on a number of fronts. As camps are usually settled in waves, there may not be a conveniently community-sized group arriving all at once to plan their 16-family area in the camp. More likely, residents who arrived early would claim more of the allotted space, leaving late-comers with little room to be accommodated. There could also be concerns that marginalized groups would be unable to claim adequate space and would be relegated insufficient space for their accommodation. These are all possible, if not likely scenarios, in the camp setting, and yet they are not unique to it. Access to resources—including land—is a process that is constantly negotiated in societies and constitutes an important forum for civil engagement.

Wilson and Harrell-Bond assert that camps should focus on facilitating people's coping strategies[60] and the planning process provides a unique opportunity to increase individual and group decision-making structures. We would offer that instead of devoting energy to dictating the spatial layout of communities, camp management organizations could instead provide the skills for communities to resolve these issues for themselves. Like the Quinta Monroy example above, urban planning practice is replete with examples of communities successfully managing the responsibility of spatial planning, even in the most trying of situations. Granted, this is not without training, facilitation, defined dispute resolution mechanisms, and clear parameters of involvement, but experience shows that people can resolve complex planning issues together, and gain a sense of ownership and empowerment in the process.

We recognize that in some cases, expediency will necessitate a more structured approach to camp planning, but we maintain that there may still be opportunities for more active place shaping, even within the stricter limitations of the prescribed grid layouts provided in the guidance documents. For example, one corner plot in each 16-family grouping could potentially be left unprogrammed for the community to decide what to do with. An initial objection to this approach might be that a single individual or family will simply annex any leftover space for their own use. Yet evidence from informal settlements around the world suggests this would not necessarily be the case. It is typical to find a large tract of open land in an otherwise densely packed development. In an absence of planning authorities, these self-organized communities have collectively maintained these spaces for football pitches. Rather than exploiting it to their individual advantage, residents protect this space in recognition of its communal value.

A question naturally emerges here regarding the potential consequence of a successful spatial governance approach. If people feel such a strong sense of ownership over their space in the camp, might they be reluctant to give it up, thus generating even more protracted camp situations? We would argue that spatial governance has as much potential to strengthen return or resettlement plans as it does to weaken them. The *Toolkit* asserts that participation "develops skills for life after displacement."[61] The need for rebuilding both

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physical and social structures is something that virtually all returning communities will likely face on their homecoming, and unlikely with a strong government or NGO to support this process. Providing residents with spatial planning skills while in the camp will better equip them for their return.

The *Toolkit* suggests reconnaissance missions, or "Go and See visits," where camp residents are able to return to their place of origin and report back conditions to the rest of the camp. These visits could be extended to include a more targeted spatial audit where participants document which structures are still standing, how much needs to be rebuilt, and what services and facilities are still available. This information could then be shared with the displaced community and workshops could be held to determine planning and rebuilding priorities.

Gaventa claims that "power gained in one space, through new skills, capacity and experiences, can be used to enter and affect other spaces."[62] We would argue that if spatial planning can create a sense of belonging in the camps, it may also allow residents to become (re-)invested in the places they are returning to. In particular, if camp residents can consistently feel that the quality of their camp community is the result of their own work, it may give them the confidence that they can achieve a similarly positive impact in their places of origin or places of resettlement. This is why the impact of participation and empowerment in the camp context is significant and far-reaching.

8. Conclusion

A key aim of this paper has been to formulate a framework for discussion and dialogue around camp planning that is informed by an urban planning perspective. While our conclusions are necessarily partial and tentative, our aim has been to suggest ways in which participation might be more thoroughly and explicitly embedded in the physical aspects of camp planning. We have endeavoured here to reconceptualize the physical planning and operation of camps into a more spatial and participatory process. In doing so, we have attended not only to the physical structures, but also the decision-making structures and processes by which "facts" are created on the ground. Reconsidering the built environment of the camp and the provision of services along these lines is, we submit, essential. Without a stronger commitment to spatial governance, the entreaties in the guidance documents to respect the dignity of residents and promote their sense of ownership in the camp will continue to ring somewhat hollow.

Notes

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34. There appear to be some internal inconsistencies in how the space of the camp is conceptualized. The recommended space allocation for a complete camp of 20,000 is given as 35 to 45 square metres per person. The *Handbook* multiplies this out for us, providing a total area of 90 hectares for a full camp. This translates to a population density of 220 to 330 people per hectare, comparable to downtown Seoul at the lower end of the spectrum and Hong Kong at the upper extreme, making the ideal camp within the top five most densely populated urban areas in the world. And this is to be achieved with single-storey buildings only. Furthermore, the dimensions of an ideal camp are also given as roughly one kilometre by 0.9 kilometres wide, relating to a 9-hectare site. Yet it is distinctly noted later on in the *Handbook* that no one should have to walk more than 5 kilometres to get to a distribution centre.
35. *Médecins Sans Frontières* and Shelter Centre, *Camp Planning Guidelines 07b*, 97–100.
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An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) Governing Migration conference in Kampala, Uganda, in July 2011.

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