

# Introduction: global conversations on refuge

*Silvia Pasquetti and Romola Sanyal*

The impetus for this volume came from conversations that we shared about our work in the Middle East, in Europe, and in South Asia, and across disciplinary divides. We came from backgrounds in architecture, planning, and geography, on the one hand, and urban ethnography and political sociology, on the other, and have utilized different theoretical and methodological lenses to study questions of governance, agency, and politics. Our conversations converged on the need for more productive, nuanced, and contextualized ways of “doing refugee studies” that were both attentive to histories of displacement and crossed disciplinary boundaries.

This book is thus a political project founded on an effort to create new avenues for theorizing about forced migration. Rather than summarizing developments around it, our aim is to encourage analyses of refugee situations that trace and compare historical trajectories of displacement and refuge, to promote interdisciplinary dialogue on the complex nature of forced migration, and to think more creatively about the processes, politics, and experiences of displacement. To this end, we went on a search for scholars across different disciplines, working in different regions and on creative analyses of displacement. We sought work that would utilize new theoretical frameworks to unpack processes of displacement, thus challenging more orthodox analyses of them.

Our goal was to problematize four entrenched patterns that have troubled us in our long engagement with studying refugees. First, we found in our own transnational and comparative work, that many studies on refugees remain within national, and regional, boundaries. Related to that, and perhaps given the urgency of current crises, we noted that a lot of scholarship tended towards a-historicism. Third, while some scholars have produced solid interdisciplinary work, we found that much work on refugees, particularly that rooted in specific academic disciplines, remains within its disciplinary siloes. Finally, and perhaps as a result of such narrow research agendas, it appeared to us that there was a theoretical impasse in much of the social

## 2 *Displacement: Global conversations on refuge*

science writing on refugees for the past twenty years. This, to us, stood in sharp contrast to the lively theoretical innovations in other fields such as urbanization, migration, and development.

These patterns are troubling because they stand in the way of understanding longer histories of displacement and their effects on places, the changing nature of the politics of displacement and aid, and the varied experiences of displacement that have resonances with other parts of the world. They prevent us from raising important questions about the uneven paths within the global humanitarian machine, including how it operates within different local contexts, about the connections between histories of colonialism and imperialism and the governance of refugees, about the different forms of refugee politics that emerge within and across global and local arenas, and about the different spaces that refugees inhabit and shape in their search for a dignified future. In other words, it detracts from a systemic and historic understanding of the politics of displacement and recovery.

Thus, for example, in reference to the argument above about the regional focus of forced migration, we note that there are often excellent academic analyses of local contexts, but that there are limited conversations across regional divides. Understanding how localized responses function in a larger humanitarian landscape and how they are tied to broader geopolitics of migration, humanitarian funding, and global practices of aid offers an important lens into the topological nature of displacement and humanitarianism. It breaks away from the potential to fetishize places as being “unique and different” because ultimately all displacements are unique and different – yet operate in relation to one another. Further, the risk for many scholars working on contemporary issues in forced migration in these localized contexts is to focus so much on present “crises” as to slip into a-historical analyses. Placing contemporary crises in longer trajectories of other geopolitical and geofinancial shifts, as well as in conversation with other regions where similar issues may be taking place, enables us to understand what, if any, shifts have taken place in relation to refugee protection. It helps us trace longer trajectories of imperialism, racism, and power that underpin many of the practices of hospitality, humanitarianism, and the portrayal of refugees today.

We can go further and take up the point about the field being largely trapped in disciplinary siloes. We recognize that there are scholars who have engaged in critical interdisciplinary work, but by and large the field tends to be dominated by particular disciplines and specialized conversations. The importance of interdisciplinary analyses cannot be overstated as different tools, methodologies, and conceptual frameworks allow us to advance the kind of theorization that we discuss above.

In our final intervention, we note the theoretical impasse discussed above. Here, we argue that, in the study of forced migration, the specter of bare life, space, and state of exception looms large. As Adam Ramadan (2013) suggests, Giorgio Agamben’s work has become a hegemonic presence within this field. While it is important to acknowledge the importance of this work

and its clear applicability to the study of forced migration, to remain captive within its orbit at the expense of exploring other theoretical concepts limits the intellectual expansion of this field.

So, how do we embark on this ambitious project to expand the boundaries of forced migration studies? One way to approach this is to consider what local–global conversations do to advance our political project. We ask ourselves: how do we bring the politics of refugee return, relief, and resettlement in the Middle East and South Asia into conversation with each other? How do these conversations help us unpack larger politics of decolonization, communalism, citizenship, and belonging? How do they help us advance an understanding of subaltern politics? Fields such as urban studies, with which we have engaged for years, have come to benefit significantly from transnational conversations. It seems that refugee and forced migration studies could equally advance from such endeavors rather than insisting on accentuating the distinctiveness of their situations. In doing so, the field could join other areas of research that have moved beyond treating the Global South as a site of empirical evidence toward seeing it as a site of theory as well. We can thus produce a “Southern turn” in forced migration studies that could challenge the dominance of theorizing refuge from the Global North.

Put differently, we note that other fields of inquiry – whether they are on urbanization, or gender, or migration – have developed diverse understandings of social worlds and human interactions and ask why the work around refugees has not evolved in the same way. Why do refugee studies and forced migration studies continue to be dominated by scholars writing from the Euro–American center? Returning to the earlier point about the possibility of a southern turn in forced migration studies, one must ask: is refugee studies in need of decolonizing? We feel that taking account of history and understanding the larger global landscape within which humanitarianism unfolds, as well as examining the productive, generative effects of forced displacement, are important in order to better understand how local practices of humanitarian intervention and resistance emerge.

Further, how can we connect refugee experiences to broader debates about human subjectivities and practices, especially at the bottom of societal hierarchies? How can we overcome the tendency to either theorize refugees and forced migrants in negative terms (as if the fundamental features of their lives are invariably what they lack vis-a-vis citizens) and in disconnection from broader societal processes and conflicts (as if they inhabit worlds apart), or celebrate their agency unproblematically? How can we bridge between these two approaches that seem to be stuck in a binary understanding of the world in which subjectivity of people is a zero-sum game: either one is able to exercise politics in ways understandable to Western audiences, or one is stripped of political life and turned into a subject of aid and control?

In this collection, we hope to offer a modest intervention of thinking about forced migration through interdisciplinary, transnational, and historical lenses. Through our collection of chapters that encompass different countries across

the world, we hope to open up new conversations between places, and think about forced migration issues using new and different theoretical lenses. We hope the book offers an impetus to develop more dialogues across disciplines that enrich our understanding of displacement. Specifically, in this volume, we attempt to undertake a critical examination of the shifting mechanisms and unequal paths underpinning the global humanitarian management of displacement. We aim to generate global conversations on structures and experiences of refuge that articulate connections and mutual influences between broadly Northern and Southern formations of displacement without lumping them together in a-historical and ultimately implausible ways.

In doing so, we highlight the importance of context in understanding the emergence of specific forms of control and resistance. We also effectively address and show the connections between some of the most topical issues in the context of displacement today, including the increasing deferral of legal–moral responsibility toward refugees and the turn toward the externalization of asylum in the Global North, the coexistence of protracted encampment and urban refuge models in the Global South, the colonial and imperial dimensions of structures of control and care, the intersection of categories of displacement with axes of inclusion and exclusion such as “race” and nationhood, refugees’ relationships with urban actors, and the potential and limits of refugees’ transnational networks of solidarities.

The work that we support and advocate for in this monograph – geographical imagination and cross-regional dialogue, historical sensibilities, interdisciplinary efforts, and theoretical creativity beyond “bare life” – is also helpful for addressing other urgent issues of displacement that we do not directly discuss, such as climate-related displacement, statelessness, secondary and multiple displacement, and the feminization of displacement. Finally, the cumulative theoretical work that we produce in this monograph aims to encourage more interdisciplinary studies about how displacement shapes and is shaped by legal, political, and moral struggles over resources, rights, and belonging. This theoretical work is also oriented toward debates in social and political theory about issues of justice, recognition, and redistribution (e.g., Fraser and Honneth, 2003) that so far have not identified the role that displacement plays in structures and experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

## **Global conversations**

In his theoretical reflections on how to produce “decolonial knowledge” about a certain topic, Walter D. Mignolo (2000, 2018: 149) argues that “it is not enough to change the content of the conversation (the domains, the enunciated); on the contrary it is of the essence to change the terms (regulations, assumptions, principles managed at the level of the enunciation) of the conversation.” He highlights how the level of “the enunciated” is the level of “conceptual abstractions that posit an ontology in which there is

no emotion” while the level of “the enunciation” is “where emotioning and reasoning take place ... the domains do not have their own emotions. Emotions lie within the actors of the enunciation who shape the enunciated: its domination, exploitation, conflicts.” In this view, “decoloniality is one type of confrontation, or *speaking to*, that delinks from the dictates of imperial enunciations.” Decolonizing movements in different disciplines therefore not only critique the veil of universalism placed by the Euro-American core, and interrogate the politics of knowledge stemming from it, but also turn toward knowing from elsewhere – i.e., knowledge production from and led by black and indigenous scholars (Noxolo, 2017). Our effort in this book to think about decolonization remains partial and incomplete but, as Noxolo (2017) notes, this must continue. We include a range of scholars who occupy varied positions in academia and come from different backgrounds with varying relationships to their research projects and sites. Building on that, the conversations that we propose in this book strive to disconnect the study of displacement “from the dictates of imperial enunciations” and to unsettle “the border thinking” that builds conceptual walls between both regions and disciplines in the study of refugees and forced migration.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, with our suggestion for “global conversations” on displacement and refuge we highlight three key analytical points.

First, we argue that transnational and transregional dialogue is a crucial first step towards decentering abstract ways of “doing theory” that silence “subjugated knowledges”<sup>2</sup> about displacement; for example, those “knowledges” about the geopolitical and geofinancial logics producing displacement that emerge from the cities and refugee camps of the Global South. In other words, transnational and transregional dialogue is crucial for shifting the terms of how we talk about displacement, thus legitimizing and mobilizing “subjugated knowledges” as full and crucial contributors to our conceptual understanding of how displacement is produced, managed, and experienced. Along these lines, we recognize and join recent efforts to better understand and theorize about displacement by studying it in a wide variety of regional, national, and local contexts (Bloch and Dona 2018; Feldman, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014; Fitzgerald and Arar, 2018). The juxtaposition of “unexpected” or neglected case studies with more familiar ones to Western audiences is a way to speak about displacement that makes new conceptual connections between displacement and the distribution of rights, power, and legitimate recognition across different scales of the global order. It is a way of speaking about displacement that is linked to new types of questions and conversations about displacement. Thus, for example, can the Colombian case that we include in this monograph help us theorize the racial dimension of displacement both within and across borders? Can the case of the Hmong refugees in the United States help us dissect the imperial dimension of contemporary Northern formations of displacement? Can the case of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh help us develop new conceptual geographies of displacement and global and local power relations? Can the case of the internally displaced

in post-Soviet Georgia push forward the interdisciplinary theorization of materiality in refugee studies? Similar “global conversations” on the political, the urban, and the everyday animate each chapter of this monograph.

Second, with “global conversations” we aim to take an analytical stance that strongly emphasizes relationships – convergences, tensions, flows, and conflicts – across scales of the global order. This is not necessarily a methodological stance advocating specific methodologies – for example, multi-sited ethnographies – for capturing global–local relationships. Rather, it is an epistemological perspective that traces connection across places and times, without the assumption that by doing so we can reach definitional or conceptual wholes. Put differently, we follow Anna Tsing’s (2005: 5) suggestion that it is the “friction” produced by global–local interactions that leads to “new arrangements of culture and power.” As she puts it: “rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick.” In each chapter of this monograph we see how this action of “rubbing two sticks” together plays out at different levels; for example, across state relationships, across state and urban configurations, in relationships between differently situated global and local actors – and in different histories – of (post)colonialism, of imperialism, of activism, and of survival.

Finally, with “global conversations” we aim to produce “relational” rather than group- or region-oriented approaches to displacement. We aim to unsettle “substantialist” assumptions about the exceptionality of certain cases and the representational power of other cases and problematize the tendency to look at case studies in isolation from others. This “relational” approach helps put in dialogue studies of displacement with other conversations about urban poverty, transnational solidarity, militarism, and imperialism. Thus, for example, as Darling’s Chapter 9 on urban accommodation for refugees in the UK and Kihato and Landau’s Chapter 10 on urban humanitarianism in Southern Africa show, the urban level emerges as a particularly important level for theorizing how displacement is managed and experienced and for interrogating the dilemmas of humanitarianism in increasingly militarized and unequal cities where the sources of marginality and dispossession vary significantly. Likewise, Isidoros’ Chapter 8 on the interactions between Sahrawi people and mostly Western humanitarians in the Sahrawi refugee camps dotting the Algerian desert helps theorize tensions and possibly misunderstanding within transnational solidarity movements and networks. Isidoros argues that, while some of the humanitarians see the Sahrawi as refugees, the Sahrawi see themselves as “citizens-in-waiting.” Further, given their familiarity with nomadic lifestyles, the Sahrawi do not necessarily experience the tent or the camp as spatial exceptionalities. This contrasts with humanitarians’ spatial perceptions. The Sahrawi are not so concerned with the spatial dimension of their lives (the camp rather than the city, the tent rather than the house), but with its legal dimension: it is through the tools of international and human rights that they seek recognized statehood for the spaces they inhabit. The refugee category is thus a means to this end. This instrumentality is often lost in

translation when they interact with the humanitarians who visit their camps. Complementing Isidoros' work, Denaro's Chapter 7 examines Syrian refugees' mobilization of networks of mostly European supporters while en route across the Mediterranean Sea and often across Italy toward Northern European destinations. Like Isidoros, Denaro shows how those categorized as refugees actively engage with a variety of social actors, modulating their voices and claims depending on the type of actor they interact with and the situation they find themselves in. Together, the two chapters help us theorize both the potential and the limits of transnational solidarities in complex refugee situations.

As these brief examples of "global conversations" show, the chapters we have included in this monograph can and should be read in dialogue with each other. While the contributors do not directly speak to one another, in this introduction we have identified and discussed how we have solicited and organized these chapters with several aims in mind: avoiding a-historical "presentism," promoting interdisciplinary dialogue, engaging in creative theorization about displacement that is sensitive to context, and connecting displacement to broader conversations about power, rights, redistribution, recognition, and justice and how to study them.

The global conversations that we propose in this volume aim to advance the work that still needs to be done to produce decolonial knowledge that, following the abovementioned point raised by Walter Dignolo, "delinks" the study of displacement "from the dictates of imperial enunciations." Specifically, these conversations aim to build new ways of "doing" refugee and forced migration studies that make and dissect connections across regional and local formations of displacement, that operate firmly within interdisciplinary perspectives, and that produce new integrated theoretical approaches to displacement, refuge, and humanitarianism.

## **Geographies of displacement: local contexts and scales of intervention**

Across the social sciences, place is increasingly recognized as a key feature of social, political, and legal processes. For example, Gieryn (2000) has invited sociologists to "spatialize" their research. In other words, other social science disciplines are joining geography in its analytical attention to spatial approaches to migration, including asylum migration. Geographers have analyzed migration in myriad ways including through using these lenses of im/mobility, waiting, and "carceral geographies" (Bagelman, 2016; Darling, 2009, 2010; Hyndman and Giles, 2011; Hyndman and Mountz, 2008; Martin, 2012; Moran et al., 2018; Mountz et al., 2013). All of these have been important in understanding the power politics and effects of detention and offshoring that are becoming the central features of migration management. In this monograph, we adopt a broader perspective on spatial processes within

and across formations of displacement, paying attention to local contexts and other scales of governance and being sensitive to how scales are not only invented, but also exist in relation to one another. We also acknowledge the vastly different geopolitical contexts within which hospitality unfolds – for example, how postcolonial environments present particular challenges and practices of hosting refugees different to those in contexts in the Global North (Landau, 2018). Thus, for example, Palmgren’s Chapter 11 on Southeast Asia connects national and urban scales to provide a better understanding of how degrees and forms of humanitarian protection are offered in each, while Darling highlights the geopolitical dimension of the accommodation system for refugees in the UK in Chapter 9, and Kihato and Landau investigate how humanitarianism intersects with urban poverty in African cities in Chapter 10.

We aim to bring our work into conversation with that taking place within the “carceral geographies.” That work has been an important lens by which to understand the evolution of the humanitarian system, the emergence of a securitized system where refugees are in fact stripped of their legal rights. Recognizing how imprisonment and decelerations function as an important part of the refugee management system offers an important entry point into how class, race, gender, and other identity attributes affect the texture of mobility. As Doreen Massey (2002) aptly noted in her work, globalization is experienced unevenly by different groups of people being shaped by and shaping power geometries. However, such practices are embedded within local politics and histories of understanding and managing migration. Further, there is a danger that such analyses of refugees and migrants as being voiceless victims immobilized within a larger oppressive humanitarian system that seeks to merely keep them alive, but not allow them to function as political agents, can be applied indiscriminately across the world. Indeed, some of the studies on camps seem to veer in this direction. Such theorization runs the danger of ignoring the complex nuances in each context and can lead to academic imperialism. On the other hand, we also do not intend to valorize refugees as agentive. Such romanticization of refugees or of the conditions under which they live can also be deeply problematic and inattentive to how humanitarianism can be a bureaucratic and oppressive system that does in fact function as a system of detention.

Along these lines, the monograph includes and, with this introduction, outlines connections between case studies drawn from different national, regional, and urban settings. However, we do not lump together these case studies, nor do we mobilize them to get closer to a presumably generalizable substantive approach to the “essence” of “camp formations,” “refugee camps,” or “securitized humanitarianism.” By contrast, we empirically map convergences and divergences, as well as complementarities and contradictions within the global humanitarian machine. In line with our arguments against a-historical “presentism” and in favor of historical sensibility and contextualized dialogue between empirical and theoretical work, the monograph shows how

categorization, control, and protection are geographically distributed and continuously renegotiated by global and local actors.

First, it highlights how the Global North's preference for regimes of individualized asylum cases and its reluctance to accept masses of refugees fleeing war and violence have produced the mass warehousing of refugees in the Global South (Fitzgerald, 2019). The shifting politics of donor countries to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR: the main UN agency responsible for refugees and forced migrants), located predominantly in the Global North, have also played a pivotal role in the ways in which those seeking safe havens have been classified and reclassified. Anxieties of immigration, xenophobia, and donor exhaustion have drawn ambiguous lines between "deserving" asylum seekers and "devious" economic migrants – categories that are clearly flimsy on close examination.

Further, in the Global South, protracted refugee situations and limited international aid and support have also led to shifts in policies and attitudes, creating new forms of disenfranchisement among refugees and other forced migrants. Moreover, at a time of increased securitization in many post 9/11 Northern states, and equally intensified existential anxieties in host states in the Global South, an increased number of stateless and internally displaced people have been left precariously suspended between global and local regimes of management. As Sajjad's Chapter 4 on the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh shows, these entanglements have a salient impact on how different states address questions of security, refugee reception, and international law. Thus, the monograph approaches Southern and Northern formations of displacement – in both their variation and their scalar connections – along the lines of Comaroff and Comaroff's (2012: 47, emphasis in the original) argument about the Global South, and, by extension, the Global North, as a "*relation*, not a thing in and of itself."

### **Interdisciplinarity: beyond a fragmented approach to refugees**

There is no dearth of works on refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and the geopolitics surrounding their categorization, movement, and enclosure (Collyer, 2016; Hyndman, 2000; Hyndman, 2012; Malkki, 1995; Mountz, 2011; Zetter, 1991, 2018). Indeed, with the advent of the Syrian "crisis," the media, academic work, and policy work have been inundated with information and analyses of refugees and migrants. There appears to be interesting divergences in terms of academic work on refugees. There are, for example, more technical, practical discussions about humanitarian protection – such as providing ICT, water, sanitation, and other services to refugees. There are also volumes written on refugees that tend to be dominated by refugee studies scholars, legal scholars, and migration experts who have spent a lifetime understanding the nuances of the system. These works have been foundational to understanding how the

global system operates, how the humanitarian system has developed, and how that gets translated into the evolution of rights of refugees as well (Calhoun, 2010; Milner and Wojnarowicz, 2017). Then, there are discrete pieces of work in history, for example, which work specifically on displacement, refugees, and migrants, but do not label themselves as being part of refugee studies (Bau, 1985; Chatterji, 2011; Kaur, 2007; Zamindar, 2007). These historical analyses offer important insights into how the management of refugees, resistances to the production of refugee labels, and emergence of refugee, local, and state politics emerges. In other words, they offer contextual readings that provide a nuanced understanding of how different parts of the world have grappled with questions of displacement. However, in being technical–practical or location specific, what gets lost is a broader understanding of the global humanitarian system. These are only some examples of a larger pattern of fragmentation in refugee studies, which, together with the relative isolation of the literature on refugees from cutting-edge theoretical developments in different disciplines, limits our understanding of the role of displacement in historical and comparative perspectives.

Our aim, then, was to bring these fragmented conversations together in order to dissect the complexity of displacement as both an object of institutional experimentation from above (by state or international agencies) and an experience that, like other human experiences, is imbued with different, context-specific emotions, desires, and actions from below. Further, as we will discuss in the next section, by connecting these conversations, our goal was to unsettle analyses of refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons as being “bare life” – subject to systems of oppression that offer them no way out. Instead, we sought to connect refugees to other social actors; for example, the urban dwellers among whom they settle in different cities across the world. While of course no single author can address all the different structural and experiential features of displacement, the monograph strongly emphasizes how old and new phenomena of displacement – from the formation of refugee camps in the Global South, to the securitization of refuge and the increased turn toward decampment in many countries of the world – do not develop in a political–moral vacuum. On the contrary, these – at times contradictory – trajectories of displacement are connected to broader global and local processes of distribution and contestation of power and struggles for access to material and symbolic resources. Through this perspective, we approach refugee studies as inherently interdisciplinary and open to the cross-fertilization of ideas and conversations emerging within different disciplines. We build on and push forward initial interdisciplinary attempts at analytical integration, such as Michel Agier’s (2011) extension of urban anthropology to refugee camps and Didier Fassin’s (2015) approach to refugees through an emerging moral anthropology of the state. Our own work is also driven by this interdisciplinary sensibility. For example, in our research we have striven to bridge the study of displacement with debates about urban informality and marginality, about securitization and militarism,

and about the relationship between morality and the law (Pasquetti, 2019, 2015a, 2015b; Pasquetti and Picker, 2017; Picker and Pasquetti, 2015; Sanyal, 2018, 2014, 2011).

This interdisciplinary sensibility emerges from each of the three sections of this monograph. The first section operates at the intersection of political geography, the sociology of the state, the history of imperialism, and studies of securitization. It builds on some of the emerging conversations in these disciplines – for example, on the link between imperial histories, “race,” and the state – to dissect how state institutions experiment with legal categorization and management of refugees at different global and local levels. Oslender’s Chapter 3 on Colombia shows the importance of bridging migration studies and works on “race,” recognizing how struggles over the official categorization of displaced people are closely linked to struggles over racial categorization. Interdisciplinarity also runs through the second section of the monograph, which brings together geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists using ethnographic methodologies to enrich our understanding of the experiential dimension of displacement. This section takes seriously how displacement is negotiated in everyday life examining, for instance, the role of material objects, refugees’ production of practical maps of mobility beyond the ones dictated by legal regulations, and their often-troubled relationships not only with institutional management from above but also with dominant ethnonational narratives that render them invisible or essentialize their identities.

Along similar lines, the third section straddles the boundaries between geography, urban studies, and sociology to examine how different actors, from law-enforcement agencies to humanitarian NGOs, use a variety of tools – formal and informal mechanisms – to manage humanitarian situations at different scales from the global, to the regional, to the urban. This concluding part also raises questions about how state and international actors relate to moral-political responsibility (theirs and that of others) as they become involved in the management of humanitarian aid across these different scales of intervention.

### **Theorizing displacement: productive and agentive approaches**

Transnational and transregional dialogues, attention to historical trajectories and legacies, and efforts toward interdisciplinarity are conducive to new ways of producing conceptual knowledge about displacement that unsettles longstanding assumptions about refugees as passive victims whose lives are deprived of political and historical texture by all-powerful structures of power. Established theoretical sources typically theorize forced displacement as a destructive force for the social lives and political subjectivities of forced migrants (Kleinman et al., 1997), and conceptualize the management of displacement as a top-down disempowering process that approximates what happens in

what Ervin Goffman (1990 [1968]) calls “total institutions.” For example, Hannah Arendt (1973: 297) theorizes refugees as people that, together with legal citizenship, have lost a protective political community. She opposes the “thinness” of human rights to the supposedly more solid protection given by legal citizenship. Building on that and the work of Carl Schmidt and Walter Benjamin, and with a focus on space, Agamben ([1995] 1998) theorizes camp formations as spaces that extinguish political life. Whether wrapped in the Agambian and Foucauldian conceptual language of “bare life,” “governmentality,” and “biopower,” or more recently, in the concept of “necropower” (borrowed from Achille Mbembe, 2003), this emphasis on passive victimhood runs through most attempts at theorizing structures and experiences of refuge. Equally troubling is the opposite romanticized assumption about refugees’ ability to reverse power relations and re-appropriate the meanings of the categories imposed on them. What is missing is a more systematic theorization of the productive powers of displacement: for example, how it creates new legal–political and moral dilemmas for state and global actors; how it interacts with other processes such as urban development; and how it is negotiated by displaced people in different contexts (e.g., in refugee camps, in cities, on the move, in their relationships with other segments of “the global poor,” in their interaction with humanitarian institutions, and law-enforcement agencies, etc.); and how it impacts people and institutions in old and new places of refuge. Given that there is rich empirical work on many of these issues, there is an urgent need to match this up with the rich theorization of refuge and refugee beyond “bare life.”

These theoretical sources are still very much relevant today, as they draw attention to the difficulties that refugees face in negotiating their lives in the context of complex bureaucracies and in a world of nation-states and national passports where non-citizens are increasingly perceived through security lenses (Coutin, 2011; Feldman, 2015; Torpey, 2000). Yet, they are not well equipped for developing productive and agentic approaches to displacement. Thus, we have encouraged contributors to creatively engage in a theoretical dialogue with their empirical materials. We did not have specific political or social theories in mind – such as postcolonial theory or theories of practice – though, as we discuss below when we specify what we mean by “global conversations,” we do see the importance of integrating postcolonial and decolonial debates in refugee studies. In his layered reflections on theories that cross borders and travel to other places, Edward Said (1991 [1983]: 226–47, 2001 [2000]: 436–52) argues that travel can either tame or make theory more transgressive. Following this view, we did not assume that certain theories were more appropriate than others but, conversely, we pushed contributors to elaborate on how and why certain concepts were useful for understanding their case studies.

Even just a cursory look at the concepts and theories used by our contributors shows how productive our approach has been. Ulrich Oslender does build on Hannah Arendt’s work, but he turns to her less-known theorization

of “thoughtlessness” to make sense of how state bureaucracies process people, in his case internally displaced people (IDPs) in Colombia. He also refreshingly excavates the distinct experiences of African-Caribbean IDPs within the “thoughtless” Colombian bureaucratic system. While Oslender develops a theoretical approach to categorization and management of IDPs along ethnoracial lines, Chia Youyee Vang ties together the histories of war, imperialism, and refuge that run through the lives of Hmong refugees resettled in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Her Chapter 1 shows the promise of a postcolonial approach sensitive to the interplay between local and global histories within refugee studies.

In Chapter 4 on the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, Tazreena Sajjad looks at how the Bangladeshi state questions and rejects the protracted reception of new waves of Rohingya refugees in connection to the restrictive policies increasingly adopted by states in the Global North. Her chapter thus raises the question of how the securitization of refuge that crosses different regions of the world further reinforces itself as a global trend because states observe other states’ practices and discourses. Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and Malaysia, is also the empirical terrain from which Pei Palmgren theorizes about state involvement in informal and even illegal practices of control and containment of Rohingya at both the national and the urban levels (Chapter 11). By doing so, he highlights the role of the state in informality and illegality, situating his work within emerging debates about “informality from above” and “legal consciousness” under conditions of marginality and oppression.

Two other examples include Diana Allan’s (Chapter 5) theorization of Palestinian aquatic identities – that is, Palestinian identities, including refugee ones, that are rooted to the sea, rather than, as traditionally conceptualized, rooted to land – and Jonathan Darling’s (Chapter 9) use of Roberto Esposito’s concept of “immunology” to examine how political–moral and even legal responsibilities toward refugees are muted and rejected in the policy arena in the contemporary UK. Further, Chiara Denaro (Chapter 7) uses Albert Hirschman’s concepts of “voice” and “exit” to examine how Syrian refugees strove to have their voice heard while in transit. Cathrine Brun and Ragne Øwre Thorshaug theorize the role of buildings and material objects in the lives of IDPs in Georgia in Chapter 6. Caroline Kihato and Loren Landau theorize in-visibility and “stealth humanitarianism” in marginalized localities of urban refuge in the Global South (Chapter 10). Ala Sirriyeh gives attention to age as an axis that increasingly marks “innocent” refugee bodies, separating them from other refugee bodies in the Global North (Chapter 2). Kostantina Isidoros engages with theories of globalization, interrogating global and local identities, boundaries, and interactions from the standpoint of Saharawi refugees in the Algerian desert (Chapter 8). She shows the global dimension of the Saharawi subjectivities and politics as they are expressed in their interactions with other “global actors” such as the humanitarians who visit their camps. The Saharawi people treat these humanitarians as “guests” in need of

help and orientation within the unfamiliar and harsh physical–political terrain of the Algerian desert.

These are just some examples of how the chapters offer rich and creative theorizing about displacement. The result is that, rather than having an integrated theoretical framework, the monograph has an eclectic but ultimately stimulating collection of theoretical sources. We hope that the cumulative theoretical work we have produced will inspire refugee studies to be more receptive to new theoretical developments in the social sciences. In this view, the monograph is in dialogue with recent theorizing of displacement, humanitarianism, and refugee lives, such as Fassin’s (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015) work on humanitarianism, the state, and morality (see, for example, Darling’s Chapter 9 on the asylum dispersal system in the UK), Monika Krause’s (2014) and Julian Go’s (2016) work on transnationalism, field theory, and humanitarian interventions (see, for example, the chapters on the global, state, and urban levels of humanitarian interventions), and Lucy Mayblin (2017) and Gurminder Bhambra’s (2017) research on the colonial–historical genealogies of humanitarian regimes of management (see, for example, the chapters on Hmong refugees in the US and refugee children in the UK).

## **Structure of the book**

The book is divided into three thematic sections, each composed of chapters drawing on cases from both the Global South and the Global North. The first section – “Experiments of categorizing and control” – draws on a variety of methodologies including historical archives, ethnography, and textual analysis of official discourses to examine the categorization of refugees as an arena of struggle and contestation connected with broader processes of control at the urban, regional, and global levels. The section shows how the categorization of refugees and other forced migrants is tied to the formal and informal distribution of symbolic and material resources as well as to the mobilization of moralizing evaluative categories by state institutions and also humanitarian organizations. It also ties displacement to other axes of inclusion and exclusion such as “race,” nationhood, and age.

The second section – “Inhabiting displacement and crafting futures” – shifts attention to the experiential dimension of displacement in different contexts across the Global South and the Global North as refugees and other forced migrants make sense and act upon the experiments of categorization and control imposed on them. This section is interdisciplinary but methodologically more homogenous as it is centered on ethnographic methodology. It excavates distinct relationships between displacement and landed identities, between forced migrants and material objects, and between global forms of activism and refugee voices and claims. This section nicely connects with recent development across the social sciences on human senses, political subjectivities,

and affective–moral connection with landscapes of war and militarism and with material objects.

The final section of the book – “Scales of intervention” – again crosses the Global South and the Global North to excavate how the global and local interact: mutually influence each other, converge, or clash. This is not just an effort to map different regional and local case studies but also highlights how being attentive to interactions across scales of intervention helps us understand structures and experiences of displacement in both their continuities and changes. This section gives particular attention to the urban level, showing how looking at global and state actors from an urban perspective raises interesting questions about the involvement of institutional actors in informality and even illegality as well as about the language and scope of humanitarian interventions at a time of increasingly fragmented sources of marginality, poverty, and dispossession across the citizen–refugee divide.

Taken as a whole, the conversations within and across the three sections offer ways of thinking about refugees not only from a securitized perspective, but also through thinking about their agency in relation to that and taking into consideration the scales at which humanitarian, security, and other processes operate. While the individual chapters remain grounded in their contexts, they offer the opportunity to think about the issues around the management of refuge and the practice of everyday life among refugees as relational across scales, regions, and disciplinary boundaries.

### *Experiments of categorizing and control*

The first section begins with Chia Youyee Vang’s Chapter 1 on the resettlement of Hmong refugees in the US in the 1970s and 1980s. Vang notes how Hmong refugees from Laos had supported American troops in Vietnam. In the aftermath of the US loss in Southeast Asia, many were resettled as refugees in the US – a program through which the US attempted to help those who had supported their campaign in the region. However, the process was fraught in many ways. Attempts at trying to mold refugees into willing subjects through language and acculturation programs were met with difficulties and resistance. Refugees are often seen as “speechless emissaries” (Malkki, 1996) and this chapter questions that assumption through investigating various processes. Vang documents the process of including refugees in the rolls of those being resettled in the US. She notes, for example, that many refugees persuaded others to whom they were not related to add them to their resettlement applications as sisters or widows or children. In the US, many who came struggled to find work and “assimilate” into society. The assistance provided to them also increased the resentment of those in the US who were also struggling with poverty. However, as she shows, the Hmong were not voiceless, passive, and grateful recipients of support and resettlement. Rather,

they tried to subvert the system in different ways, including by refusing to take on jobs they were unhappy with and enrolling for welfare instead. The chapter highlights the complex nature of refugee resettlement in the US, illuminating not only the geopolitics of refugee resettlement schemes, but also how, when such programs are put into practice, they do not merely produce docile bodies, but rather create varied and often resistant subjects.

In Chapter 2 titled “Niche openings and compassionate exclusion: the reception of refugee children in the UK” Alaa Sirriyeh draws on the concept of “niche openings” to explore how the category of children is deployed in the increasingly restrictive asylum system in the UK. Her chapter shows how the UK has had a longer history of protecting children – for example, the Kindertransporters during the Second World War. The British have also exhibited a certain compassion for children, paying particular attention to their innocence and vulnerability. Children and childhood are seen to be categories and phases in life that ought to be protected, particularly in times of crises such as conflicts. Sirriyeh’s chapter, however, draws attention to the varied ways in which the term children is understood. On the one hand, with the tragic death of toddler Aylan Kurdi, and the media’s compassionate response to it, there was greater commitment by the British government (in principle) to bring child refugees into the UK and resettle them. On the other hand, Sirriyeh notes the complexities of understanding what a child is within these narratives. She notes how the imagination of a “child” is one that is younger, more vulnerable, versus many of the minors who have come over who are in their teens and are viewed with greater suspicion and contempt. Thus teenagers, who are still minors, occupy a precarious position, where they are legally classified as children and are vulnerable, but lack the social support by asylum-providing countries like the UK who see them as being less deserving than those who would be considerably younger and in supposedly greater need of protection. Sirriyeh’s chapter thus offers a glimpse into the niche openings available to children looking for asylum in host countries, but is tempered through a sobering look at the laws and regulations that affect child protection regimes and general social attitudes towards children.

In Chapter 3 of this section, “The banality of displacement: re-reading Hannah Arendt to instil critical thought in the Colombian refugee crisis,” Ulrich Oslender draws on Arendt’s work on the banality of evil to construct a powerful critique of how the system of management of refugees and IDPs fails to take into consideration the many facets of their identities, especially in terms of their ethnoracial membership. Oslender engages in a critical reflection of the idea of banality, noting that as Arendt envisioned it, it was not about the commonplace or mundane but rather about thoughtlessness – specifically lacking critical thought. He argues that this thoughtlessness is not something that is simply there, but rather it is something that is actively produced. Oslender critiques the IDP protection system operating in Colombia in the process of developing his argument around the thoughtlessness that is embedded in the system. He argues that it is not just the violence of conflict

that is thoughtless, but also the system of registration, the bureaucracy around the recognition of IDP status, and the provision of support that have at their heart institutional thoughtlessness that is problematic. For starters, there is the numbers game, where IDPs are reduced to figures and thus lose their complex identities. These numbers of IDPs are hotly disputed between the state, which attempts to play them down, and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), which indicate higher numbers. Second, he points out that while the constitution in Colombia recognizes African-Caribbeans as ethnoracial minorities in the country, figures collected about IDPs fail to account for ethnoracial differences. As a result, as he notes, *campesinos*, fisherfolks, black, indigenous, or *mestizo* – very varied groups of people – are subsumed under a single umbrella of IDP. Few, if any, statistics are kept on their ethnic differences. Thus, the system that attempts to protect IDPs in fact fails them. A useful illustration of this point is made through his discussion of diet – the provision of food for IDPs and the food that is provided which is not in line with the diet they are used to. Part of this stems from the fact that no data is available to know which ethnic group IDPs come from and thus to tailor humanitarian support accordingly. This brings us back to questions that lie at the heart of the humanitarian project. As recipients of humanitarian aid, are refugees only meant to be grateful and submissive? This is a question that Vang has also raised through her work in Chapter 1. What does it take for us to see refugees as unique humans and provide responses that are in line with that recognition? How do we, through our practice and academic work, re-humanize refugees and move away from a rhetoric in which they are seen to be nothing more than recipients of aid? This requires us to think about agency and identity more critically.

The first section concludes with Chapter 4 titled “Refugees welcome? The politics of repatriation and return in a global era of security.” In this chapter, Tazreena Sajjad offers a refreshing Southern perspective on the debates about “crimmigration” and “securitization” of migration that are often centered on Northern states. She draws our attention to the politics of hosting refugees among Global South countries in an era of growing security concerns and the diminishing power of the UN to protect the rights of refugees. In particular, she focuses on how Bangladesh has hosted the Rohingya over the last several decades as Myanmar has engaged in repeated ethnic cleansing practices against them. Like other scholars working on the politics of hosting refugees in the Global South, such as B.S. Chimni, Sajjad draws our attention to the unevenness of the global humanitarian system whereby those countries who are often least equipped to host large numbers of refugees find themselves doing so over long periods of time (Chimni, 2000). This has become even more apparent since the end of the Cold War as refugees have begun to carry less and less political value. While countries in the Global South are tasked with hosting large numbers of refugees, their security concerns tend to be overlooked while those of countries in the Global North are amplified. The

UN, which is dependent on funding from donor countries in the Global North, plays a role in perpetuating this uneven system. What then do these countries in the Global South do? As with the work by Palmgren, Sajjad draws our attention to the questionable practices of states in the Global South. She looks at how, in countries such as Bangladesh – which has hosted Rohingyas since the 1980s – there are attempts to try to limit the numbers of refugees or repatriate them or resettle them in geographically problematic areas. As a result of the diminishing power of the UN, a change in the geopolitical landscape of the world, and the emphasis on security concerns, the rights of refugees continue to be eroded.

### *Inhabiting displacement and crafting futures*

The first chapter of the second section focuses on the case of displaced Palestinians. In Chapter 5 titled “At sea: maritime Palestine displaced,” Diana Allan takes us through a critical understanding of Palestinian identity and displacement and its relationship to the sea in her exquisitely written ethnographic chapter. Here, she challenges normative understandings of Palestinian refugees as coming from farming backgrounds (*fellaheen*), and shows us instead the lives of Palestinian refugees who were fishermen who were displaced to Lebanon. Her work not only illuminates the close relationship – both personal and professional – of these communities to the sea, but also the complex political negotiations they have to engage with in order to continue their trades and indeed stake a claim to territory through their nautical understandings. In a particularly telling example, she talks about how these fishermen have an intimate understand of the aquatic terrain, honed through generations of working in these trades, and how these are then mobilized to challenge other forms of territorial knowledge and disputes over having illegally crossed international waters. Allan’s work is not only an original contribution to the understanding of Palestinian identity, but also of rethinking the identity of Palestinian refugees as *landed*. It offers an important lens with which to understand the geographies of forced migration, lending itself to the critical development of pathways taken to refuge (aquatic), the spaces of exile (as she notes, to move away from imagining refuge to be in the camp), and the kinds of work done in refuge (fishing and other maritime activities). As she notes “This chapter is a tentative attempt to reclaim and reconnect experiences of exodus, labor and resistance at sea – crosscutting past and present – through a body of water, where fishing is both subject and method.” Indeed, as she asks, “What might forgotten Palestinian histories of maritime displacement yield?” In fact, such a question can and perhaps should be asked of many other displacements in various parts of the world.

In their Chapter 6 titled “Privatized housing and never-ending displacement: the temporality of dwelling for displaced Georgians,” Cathrine Brun and Ragne Øwre Thorshaug explore displacement through a critical analysis of

materiality and homemaking practices among internally displaced persons from Abkhazia to Georgia. Looking at collective shelters which until 2009 were used by the state to house IDPs, and were then privatized, the authors “analyze the experience of what happens when the status of the material shelter that forced migrants occupy changes from temporary to permanent living spaces through privatization, but people’s displacement statuses do not change accordingly.” These buildings are inhabited by IDPs, but they have been privatized since 2009 and so are no longer IDP housing but private residential structures like any other in cities like Tbilisi. The Georgian state allowed the privatization of the housing but did not change the status of the residents from IDPs to citizens as they continue to clash with Abkhazia over the latter’s independence. The buildings and their residents play a key role in the continuation of claims of Georgia over the Abkhaz region.

Despite the status change of the buildings from IDP shelters into private buildings, they continue to be seen as IDP buildings. Their categorization as such impacts the ways in which the residents are imagined by those on the outside. As spaces that were built for other purposes – as hospitals, dormitories, and so forth – the afterlives of these shelters as “durable” housing solutions that exist in a gray space between permanent and temporary, as IDP shelters and private spaces, have considerable effects on residents. The authors discuss the clashing temporalities of the past lives of these structures and their current incarnations. The dwelling spaces themselves, being small and concentrating all activities from eating and sleeping to entertaining into often a single room, also present clashing temporalities for the residents. Through a careful analysis of privatization and homemaking practices, and bringing in this critical dimension of time, the authors deftly offer a critical analysis of the materiality of displacement and the ways in which it affects social lives and the experiences of displacement.

In Chapter 7, titled “Voice through exit: Syrian refugees at the borders of Europe and the struggle to choose where to live,” Chiara Denaro draws our attention to how Syrian refugee voices emerged during their migration out of Syria towards Europe. Denaro draws on Albert Hirschman’s paradigm of “Exit, voice and loyalty” together with the autonomy of migration theory, subaltern studies, and critical citizenship studies to engage in this analysis. She argues that limited attention is paid to the voices of migrants in transit, but by doing so it is possible to break down the binaries between forced and voluntary migration and this contributes to the recognition of agency and political subjectivity among forced migrants. In her work, she critically interrogates the emergence of voices of refugees who have engaged in protests and turned to digital and social media to document their lives and have their voices and demands heard, revealing the myriad ways in which refugees exercise agency, challenge the structures that seek to contain and push them back, and stake claims to the right to move to where they feel safe. Her work falls into a larger landscape of critical geopolitical work that shows the varied actors involved in the management of the migration and

how migrants themselves can shape the geopolitics of migration control. It also calls our attention to *how* we pay attention to voices. Why do we imagine refugees and asylum seekers to be voiceless or speechless? By whom is this voice or speech not heard? In other words, is there an intellectual imperialism at work when we claim that certain people are unable to “speak”? How can we decolonize our understanding of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers by paying attention to the quotidian ways in which they make their voices heard and by co-producing knowledge (Siddiqui, 2018)?

In the last chapter of this section (Chapter 8), titled “The global refugee camp: coinciding locales of refuge among Sahrawi refugees in North Africa,” Kostantina Isidoros draws on her long-term fieldwork among the Sahrawi people living in refugee camps in the Algerian desert to examine the mutual perceptions and social interactions between the Sahrawi people and the humanitarians visiting them. She highlights the intricate interplay of legal, spatial, and political meanings variably attached to categories such as “nomads,” “refugees,” “citizens,” and “statehood” in such perceptions and interactions. In the process, she unsettles dominant assumptions about what and who is “local” and what and who is “global.” She also problematizes assumptions about the relative distribution of vulnerability and agentic power in the encounters she observed in the Algerian desert. Indeed, in her chapter, the “global” humanitarians come across as in need of orientation and reassurance as they negotiate the difficult geopolitical terrain of the Algerian desert. Further, her findings show a certain tension traversing the interactions between the Sahrawi people and the humanitarians: the former greet the humanitarians in their camps as socio-spatial formations of statehood-in-waiting, while the latter experience the camps as (probably temporary) harsh spaces in need of humanitarian aid. Ultimately, the chapter proposes and offers an example of how ethnography can be used to study humanitarian interventions as they are experienced on the ground. In doing so, it nicely introduces the third and concluding section of the book.

### *Scale of intervention*

The third section begins with Jonathan Darling’s Chapter 9 titled “Out-sourcing refuge: distance, deferral, and immunity in the urban governance of refugees.” In this chapter, Darling draws on Esposito’s work on immunitary logics to critically examine practices of refugee protection and support generally, but the UK’s asylum accommodation system in particular. Darling discusses Esposito’s work which develops the interplay between community and immunity. Darling argues that this is central to understanding borders, identity, and difference and responses to refugee reception more generally. Where community is founded on bounding members together, and community is experienced as a risk to the self, immunity operates on a somewhat opposite but complementary logic. As he notes: “immunity enables the individual to defend and retain

their self-identity against the exposure of *communitas* and its binds of duty.” Immunity involves selective inclusion and as such “presents a distinct relation to otherness, one that seeks to protect and retain self-identity through the selective incorporation, pre-emption, and neutralisation of threats. It is this combination that Esposito (2008) argues makes immunity a fundamental logic behind biopolitical interventions in humanitarianism, the war on terror, and the politics of migration.” With this conceptual background in place, Darling goes on to discuss the functioning of the asylum system in the UK. He uses three different ways to expose the immunitary workings of the state: through “practices of distancing, the deferral of responsibility, and the privatization of state functions, each serve to produce immunitary borders within and beyond the territorial limits of the nation-state.” He notes how the accommodation system has been privatized and managed by private organizations such as G4S and other subcontractors; how asylum seekers can no longer choose where to live, but rather are put through a central processing system that assigns them housing in different locations. As with other scholars (Gill, 2009), Darling notes how asylum seekers are shifted around breaking social bonds. He discusses how accommodation is provided in locations that have high levels of deprivation. All these processes affect not just the growing marginalization of asylum seekers but also bring into the sharp relief the overlaying of asylum spaces on spaces and populations facing poverty. This presents important social and political questions about the marginalization of subjects. Can we begin to develop a radical critique of neoliberalism and securitization on the one hand and inequality and marginality on the other by bringing together the critical discussions around urban poor and refugees, and asylum seekers? Rather than seeing these groups as conflictual, is it possible to bind them in discourses of solidarity that would provide robust critiques of the state and the state system more generally?

Secondly, in their Chapter 10 titled “Visibilising suffering or stealth humanitarianism? The perils of promoting durable protection in cities of the south,” Caroline Kihato and Loren Landau draw our attention to the complexities of protecting refugees and their rights within urban environments. As refugee crises become increasingly urbanized, protecting refugees becomes more complex. Unlike camp settings, urban environments are spatially fragmented and subject to various financial and political changes that are linked to, yet distinct from, those at the scale of the nation state. In cities in the Global South where much of urban displacement takes place, protecting refugees can be highly varied and subject to the whims of local communities and power brokers. Here, refugees share the same kinds of socio-economic struggles as the urban poor; therefore, privileging one over the other can cause tensions and resentments among the local communities. Kihato and Landau point out that in such a condition, insisting on formulaic, rights-based approaches may be counter-productive. Rather, humanitarian organizations are better off working more stealthily with local organizations, including state

institutions, to insert protections for refugees into local by-laws. This requires organizations to understand local power dynamics, be willing to be flexible, and work to produce small, incremental changes. This may not be the kind of model that donors seek when funding humanitarian responses, but in an increasingly urban and dynamic world, we perhaps need to abandon earlier models of protection and adopt tactics that tap into the needs and interests of local communities. This is perhaps one of the only ways in which to protect refugees in urban spaces. As such their intervention raises some important questions for academics and practitioners. For example, they draw our attention to invisibilization as a tactic of survival. Indeed, as Palmgren's chapter also shows, being visible as a refugee in an urban environment where rights are limited and/or unevenly enforced may come at great cost – financially and socially. Instead, there may be more acceptance for refugees among local populations if the state simply looks the other way, as Kihato and Landau demonstrate. Further, their work raises questions about rights to the city – how in fact do refugees exercise these if their presence even among the urban poor is so deeply contested? Do we ever reach a moment when the rights of refugees can be demanded in an urban environment where poverty and marginalization are deeply entrenched?

Finally, in Chapter 11, titled “Onward pushes and negotiated refuge: theorizing the fluid national and urban regimes of forced migration in Southeast Asia,” Pei Palmgren critically analyzes the complex and informal nature of refugee protection in Southeast Asia. Palmgren specifically looks at Thailand and Malaysia and uses the discussion of Rohingya refugees to illuminate the different ways in which the state colludes with people smugglers and others in clandestinely pushing Rohingya refugees into Malaysia. The crackdown on these practices clearly reveals how deeply involved the Thai state is with these practices. However, it is not just at the level of people smuggling that the state is complicit. Rather, looking at the ambiguous and patchy nature of refugee protection in Southeast Asia, where there is no recognition of refugee status and protection of it either (except non-refoulement), Palmgren reveals how the state is involved in the continuous marginalization and oppression of Rohingya refugees. For example, he shows how urban refugees are constantly extorted by policemen as well as local communities in cities such as Kuala Lumpur and the significant income that goes toward paying these bribes in exchange for not being detained. UNHCR documentation does not hold much authority, if any, in these places. Palmgren thus shows how the legality and enforcement of refugee rights differs at different scales – from the scale of the state to that of the urban. In doing so, he draws our attention to the scalar nature of the law and the need to pay attention to that. Further, his work continues a longer tradition of critical work around the ad hoc nature of law enforcement and the lack of protection and rights that many refugees are subject to in different parts of the world (Campbell, 2006; Coddington, 2018; Sanyal, 2018). These works reveal how the lack of legal frameworks creates socially and economically precarious situations for refugees who are

compelled to work in the informal economy for longer hours and lower wages; in other words, their labor is continually exploited. Thus, as Pasquetti and Picker (2017) note, informality becomes a form of confinement. We may ask how thinking about legal ambiguity and ad hoc policing changes our understanding of refugee subjectivity, especially in situations of protracted crises.

## Notes

- 1 While Mignolo (2018: 149) calls for a conceptual movement “past the disciplines” rather than toward interdisciplinarity (which, according to him, “depends on maintaining the disciplines”), as we discuss in this Introduction, interdisciplinarity seems a crucial step toward delinking refugee studies from its still dominant Eurocentric assumptions, thus strengthening cross-regional dialogues about rights, justice, and historical legacies of imperialism and colonialism within its overly fragmented field.
- 2 With “subjugated knowledges” (e.g., Collins, 1990; Mignolo, 2000), we refer to those types of knowledge produced by and circulating among marginalized groups and places. These knowledges are “enunciations” that are not recognized as legitimate enunciations with global power structures and, as a result, they are often pushed toward the realm of emotionality and away from the presumed lack of emotionality of dominant epistemological perspectives.

## References

- Agamben, G. [1995] (1998), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Agier, M. (2011), *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Arendt, H. (1973), *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).
- Bagelman, J.J. (2016), Still waiting: security, temporality, population. In *Sanctuary City: A Suspended State, Mobility & Politics* (London: Palgrave Pivot) pp. 94–104.
- Bau, I. (1985), *This Ground is Holy: Church Sanctuary and Central American Refugees* (New York: Paulist Press).
- Bhambra, G. (2017), The current crises of Europe: refugees, colonialism, and the limits of cosmopolitanism. *European Law Journal* 23(5): 395–405.
- Bloch, A. and G. Dona (eds) (2018), *Forced Migration: Current Issues and Debates* (London: Routledge).
- Calhoun, C. (2010), The idea of emergency: humanitarian action and global (dis) order. In Fassin, D. and M. Pandolfi (eds) *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* (New York: Zone Books), pp. 29–58.

- Campbell, E.H. (2006), Urban refugees in Nairobi: problems of protection, mechanisms of survival, and possibilities for integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19: 396–413.
- Chatterji, J. (2011), *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967*, Reissue edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Chimni, B.S. (2000), Globalization, humanitarianism and the erosion of refugee protection. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13: 243–263.
- Coddington, K. (2018), Landscapes of refugee protection. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 43(3): 326–340.
- Collins, P.H. (1990), *Black Feminist Thought* (London: Routledge).
- Collyer, M. (2016), Geopolitics as a migration governance strategy: European Union bilateral relations with Southern Mediterranean countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42(4): 606–624.
- Comaroff, J. and J. Comaroff (2012), *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving toward Africa* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers).
- Coutin, S.B. (2011), The rights of non-citizens. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 7: 289–308.
- Darling, J. (2010), A city of sanctuary: the relational re-imagining of Sheffield's asylum politics. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35: 125–140.
- Darling, J. (2009), Becoming bare life: asylum, hospitality, and the politics of encampment. *Environment and Planning D* 27: 649–665.
- Fassin, D. (ed.) (2015), *At the Heart of the State: The Moral World of Institutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press).
- Fassin, D. (2013), On resentment and ressentiment: the politics and ethics of moral emotions. *Current Anthropology* 54(3): 249–267.
- Fassin, D. (2011), A contribution to the critique of moral reason. *Anthropological Theory* 11: 481–491.
- Fassin, D. (2009), Les économies morales revisitées [Revisiting moral economies]. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*: 1237–1266.
- Feldman, I. (2018), *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Feldman, I. (2015), What is a camp? Legitimate refugee lives in spaces of long-term displacement. *Geoforum* 66: 244–252.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, L. and S. Long (eds) (2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Fitzgerald, D. (2019), *Refuge beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Fitzgerald, S.D. and R. Arar. (2018), The sociology of refugee migration. *Annual Review of Sociology* 44: 387–406.
- Fraser, N. and A. Honneth. (2003), *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso).
- Gieryn, T. (2000), A space for place in sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 463–496.
- Gill, N. (2009), Longing for stillness: the forced movement of asylum seekers. *MC Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture* 12(1): 10–15.
- Go, J. and M. Krause. (2016), *Fielding Transnationalism*. Sociological Review Monograph. (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell).

- Goffman E. (1990) [1968], *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (London: Bantam Doubleday Publishing Group).
- Hyndman, J. (2012), The geopolitics of migration and mobility. *Geopolitics* 17(2): 243–255.
- Hyndman, J. (2000), *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Hyndman, J. and Giles, W. (2011), Waiting for what? The feminization of asylum in protracted situations. *Gender, Place & Culture* 18: 361–379.
- Hyndman, J. and Mountz, A. (2008), Another brick in the wall? Neo-refoulement and the externalization of asylum by Australia and Europe. *Government and Opposition* 43: 249–269.
- Kaur, R. (2007), *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press).
- Kleinman, A., V. Das, and M. Lock. (eds) (1997), *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Krause, M. (2014), *The Good Project: Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason* (Chicago: Chicago University Press).
- Landau, L.B. (2018), Displacement and the pursuit of urban protection: forced migration, fluidity and global cities. In Bloch, A. and G. Dona (eds) *Forced Migration: Current Issues and Debates* (London: Routledge), pp. 106–125.
- Malkki, L.H. (1996), Speechless emissaries: refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology* 11: 377–404.
- Malkki, L.H. (1995), *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- Martin, L.L. (2012), ‘Catch and remove’: detention, deterrence, and discipline in US noncitizen family detention practice. *Geopolitics* 17: 312–334.
- Massey, D. (2002), Globalization: what does it mean for Geography? *Geography* 87(4): 293–296.
- Mayblin, L. (2017), *Asylum After Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International).
- Mountz, A. (2011), The enforcement archipelago: detention, haunting, and asylum on islands. *Political Geography* 30(3): 118–128.
- Mbembe, A. (2003), Necropolitics. *Public Culture* 15(1): 11–40.
- Mignolo, W. (2000), *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Mignolo, W. (2018), *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Milner, J. and K. Wojnarowicz (2017), Power in the global refugee regime: understanding expressions and experiences of power in global and local contexts. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 33: 7–17.
- Mountz, A., K. Coddington, R.T. Catania, and J.M. Loyd (2013), Conceptualizing detention: mobility, containment, bordering, and exclusion. *Progress in Human Geography* 37: 522–541.
- Moran, D., J. Turner, and A.K. Schliehe (2018), Conceptualizing the carceral in carceral geography. *Progress in Human Geography* 42(5): 666–686.
- Noxolo, P. (2017), Introduction: decolonising geographical knowledge in a colonised and re-colonising postcolonial world. *Area* 49(3): 317–319.

- Pasquetti, S. (2019), Experiences of urban militarism: spatial stigma, ruins, and everyday life. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 43(5): 848–869.
- Pasquetti, S. (2015a), Negotiating control: camps, cities, and political life. *City* 19: 702–713.
- Pasquetti, S. (2015b), Subordination and dispositions: Palestinians’ differing sense of justice, politics, and morality. *Theory & Society* 44(1): 1–31.
- Pasquetti, S. and Picker, G. (2017), Confined informality: global margins, statecraft, and urban life. *International Sociology* 32: 532–544.
- Picker, G. and Pasquetti, S. (2015), Durable camps: the state, the urban, the everyday. *City* 19: 681–688.
- Ramadan, A. (2013), Spatialising the refugee camp. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38: 65–77.
- Said, E. 2001 [2000], *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Said, E. 1991 [1983], *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Sanyal, R. (2018), Managing through ad hoc measures: Syrian refugees and the politics of waiting in Lebanon. *Political Geography* 66: 67–75.
- Sanyal, R. (2014), Urbanizing refuge: interrogating spaces of displacement. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38: 558–572.
- Sanyal, R. (2011), Squatting in camps building and insurgency in spaces of refuge. *Urban Studies* 48: 877–890.
- Siddiqui, A.I. (2018), Writing with: togethering, difference, and feminist architectural histories of migration [online] <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/structural-instability/208707/writing-with/> [accessed 17 April, 2019].
- Torpey J. (2000), *The Invention of the Passport* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Tsing, A. (2005), *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Zamindar, V.F.-Y. (2007), *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Zetter, R. (2018), Conceptualising forced migration: praxis, scholarship and empirics. In Bloch, A. and G. Dona (eds) *Forced Migration: Current Issues and Debates* (London: Routledge), pp. 19–43.
- Zetter, R. (1991), Labelling refugees: forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4: 39–62.