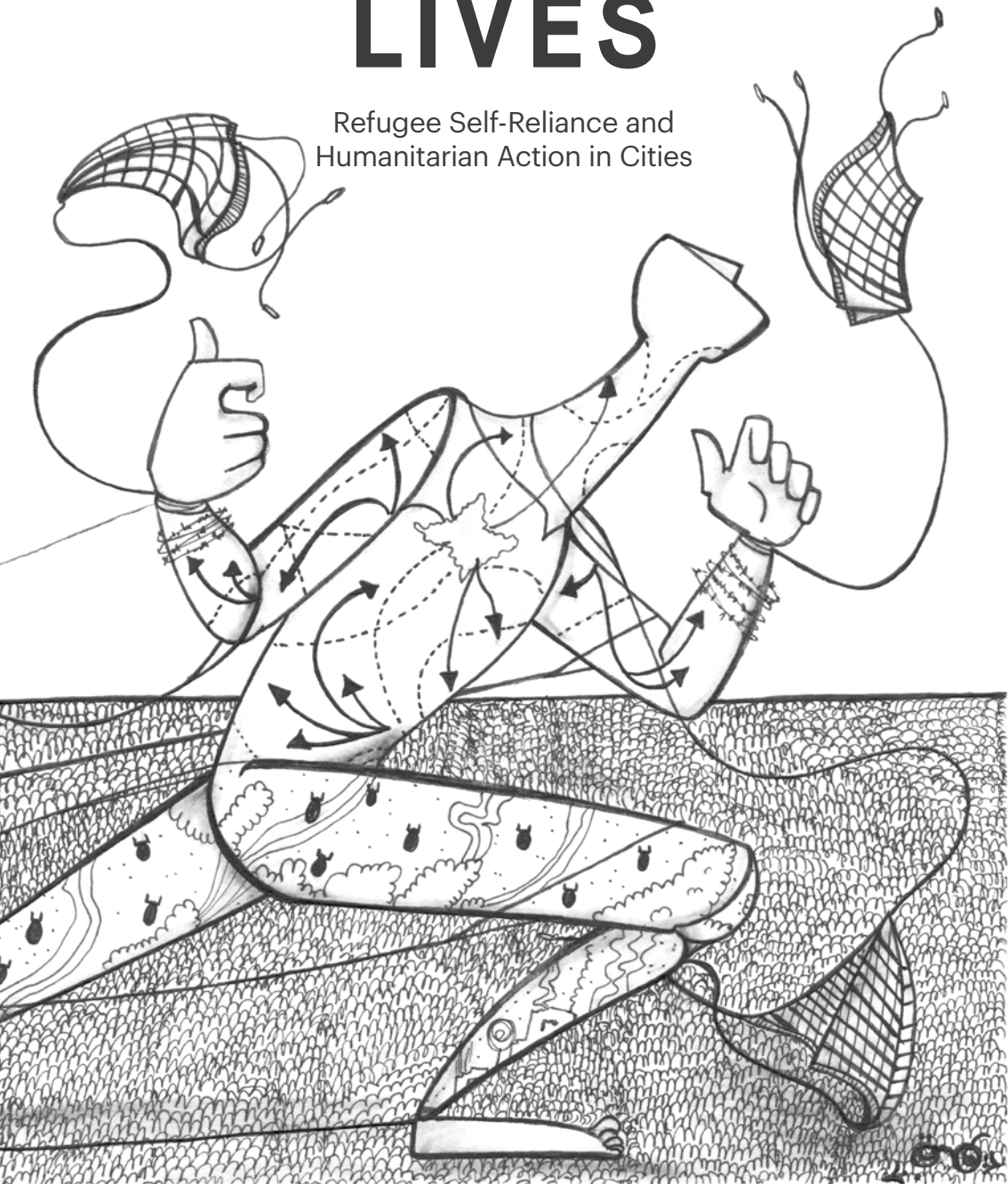# MAKING LIVES

Refugee Self-Reliance and Humanitarian Action in Cities

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Humanitarian Action in Cities

Edited by Juliano Fiori and Andrea Rigon

The Humanitarian Affairs Team
Save the Children

Save the Children

dpu
Development
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CONTENTS

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For more than 60 years, the DPU has conducted research, consultancy and postgraduate teaching that helps to build the capacity of national governments, local authorities, NGOs, aid agencies and businesses working towards socially just and sustainable development in the global south. The DPU is a department of the Bartlett: University College London's global faculty of the built environment.

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Through critical reflection, research, and outreach, the HAT informs Save the Children strategy, offers proposals for policy and practice within the organisation and across the humanitarian sector, and works to translate these proposals into practicable plans of action.

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ACRONYMS

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EU	European Union
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GBP	British pound
GoI	Government of India
HRLN	Human Rights Law Network
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IT	Information technology
LTV	Long Term Visa
NFI	Non-food item
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
REACT	Refugee Assistance Collaboration in Thessaloniki
SLIC	Socio-Legal Information Centre
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

INTRODUCTION

This publication presents the results of a one-year research project at the intersection of urban, humanitarian and forced migration studies. As protracted displacement increasingly contributes to urban change and poses a challenge for city governance and infrastructures, this research project focuses on 'urban-itarian' settings – cities that are home to a growing number of 'persons of concern' (a category that includes refugees and returned refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and returned IDPs, stateless people, and others), and increased humanitarian activity. In these contexts, humanitarian organisations provide an additional layer of urban infrastructure, on top of the conventional provisions for protection, basic services, and livelihoods for persons of concern. They face growing pressure from governmental donors to provide more specialised responses to conflicts and disasters that cannot be isolated from wider urban dynamics.

The project focuses on refugee self-reliance in the city. It explores the socio-economic practices of refugees and host communities, the challenges faced by refugees in gaining access to labour markets, and the ways in which humanitarian actors, often in collaboration with city authorities, seek to promote refugee livelihoods. A broad notion of the market as a space of social practices (characterised by power relations, flows and exchanges, negotiation, and the pursuit of aspirations) informs an analysis of the way in which the activities of institutional actors become enmeshed with those of informal actors, which offer an alternative support network for refugees unable to engage in formal labour. While humanitarian organisations have placed particular emphasis on the economic dimensions of refugee self-reliance, this project explores other aspects of refugee well-being too. Understanding the barriers and limits to refugee self-reliance, as well as the potential shortcomings of self-reliance as a conceptual and programmatic framework, is key to improving the support that is available to refugees in urban settings.

In short, the project sought to:

- – identify and contextualise socio-economic practices adopted by refugees in urban settings, as well as the opportunities and challenges that refugees encounter;

– analyse the practice of self-reliance programming by humanitarian organisations in urban settings, including its contribution to refugee well-being;

– increase humanitarian actors' understanding of how their self-reliance programmes affect, and are affected by, political and economic systems, and processes of urban change;

– contribute to humanitarian strategies aimed at promoting refugee well-being in changing urban environments.

This project was undertaken as part of a broader partnership between by the Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London, and Save the Children's Humanitarian Affairs Team (HAT).

For more than 60 years, the DPU has conducted research, consultancy and postgraduate teaching that helps to build the capacity of national governments, local authorities, NGOs, aid agencies and businesses working towards socially just and sustainable development in the global south. The DPU is a department of the Bartlett: University College London's global faculty of the built environment.

Through critical reflection, research, and outreach, the HAT informs Save the Children strategy, offers proposals for policy and practice within the organisation and across the humanitarian sector, and works to translate these proposals into practicable plans of action.

The DPU and the HAT developed this partnership as an opportunity to conduct research that contributes to theory and practice, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, and to offer professional pathways for UCL students. It offers the DPU a chance to strengthen its impact on policy and practice, informing strategy at one of the humanitarian sector's largest and most influential NGOs. In turn, the partnership enables the HAT to draw upon the DPU's academic expertise and research capacity. The DPU and the HAT jointly appointed a Humanitarian Affairs Adviser/Research Associate, who worked as a liaison between the two institutions, developing this initial collaborative research project on refugee self-reliance in cities. The partnership will promote the exchange of knowledge between researchers and practitioners through the development of a community of practice beyond this research project.

The project also involved researchers from O.P. Jindal Global University's School of International Affairs (JSIA). JSIA is 'India's first global policy school'. Bringing together scholarship on International Relations, International Law, and International Business, JSIA aims to produce knowledge that can contribute to India's engagement in international affairs and can address pressing global challenges.

The project's research team included Estella Carpi, jointly appointed by the DPU and the HAT; Sophie Dicker, Juliano Fiori, and Fernando Espada

from the HAT; Andrea Rigon, Camillo Boano, and Cassidy Johnson from the DPU; and Jessica Field, Yamini Mookherjee, and Anubhav Dutt Tiwari from O.P. Jindal Global University. During a workshop in December 2016, an initial conceptual framework was developed with input from various experts, including Diane Archer (International Institute for Environment and Development), Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (UCL), Caitlin Wake (Overseas Development Institute), Jonathan Darling (University of Manchester), and Michaelle Tauson (Save the Children). The project then identified three cities in different regions – Halba (Lebanon), Delhi (India), and Thessaloniki (Greece) – as sites for field research. Findings have been shared at various events, and feedback has contributed to the presentation of the findings in this publication.

Carpi conducted the study in Halba, where Syrian refugees make up over a third of the population. Her paper analyses the impact of humanitarian livelihoods programmes in the context of severely limited access to the labour market for refugees, who are only allowed to work in cleaning, gardening, agriculture, and construction. In this scenario, while livelihoods programmes transfer some skills to refugees and provide them with leisure activities, self-reliance remains largely unachievable. The actual agenda of livelihoods programming seems to be more about social cohesion and the reduction of tensions between refugee and host communities. In fact, Carpi argues that it is the host middle-class that, with access to new job opportunities, benefits economically from the livelihoods programmes, and the very presence of humanitarian organisations.

The study conducted by Field, Tiwari, and Mookherjee, in Delhi, focuses on two particularly vulnerable refugee groups: stateless Rohingyas and non-Muslim Afghans. Their research explores the lived experiences of urban refugees attempting to survive and realise their aspirations. They found social hierarchies between refugees who have different levels of legal recognition and entitlements. Limited legal protection and an unclear understanding of rights has led to arbitrary treatment by state officials and exploitation by employers and landlords. In emphasising individual entrepreneurship and economic independence, humanitarian organisations can overlook other important dimensions of refugee well-being, and they can place additional burdens on women, who are often also responsible for domestic work.

Finally, Dicker conducted the study in Thessaloniki, investigating refugee support mechanisms beyond those provided by humanitarian organisations and the state. Many refugees and migrants have been engaging in practices of 'self-support' to meet everyday needs. Moreover, local autonomous solidarity initiatives have provided spaces to promote social and political participation in a way that humanitarian organisations have been unable or unwilling to do. She emphasises the need for humanitarian response to engage with local civil society without undermining their solidarity practices.

Shared learning across the field studies is presented in the final chapter – an overview, focused particularly on humanitarian agencies and their approach to self-reliance. This chapter also aims to inform humanitarian policy and practice in the context of protracted displacement in cities, acknowledging the importance of understanding processes of urban change in the planning and implementation of humanitarian activities.

All the outputs from this project can be accessed on the project website: http://refugeesinthecity.org

Learning and Earning in Constrained Labour Markets: The Politics of Livelihoods in Lebanon's Halba[1]

Estella Carpi

Background on Halba

Those unfamiliar with Lebanon had probably never heard of the governorate of Akkar until recently. From spring 2011 onwards, Akkar became the primary destination for Syrian refugees fleeing war, persecution, and destruction. While the history of conflict-caused damage in the region is longstanding, the local genealogy of humanitarian presence and action is paradoxically short. This contradiction opens up important research avenues into how humanitarian practices and presence have been shaping the Syrian refugee crisis, and how local people and refugees navigate their everyday livelihood opportunities by weaving a peculiar social fabric. This paper examines the labour market as a lens through which to reflect ethnographically on this social fabric.

Even the briefest stay in Akkar makes clear to visitors the chronic poverty of the region, and the extent to which local people have felt neglected by the state and NGOs over the last century. The historical neglect of this region can be traced back to the Beirut-centrism of the Lebanese economy,[2] and the distraction of the international community's attention by the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon.

Although urbanistically under-developed, Halba – Akkar's capital – derives its economic importance from its intermediary position between Homs and Tripoli, and from being the main market for the surrounding villages.[3] Unlike other urban settings that can be discussed in terms of economic 'recovery' after crisis, Halba has never been designed or developed as a city. Infrastructure and services are poor and insufficient. Electricity, when not privately purchased, lasts only four hours per day. People only have access to two hospitals and five schools.

As a local scholar told me in Halba on a cold morning in late February, 'Halba is neither a village, nor a city' (*wa la qariye wa la medine*).[4] Too small to be called a city, some scholars would probably define it as an urban centre.[5] Halba's society still rests on the rural hierarchical ties and relationships that characterise the surrounding hamlets. The social architecture of power, in this sense, does not differ in any way from rural norms. The 'city' is also a

commercial and administrative hub for the surrounding hamlets, constituting a spatial continuum with the informal gatherings where Syrian refugees reside – mainly located on the sides of the main roads – and hardly identifiable as well-bounded refugee camps. The municipality was built in the centre of the town in 1998, giving rise to more traffic and stunting any possibility to open up public markets, especially from the 2000s until today.

In this paper, the market in Halba, thin and scattered in the space of the city, is a sociological entry point for examining structures and networks of collaboration, power, aspirations, and (non)encounter. In spite of its scantiness, the local labour market remains the 'lifeblood'[6] of Halba's tentatively urban life. In this framework, both the unaccomplished city-making of Halba itself, and its market, are key conceptual tools for understanding humanitarian action in social, economic, and political life.

I will here discuss the increasing multi-ethnic and area-focused politics of livelihoods that have been adopted by humanitarian agencies. I will suggest that the humanitarian objective of self-reliance, on the one hand, is experienced by refugees as an unachievable social status in conditions of marginalisation and illegality; on the other, the self-reliance formula explicitly intertwines with security and social cohesion agendas, mainly intended to promote the stability of the 'host'. Under this framework, the role of livelihood programmes is reduced to an intentionally limited provision of leisure and transfer of skills without providing sustainable conditions for local employment.

Halba and the Syrian Refugee Influx

Akkar governorate numbers 350,000 inhabitants; 250,000 Syrian refugees have registered with UNHCR since 2011. Although, according to estimates, 70% of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050,[7] cities have often relied on rural livelihoods in order to perpetuate their existence. Some of Halba's residents still work in the surrounding fields to earn a living, as the city *per se* does not offer a large number of job opportunities. With a total of nearly 44,000 inhabitants, local people count 27,000 and urban refugees 17,000.[8]

Most of the Syrian refugees who have resettled in Halba, mainly from 2012 onward, were people who were living in cities in Syria, not used to rural conditions: 'The rent in Halba is much higher than for a shelter, I know. But I cannot see any other way of life for my kids. The ones among us who chose the villages are the ones who used to work in agriculture back in Syria, or who used to live in quite modest conditions', a Syrian refugee woman recounted.[9] Furthermore, while most of the refugees affirmed that they chose Halba for contingency reasons, most Halba residents think the refugees relocated there because of their easier access to work, being the industrial hub of Akkar, where food costs less than in the villages. Other refugees, however, affirmed that they already had relatives living in Halba whom they could rely on.

In January 2015, the Lebanese government issued a new decree for refugees, who were not allowed to work in Lebanon in sectors other than cleaning (now classified as 'environment'), gardening, agriculture, and construction, due to rising local unemployment.[10] Exceptions were made for Syrian nationals who were admitted for reasons of business or trade when sponsored by an employer (*kafala* system), or if they owned assets in Lebanon.[11] Most refugees are therefore doomed to exploitation and informal jobs. Prior to the war and the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, local people better accepted the temporary pattern of migrant labour[12] and the fact that most of the Syrian workers in Lebanon were single men who used to send money to their families in Syria. The idea that the refugee newcomers have played the same role within Akkar's economy as prior to the Syrian crisis[13] turns out to be misleading, because the local labour market has become populated by an unprecedented number of women and children over the last six years.

The geography of the historical Syrian presence in Akkar allows for an understanding of how morally painful the refugees' presence has become. As has often been demonstrated in scholarly literature,[14] major intolerance is observable even when outsiders are less distinguishable from insiders. Local perceptions are illustrated by this statement of a Lebanese resident, 'They are like us, and they live even better than us'.[15]

The identification of the refugee newcomers – who, most of the time, fled political persecution or government's shelling – with the Syrian regime has opened a deep historical wound that local people continue to carry,

and which several humanitarian agencies initially neglected by merely addressing refugees, rather than chronically vulnerable populations more broadly.[16] In this sense, the refugee migration into Akkar has been experienced at a local level as a re-territorialisation of the Syrian occupation, of which the future temporal duration remains unclear.

Both local residents and urban refugees describe Halba as a city of *ta'aiyush* ('co-existence'), a city for all. It is indeed multi-confessional, unlike Akkar's villages, and, at the same time, social tension is not necessarily more palpable than in other Lebanese regions, which are known to be more "homogenous" from a religious or ethnic perspective. This idea of local harmony contrasts with the locals' experience of unease in living with the refugees who recall the historical spectre of the *Pax Syriana* (1976-2005). Moreover, the stifling of the economic health of Akkar is locally attributed to the Syrian regime. Local residents often mention the fact that Syrian nationals, who used to oppress them in the capacity of soldiers or competitors in the labour market, can now leave for Europe much more easily than they can, due to their refugee status. A Lebanese resident found such a legal differentiation unfair: 'What is happening in Syria also occurred to us'.[17]

Paradoxically, the refugees in Akkar who fled the Syrian government's shelling from 2011 onwards are identified with the Syrian regime that controlled Lebanon and long shaped its politics. The refugees become human reminders of past wounds. Most Akkaris now perceive themselves as the victims of an occupation of which no history has been written. Halba is currently an undesired – yet a *de facto* accepted – site of refuge.

In light of their vulnerable position in the labour market and the contemporary local hostility toward them due to these historical legacies, Syrian refugees in Akkar are now unlikely to undertake an explicit and effective 'politics of interruption' of governmentality strategies,[18] to challenge and contest either the Lebanese state or the humanitarian agencies.

The Humanitarian Politics of Livelihoods in Akkar

Mnhtaj sharaka aktar min sharika
"We need more cooperation than business"
Ibrahim Dahr, Leader of Akkar's Traders Association

Local livelihood programmes are intended as "ways to improve life" (*sobol tahsin al-'aiysh*). Most livelihood programmes in Akkar are rural-centred. In some cases they consist of vocational trainings (e.g. IT classes, make-up, and chocolate-making among the most frequent), temporary work opportunities,

or income-generating activities – such as those delivered by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) from the Lebanese Cash Consortium and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). In other cases, livelihood programmes can be components of the protection programme under emergency cash assistance (e.g. when a fire occurs in an informal settlement, monetary compensation is provided to assist the fire-affected people) – such as those delivered by the Irish NGO Concern Worldwide – or unconditional cash programmes (normally $174 per month) and as a component of food security – such as those delivered by Save the Children Lebanon, which leads the Lebanese Cash Consortium under the World Food Programme. All of the livelihood programmes I encountered in Halba were open to both Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens, as compensation for having neglected the vulnerable hosts at the outset of aid provision in the region. In some of these programmes, Lebanese residents even outnumbered the Syrian nationals. Cash for work is the predominant type of livelihood programme designed for males in Akkar; small-scale or home activities for self-generating income are primarily designed for females.

The vast majority of NGO needs assessments are not based on specific locations but on single cases, with resort to UNHCR's registration dossiers. The assessments are therefore complementary. People formally register online after being classified as eligible. Most of the time, needs are assessed according to the specific circumstances of vulnerability (e.g. types of food purchased; housing conditions, etc.), rather than on mere income basis. INGOs mostly base their needs assessments on the survival-minimal basket expenditure for food and non-food items, which is based on national calculation methods.[19]

As a common rule, intended beneficiaries are normally allowed to join livelihood NGO programmes on a six-month basis. That means that they need to wait for new semester to be able to re-enrol in any livelihood training.[20] Under the IRC's Economic Recovery and Development Programme, livelihood programmes are subdivided into cash for work – primarily for men – cash for products (when participants sell their artefacts), and services for work (when participants work to access services in return).

The activities for trainings, apprenticeships and seasonal work are mostly selected according to market-based needs' assessment (e.g. Save the Children Lebanon,[21] the Skill Gap Analysis, and the Danish Refugee Council).[22] Conversely, the Akkar Network for Development project, funded by UNICEF and the European Union, was mostly decided on the basis of the individual preferences of the participants. This strategy addresses likely tensions between individual professional aspirations and effective market gaps.

Livelihood centres throughout the Akkar region have become focal points for job seekers, and NGOs increasingly function as informal work agencies (although they only refer people to employers rather than employing

themselves, especially for the sales, marketing, and accounting sectors). Among the programmes, humanitarian agencies most frequently organise trainings for makeup and chocolate-making, as well as coast and city cleaning and painting. Such work activities have been found suitable to the Lebanese market economy.[23] Most of the livelihoods programmes feature self-employment and informal activities promoted to guarantee survival rather than entrepreneurship: small-scale self-empowerment challenges host governments to a lesser extent, and is less likely to raise local dissent. It is also less challenging to established cultural understandings of gender roles and work tasks. This paper proposes that, in order to comply with the Lebanese government's desire of making the refugee presence temporary and enhancing local employment, only programmes meant to guarantee mere survival – at times even leading to self-marginalisation – have been considered ethically acceptable at a local level. So to speak, such programmes represent commonly approved rather than radical forms of self-reliance.[24]

The INGOs that conduct livelihood programmes in the city of Halba rely on local partners to enhance their outreach. Most of the refugee participants whom I interviewed were not involved in other similar projects at the time of the workshop, or had never been before. Even so, the Syrian refugees I interviewed illustrated how some outreach strategies can end up being problematic. Some of their acquaintances had never heard about the possibility of joining livelihood-aimed activities. The NGO outreach strategies have been described as based on word of mouth rather than official announcements via SMS, street leaflets or other information provision in the public space, or with UNHCR reaching every registered person. As a local aid worker commented, 'Each of these projects in Akkar is budgeted and designed as relatively small. We fear having to deal with big numbers, and therefore with competition and resulting social tension'.[25]

The humanitarian politics of livelihoods has however changed in Lebanon over the last six years. While participants in livelihood programmes used to earn cash when providing part-time work on a task-by-task basis, now the government discourages this practice. Usually Lebanese and Syrian males are selected by INGOs and UN agencies for temporary work missions, to earn $150 on a monthly basis (for five hours of work per day and for the duration of ten days per month).[26]

Similarly, humanitarian discourse around refugee livelihoods has changed. In autumn 2016, UNDP attempted to open a public market to revive commercial activities in Halba, in agreement with local authorities. The project was promoted under the 2013 Lebanon Host Communities Support project, whose aim is to improve the territory. For political reasons, cash for work programmes had to be renamed 'community support', following a governmental statement.[27]

Having the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs as a partner, the initiative is aimed at supporting Lebanese host communities who struggle to cope with the additional burden in an already harsh socio-economic environment. Set in 6,000m^2 of public space, the market has the capacity to accommodate the approximately 390 traders yearly who come from 216 villages in Akkar. The public market facility was supposed to be operational seven days a week 'serving all residents of the area'.[28]

The purpose was to create a space in which local merchants, cooperatives, and entrepreneurs could meet with consumers, encourage trade, and revive the area economically. The UNDP public market apparently opened for only four days after its inauguration.[29] The market is located in an area that is difficult to reach by public transport, and a sizeable number of traders did not even find out about it until its inauguration.[30] To show me the abandoned market site, the deputy mayor drove me along a small street in the countryside, neither easily visible nor inhabited.

On the occasion of the public market of Halba, UNDP had also provided support to the municipality in financial management and capacity building, to ensure an autonomous and longstanding management of the market.[31] However, such trainings are locally deemed to have low efficacy and no sustainability. The mayor and the deputy mayor agreed. 'These trainings simply remain on paper [pointing to an exhibited official certificate the municipality had obtained after a workshop]. Our deprivation is not healable this way',[32] the mayor said. This points to the slippery and late encounter between city authorities and humanitarian actors.

Temporary work opportunities are increasingly being provided for Lebanese and Syrian nationals, according to the aid workers I interviewed. This is done to reverse the previous tendency of providing aid exclusively to Syrian refugees. However, even as vulnerabilities are being identified regardless of social group, and services and needs are no longer 'ethnicised', tensions and the need for social cohesion are still particularly identified in ethnically and religiously mixed areas. Although humanitarian agencies have recently become aware of the significance of ignoring host communities' needs,[33] the current tendency to associate tensions with ethnic hybridity results in a new 'ethnicisation' of care. The reification of the host-refugee dichotomy, in this sense, formalises the perception of tension between these social groups, paradoxically incentivising the behaviour some humanitarian projects aim to avoid.[34]

Employing Self-Reliance as a Social Cohesion Regime

While the idea of human security shifts the focus from the state to the individual, the mission to save lives and alleviate suffering in protracted crises needs to entail the concept of a future. But the ideal of self-reliance, and the language of resilient livelihoods, create a framework that fits very well with neoliberal models of governance and individual responsibility.

I will illustrate how refugees are now approached as full agents and *need to become* independent, while, in practice, their protracted refugee status renders their learnt skills a purely symbolic value. Misery and financial hardships that unify Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees are very identifiable on the ground. Members of both groups live in the same financial and housing conditions. Self-reliance, in this sense, is not the absent key to social cohesion and stability in protracted crises. The response that Akkari society was independently providing to the first arrivals from Syria, in 2011, was already an encounter between long-standing self-reliant subjects. Local vulnerability in Akkar was in fact recognised only when the Syrian refugee crisis became protracted, and compensatory mechanisms were activated by INGOs in order to better and preserve refugees' lives in the countries neighbouring the crisis rather than focusing humanitarian action on resettlement programmes. This explains how humanitarian livelihood programmes are today inscribed in a framework of compensatory mechanisms, meant to address the frictions caused in Akkar by an existing ethnocentric system of provision.[35]

Self-reliance – translated and interpreted as "self-sufficiency" in Arabic, *iktifa' adh-dhat* – is considered by refugees neither achievable nor conceivable in the Lebanese context. According to fieldwork findings, self-reliance is an invented category, which aims to measure the impact of humanitarian intervention and the levels of dependency on external support throughout time, emphasising the need to make sources of livelihoods 'resilient' in contexts of chronic crisis.[36] I will seek to show how self-reliance, in this framework, is aimed at serving the public good, and becomes a sort of inter-ethnic promotion of the stability of the 'host'.

I interviewed three Syrian refugee women and a Lebanese woman who were attending a livelihood programme; one Syrian refugee man with no access to livelihood programmes due to physical impairment; a Lebanese woman with no access to livelihood programmes because of ethnocentric assistance regimes; and one Syrian refugee male participant in a cash for work programme. Most of the refugee interviewees do not define themselves as self-reliant and economically self-sufficient, viewing self-reliance as an existential status that can hardly be achieved during the chronic waiting to which they are doomed (perceived as a purgatory-like 'waiting' even when they manage to properly settle down in host societies). Most of them say they depend on NGOs' support, and remittances from relatives who resettled in other host countries

and better sustain themselves; or they incur debts, they accept exploitation, or promise future payments. The refugee economy in Halba revolves around food vouchers, which they often sell to be able to purchase goods more expensive than everyday food (such as shampoo, baby pads, and other toilet items). In this vein, refugees discuss self-reliance by mentioning a series of economic deficiencies.

The pre-existing presence of Syrian workers in the local labour market has, in the best of cases, provided the refugee newcomers with the possibility of renting a piece of land on which to build their own tent for a cheaper price. In most cases, in fact, the refugees reside in specific locations due to their direct or indirect connections with the local landowner. Nevertheless, Syrian returnees who went back to Akkar after the beginning of the war had no other resources and social capital to rely on, even though some of them had already known the region, worked in the region, or were even born in the region. Moreover, my findings show that financial management in Halba's everyday life is conducted per household rather than on the basis of family ties. Cousins and siblings, among the refugees, do not necessarily support each other. Nevertheless, most of the livelihood programmes proved to be individual-focused rather than attempting to support collective forms of (un)salaried labour. A small percentage of refugees work on a regular basis, with formal contracts, and with a salary that allows them to pay for their living. On the whole, the Syrian refugees I interviewed believed that more Lebanese people work in the informal market by choice instead: 'If I did something like selling products in the black market, as a Syrian, I would get arrested'.[37]

I attended a chocolate-making training financed by the European Union and UNICEF over four weeks. The training was managed by the local NGO Akkar Network for Development,[38] which runs several livelihood programmes in the Akkar region in partnership with INGOs. The workshop took place twice a week for three months. Among the trainees were seven Syrian women and three Lebanese women, all having their transportation expenses covered. Chocolate-making has been a success story in the Syrian refugee diaspora in Canada and Germany, their business success having been branded in the media with the motto 'peace by chocolate'.[39]

Most of the trainees found out about the workshop from speaking with neighbours; through the school of their kids, which sponsored it; through the driver of an NGO who used to drive participants to past workshops; or through relatives who were planning to attend. The NGO also uses community gatekeepers and informal communication to reach out to people. As a result, the vast majority of the Syrian refugee women who attended were from the same region in Syria (Tel Kalakh, by the northern Lebanese border).

On the one hand, the attendance of Syrians and Lebanese, although in uneven number, conveyed the apparent desire from the donors' side to create a new social membership of those willing to work in the chocolate-making

sector. Ironically, most of the trainees actually came from the same village and already knew each other, so were unable to generate a new cohesive social group. On the other hand, according to the refugees and the local residents I interviewed, such programmes may cause further job competition within the same sector, further fuelling inter-group as much as in-group frictions.

The refugee and local women who attended the chocolate-making workshop expressed and suffered from similar material vulnerabilities. Syrian women had not worked in Syria since, at that time, they had no need and dedicated themselves to child-rearing. Expectations about livelihood programmes were however quite diverse, ranging from the desire or the desperate need to find a job, to approaching the workshop as a mere leisure activity in acknowledgment of the fact that Akkar's economy would not eventually guarantee a place for them in the labour market, amid the legal constraints for refugees in Lebanon. Most of the time, the kind of labour that beneficiaries were envisioning was home-based and small-scale, aimed at mere survival or integration of the family income (e.g. selling chocolates to neighbours).

While a Lebanese trainee woman was struggling to define her ambivalent economic status during the interview, she later explained in the following way:

> It's lucky my husband owns the house I'm presently living in with my eight kids. I see him every six months. I think he got married to someone else after I lost my waitressing job. He comes to leave some money from time to time, but it's not enough. I usually roll grape leaves (awra' al-'enab) for the neighbours when they organise big dinners. They normally give me 5,000 LL (nearly $3.32) to roll 1 kg of leaves. It's about 2 hours of work... Overall, however, I'm optimistic. I really hope I'll be able to make chocolates and sell them to the neighbours.[40]

Poor Lebanese residents can therefore approach livelihoods programmes as future work opportunities, without the legal constraints affecting Syrian nationals, who view self-reliance as a mirage, an unrealisable objective and an unachievable status. The work permit is partially forbidden in Lebanon, and such a ban on working is clearly written on the document they need to sign when they renew their permit of stay.[41]

Overall, the chocolate-making was approached as a potential way of making some income, but not becoming the leading financial support in the household. For refugees especially, it was often approached as a leisure activity, a way to meet other people, to not be locked in the house, and fill up the day with a new activity. The Lebanese women who attended the workshop, by contrast, used to work in the past, and lost their jobs for different reasons. Unemployment was therefore the factor that induced them to participate.

I remotely followed up with the women trainees who had terminated the workshop at the time of writing. None of them had managed to arrange even small-scale sales of chocolates, despite the will of some of them to do so. In hindsight, the programme generated neither frictions nor cohesion among the few new acquaintances established during the workshop, being a short-term response aimed at social stability while not offering any longer-term strategic effects for addressing displacement in the city.

Self-reliance and livelihood programmes offer a spectrum of understanding how people own or build their access to resources, services, and rights granted or denied to particular groups.[42] It reminds all actors involved that there needs to be a plan for the future, which certainly cannot exclude people's political impetus to pursue greater changes on the ground. Such plans for the future should be adequately approached as a multi-scale effort. The following cases suggest how self-reliance is household-oriented rather than being an individual way or a family-unit-oriented way of coping and producing self-sustainability.

Mohammad,[43] originally from Aleppo (northern Syria), has been in Halba for 4 years. He used to be a tiler, but he now suffers from a slipped disc and cannot work at all. Mohammad's sister is a widow and is rearing her four children (whom they call 'orphans') since the father's death in an incident at work one year before. Mohammad's family, along with his sister and her three children, live together to support each other. His sister receives help from local charities to take care of the fatherless children. Both families sell the WFP food vouchers ($27 per month per member of household) to be able to pay the rent ($130 with electricity bills included). Being eleven household members, they can sell $297 of vouchers per month to Lebanese neighbours, who crave financial support for everyday shopping expenses. Mohammad specified: 'We're able to save some money to get cheap food, but the rent needs much more. With no work, there is no alternative'.

Abdallah,[44] a Syrian refugee, instead benefited from an international cash for work programme in Halba, which entailed cleaning the city in agreement with the municipality. The programme included three Lebanese and nine Syrians, and ran for thirty days over a period of three months. Each worker was paid a salary of nearly $20 per day. Clearly, such a programme does not constitute long-term strategy, despite being development-focused in its design.

Having arrived in Halba with his wife and three children through the 'Arsal border-crossing, Abdallah bribed the Jabhat an-Nusra armed group (currently known as Jabhat Fath ash-Sham) to negotiate their passage with the Syrian regime. The relocation to Halba was financially devastating. Even though Abdallah's family receives food vouchers from UNHCR – now through an e-card – they remain unable to pay for baby pads, land rent, shelter replacement material, and bills:

> I can do only light work now, because I got injured here in Lebanon
> – [showing a deep wound on his left arm] – so the cleaning work
> programme was the best option for me. Three months after the cash
> for work, however, my life got back to the way it used to be before. I
> used to be a driver in Syria, and I wish I could do the same job here.
> My driving licence remained in my house under shelling. It would be
> too costly to purchase a new one in Lebanon.

Apart from the temporary nature of the job opportunity he was given,
Abdallah's experience is consistent with research showing[45] that cash provides
only an ephemeral sense of normality in everyday life. His relatives in Amman
were able to send money via Western Union from time to time, until his
brother was injured at work without insurance covering medical treatment.
As a consequence, Abdallah had not been paying the rent for three months,
and feared eviction. 'Our self-sufficiency means leading an indoor life, and
consuming as little as possible'.[46]

According to all of the aid workers I interviewed, cash for work programmes
have not had a significant effect on either the local economy or refugee self-
reliance mechanisms. According to the aid workers, such programmes have
however helped to improve the Akkar landscape and environment, such as the
coast-cleaning project from al-Abdeh to Arida (northern border-crossing with
Syria). The short time-frame of the livelihood programmes was mentioned
as the first problematic factor. Despite such limitations, the coast-cleaning
project, employing vulnerable citizens and forced migrants while improving
local areas, provides an example of the delayed collaboration between the
urban environment and the humanitarian system.

Labour-market regulations and institutions are now commonly seen as the
key to underpinning collective efforts, cooperation, and a sense of sameness and
social belonging.[47] The search for economic homogeneity in the labour market
for different and multinational social classes is therefore used by humanitarian
agencies as a guarantee of social cohesion and, in turn, stability. By this token,
if the Halba market is structurally hierarchical, historically relying on the
cheap labour of Syrian workers, current humanitarian interventions reproduce
the gendered and hierarchical relationships between market actors, in order
to create realistic job opportunities for locals and refugees.

The interviews conducted with the aid workers show that survival and
livelihoods have gradually been reconfigured under the terms of securitisation,
validating the argument of Wacquant[48] that the welfare state dismantlement
has led to a 'government of social insecurity' and 'prisonfare'. By preserving
the gendered and ethnicised labour market of the Akkar region, social order
is guaranteed, and local power structures are not challenged. The way in
which these dynamics maintain or produce structures and processes of social

injustice is addressed differently by NGOs, but livelihoods increasingly fall into the 'humanitarian protection' sector, which should, conceptually, imply a rights-based framework.[49]

The Socio-Economic Impact of Humanitarian Presence

I will now examine the socio-economic impact of the presence of humanitarian agencies on Halba's labour market. The continual contribution of humanitarian actors to an everyday economy is rarely explored, despite the resources invested in analysis, development, and reform of humanitarian programmes and methodologies.

Humanitarian agencies first arrived in Akkar between 2011 and 2012, to assist Syrian refugees. On the whole, the regional class divide over the last five years has increased, as owners of cars, service provision and rental agencies, properties, and large shops became wealthier thanks to the financial input of INGOs and UN agencies responding to an increased international demand to conduct their programmes *in loco*. The wealthier classes have become wealthier as a consequence of the Syrian refugee crisis – which lowered the cost of the available workforce – and of the new market demand created by the humanitarian presence. Humanitarian aid provision, therefore, represented an opportunity to develop the northern border regions of Lebanon, where segments of the local population did not even typically hold citizenship before the 1990s.[50] Quite significantly, the wealthier among the interviewed local residents explained that, in the capacity of consumers, they had to travel 'from one shop to the other. You cannot find anything you need in a specific city or village of Akkar'.[51] Local residents also perceived that local competition had lately increased due to the job opportunities offered by INGOs, such as teaching and training in the humanitarian livelihood programmes, which are well-paid activities.

Therefore the 'have-nots' – the so-called hidden losers of the crisis[52] – found themselves in competition with poor newcomers. While some of the middle and upper social strata of the Syrian refugee diaspora managed to reach the European coasts or other third countries, the most vulnerable among the refugees had no choice but to remain in Lebanon, having insufficient resources to pay for a smuggler, and being unable to provide skilled labour to qualify for sporadic humanitarian corridors to Italy and France.[53] Most of the economic pressure following the arrival of Syrian refugees has therefore affected poorer classes. The major pressure was perceived in the agricultural sector, in which Syrian nationals are legally – and historically – allowed to work. Moreover, the 2015 closure of the border has impoverished many Akkar's villages that used to depend on smuggling.

Nevertheless, the World Food Programme-issued smart cards have not only sustained the everyday consumption of refugees since the beginning of the crisis, but have also supported Akkar's larger shops. Small businesses, according to local inhabitants, have however been ignored by INGOs, and consequently lost out on revenue over the last five years. Indeed, the vouchers, which are only redeemable at local businesses – and from 2013, the e-cards[54] – replaced direct food aid in ways that created aligned interests between refugees and powerful local elites, in accordance with Akkar's hierarchical social *habitus*[55] and the local architecture of labour. At the same time, local consumption of non-basic goods has barely increased. This has meant population growth with no increase in job opportunities. 'At the beginning of the refugee influx, many people opened new shops, especially restaurants and the like, but they eventually shut down as the rent is very expensive and customers are not many', a local resident explained.[56]

On the whole, Akkar is a historically 'oppressed and forgotten area' (locally referred to as *mantaqa mazlume w mahrume*), but the socio-economic impact of the Syrian refugee influx varies according to a diverse local ability to capture potential benefits. However, the daily narrative of generalised deprivation has the effect of homogenising local vulnerabilities and wealth. Across social classes, Akkar's inhabitants generally describe their region as resourceless, and suggest that the railways should be rehabilitated to attract tourism, and that the local Rene' Moua'wad airport, now exclusively in use for military purposes, should be reopened, as it would provide 2,500 job opportunities.[57] Some aid workers pointed out that Akkar is underdeveloped for political reasons, rather than simply due to the refugee influx, as 'the Beqaa Valley hosts many more refugees and, in some of its areas, is even more developed than Akkar.[58]

Aid workers also mentioned the lack of local coordination as among the contributors to chronic poverty. Coordination between the international humanitarian apparatus and local authorities is said to exist only on paper,[59] with the representatives of the latter stating that INGOs rarely look for their approval before starting projects in the Akkar region. The traditional informality and flexibility of Lebanese governance have in fact long left generous room for independent humanitarian action. While humanitarian actors insist they never operate without local approval, the Halba Municipality expressed the feeling of being bypassed.[60] The leader of Akkar's Traders' Association[61] also affirmed that his organisation would be able to provide material for livelihood programmes, such as tools necessary to produce artefacts and hand-made apparel, but there is no local collaboration either, and the will to survive with international funding overshadows such efforts.

Most of the NGOs that operate across Akkar are located in Halba and nearby villages al-Qobaiyat, and Wadi Khaled, but the economic benefits of their physical presence seem to have scarcely impacted Halba's economy.

One foreign aid worker commented[62] that, with no time to cook while working up to 10 hours a day, he consumed all of his daily meals outside, but to go to bars and cafeterias, and use gym facilities, he preferred to go to al-Qobaiyat, considered safer than Halba.[63] Similarly, a local aid worker affirmed:[64]

> Surely INGOs gave more jobs to me and local middle class youth. I was unemployed before starting this job... For me the refugee influx has nothing to do with the opening of a few new shops, as their purchasing power is very low. The temporary opening of new shops in Akkar is rather a symptom of middle and upper classes that managed to become wealthier, and few of them are based in Halba.

Halba is therefore described by local residents as a place *to be addressed* by urban-planning and humanitarian interventions for its needs, not *to be lived in.* In this sense, its urban civic life is denied, as the Akkari inhabitant 'remains a peasant, and does not need much apparel or any other sort of urban consumption'.[65] Participation in the market is rural in nature, such as the sale of agricultural tools. According to Walid,[66] the lack of employment and the denial of the city as a market-place led shop owners and local service providers to reduce business hours. In fact, Halba primarily lacks market demand for non-basic consumer goods. Some of these shops 'shut down after a short time'[67] due to the inhabitants' 'limited income and way of living' (*m'aiysh mahdud*). As the leader of the Akkar Traders' Association put it,[68] 'When shops shut down the city dies'.

Most aid workers believed the livelihood programmes they were working for would be unable to change the local market in Akkar, but considered the programmes a mechanism for 'deciding what they want to do with their new skills, not merely finding a job'[69], thereby contributing to refugee life decision-making. The aid workers involved in the chocolate-making workshop also stressed that chocolates are produced in too small quantities to be sold: 'To start commercial activities and coordination more funding would have been needed'.[70] Aid workers also tended to identify the legal impossibility of refugees obtaining work permits, and the increased toughness of the government's migration policies, as the greatest limitations affecting their livelihoods projects.

Syrian refugees highlighted the fact that training people on the same tasks can end up feeding local competition over the same jobs rather than creating new job opportunities. The following account of a local aid worker, which is representative of the views of all of the NGO workers I interviewed in Halba, responds to the refugees' concern:

> Self-reliance cannot be an objective in short-term programmes, which are just meant to alleviate immediate hardships. Although we now have more long-term projects, self-reliance is not achievable. The majority of our livelihood projects are aimed at self-employment, but they cannot have a big economic impact on each household. However, this suits the Lebanese context, where most of the businesses are informal and self-run. Social cohesion is still possible with these strategies, as small-size self-employment does not generate much competition.[71]

This belief in not engendering actual competition in the labour market unravels a conception of refugee livelihoods and self-reliance as a sustainable means to social stability. Local economy development agendas and humanitarian livelihood programmes are clearly interrelated with social stability and cohesion agendas. Livelihoods surely depend on the type of risks that people are faced with and their security conditions. But rather than self-reliance as a final objective, the current humanitarian politics of livelihoods in northern Lebanon sets social cohesion and stability as the very purpose of such programmes. With both national groups involved in settings like the chocolate-making workshop, it is common to see mutual support and reciprocal services between refugees and local residents. For instance, Zena[72] is a Halba resident who assists Syrian refugee children with their homework in the afternoon hours to get extra money, while the children's families pay her a convenient monthly rent for the land where they built their tents. Likewise, Lebanese and Syrian families who cannot afford a private car resort to the practice of car sharing.

Within the relative limitations of a merely qualitative approach, my research has shown how the physical presence of humanitarian agencies in Akkar has impacted the local market of Halba to a greater extent than their livelihood programmes. Refugees tend to approach the latter as leisure or potential home-based and small-scale economic activity, able only to integrate the household's income. Most refugees, especially women, were in fact sceptical about the possibility of finding a stable job in Lebanon. Lebanese residents, with the benefit of citizenship, approach livelihood programmes as a way to enhance their own job opportunities. Indeed, in a construction apprenticeship programme, DRC registered[73] ten Lebanese and one Syrian. Under their large MADAD programme,[74] likewise, 70% are Lebanese and 30% are Syrians. The scarce impact of programming with respect to the sizeable impact of the physical presence of the humanitarian apparatus resulted in the refugees believing that livelihood programmes are primarily designed to support the development of Lebanon's 'hosting' areas, rather than the refugees themselves; local people, on the other hand, continued to believe that humanitarian agencies had rushed over to assist the refugees exclusively, while neglecting chronic local hardships.

Conclusion

I have provided an analysis of the following research findings:

– The humanitarian attempt to enhance the local economy does not adopt self-reliance and economic prosperity as primary objectives. Rather, enhancing citizen and refugee participation in local markets is a means to achieve social cohesion and avoid tensions. Thereby, the livelihood agenda is explicitly interrelated with the security and stability agenda of INGOs and UN agencies.[75]

– I have observed a varying economic impact of the humanitarian presence and the forced migration flows on the local labour market. The opening of aid work job positions allowed the local educated youth to get employment, therefore strengthening local middle classes. In short, people who already owned properties, cars, and licenses materially benefited from humanitarian provision. Conversely, the working classes – mostly rural in Akkar – have instead been put under strain, having to compete over the same resources and jobs with the newcomers, who provide a cheaper workforce (i.e. mostly in the construction, gardening, agriculture, and cleaning sectors).

– Humanitarian livelihood programmes affect the local market of labour less than the physical presence of the humanitarian apparatus. The programmes, mostly started by humanitarian agencies with the purpose of creating job opportunities, have little impact on the local economy. Indeed, they mainly aim to produce small-scale forms of self-employment, which neither aim to challenge the local hierarchical structure of labour nor always provide basic resources with large outreach. There is therefore tangible impact of livelihood programmes only on refugees and vulnerable local residents who have easier – yet discontinuous – access to minimum resources.

– Refugees tend to experience livelihood programmes as leisure activities, whilst Lebanese poor people approach them as potential future jobs. This is due to the refugees' social awareness that there are legal constraints preventing them from working, and that the Akkari economy is structurally unable to provide opportunities to the entire Syrian workforce. As a result, refugees often approach livelihood programmes with a feeling of resignation.

– The NGOs' outreach is intentionally limited. Restricting outreach is an inevitable result of limited resources available, and of the need to create a limited number of job opportunities. Furthermore, even though the humanitarian programmes' outreach is deliberately limited, it still needs to be based on more accurate criteria, as most participants find out about the livelihood programmes thanks to neighbours or acquaintances, and, more rarely, through published material, street posters, or door-to-door strategies.

Firstly, this study has shown the layered relationships between urban labour markets and social cohesion. Social cohesion in Halba is a varying *habitus* of human relations, which, in some cases, is upheld or sought out at the expense of social, ethnic, and gender equality. Despite the agenda of preserving social order, the delayed encounter between humanitarian actors and local authorities – who are sometimes unwilling to host humanitarian programmes – has prevented the city from grasping the development opportunities that crises can present. The impact of the humanitarian presence on Halba's local economy is however palpable. In this framework, self-reliance and resilient livelihoods emerge as a politics of economic survival and social stability. While, at a local level, the focus is increasingly placed on social stability and coexistence, the humanitarian livelihood approach is called back to the 'minimum of humanitarian reason',[76] e.g. guaranteeing basic services and resources.

Crisis protractedness inevitably produced the *need* to attribute agency to the refugees. Consequently, humanitarian action in Halba is increasingly legitimised through the narrative of upholding and ensuring long-term social cohesion and stability, using a language of a resilient livelihoods agenda. Following a refugee-agency-centred humanitarian ethics, intended beneficiaries are called upon to participate in the maintenance of such local stability. The effort towards 'resilient livelihoods' and 'self-reliance', moreover, links humanitarian with development programming in a bid to ensure long-term support.

However, how can we insist upon the importance of making a transition from care to self-reliance and resilient livelihoods, when the legal and economic structure of the receiving society will not grant refugees the right to work, and when resettlement in a third country is unlikely? As this paper has tried to show, in the Akkar scenario, the newly acquired skills of longstanding refugees may at times turn into mere accessories; and addressing their aspirations through livelihood programmes ends up providing moral relief for the service providers rather than a self-fulfilment opportunity for the intended beneficiaries.

Finally, the early humanitarian efforts in Akkar had actively ethnicised the emergence of new and old needs, polarising the needs of the Lebanese and those of the Syrians. Today, compensatory stability mechanisms address social tensions through refugee economic survival and local empowerment. Therefore, while tensions are still identified in ethnically hybrid contexts, the humanitarian assistance regime is increasingly deployed according to area, rather than ethnicity or religion. In other words, a geographic rather than an ethnic and religious politics of vulnerability is finally emerging, but humanitarian security agendas still stymie this process by adopting ethnocentric regimes of stability.

APPENDIX

Note on Methodology

This study draws on in-depth interviews and participant observation with four local residents, namely two Lebanese women and two Lebanese men, who were participants in or unaddressed by livelihood programmes. Specifically, I conducted walking interviews with local residents, in an effort to connect their accounts to the spatiality of Halba's political economy and the past Syrian control over the region. Public spaces did in fact prompt personal memories. This was not feasible with the urban refugees, who, most of the time, felt uncomfortable or even unsafe in outdoor spaces. In-depth interviews and participant observation were conducted with five Syrian refugees, again of mixed gender and beneficiary status.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with people officially considered to be 'city authorities', or referred to as figures of authority at a local level; among these, the mayor and deputy mayor, the governor of the district of Akkar (*mohafez*), the *makhatir* (central state officials), the director of the American University of Technology (Akkar branch), and the municipal library secretary.

Finally, in-depth interviews and participant observation were conducted with six local aid workers from five INGOs, namely the UNICEF-Akkar Network for Development partnership, Save the Children Lebanon, the International Rescue Committee, and the Danish Refugee Council, all of which were implementing livelihood programmes in Halba. I have thereby sampled aid workers who were operators in livelihood programmes and everyday local market actors at the same time, in order to better assess the overall socio-economic impact of humanitarian actors on Halba.

I have also had access to local archives where Arabic texts on the history and economy of the city were collected, and drawn on the support of local intellectuals – specifically a historian, a writer, and a poet. It is worth highlighting that the one-month fieldwork assignment has not provided me with sufficient time to observe how residents experienced and responded to the temporary nature of such livelihood programmes. In fact, such programmes in Halba normally run for three months. In one month, I personally had the

chance to speak to people who had already completed a training or work mission, or who were doing it at the time of fieldwork. The timeline thus posed constraints on my assessment of what livelihoods programmes had changed in the individual's broader life framework, and what they had not.

Names of private individuals have been changed in the text, to protect identities and preserve anonymity, except for interviewees who have expressed their consent to be explicitly mentioned in this paper.

ENDNOTES

1. This study is dedicated to Badiyʻa and the 'Akkar Network for Development' staff, Halba. I am greatly indebted to Dr Jonathan Darling (University of Manchester), who reviewed an earlier draft of this paper.

2. Michel Seurat, *Syrie, l'état de Barbarie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, coll. Proché-Orient, 2012).

3. Faraj Tawfiq Zakhour, *Halba fy nisf qarn 1900-1950* (Halba: Dar Zakhour li'l tabʻa, an-nashr, wa at-tawziʻ, 2005), 24.

4. The Arabic transliteration in this paper follows the (uncoded) commonly accepted rules of the Lebanese dialect. I therefore transcribe terms and sentences in the way local speakers pronounce them, rather than adopting the Standard Arabic transcription scheme, which would less evoke lived experience.

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7. Leah Campbell, *Stepping Back. Understanding Cities and Their Systems* (London: ALNAP Working Paper, 2016).

8. These data were collected from the local Municipality (February 23, 2017, Halba).

9. Informal conversation. Halba, February 17, 2017.

10. The following illustrates how changeable are Lebanese policies with respect to Syrian work in Lebanon: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/14/lebanon-new-refugee-policy-step-forward.

11. Filippo Dionigi, 'Rethinking Borders. The Case of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon', *Refugees and Migration Movements in the Middle East* no. 25 (University of Southern California: Pomeps, 2017), 26.

12. John Chalcraft, *Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon: The Limits of Transnational Integration, Communitarian Solidarity, and Popular Agency* (Florence: EUI Papers, RSCAS, 2006/26).

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15. Interview conducted on February 27, 2017.

16. Estella Carpi, *The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in Akkar's Villages* (Beirut: Civil Society Knowledge Centre and Lebanon Support, 2014).

17. Informal conversation between the author and a local resident. Halba, March 9, 2017.

18. Carolina Moulin, and Peter Nyers, '"We Live in a Country of UNHCR" – Refugee Protests and Global Political Society'. *International Political Sociology* 1, (2007), 363.

19. Interview with local aid worker. Halba, March 1, 2017.

20. Halba, February 22, 2017.

21. Halba, March 1, 2017.

22. Halba, March 10, 2017.

23. Interview with a local aid worker. Halba, March 3, 2017.

24. Mark Duffield, 'The Liberal Way of Development and the Development—Security Impasse: Exploring the Global Life-Chance Divide', *Security Dialogue* 41 (1), (2010): 53-76.

25. Interview with a local aid worker. Halba, February 22, 2017.

26. Interview with a Danish Refugee Council aid worker. Halba, March 10, 2017. Interview with an International Rescue Committee aid worker. Halba, February 22, 2017.

27. Interview with a local aid worker. Halba, February 18, 2017.

28. *UK Aid Funded Projects in Underprivileged Akkar*, UK government website, published on December 16, 2016.

29. Informal conversation with local residents. Halba, March 2017. Interview with the governor. Halba, March 8, 2017.

30. Interview with the leader of the Akkar Traders' Association Mr Ibrahim Dahr. Halba, March 7, 2017.

31. Interview with UNDP. Tripoli, February 22, 2017.

32. Interview with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Halba, February 23, 2017.

33. Lama Mourad, 'From Conflict-Insensitive to Conflict-Driven Aid: Responding to the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon', Middle East Institute, 2016, accessed 8 June, 2017, http://www.mei.edu/content/map/conflict-insensitive-conflict-driven-aid.

34. Ibid.

35. Estella Carpi, *The Everyday Experience of Humanitarianism in Akkar's Villages* (Beirut: Civil Society Knowledge Centre and Lebanon Support, 2014).

36. The Arabic linguistic genealogy of the conception of 'livelihoods' reveals how broader the scope of humanitarian action has become, enlarging the meaning from *masdar rizq/mawrid rizq* ('source of sustenance/living') to a more general *tahsin sobol al-'ayish*, 'betterment of ways of living'.

37. Interview with Rawan, a Syrian refugee woman. Halba, March 7, 2017.

38. UNDP affirmed it had set up a laboratory of chocolate making in Akkar, but no local resident or aid worker was aware of this or of where exactly the place was. Halba, February 28, 2017.

39. "Sweet Success: How the Haddads went from Refugees to Employers in 1 Year", *CBC News*, Jan 7, 2017.

40. Interview with Lawlat. Halba, February 28, 2017.

41. Interview with Syrian refugee women. Halba, February 21, 2017.

42. Oren Yiftachel, and Haim Yakobi, 'Control, Resistance, and Informality: Urban Ethnocracy in Beer-Sheva, Israel', in Nezar al-Sayyad and Ananya Roy (eds.) *Urban Informality: Transnational perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Lexington Books, 2003), 111-133.

43. Halba, March 9, 2017.

44. Halba, March 8, 2017.

45. Sarah Bailey and Paul Harvey, *State of Evidence on Humanitarian Cash Transfers* (London: ODI, 2015).

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53. http://www.mediterraneanhope.com/articoli/italy-opens-humanitarian-corridors-for-refugees-867 and http://www.onuitalia.com/2017/03/14/humanitarian-corridors-france-joins-italy-hollande-giro-step-forward-globalization-indifference/.

54. 'New E-Cards Make Life Easier to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon', *World Food Programme*, October 13, 2013.

55. Pierre Bourdieu defines 'habitus' as a system of embodied dispositions and tendencies that organise the ways in which individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it.

56. Halba, February 28, 2017.

57. Interview with Ibrahim Dahr, Leader of the Akkar Traders Association. Halba, March 7, 2017.

58. Halba, February 22, 2017.

59. Marwa Boustani et al., *Responding to the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon. Collaboration between Aid Agencies and Local Governance Structures* (London: IIED, 2016).

60. Halba, February 23, 2017.

61. Interview with Ibrahim Dahr, Leader of the Akkar Traders Association. Halba, March 7, 2017.

62. Halba, March 6, 2017.

63. This is due to its wealthier population, which is entirely Christian Maronite, and therefore believed to be less sympathetic and associable with the Islamic armed groups in Syria.

64. Halba, February 28, 2017.

65. Informal conversation with local residents. Halba, February 25, 2017.

66. Halba, February 23, 2017.

67. Halba, February 28, 2017.

68. Interview with Ibrahim Dahr. Halba, March 7, 2017.

69. Interview with a local aid worker. Halba, March 10, 2017.

70. Halba, February 26, 2017.

71. Interview with a local aid worker. Halba, March 10, 2017.

72. Halba, February 27, 2017.

73. Interview with local aid worker. Halba, March 10, 2017.

74. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/syria/madad_en.

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Refugee Self-Reliance in Delhi: The Limits of a Market-Based Approach[1]

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Background on Delhi

India has a long history of accepting people fleeing from conflict and natural disasters. Its cities are often hosts to large numbers of internally and externally displaced people living and surviving amongst the 'local' population. However, the country does not have a domestic legal framework to guarantee protection for such groups, and it is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Additional Protocol. As there is no domestic legal framework for status recognition, refugees are categorised as foreigners and fall under a range of Acts, the most relevant of which are the Foreigners Act of 1946 and the Citizenship Act of 1955. These Acts make it an offence to be in the country without valid travel and identity documents, which puts many refugees and stateless persons at risk of classification as an illegal immigrant and deportation. There is currently a government-sponsored amendment to the Citizenship Act (1955) working its way through parliament: The Citizenship Amendment Bill (2016), which seeks, essentially, to relax the requirements for Indian citizenship. However, it only recognises non-Muslim minority groups from the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. If passed, this would set a worrying precedent for codifying refugee protection in India on communal grounds – non-Muslim displaced people from (some) neighbouring countries count as 'legitimate' refugees and potential future citizens of India, Muslims do not.

While there is no official legal framework, the government does offer *prima facie* recognition for two refugee groups who enter the country – Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils – offering them a range of entitlements, including referral to relevant public services, a government-approved Refugee Certificate valid on a yearly basis and renewable on assessment, one-year work permits, and freedom to move in and out of the country. The government also enables UNHCR to operate in the country with a mandate to protect and assist certain refugee groups. This includes refugees from Afghanistan and Myanmar, and, in smaller numbers, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Syria. These groups are engaged, to varying degrees, in UNHCR education, livelihoods and protection programmes, and are also – after Refugee Status

Determination – entitled to a Refugee Certificate. This may enable them to receive a Long Term Visa (LTV), to be renewed on a regular basis and essential for renting or employment, though the Government of India takes the final call on issuance. The final grouping of *de facto* refugees present in the country is those evaluated as foreigners on a case-by-case basis, with permission to remain only if they have a valid reason to do so (such as education enrolment or marriage to a citizen). Hindu refugees from Pakistan and Bangladesh find themselves in this grouping, and are *prima facie* viewed as migrants rather than people with well-founded fears of persecution in their countries of origin. This three-tiered system entails an administrative hierarchy of refugees that defines the variable protection and assistance one can receive, as well as the ability to secure jobs, education and homes.

According to UNHCR, India currently grants asylum and provides support to around 207,000 refugees, with a large majority of those receiving assistance from the organisation living in Delhi.[2] However, the total number of *de facto* refugees who have been forcibly displaced or had little choice but to cross the border into India is likely to be much higher, due to numerous unresolved conflicts in neighbouring countries. The difficulty in obtaining accurate numbers is due to a combination of porous borders, desire for anonymity, high mobility in South Asia, and the lack of a domestic or regional refugee regulatory framework requiring record-keeping of such individuals.

An emerging body of academic and policy literature is beginning to examine disparities in protection for different groups in India, in particular addressing urban environments and urbanisation as phenomena that exacerbate vulnerabilities.[3] However, there are significant knowledge gaps. Not only are analyses on especially vulnerable refugee groups in urban India – such as the stateless Rohingya and non-Muslim Afghan refugees – largely missing from current research, but there is also insufficient qualitative data relating to the lived experiences of urban refugees attempting to survive and realise their aspirations in India's cities. Based on six months of field research, engaging with Rohingya refugees, as well as Sikh and Christian Afghan refugees in New Delhi, this study seeks to address some of these gaps.

As of 2014, 6,000 Rohingyas were registered with UNHCR, of which around 4,500 have refugee cards.[4] Exact numbers are hard to establish as a result of poor registration numbers (current estimates are as high as 40,000), but the main settlement areas of Rohingya refugees in India are New Delhi, where UNHCR is the main body offering formal refugee support, Hyderabad, and Jammu. As a Muslim faith group, they experience general anti-Muslim discrimination and their case is a geo-politically sensitive one, affected by India's bilateral relations with Myanmar.

Afghan refugees fled to India in a first significant wave in the early 1980s, following an outbreak of war in the country after an invasion by the Soviet Union. The majority of the 10,000 or so refugees that entered over the 1980s

and 1990s were Hindu and Sikh Afghans, who had previously enjoyed, according to Ashish Bose, a 'bhai-bhai' (brother) status with Muslim Afghans, but experienced increasing persecution and attacks after the outbreak of war.[5] The current number of registered Afghan refugees (of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh faiths) is 12,154.[6] Legally mandated for protection under UNHCR, Sikh Afghans are – in theory – entitled to Refugee Certificates, Long Term Visas, to apply for residential permits, and seek livelihoods in the formal and informal economy.

Christian Afghan refugees in India are much more recent arrivals, fleeing from Afghanistan, since 2005, in fear of religiously-motivated attacks. Their numbers have been placed at around 250,[7] but are difficult to verify as they seek anonymity in Delhi and elsewhere due to confrontations they have faced with the Muslim Afghan refugee community in India. Very little is written about this refugee group, and they do not feature in UNHCR's 2014 evaluation of programming in the capital because the UN organisation does not work with them.

Introduction: From Dependency to the Market

In the late 1990s, in the wake of substantial global cuts to UNHCR budgets, the organisation's Delhi mission was experiencing financial difficulties and was forced into a 'process of triage' – namely, cutting back on the costliest activities.[8] Urban refugee support, particularly subsistence allowances, was deemed very expensive. Additionally, urban refugees receiving, or seeking to receive, this support in Delhi were viewed negatively: as self-entitled, overly aggressive in their approach to UNHCR, and as less worthy (i.e. less poor) than refugees in camp settings.[9] UNHCR also feared that continuing subsistence allowances would act as a draw for other asylum seekers to the capital. Therefore, the decision was made for a policy change: to focus on making refugees in Delhi and wider India 'self-reliant'. This was published as a global policy priority in UNHCR's 1997 'Comprehensive Policy on Urban Refugees'.

At the time, refugees were expected to survive on their own, to reduce 'the dependence [they] have on the international community and the burden they exercise on the local community'.[10] Although the 1997 Policy outlines the intention of creating employment programmes, the caseload of 'legitimate' refugees was narrowly defined, and much of the thrust is towards minimising the role of UNHCR in day-to-day support and discouraging what was viewed as dependency.[11] This document was understandably met with heavy criticism. A (slow) review was undertaken, culminating in the publication of a revised strategy in 2009. While the tone regarding the legitimacy of refugees in urban environments has changed, the focus on 'support[ing] the efforts of urban refugees to become self-reliant, both by means of employment or self-employment', remains steadfast.[12] The market economy, with its promise of jobs and income, has become the antidote to the problem of aid dependence.

How does such a market-driven approach work in a context where the government not only restricts refugee access to the economy through an exclusive documentation regime, but also codifies ideas of legitimacy of presence in India along communal lines? This paper explores such questions, in relation to refugee self-reliance in Delhi, reflecting on the role of identity politics, bureaucratic process, and urbanisation in shaping the circumstances of refugees to make meaningful lives in the city. With particular attention to the experiences of Christian and Sikh Afghans and Muslim Rohingya,[13] it offers a critical analysis of self-reliance as a programmatic approach, and closes with some reflections on alternatives for humanitarian practice to support refugee well-being in Delhi.

First, however, it is important to put these policy shifts into wider historical perspective. Over the last century there has been a gradual shift in ideas of 'who counts' as an Indian citizen, with communal identity a marker of difference. As the country's economy has liberalised and its cities urbanised

– attracting wealth, investment, labour and requiring the expansion of public services – these communalised ideas of belonging have centred on the cities and the delimitation of the right to exist in them. Refugee/migrant (these terms are often used interchangeably in national rhetoric) exclusions from these spaces have been solidified and legitimised over the longer term, through use of the political language of risk and economic language of burden.

1947 Partition and the Communal Inscription of Urban Space

The British Empire retreated from the Indian subcontinent after World War II. The region was subject to a momentous territorial reconfiguration by the British government, with 'devastating and largely unforeseen consequences'.[14] Borders defining the new states of Pakistan and India were drawn hurriedly along ethno-religious lines; outbreaks of hostility and intense violence erupted between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, as up to 20 million South Asians were displaced, fleeing to, or being forced to relocate to, Pakistan (the direction for most Muslims) and India (the direction for most Hindus, Sikhs and other non-Muslim peoples). The mass movements and violence that followed Partition resulted in the deaths of over 100,000 people and the displacement and dispossession of 15 million.[15]

Partition became a defining moment for modern South Asian experiences of forced displacement. One result was the emergence of an ethno-religious understanding of citizenship in India, and the technocratic policing of who counts as a citizen or refugee in the modern Indian state and its major cities. It was during Partition that norms emerged as to: the responsibilities of the state towards *de facto* refugees and vice versa; the role of governmental and non-governmental organisations in 'managing' the crisis; and who belonged to these new nations.[16] Underlying the bureaucratic elements of resultant 'rehabilitation and reconstruction' programmes designed to (re)settle the displaced, were ethno-nationalist lines of question, including into whether Muslims could ever be Indian, and which groups have a right to reside in urban areas.[17]

Institutions of displaced population governance that sprung up included the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, which was created to 'manage' the movement, settlement and well-being of the displaced. Camps were established throughout India's major cities, as a temporary humanitarian response to the sheer numbers of those forced from their homes – and security officials, specifically policemen, were the government agents deemed most appropriate to 'control' the camp inhabitants, particularly in Muslim camps.[18] These *ad hoc* settlements were the quintessential spaces of administrative and bureaucratic control, and categorisation.[19] But they were to be temporary, and contained only a fraction of those on the move. The longer-term 'solution'

to this mass displacement situation, for many new leaders of the Indian state, was for Muslims to leave India for Pakistan, and for newly arriving Hindu and Sikh refugees to be able to return 'home' and occupy Muslim 'evacuee' property.[20] The Indian Government even passed the Administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950, 'to provide for the administration of Evacuee Properties and for compensating the refugees who had lost their properties in Pakistan'.[21] Thus, in the few years following Partition, several developments were simultaneously occurring: Firstly, the politico-bureaucratic development of an apparatus for refugee relief and 'rehabilitation' in urban centres that had policing, security, and population control as core functions. Secondly, there was a shifting relationship to place developing among the emerging nations and their displaced inhabitants, particularly regarding cities with a perceived urgent need to reconfigure and re-establish a connection to land, which had been violently ruptured.[22] This self-conscious (re)inscription of place was partly ethno-religious in foundation: City spaces were becoming as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' in (self-)identification as their inhabitants, and this seemingly entitled certain groups to occupy certain areas, and relegated others to the periphery.

Delhi was central to this reconfiguration process, because it was (and still is) the political and administrative capital of the colonial state and the Republic of India, and therefore a historically important centre of production, political contestation and, during Partition, population flows in and out of India. It had (has) a somewhat 'special status' in the Indian context: as a national capital, is has had to project a particular idea of India on the international stage, and also as a State, it is responsible for citizens' rights and social justice.[23]

Delhi's centrality in the history of Indian Muslims is well-established, given it was a seat of power under the Mughal Empire for many centuries. Gayer and Jaffrelot note that Mughal Indian cities were 'a haven for Muslim elites and commoners fleeing invasions or persecutions in their homeland'.[24] These were cities of 'composite culture', they argue, with a Muslim ruler-ship that was in constant interaction with Hindu-dominated society. Such composite culture, however, began to wane with the rise of communalism and nationalism in the later years of the British Raj (with codification of ethnic and religious differences used by the British as a technology of control), during the violence of Partition, and the increasing prominence of an anti-Muslim nationalist agenda (fuelled by Hindu-nationalist movements) in more recent decades.[25]

The vast numbers of displaced people after Partition, and the resultant development of urban instruments of 'migration management' (i.e. the creation of city camps; the legitimisation of occupation by Hindus and Sikhs of 'abandoned' Muslim property; the provision of trains from Delhi to Pakistan, etc.) meant that Delhi and India's other urban centres became, to borrow from Jonathan Darling, 'strategic locations for the enforcement of border control'[26] – places for restricting and removing non-citizens of the Indian state.

These processes were increasingly framed as economically and bureaucratically rational, and therefore legitimate. As Zaminder argues, economic rationalisation 'provided the logic' for Indian and Pakistani governments to officially support the 'transfer of populations' in the Punjab, and this logic 'became central to the notion that Muslim refugees from elsewhere in India could not be accommodated, that they were an economic liability'.[27]

Such logic was arguably evident during India's assistance to refugees fleeing from East Pakistan (soon-to-be Bangladesh) in 1971, when the Government made it clear that its doors were open to the displaced and it would do as much as possible to help, but that no refugees could remain in the country's camps and on its roadsides beyond the short term.[28] India's permanent representative to the UN, Samar Sen, stated at the time: 'Voluntary repatriation was the only lasting solution to the problem. This was not only the best, but also an imperative, solution. And it must come soon... [T]he relief operation should not become yet another political and economic burden on the international community'.[29] While understandably presented as an economic issue (India would struggle to support all 10 million refugees in the long-term), this policy framing was also intimately bound with concerns over the stability of the State of Assam, where an influx of refugees from East Pakistan was met with protest from indigenous communities, as the state was already experiencing communal conflict related to historic Bengali migration.[30] Political and economic concerns entwined with those of identity.

The rationalisation of ethno-religious exclusion saw echoes in the capital several decades later, between 1996 and 1999, when thousands of Bengali-speaking Muslim slum-dwellers were deleted from the electoral rolls by one party of the Central coalition government, the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – also in power in Delhi State.[31] These undocumented Muslims were declared to be illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, and this claim was used to strip them of their rights. They could well have been self-settled internally displaced persons (IDPs) from within West Bengal in India, or refugees from neighbouring Bangladesh, but the BJP made a conscious and public decision to differentiate between perceived 'legitimate' Hindu refugees from those areas, and Muslim 'infiltrators' with the potential for political and economic destabilisation. As one pro-BJP publication explained, in 1991:

> The Hindu refugees [from Bangladesh] had to seek shelter. They have already declared themselves as refugees, whereas the infiltrators [Bangladeshi Muslims] are illegally trespassing our national borders, maintaining dual citizenships and creating havoc to the State's economy.[32]

Of course, concerns over the 'burden' of these non-citizens in India was (and still is) not exclusively ethno-religious, but also socioeconomic. The poor in general in India 'are seen as a drain by creating disorder, squalor and stress on the city'.[33] These markers of difference (poverty, religion, ethnicity etc.) have all been deployed as mutually reinforcing markers of urban undesirability. They act together as a 'gate-keeping system' that is, to quote Baviskar, 'designed to play upon … anxieties around the breakdown of urban infrastructure, … apprehensions about the scarcity of water and electricity, the increase in crime and disease, and the proliferation of unruly places and peoples'.[34] This system has been specifically deployed to define 'insiders' entitled to benefit from urban social systems and security, and 'outsiders' who are not. As Sanyal argues, refugees now are often viewed through 'a particular prism of fear and mistrust' – as prone to 'criminal activities and lawlessness, and as economic burdens at best'.[35]

Ethno-Religious Identities and the Refugee as 'Outsider'

The concepts of 'insider' and 'outsider' have taken on complex meanings, both institutionally – for official bodies determining who a refugee is, where a refugee should be settled (or placed), and their concomitant entitlements – and also among refugees themselves, who seek to locate themselves within these inscribed categories. As the above analysis shows, the distinction between *de facto* refugee and migrant in India has always been a slippery one – often conveniently so. To quote Ghosh, 'because of the absence of legal regimes, quite often the categories get mixed up and migrants, refugees, illegal settlers or stateless persons become one and the same'.[36] These unfixed and fluid status-ascriptions have resulted in, for example, Rohingya refugees being knowingly and unknowingly harassed by police authorities, labelled as 'illegal Bengali migrants' and jailed.[37] They have also enabled the state to move deftly between projections of welcome, ('India's refugee policy is an example for the world to follow', declared the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in 2013[38]), and actions of exclusion, such as the selective issuance of LTVs to different Afghan refugee groups, and recent moves to 'identify, arrest and deport' Rohingya Muslim 'migrants'.[39] As Sarbani Sen explains, 'For the GoI, the ad hoc approach to refugee issues is politically more convenient in the context of the bilateral relations that India has with the country of origin of the refugees'.[40]

However, as touched upon above, rhetorical slippage is not restricted to ideas of the refugee/migrant. On the far right of Hindu nationalist discourse, the language of 'infiltration' has frequently been used to describe the presence and purpose of Muslim migrants (who may also be *de facto* refugees) in India. Indeed, the BJP staked its leadership campaign on ending Bangladeshi 'infiltration' in 1993.[41]

As 'refugee' is muddled with 'migrant', and the latter has been used interchangeably with criminal or terrorist 'infiltrator' (especially when describing Muslims), broader associations of refugees with illegality and feelings of undue state responsibility (economic burden) and risk (political destabilisation) are being reinforced, and boundaries between the 'in-group' and 'out-group' solidified. This is translating to refugee experiences of marginalisation:

> In renting ... there are problems about religion, some people don't want to rent to Muslims ... Muslims will never get nationality or any help in India, so we can't think of that kind of 'hope' [Male Rohingya refugee]

> For the landlords there is a concern. Refugees are foreigners and can be considered a security issue. As there is a security issue, there has to be a premium charge. They feel they are taking a risk. There are a lot of terrorism activities nowadays and these people are belonging to a particular community – you know which I am speaking about – they come from that particular background. These Rohingyas, they are all Muslims, so this is picked up ... if there is a risk, people charge a premium. [NGO worker]

This out-group reinforcement is not restricted to Muslim refugees. For instance, the Sikh Afghan refugee community, some of whom have resided in India for over 30 years, have faced constant problems attempting to get legal recognition as naturalised citizens and social recognition as legitimate, long-term residents of India. They often find themselves caught between contradictory social identities. For instance, Afghan refugees are categorised by UNHCR into two types: as ethnic (meaning Muslim) Afghans, or non-ethnic (meaning Hindu, Sikh and Christian Afghans). Many feel the distinction is paradoxical with negative effects, as one refugee explained:

> Firstly, they [UNHCR and the GoI] recognize us as refugees. Ok, fine but then they categorise us as Muslims or non-Muslims, and also as Indian-origin Afghans. ... If we are Indian origin, why did you categorise us as refugees? But when there is talk of resettlement, I am an Indian-origin Afghan or Indian, so no need for resettlement! This is discrimination... In Afghanistan we were mistreated because we were 'Indians', here the government mistreats us because they call us refugees or Afghans. [Afghan Sikh male]

The ambiguous space that the non-ethnic Afghan refugees perceive they occupy, between ethnic/Muslim refugee identity (perceived as favoured for third country resettlement) and 'Indianness' (their ascribed roots as historic Indian migrants in Afghanistan), cause confusion. They fit neither category at the 'right time', and it feels paralysing. The only category they do occupy is outsider, both in Afghanistan and India.

Even when refugees have passed the current 12-years of required residency for a citizenship application, there's no guarantee they will be able to make the transition. One Afghan refugee explained the situation of his friend: 'He applied for citizenship in 2000. The file was misplaced, then he reapplied in 2003, and that is still pending! He came to India in 1989'.

Bureaucratic Entanglements

The paralysis that refugees face as they seek various kinds of documentation and recognition from the authorities can be explained, in part, as a result of institutionalised corruption. It is common in India, and elsewhere in the world, for officials such as police officers or civil servants to mistreat refugees, delay processes, or unfairly imprison them in anticipation of a bribe.[42] A 2009 study of refugees in Delhi noted that: 'For verification of residency, the local police … require excessive payments or bribes of up to 300 rupees [approx. 3.50 GBP]'.[43] In our study, the refugee that spoke of the delayed citizenship application reflected on the cause: 'The main reason for this discrimination is corruption. If you have money then the Home Ministry will do anything for you. For example – mostly people who have got citizenship in India have paid a lot of money. So the poorer refugees can't manage this'.

Key informants also told anecdotes of government officials issuing contradictory statements on which documentation is necessary for which purpose (*this* document on one day, *that* document on another), and rejecting legitimate paperwork as though ignorant of its validity. Therefore, a responsibility of the state, and an opportunity for non-governmental organisations, must be the education of front-line civil servants and police authorities on refugee entitlements, and the development of an oversight mechanism for observing and enforcing corruption charges against officials. Aspects of this much-needed change might not be so unrealistic. A workshop held in April 2017 by the Women's Refugee Council in Delhi was attended by a senior member of the Delhi police force who, upon hearing the difficulties refugees were facing when dealing with police authorities, declared the possibility of setting up a Refugee Help Desk in Delhi police headquarters as a first point of contact for refugees in the city with official concerns. If implemented, it would be a small step towards public authorities' recognition of their responsibility for mitigating refugee vulnerability.

This single, technocratic recommendation would certainly not counter many of the structural problems of 'bureaucratic violence', through which 'political, administrative and judicial action and inaction prevent poor people from making a living, obtaining medical aid, and securing the necessities of life as food, clothing, shelter and sanitation'.[44] Such violence is enabled by the 'production of indifference' among civil servants and government authorities, as well as the communalisation of identity and the mobilisation of hostility against the outgroup for the purposes of diffusing a threat or attaining influence and power.[45]

When refugees navigating Indian bureaucracy are not experiencing outright brutality, they often face simple arbitrariness: seemingly chaotic and inconsistent treatment by officials; the misplacement and delay by the government of the citizenship application, as in the case of the Afghan refugee mentioned above; differential entitlements given to Sikh and Muslim Afghan refugees, who are entitled to LTVs, and Christian Afghans, who are not. In the legal sphere, too, when refugees require representation they are often assigned government lawyers with little knowledge of either the refugee group they are representing or Indian refugee case history more broadly, which results in inadequate representation and understanding of processes and rights.[46] Through the effective delegation of the majority of refugee protection to UNHCR – a form of distancing – Indian authorities have reinforced the outsider identity of the refugee. UNHCR's role here as the main arbiters of protection for refugees in an otherwise indifferent bureaucracy, raises questions about the delegation of responsibility without requisite authority, and therefore reinforcement of refugee powerlessness. As UNHCR is the main document-issuing authority for refugees in India, and as documentation is essential for claiming any entitlements, it has been referred to by refugees as their government. One Rohingya refugee exclaimed during the interview: 'your government is Modi, my government is UNHCR!' And almost mirroring the arbitrariness of the GoI's bureaucratic immigration process, UNHCR's processes also require multiple visits for status verification. Another Rohingya refugee explained:

> You need a lot of money to come here from there, around 500-1000 [rupees] is what you have to spend to come with your children [from Mewat, a Rohingya settlement in the neighbouring state of Haryana], that's why they feel that if they come to Delhi to get their cards made then they have to give three or four interviews. So imagine for one interview they spend 1000, where will they get so much money to keep going and coming?

Barriers to Refugee Employment, and Livelihoods Programmes

UNHCR's Head of Mission is currently located in New Delhi (it has a second office in Chennai). This presence in Delhi, and the level of support or entitlements UNHCR is perceived to provide, seems to be a draw for refugees to the capital city. One female Rohingya informant explained: 'We were told by family to come here [to Delhi] as things are easier. You get the UNHCR card here … Mewat [another Rohingya settlement area in Haryana] is very far away, it creates a problem … you get more facilities here [in Delhi] through the UNHCR'. And another: 'The biggest reason for staying in Delhi for us is that the refugee card from the UNHCR, you only get that here'. These Refugee Cards are essential documents for accessing any services, for themselves or their children.

Technically, registered asylum seekers and refugees have equal access to government services, such as public schools, and critical healthcare. Despite entitlements to access many public services, refugees and UNHCR currently face difficulties proving those entitlements after the introduction of the Aadhaar, a unique 12-digit number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India, recorded on a card, which identifies every Indian resident by biometric and demographic data.

Though a voluntary identification card, it has fast become the main accepted identification to ensure access to public services for all Indians. Foreigners are entitled to an Aadhaar Card but, at present, the law is ambiguous as to what documents count in the application process as proof of identity. Refugee Certificates are not listed explicitly as valid documents, and this is creating confusion – UNHCR report that some refugees have been able to receive one using their Refugee Certificate, while others have been refused. And even when refugees do have one, they are not always believed to be legitimate card-holders. As one Rohingya refugee explains:

> People who have got Aadhaar without refugee card or LTV, police can catch them for fraud and even UNHCR can't help … Once the police stopped me and asked for the refugee card and when I was taking out the card, even the Aadhaar card came out. He said that you aren't allowed to get Aadhaar. He also said it's not written here that you can get Aadhaar but eventually I showed him that it's not for citizenship. So he let me go. The situation is very tricky with Aadhaar.

Interestingly, in this instance, the police officer was concerned that the refugee might be fraudulently holding *citizenship* documentation and was persuaded of the refugee's right to carry the card, only when he was convinced that it

wasn't proof of citizenship. Again, the impression given is that refugees are permitted to exist in India, but not 'belong'.

Meanwhile, Aadhaar Cards are becoming increasingly essential for work purposes. The same refugee continued:

> The Refugee Card [Certificate] is not the most helpful but at least to move around it's good for us. For example – whenever police authorities stop us we show them our Refugee Card and it's fine. That is good for us! But for work, it's not useful at all … I was working in a factory in Aligarh, where after a while maybe the owner realised that I am not Indian. He called me and asked for my documents. I showed him the Refugee Card, he said this is not valid and he fired me. I went to the market and got a duplicate Aadhaar card for 350 rupees. What could I have done? I had to work at any cost. I took the card back to the owner and he said ya this is fine and now you can work.

While this refugee was able to work around the bureaucratic issue of documentation in the short term by obtaining a fake copy of the Aadhaar Card, he placed himself at risk of arrest for carrying falsified documentation. This is a common situation for refugees in India and the world over. Not only does it put the refugees at risk of arrest and deportation, but employers can use the vulnerable position of the refugees to underpay, not pay, or abuse them without fear of the refugees reporting the exploitation. Refugees remain powerless. 'This guy', explained one Rohingya informant about another also in the interview, 'has four or five children, how will he survive without work? He works as a daily wager in Noida. He has not been paid for 15 days of his work and he has been chasing the contractor. This is very common. The contractors don't pay the whole amount ever'. Another shared his experience: 'Yesterday, I worked almost for four hours to earn 250 rupees [approx. 3 GBP] but didn't get paid'.

The Afghans, though a typically better educated and higher skilled group, have also struggled because of documentation. Their main difficulty is getting jobs in the first place. As one Afghan explained: 'UNHCR basically don't have any authority to get jobs for us. … Even if there are jobs available its difficult because of documentation. Even if we know English or are educated. Still it's a big no for us because of the documentation problem'. Another: 'For jobs, they ask us for Aadhaar card. Who will give us jobs?'

These experiences reinforce the corruption and arbitrariness of Indian bureaucracy that refugees experience – with haphazard understandings of entitlement to a card that legally *is* available for foreigners (as noted above, the limited legal status that refugees do have in India is as foreigners), and an application process dependent on an ambiguous list of valid application

documents. Here, the GoI should seek to clarify the legitimacy of Refugee Cards for Aadhaar applications. In the meantime, legal aid organisations supporting refugees must continue to sensitise officials on the legitimacy of refugee applicants, assuming a right to the card in the absence of a law excluding them. This is an essential step for ensuring that refugees have, at least, the opportunity to *access* livelihoods, as well as education and health services. Though it will not be sufficient in itself to provide refugees with the opportunities to make a life and livelihood in Delhi, to become 'self-reliant'.

UNHCR's work largely revolves around determining refugee status for documentation and entitlements. It works closely with NGO partners to offer needs assessments, referrals to relevant agencies, and support in integrating in the host community and labour market. These organisations include: Don Bosco, focused on education, assistance in access to healthcare, youth clubs, psychosocial support, and outreach on issues such as gender-based violence; the Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC) which provides legal assistance to refugees; and Access, which is primarily focused on supporting refugees' entry into employment, through Life Skills Training classes, which mentor refugees in how to approach job searches and interviews, vocational training and job placements, which typically involve the attachment of refugees to an agency for on-the-job learning of low-skill manufacturing work, and enterprise training as part of an entrepreneurship programme, which offers a small number of refugees (around 80) a year's grant to set up a small business. Refugees participating in the programmes of these NGOs are usually referrals from UNHCR or self-referrals that have become aware of the opportunity through word of mouth. The programmes take place at project sites near the main refugee settlement areas in order to mitigate travel cost and time burdens for these refugees, and to augment employment and education opportunities in their surrounding neighbourhoods.

Despite these programmes, many refugees are still struggling at a basic level to provide for themselves and their families, and in a deeper sense to attain livelihood opportunities and living standards that meet their changing needs, expectations and aspirations. The difficulties and disappointments in this area were broadly echoed by refugees, UNHCR and their implementing partners alike: limited access to the formal economy due to insufficient documentation; high levels of employment dissatisfaction in terms of available jobs and experiences of working in them; high attrition rates in job placements; and low take-up for, and interest in, certain classes, trainings and livelihood opportunities.

> In terms of livelihood programmes, what happens is that some people take up such trainings with hope of a job. For this they leave their old work. But after training there are no jobs, even when there are jobs then

> it will be for example for a waiter in a restaurant for 5000 rupees [per month, approx. 60 GBP] whereas earlier the same person was earning 8000 rupees [approx. 95 GBP]. So what's the point? [Male Rohingya refugee]

> When I came [to India] I did business management [with an implementing partner of UNHCR]. But the diploma I got from there is useless. [Male Afghan]

Unskilled and poor refugees – typically Rohingya males – often end up in construction, factory work or *ad hoc* service jobs for low pay, like most unskilled migrants moving to urban areas.[47] Three of the better-educated Rohingyas had established their own community-based organisation dedicated to improving the literacy levels of their community (Rohingya Literacy Group), but this was a social enterprise rather than a for-profit venture. For women, the main livelihood stream is through home-based enterprises, though these are very small in scale and not large in number for reasons that will be explored shortly. The most regular work for many of the refugees with language skills, particularly English, is in translation. For Rohingya refugees, this largely means working for UNHCR or NGOs and engaging with new Rohingya asylum seekers and refugees (one male and two female Rohingya refugees were currently in this position, another one having worked the role previously).

For the Afghans this is a much more reliable source of employment, given the significant numbers of Afghan visitors – medical tourists, sight-seers, diaspora and extended families – that pass-through Delhi regularly. However, the form of work raises a number of protection concerns. A Don Bosco manager noted that female translators are at high risk of being propositioned for 'favours', particularly of a sexual nature, and there have been instances where translators have been asked to accompany a client to nightclubs and other inappropriate venues. The nature of private contracts can also present moral and legal dilemmas. As one refugee explained:

> For those who know English there is a good job prospect in translation for medical tourists coming from Afghanistan. But the setup is quite shady since the private hospitals have a kind of deal where they overcharge the Afghans and in return provide incentives to the Afghan translators to get the medical tourists to their hospital.

The informant expressed discomfort at this practice for moral reasons, and refrains from it himself, but it remains an attractive opportunity: commission can earn a translator a significant percentage of the total expenditure on treatment.

Precarious and irregular labour is a feature of the informal economy in India, and the way 82 per cent of the Indian population attempt to make ends meet.[48] It prevents any long-term accumulation of wealth and access to institutions of power – restrictions that some scholars argue are deliberately constructed to prevent 'undesirables' (the poor, migrants, ethnic and faith minorities) from tipping the balance of power and de-stabilising the authority of the establishment.[49] Here, the city (as a space to be protected) is particularly important, explains David Harvey, as it is the storehouse of a country's assets, and the centre around which the dominant mode of production is organised. Refugees, migrants and other 'undesirables' are essential to its functioning but represent potential disruption, so must therefore remain disenfranchised.[50]

As discussed, the primary technical obstacle that prevents refugees from finding regular and safe employment is the lack of official status and documentation. No codified refugee status, precarious, temporary and changeable documentation, and their broad inability to open bank accounts[51] means that most refugees cannot enter the formal labour market, where at least the more educated and English-speaking refugees might find opportunities that better match their skills and aspirations. However, beyond this legal protection deficit and the bureaucratic barriers that limit the possibility of self-reliance, there are also aspects of humanitarian programming aimed at fostering self-sufficiency that arguably further undermine refugee resilience to urban shocks and challenges.

From Self-Reliance to Inter-Generational Dependency?

Programming tensions – between short-term humanitarian norms and longer-term development needs – reflect a lack of research into and understanding of the way that urban economies are experienced and navigated by refugees with diverse needs and social identities. For instance, our study strongly suggested that Rohingya women experienced the city and livelihoods differently from Rohingya and Afghan men, which was not reflected in humanitarian programming. In some cases, livelihoods programming seemed to be inadvertently reinforcing gender hierarchies.

In interviews, both male and female refugees – across the Afghan and Rohingya communities placed a high value on the welfare of the family unit and the importance of education for children. Their future prosperity, fostered by keeping them healthy and getting them to school, was framed as the most basic measure of community well-being. Some spoke of their refugee children's poor schooling experiences in terms of a skills loss for the community:

In 30 years unfortunately not one professional has come out of our community … Some girls, around ten to twelve, do studies through long-distance. In Afghanistan, we had doctors, professors, ministers, surgeon, in every profession but here in 30 years not one [certified] doctor or teacher or engineer or pilot – biggest loss for us! [Sikh Afghan Male]

Some framed child refugee experiences as a protection concern, interrelated with their own sense of space and stability:

As soon as we put our children into school, the landlord comes and tells us to leave, then we have to hop from place to place … this is ruining our children's lives too, they aren't able to have a proper education. [Rohingya female]

They [the children] don't have places to play. The place is small, smoke from one house goes to the other house, which results in fight[s]. Space is a problem. [Rohingya male]

Others spoke of education as a neglected necessity and right:

In India, first priority is shelter, food. Education suffers. [Rohngya male]

We follow all the Indian government's rules and laws but it does not follow human rights in this country. Low-paying jobs here. Main point is education was free back home – here there is so much corruption that even though education is a fundamental right in India, we still have to pay in the form of donations – if we pay then how is it a fundamental right? [Afghan Sikh male]

And some shared their hopes and expectations for their children's well-being in relation to themselves and the wider community, stretching from Delhi to Burma:

My kids are very smart, they will do great. They even recite the things I have taught them on the phone to my mother and other relatives back in Burma. [Rohingya male]

We want to go [back to Burma] but our children won't go … My children want to become 'big people' here. [Rohingya female]

The first point to take from these interview excerpts is that they hint at the relational understandings of family and community well-being, and the interconnectedness of children's right to education with long-term opportunities for family and community prosperity. A 'self-reliant' refugee in this framework is not purely a wage-earning individual, but is part of a group made up of interdependent generations, which experiences meaningful settlement beyond wage employment (though not exclusive of it), and through education opportunities for the next generation.

Humanitarian policy literature often begins with the acknowledgement that education is 'one of the crucial ways to prepare for self-reliance'.[52] However, humanitarian narratives regarding 'self-reliance' tend to ignore inter-generational dependencies, focussing on the refugee as an individual whose success is measured in technocratic terms against the attainment of some form of economic independence (i.e. job placements for adults). They ignore the network of *mutually-reliant* individuals within a family and a community that must contribute to the larger 'self-reliant' collective over the longer term. And they are gendered, as it is largely women who are responsible for unpaid childcare and housework, which are foundational components of quality education, alongside access to, and quality of, schooling.

The 'Double Burden' of Refugee Self-Reliance for Female Refugees

The Rohingya women interviewed as part of this research are experiencing what is known as 'the double burden':[53] Many are responsible for housework and childcare while also undertaking some form of paid work. Though they did not use the language of 'burden' themselves, their narratives invoked the heavy responsibilities of their dual role. One discussion between two Rohingya women – one in her mid-30s (A) and the other late 20s/early 30s (B) – who live in a riverbank slum settlement in the east of the city, offered an example of a daily routine.

> B: She [referring to interviewee A] works in rubbish collection, her husband is old and she has four or five children. She works herself, she supports their education.
>
> A: I wake up at 5[am], then I cook, wash clothes for my children, go to work.
>
> B: She works from 8[am] to 5[pm].
>
> A: I come back and cook, feed the children. In Burma, we don't go outside.

B: In Burma women only work inside the homes, they don't even see men. Here you have to work, talk with everyone.

A: I used to sit at home and make hats, chairs. We don't make them here.

Refugee A is responsible for childcare, the home *and* breadwinning. While female-earner households was not the norm of all Rohingya families interviewed, childcare and domestic work certainly formed the backbone of most of the women's daily routines in Delhi. Longstanding gender ideologies dictating what is appropriate work for men (wage labour in the public sphere) and women (unpaid care and domestic work in the private sphere) in the Asian context have contributed to this dichotomy. Humanitarian actors have long-recognised the need to increase the access of women to opportunities and resources; the need for female empowerment and gender equality. However, their 'productivity' is largely imagined in livelihoods and wage-labour terms – childcare and domestic work are not recognised as essential activities for successful, self-reliant communities. As UNHCR's *Livelihoods and Self-Reliance* strategy explains, effective support will 'match programming interventions with corresponding levels of livelihood capacity (*existing livelihoods assets such as skills and past work experience*) and needs identified in the refugee population, and the demands of the market' [emphasis added].[54] Thus, according to humanitarian narratives, and recognising traditional divisions of private and public labour, women – to gain an equal footing with men and empower themselves as rightful wage earners – must do domestic work *in addition* to developing livelihoods capacity, in order to be recognised as self-reliant.

This is not to argue that women are 'natural' caregivers and should be acknowledged/encouraged as such, but that childcare and domestic work must be recognised as productive contributions to the interdependent self-sufficiency (or self-reliance) of a family and community, regardless of which gender takes responsibility. Family and community self-reliance does not rest on the ability of each individual in a given refugee group to maximise their earning potential, but on the interconnected public and private activities that enable a group to make progress without substantial external aid. Acknowledging this should eventually lead to two shifts in research and policy work.

Firstly, a focus on the interconnected activities and processes that enable and inhibit self-reliance for an intergenerational, and intersectional, network (rather than at an individual level) will encourage analysis of broader structural factors that may be impacting refugee capabilities to make meaningful and self-reliant lives for themselves over the longer term – particularly in the case of women. This is a necessary counterbalance to the dominant focus on the market, and individual participation in it, as the 'solution' to aid dependency. Secondly,

this focus on non-economic interdependency in self-reliance should open up the possibility of understanding how men and boys are also productively engaged in unpaid work. A key observation taken from the study was that voluntary work contributed as both a social safety net in the communities (to keep the unemployed active), but also to a collective sense of well-being.

Self-reliance for Unpaid Work?

The absence of meaningful employment was perceived differently by male Afghan and Rohingya refugees in this study, or at least the 'opportunity' of not being able to work in gainful employment was approached differently. Rohingyas were much more instrumental in their voluntary undertakings – consciously seeking to create and use their non-profit organisations, or unpaid work in their own community, to achieve certain ends including: gaining experience that would enable them to get a foothold on the job ladder; expanding contacts that might assist in national advocacy for the Rohingya refugee cause; or *ad hoc* benefits such as supporting widows in paying the utility bills and helping new refugee arrivals navigate the Refugee Status Determination process.

   Of the Afghan Christians we interviewed, many of the youth assisted the pastor in various capacities, mostly without formal monthly pay. This faith-based occupation offered a social safety net and the security of the church network for the individuals engaged in the activities. A key pastime that has emerged for this youth in Delhi is music: a small group would play and perform together, both in church services and in teaching. One of the youth recounted: 'Five years ago, I was in a show, there was a boy who introduced me to a *Dhol* [a percussion instrument]. I didn't even know. He told me to play like this. Till then I didn't know about music. Then I said let's just try and learn music … When I played music, people appreciated me. Slowly I started singing'. This youth has now turned his music into an income stream, teaching others to play, and touring India giving shows. While this is now a form of livelihood, of wage-earning employment, it also remains an important non-economic community activity that gives 'solace' to individuals and the wider community, to quote another Afghan refugee.

   For the Afghan Sikhs, it is mostly the older men who engage in community service work, running education programmes for children in their self-started refugee organisation Khalsa Diwan. These elders have been in the country for the longest, and so are generally seen as wiser, with valuable experience to share. However, educating the youth and engaging children in play was not the preserve of the older generation – the younger male refugees offer music sessions and other entertainment activities at the gurudwara (Sikh temple) and Khalsa Diwan.

While this unpaid youth engagement cannot be compared to the (feminised) labour of child-rearing – especially given that the former is a much more optional vocation than the latter, which is essential to the functioning of a community – these endeavours should still be viewed as small examples of non-economic coping mechanisms refugee communities use to contribute to the well-being of the community and carve out a meaningful existence for themselves. To quote Halvorsen: 'work can be socially useful even if the market is not willing to pay its price. But the problem with activities outside the labour market is that their usefulness is difficult to measure and account for formally'. This is especially true of childrearing and caregiving.[55]

Ghettoisation: Gender, Identity and the City

The city of Delhi offers opportunities for the breakdown of traditional roles, and, conversely, for reinforcing social hierarchies. The position of risk, opportunity and security that Rohingya women find themselves in in Delhi is complex, and infused with feelings of relativity: freedoms and restrictions in rural Burma compared with freedoms and restrictions in urban India. Almost all of the Rohingya women interviewed as part of this study reminisced about the space and landscape of Burma. They missed the fresh fruits and river fish that they could eat, and the kinds of trees they could use for home-making; especially the broad tree trunks of a specific tree, with which they built their homes. This contrasted with the plastic and cardboard they had to use in their settlements in Delhi, and the fact that they have 'no space' (i.e. land) upon which to settle and develop a level of self-sufficiency over the longer term. One of the Rohingya *jhuggi* (slum) settlements is situated on land donated by a charitable foundation; another is urban wasteland – neither are suitable for development of permanent housing or subsistence activities. The latter is shared with Indian migrant populations, and both are located some distance from basic public services (though aid organisations have sought to provide drop-in centres within reasonable distance to mitigate travel costs).

However, despite the warm recollections of 'home' and the difficulties of finding adequate 'space' in India, there was also a broadly positive reflection on the opportunities that Delhi offered. For example, where aid organisations expressed concern over the inability and/or unwillingness of Rohingya refugee women to leave their *jhuggis* for education, training or employment opportunities, some Rohingya women themselves expressed a sense of freedom they felt in a city that allowed such movement. In Delhi, *the possibility* of being able to leave the settlement felt, in a small way, empowering. Indeed, the women with the highest levels of education were engaged in gainful employment outside of the settlement camps (primarily as translators), which was noted as a sharp contrast to the situation in Burma, where 'women only work in the homes'.

The gender hierarchies, urban insecurity, and financial precariousness that still discourage (or prevent) these women from leaving the camp-like accommodation cannot be dismissed simply because some feel a sense of empowerment. Indeed, it was clear from the interviews that the 'unfreedoms' the women were facing (to participate in public life, to have the opportunity to receive basic education, and to receive healthcare) were more common, shaped by an intersection of factors including gender, ethnicity and religion. 'We have one problem. It is that we are Rohingya. If we weren't Rohingya we would not have these problems ... If we were Indian we could educate our children', exclaimed one woman, who felt her ethnicity was impeding the opportunities of the future generation. Another highlighted the impact of this difference on inter-community relations: 'We have no similarities, nothing in common with Hindustanis, we can't go to them ... it's possible some people feel scared. We don't speak the language. When we go anywhere, this is always in the back of our minds, if we go somewhere and someone disturbs us, if we step out of our houses, we worry about this'. A third and fourth mentioned that assistance comes from those with shared identity characteristics: 'The government doesn't help us but the people from Shaheenbagh [other Muslims] helped us a lot'.

As city spaces are deeply inscribed with communal and class identities (as outlined above), it is possible to observe a tacit ghettoisation of these communities (and, particularly, the women within them). Invisible borders are mapped around in-groups and out-groups, which in turn makes livelihoods-promotion activities undertaken by aid organisations, as they are currently structured, more complex. Moves to offer women 'home-based' enterprise opportunities that capitalise on their desire to work and their reluctance or inability to move outside of the settlement area can reinforce that boundary-making. However, requiring women to move outside of the settlement sphere in search of enterprise opportunities can put them at risk of intersectional discrimination on the basis of their gender (from fellow refugee men who may seek to limit the role of women in 'their' public sphere, or from translation clients who solicit them for sex), ethnicity (from institutions and other communities) and faith (from non-Muslims). One Rohingya woman has experienced verbal abuse on several occasions (once in front of investigators) from a male Rohingya community member, for working a job that, he believed, unduly increased her influence as an interlocutor with the aid community. In the Sikh and Christian Afghan refugee communities, female refugees were notable by their absence as we unsuccessfully tried to include them in our interview sample.

Humanitarian organisations must, then, move beyond conventional conceptualisations of livelihoods and self-reliance. Understanding and measuring these goals in terms of jobs, income and market participation does not go far enough to address the structural inequalities that prevent

individuals, families and communities from living long and living well. Current programmatic frameworks fail to account for the fact that historical inscriptions of urban space, and the lived experience of the city, exacerbate those inequalities and marginalisation. A job or a steady income cannot be the primary indicator of the attainment of self-reliance when opportunities to engage in the market are delimited by documentation, invisible urban boundaries, and the politics that lie behind identity, including faith and gender.

Aid workers interviewed for this research certainly recognised the disconnect between refugee aspirations, capacities, the conditions of their urban settlement, and the limited job opportunities that their legal status and cultural differences enable them to take up. But humanitarian approaches to self-reliance are ideologically rooted in concepts of short-term assistance and longer-term, individualised self-care. What these variable urban experiences suggest is the need for a more flexible and longer-term framing of refugee self-reliance and community resilience, where the goal is less about individualised, entrepreneurial self-sufficiency, and more about the ability of refugees (collectively, and collaboratively with the wider community) to convert places, services and opportunities into human well-being. In other words, to view self-reliance through the lens of capabilities. This is not to say that livelihoods programming should be abandoned. Alongside continued advocacy for a legal framework, organisations should create livelihood opportunities and education programmes that: have longer and more flexible time-frames; are more capability-driven than market-driven; focus on agency and well-being; and are less defined by quantitative and technocratic measurements for success.

As outlined above, one of the key problems with current self-reliance programming is that the ultimate objectives for sustainable well-being centre around jobs and income in the market space. These important aims are currently framed as *end goals*. Sustainable livelihoods are understood as indicators of self-sufficiency, and so programming is directed to increasing access to them, and the level of income a refugee can command. However, looking at self-reliance through the lens of capabilities,[56] it is possible to see that jobs and income should actually be considered as part of a package of *means* that enable a person to live long and live well. The freedom to work (i.e. the ability and opportunity to work) is a constituent *component* of well-being and development, rather than an end goal in itself. Other components include political freedoms, social facilities and transparency.

The urban environment has been instrumental in the perpetuation of the idea of livelihoods as ends. The city appears to be a centre of choice, opportunity and (entrepreneurial) prosperity; refugees seem only to need, the argument would follow, humanitarian or state support to meet market-entry requirements – documentation, a certain level of education, health, language skills, etc. – to be able to gain access to the jobs required to ensure a sustainable

income, a reduction in poverty, and a better quality of life. However, as we have seen, this emphasis on self-care through work and the 'responsibilisation' of the individual refugee doesn't account for the intersectional discrimination refugees face due to the politics surrounding their ethnicity, faith and gender, nor does it recognise or support the non-economic ways in which refugees seek to make their lives meaningful. The key problem in refugee self-reliance/livelihoods programming is that the 'freedom to work' is viewed only in terms of its direct contribution to a sustainable income, rather than as a core part of an interconnected set of freedoms – political participation, health and education – that are essential for development.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that historically contingent identity politics, state-making, and urbanisation processes have contributed in Delhi to the socio-economic marginalisation of Sikh Afghan, Christian Afghan, and Rohingya refugees, as well as the emergence of a bureaucratic, corrupt, and arbitrary system of management of their rights and entitlements. Ideas of belonging and citizenship in the post-Partition state have taken on a communal hue, as Muslim refugees/migrants, in particular, have been subjected to a politics of exclusion. This has impacted the lived experiences of non-Muslim refugees attempting to survive and prosper in Delhi too, as rhetorical slippage between ideas of the refugee, foreigner, (illegal) migrant, (Muslim) infiltrator and even urban poor have resulted in these terms becoming mutually reinforcing ideas of difference (from Indian citizens), economic burden (for the state) and risk (to the city).

An arbitrary status hierarchy, which offers refugees varying levels of legal recognition and entitlements, stands in the place of a robust domestic legal framework for refugees and adherence to International Law. It is often not clear what exactly refugees are entitled to –the Aadhaar card, for example – and how those entitlements might differ between groups. This can lead to arbitrary treatment by state officials and exploitation by employers, who know refugees do not have much recourse to legal action. Refugees in Delhi find it difficult to find jobs, homes, and a sense of settlement, let alone autonomy and 'self-reliance' – even those that have lived in the city for more than 30 years. The GoI has a huge responsibility, in the short term, to make efforts to clarify the legitimacy of refugee documentation for employment and housing, and refugee entitlement to Aadhaar identification. In the longer term, there needs to be a shift away from the increasing communalisation of refugee/migrant identity, and towards the creation of a robust and inclusive legal framework for protecting refugees across India.

Humanitarian organisations also have significant opportunities to augment their support for urban refugee well-being in the capital, though this will require a shift in programming goals away from the conceptual and programmatic framework of self-reliance. Current approaches to supporting self-reliance are falling short, due to an overreliance on the labour market, particularly the informal sector, as the main source of opportunity and socio-economic prosperity. Employment options are often precarious, underpaid and exploitative, and refugees – situated as an outgroup on the socio-economic and political periphery of the city – cannot vote with their feet and leave for an alternative if they are unhappy with the 'opportunities' they have been presented. Moreover, expectations of self-enterprise and economic independence can place additional burdens on those, typically women, who are also responsible for caregiving in the home. Though economic relations play an important role in humanitarian organisations and refugees working together towards improving well-being, that does not mean economic imperatives have to dictate all aspects of programming, especially the ways that aid organisations approach the idea of 'self-reliance' and their interactions with recipients of assistance.[57]

Instead of understanding 'self-reliance' in terms of income, jobs and transferable market skills, we argue that aid organisations should take a broader look at refugee well-being and factor in the non-economic – and non-individualistic – components of living a fulfilling and meaningful life in a complex urban environment such as Delhi. These include family care-giving, leisure opportunities and voluntary work. It is only through understanding sustainable livelihoods as *constituent parts* of refugee well-being, rather than *end goals*, that humanitarian organisations can more effectively support urban refugees to convert places, services and opportunities into things they have reason to value.

APPENDIX

Note on Methodology

Analysis began with a desk-based literature review that drew on history and refugee studies (particularly focusing on India, and Rohingya and non-Muslim Afghan refugees); relevant urban cultural histories of New Delhi; topical aid studies; and grey literature on humanitarian, development and refugee-related work in this context. Rohingya and non-Muslim Afghan refugees were specifically selected because of the general absence of analysis on their lived experiences in India compared with other refugee groups – such as Tibetans, Chins from Burma and Chakmas from Bangladesh (Singh, 2010; Mishra, 2014; Dasgupta, 2016).[58] But also because their faith differences – Muslim, Sikh and Christian – offer an important opportunity to take a comparative perspective on how faith impacts urban refugee experiences in a Hindu-majority host environment.

The investigators undertook a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants: UNHCR officials and NGO implementing partners, and members of the refugee communities. The latter included walking interviews, one-to-one conversations, and some group discussions, the majority of which were in the refugees' settlement localities and community spaces. Whenever possible, interviews were carried out by the authors in English, Hindi and Bengali; if interviewees didn't speak one of these languages, a local translator was hired. Questions to refugees focused on their daily routine, their experiences of the city, their sources of support and perceived limits to their autonomy.

A total of 55 key informants contributed to this project through such interviews: 33 Rohingya refugees (who are more recent arrivals), nine Afghan Christians (who arrived since 2005), two Sikh Afghans (who had been in India for three decades) and 11 NGO workers and UNHCR staff. Participants were selected through snowball sampling, with implementing NGOs and refugee community groups providing initial contacts. Opportunities for networking contacts were also sought through events where prominent refugee community members from the Rohingya community were giving talks on the situation in Myanmar. Refugee community centres and spaces were particularly crucial for contacts, but difficulties included finding suitable times to speak, and accessing the wider community beyond the gate-keeping leaders. In some instances, it took weeks of return visits to secure one interview.

While gender parity was sought in key informant interview numbers, it was not always possible, due to the reluctance of many women to engage with the researchers, and male community-leader gate-keeping, which was difficult to work around in the short time-frame. Women make up just over a third of the Rohingya refugees interviewed, and none of the Afghan community.

Research was also ethnographic, with investigators undertaking walking tours of refugee settlement areas, regular observations of daily economic and social life, and informal conversations with refugee and local communities over the course of 3 months. Informal conversations offered a rich insight into the lived experience of refugees in New Delhi, and were one of the ways women refugees felt most comfortable engaging with investigators. Through informal discussions, investigators additionally engaged with eight more Rohingya women and 10 Rohingya men, seven Afghan Christian women and six Afghan Christian men, three Afghan Sikh women and six Afghan Sikh men. Though these conversations were not recorded through note-taking or voice recorder at the time, verbal consent was given for such discussions and investigators were able to gain a deeper impression of daily life, which in turn informed this analysis.

While snowball sampling entails clear limitations, including the potential bias of sampling within networked communities and the exclusion of those marginalised within refugee groups themselves,[59] the project was limited by time constraints.

Finally, two interactive workshops were held in Delhi and Manchester to share early findings with relevant policymakers and experts in the field, as well as representatives from the refugee groups themselves. Attendees numbered 35 and 30, respectively. Discussions and feedback from these events has, in turn, fed back into this analysis.

ENDNOTES

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Solidarity in the City:
Platforms for Refugee Self-Support in Thessaloniki[1]

Sophie Dicker

Background on Thessaloniki

Following the arrival in Greece of approximately 124,000 refugees and migrants between January and July 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees declared a 'humanitarian emergency' in Europe, requiring 'an urgent Greek and European response'.[2] With 50,000 arrivals in July alone (up 20,000 from the previous month) the UN stated there had been a '750% increase in the number of refugees and migrants from the same period in 2014'.[3] Many of these arrivals saw Greece as a country of transit;[4] predominantly, they aimed to reach countries in Northern Europe. However, following the closure of Greece's Northern border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)[5] – first to all those not of Syrian, Iraqi or Afghan nationality, in November 2015, and then to all refugees, in March 2016 – Northern Greece moved from a site of transit to one of containment. By May 2016, an estimated 28,726 refugees and migrants were stranded in formal and informal camps in Northern Greece.[6] The initial humanitarian response, under the instruction of the Greek Government, and with the support of the Greek army, UNHCR, humanitarian NGOs and volunteers, was to house refugees in makeshift camps in disused, mostly ex-industrial, sites across Northern Greece – with Thessaloniki, which is an hour's drive from the Greece-FYROM border at Idomeni, as an administrative centre.

While refugees were undoubtedly present in Thessaloniki during this time (and others have arrived since), no official data exists on the number of people or the support systems being used, with the focus of the humanitarian system on delivering programming in the predominantly rural and peri-urban[7] campsites. Although there was already significant autonomous movement by refugees to Thessaloniki, it took the harsh winter weather of late 2016 to force a rapid change in strategy, with residents in uninhabitable camps (some referred to as 'not fit for humans' by one member of the international response) being moved into urban accommodation – hotels and apartments – of which a significant proportion was in the greater area of Thessaloniki.[8] Various humanitarian agencies started to shift focus to responding in the city as camps emptied out. One interviewee asserted that, by March 2017, at times

there 'seemed to be more staff in some camp activities than beneficiaries'. International humanitarian organisations undertook rapid assessment of the situation in Thessaloniki in January and February 2017, seeking to define what their roles should be in an increasingly urban response. Thessaloniki went from being predominantly a site of administration for the international response (and thereby a base for a significant number of humanitarian workers[9] and volunteers), with only local and national organisations predating the 'refugee crisis' supporting refugees in the city, to being itself a focus of programming by the international humanitarian response.

In March 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated 'The time has come to invest in the self-reliance of asylum-seekers and local integration of refugees in Greece, so that they can better contribute to their host society'.[10] This statement drew on eight key recommendations published by UNHCR in February 2017, including to 'increase self-reliance opportunities for asylum-seekers'.[11] During the research period – March to April 2017 – international humanitarian actors were mainly in a planning phase, seeking to assess the best ways to engage in the urban context. This included members of the Urban Working Group, discussing how to increase the self-reliance of refugees in the city. At the same time, international NGOs[12] were providing various protection, health, education, and food and nutrition programmes in the city, almost exclusively for those in UNHCR coordinated hotel accommodation. A number of INGO staff members stated that they were struggling to 'find the beneficiaries' (since there was 'no tracking of Persons of Concern'), beyond those they were assisting through UNHCR's coordination.

Introduction: 'A City of Refugees'

Egnatia Street runs through the heart of Thessaloniki, from east to west. A busy commercial street lined with shops and offices, it takes its name from Via Egnatia, a road built by the Romans in the 2nd century BC that stretched from modern day Istanbul to the Adriatic. Via Egnatia passed through what is today Turkey, Greece, FYROM, and Albania on its route westward to Rome. Initially built by Rome to enable the suppression of the natives of the newly conquered region of Macedonia,[13] over the centuries Via Egnatia facilitated the movement of goods, people and cultures between east and west, and Thessaloniki became an important trade hub on the route. Today, Egnatia Street bears many signs of Thessaloniki's diverse history, which, in part owing to its location in the Southern Balkans, has been shaped by a wide range of influences. Towards the western end of Egnatia Street, close to an 11th century Byzantine Church and just under the ruins of the city's Roman Forum, is Hamza Bey Mosque. Built by the Ottomans in the 15th century, it is one of three, non-functioning Ottoman era mosques in the city. To the east, the church of Acheiropoietos, built in the 5th century, sits just off Egnatia Street. A plaque outside informs passers-by of aspects of the city's complex history: 'When Thessaloniki fell [to] the Ottomans in 1430, Acheiropoietos was the first church to be converted into a mosque by Sultan Murad…During the years 1922-1923 [it] hosted refugees from Asia Minor, and no sooner than 1930 was restored to Christian worship'. As one local interviewee stated, 'the city reminds you of its past'. As the capital of Macedonia – a historically contested region, a section of which only became part of Greece following the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913[14] – Thessaloniki has 'a long past of multicultural coexistence and trans-local importance in the Balkan region'.[15] In the context of increasingly tightened borders within the European Union and in surrounding countries, Thessaloniki's location also means it is currently one of a handful of urban hubs for refugees and migrants on the periphery of Europe.

Thessaloniki has long been a convergence point for refugees and migrants, a place of permanent settlement and transit. Over the last century, the city has received groups fleeing the Balkan Wars (1912, 1913); from Armenia (following its incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1922); from Kosovo (1999); and those escaping conflict, poverty and repression in a number of African and Asian countries (perhaps most significantly Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, occupied Palestinian territories, Nigeria, Algeria, and Congo) as well as from other Balkan and Eastern European countries over recent decades. Resettled Greek populations have also shaped the city, following the voluntary population exchange between Greece and Bulgaria in 1919, the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations in 1922-23, the movement of Greek Cypriots from 1974 onwards, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990.[16] Given such frequent and at times sizeable population flows over the

last century, the city has been significantly shaped by migration. Settlement following the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations, for example, led to a 40% rise in the city's population between 1920-1928 and the development of many of the modern city boroughs.[17] At the city's Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Thessaloniki is named 'the "capital of refugees", having been a safe haven for the persecuted and the destitute'.[18] The problems faced by new arrivals to the city are also outlined at the Museum, which states that 'employment, social and political integration tormented refugees for many years'.[19] A number of local interviewees also referred to Thessaloniki as 'a city of refugees'[20] when discussing local reactions to recent refugee arrivals – with some referring to their family's direct experience as refugees (including grandparents and great grandparents).[21]

But if the city has a history of receiving refugees, humanitarian agencies responding to the 'refugee crisis' since 2015 have often exposed their unfamiliarity with operating in the city. Some local interviewees suggested that international humanitarian actors had yet to fully understand the urban context[22] and the existing forms of refugee support the city was providing. An interviewee involved in the local government's refugee response cautioned: 'INGOs should be aware of the whole picture in the city – all of the civil society action, not just the formal projects and programmes. Understanding the context is not just about what other NGOs are doing'.

This paper seeks to contribute to building a 'whole picture' of the city, exploring refugee support mechanisms developed within Thessaloniki that have not been captured by humanitarian NGO and UNHCR assessments of Thessaloniki to date. Many refugees and migrants have been engaging in practices of 'self-support' – practices to meet every day 'basic' needs, which do not necessarily meet or conform to UNHCR's definition of 'self-reliance'. This paper examines these self-support practices, as well as alternative forms of refugee assistance, with a focus on the social and political use of spaces provided by local autonomous solidarity initiatives.

Practices of Solidarity in the City

Although opinions on the arrival of refugees among the city's population are naturally diverse, and tensions have arisen,[23] there has been a tolerant, if not welcoming, response from a significant proportion of the city's population over recent years. One local interviewee working for a Greek NGO described her surprise at the strength of the response from locals to the 'refugee crisis' from 2015 onwards, with people finding the NGO's office to offer help and donations. Even though questions have since been raised by professional humanitarian organisations about how successfully these good intentions have translated into effective assistance and protection of refugees, it is indicative of local

sentiment at the time. Since 2015, a significant proportion of locals have undertaken a variety of voluntary actions, including accommodating people in their houses,[24] volunteering at refugee camps outside the city (including at Idomeni), and participating in the city's grassroots responses, activism and political organising, as well as organising around specific skills and expertise. For example, both prior to and since 2015, a group of lawyers has conducted pro-bono legal work in solidarity with refugees and migrants, and medical professionals have worked with solidarity clinics to provide primary healthcare for those unable to access state health services. Church networks were also reported to have been a source of support for refugees[25] – acting as hubs for information, including on jobs for those refugees with permission to work.[26] Many interviewees discussed these local actions explicitly under the term 'solidarity'.

The 'Greek crisis' – following the global financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing Greek (and European) debt crisis from 2010 – had a crucial impact on the development of solidarity practices and initiatives in Greece.[27] Sotiropoulos and Bourikos state that 'since 2010, the economic crisis has functioned as a catalyst which has revitalised Greek civil society, particularly with regard to social solidarity, and has allowed new informal types of civic-minded activity to emerge'.[28] This has included a variety of localised, popular responses, emerging across Greece, that question both the validity of post-crisis policies and the specific economic and political logic that underpins them. As in other places, one dominant aspect of the local responses in Thessaloniki has been a critical engagement with the idea of 'representative democracy',[29] and the use of direct democracy – the practice of making decisions 'horizontally'[30] in assembly format – as a central form of organising. Over recent years, a number of economic initiatives broadly referred to as part of the 'solidarity economy' have also emerged in the city, in part in response to the economic consequences of the crisis. Using the concepts of direct democracy, these initiatives have sought to operate under alternative social relations that challenge dominant capital-labour relations, neo-classical economic theory, and hierarchical relations of power,[31] promoting principles of egalitarian participation and social solidarity.[32]

As one interviewee engaged in solidarity initiatives in the city suggested, a connection between this critical engagement and the rejection of xenophobic narratives in the city over recent years merits further investigation. This connection was seen as especially significant given that xenophobic narratives have often focused on exploiting fears articulated in 'economic' terms – including reference to competition over jobs, suppression of wages, increased competition over resources and access to (and quality of) services. An article written in collaboration with members of central components of the local solidarity initiatives[33] asserted that responses to the recent increase in refugees in the city 'marked a moral victory for Greece's social movements,

which throughout the years of the crisis have not only been resisting the assault of the popular classes and creating grassroots alternatives, but have also been combating racism, xenophobia and fascism at all levels: in the neighbourhood, in the streets and in public discourse'.[34]

Thessaloniki has a 'long history of political organising at the local level',[35] shaped by the urban context, including its industry and demography. Its industrial and trading history – as a commercial port with substantial industrial areas and links to nearby agricultural land – has given the city a significant working-class population and culture.[36] As a city with a number of large universities, Thessaloniki also has a significant proportion of young, well-educated residents. The two main universities – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (the single largest university campus in Greece by number of students) and the University of Macedonia – are located in the centre of the city. A local informant noted that the student culture of parts of the city fosters a spirit of resistance, solidarity and a questioning of the status quo.[37] For example, the area of Navarino (near Aristotle University) has long been fertile ground for political debate, musicians and collectives, and was the site of the first squat in Greece. A number of the local interviewees currently involved in solidarity initiatives in the city and their refugee responses had attended university in Thessaloniki.

Solidarity Initiatives and the Local Refugee Response

A significant aspect of the local response to 'the refugee crisis' has been through the city's 'autonomous' solidarity initiatives – autonomous on the grounds that they are 'self-organising' (run on the basis of direct democracy, through assemblies) and broadly seek to manage themselves 'without [a] relationship to the state or market'.[38] Although the reality is more nuanced (for example, initiatives pay rent on the buildings they occupy, and engage daily in local markets), it is indicative of an ideal that informs their approach. These initiatives are also premised on the concept of 'solidarity', which in each case appears to be based both on the rejection of the social relations promoted by both state and NGO approaches to support, and on the explicit premise that the initiatives – including solidarity kitchens, health clinics for the uninsured, non-food item (NFI) stores and activist groups – are open to anyone in need. They are founded in, and supported by, already existing structures that had developed over recent years and decades to support the city's population. They are also all developed within – and in response to – the city context; are aimed, primarily, at the city level; and are operated by people with a lived understanding of the local and national contexts. Notably, a number of these initiatives developed in response to the economic and social consequences of Greece's financial crisis from 2008 onwards, in response to the existing

presence of refugees and migrants in the city before 2015, as well as developing out of broader political and social movements in the city.

Referring to the increase in refugee arrivals to the city, one local NGO worker stated, 'In a way, we were much more prepared to respond because of the [Greek] crisis – we had solidarity kitchens, political movements, grassroots responses'. This 'preparedness' to respond among local groups existed not only in a material sense, of being able to organise and work through existing infrastructures to provide for basic needs and services, but also in political and social senses. This is demonstrated by a closer look at the aims and actions of these initiatives. The three largest are Steki Metanaston, Micropolis, and Oikopolis, although other smaller and more service-focused collectives are also very active, such as the Social Clinic of Solidarity.[39]

Steki Metanaston, a 'Social Centre – Immigrants Place', developed from the Antiracist Initiative of Thessaloniki – an initiative established in 1998 as 'an open coordination space…for the social and political collectives of Thessaloniki fighting against racism'.[40] Opened in the centre of the city in 2004, The Social Centre ('Steki'[41]) was conceived as a site for hosting solidarity practices, with immigrants, as well as other political movements. It is managed on the basis of weekly open participative assemblies. In 2009, the centre opened a new 'Immigrant's Place', named Room 39, to provide greater space for 'a more participatory and open response'.[42] This combined with Steki's response to homelessness in the city (a phenomenon that grew significantly during the Greek crisis[43]), where actions involving refugees and migrants grew as the perceived need grew. These actions – labelled 'activities…of material solidarity'[44] by the Centre – currently include daily food distribution, the serving of hot food at the Centre on Saturdays and Sundays, a weekly clothing distribution session, legal support and referrals, a women's support group,[45] and classes such as Greek, Maths and Arabic. In addition to Room 39's activities, Steki also has a computer pool and exchange library; provides space for socialising, discussions, assemblies, concerts, parties, film screenings and arts activities (dance, music and theatre); and tutors Junior High School and High School students.

Micropolis, a 'social space for freedom…a miniature of the city that we want',[46] is another solidarity initiative in the middle of the city. It grew directly out of Greece's 'December 2008 uprisings', which started in reaction to the shooting of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by police in Athens but developed into a wider response that expressed frustration with the economic and political context in Greece,[47] including rising unemployment, social inequality and proposed social and economic reforms aimed at ensuring Greece's competitiveness in international markets, including reforms to pensions. Over the following years, a movement with a strong anti-austerity message and horizontal approaches to organising developed, with the city's youth and student population playing a central role. Micropolis aims to create

a space 'where people will not function by means of profit and competitiveness, but in terms of social solidarity'.[48] It includes a self-organised bar and concert space, a space for children (aimed to be co-managed by children, parents and teachers), a computer room with free internet access, an assembly room, a library, a film screening group, and a cooperative shop. In support of refugees and migrants, it also facilitates legal support, cultural exchange and solidarity events, provides hairdressing services, and holds assembly meetings with refugees and migrants – including to discuss more appropriate support for their needs and interests in the city.

Oikopolis, whose aim is to support 'a parallel city for ecology and solidarity',[49] developed out of a long-standing ecological movement in Thessaloniki. In 2012, Oikopolis started organising to support homeless people in the city. This included providing a nightly hot meal (which still happens, and which refugees now cook for everyone on Tuesdays) and a weekly clothing and food distribution. The organisation built on this experience and the infrastructure it had developed when it responded in the border camp at Idomeni from February 2015, providing clothes, water and food – eventually setting up a kitchen in collaboration with others that provided between 300 and 600 meals a day. Following the Idomeni response, the organisation continues to support a number of families in the city whom it had supported through the Idomeni kitchen, in finding housing, food, clothing and access to medical services. Predominantly, however, Oikopolis is a social space in the city for locals, refugees and migrants. It is a place for meeting and socialising, for events, for information and referrals, and for language classes.

It is within this context, and with the presence of these initiatives in the city, that various humanitarian organisations are planning to support refugee self-reliance.

Understandings of Self-Reliance and Practices of Self-Support

At the time of research, the question of how to increase the self-reliance of refugees in the city was increasingly being discussed by key actors in the humanitarian response, including UNHCR and the Urban Working Group. Cash programming had just been rolled out by UNHCR, while longer-term plans for livelihoods were in initial planning stages, led by the Municipality of Thessaloniki and UNHCR. For those registered for resettlement under the EU Relocation Programme or considered 'vulnerable',[50] UNHCR leads the provision of accommodation,[51] cash for those eligible,[52] and – to varying extents – supports access to other basic services for health, child education and protection. This is the group that the international humanitarian response and a significant proportion of the local NGO response are providing services for – and whose potential self-reliance they are considering. For those not

reached by UNHCR support, as discussed below, very little support is available from NGOs.

Both international organisations and local government appeared to have distinct understandings of self-reliance for those intending to leave the city and those likely to stay. For those under the EU Relocation Programme, self-reliance is broadly taken to be the ability of refugees to access services without support while in the city, in a form of temporary integration (in which, as one interviewee working for an international actor stated, there would be 'no more babysitting'). According to local government, it is also dependent on collaboration with destination country authorities to begin certifying the qualifications of refugees, so as to minimise delays in them being able to re-join employment or study once they reach their destination.[53] 'Cultural orientation', in which refugees 'learn to be self-reliant in the European context…learning European skills' (for example, by focussing on 'practical aspects of life in Europe', such as how to navigate transportation systems and use ATMs, and by 'learning about democracy'), was also mentioned as a way in which self-reliance processes could be initiated in a context of transit. One interviewee from an international organisation asserted that this was particularly important since he thought it likely that many refugees would be relocated to a small town or city, where there would not be the same number of actors to support assimilation as currently active in Thessaloniki.

For those receiving UNHCR support, understandings of self-reliance focused on transportation and mobility; access to information on, and whilst using, the city's services – particularly health services;[54] aspects beyond 'basic needs', such as social needs and support for practicing a trade, developing skills, working towards aspirations, or otherwise being occupied in a way they considered valuable.[55]

UNHCR defines self-reliance as 'the social and economic ability of an individual, household or community to meet basic needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity'.[56] Almost none of the refugee interviewees for this research were self-reliant by this definition, nor did many think there were significant possibilities to become so in the context. Those in the relocation programme were reliant on the support of UNHCR for accommodation and cash, along with other services provided by NGOs; and the majority of those not under the umbrella of UNHCR's support were more focused on meeting immediate needs (often without – and at times at odds with – sustainability, dignity, personal safety, and access to education, for example). This paper distinguishes these processes of self-support, which are focused on more basic aspects of survival and protection, as well as other social and political activities, as fundamentally different from UNHCR's definition of self-reliance.

According to interview data collected for this research, practices of self-support by refugees, and challenges for self-reliance, vary according to social

factors including age, gender, and nationality. The key factor for the provision of accommodation and other support by UNHCR is whether, based on their nationality, refugees fall under the EU Relocation Programme's criteria. Eligible nationalities are determined on the basis of EUROSTAT data for the previous quarter,[57] whereby a nationality must receive an average recognition rate in recipient countries of 75% or greater, which, in the context of Thessaloniki essentially applies only to Syrians.

For those nationalities thereby unsupported by the UNHCR-led response[58] and NGOs,[59] including Afghans, Iraqis, Pakistanis, Algerians, Egyptians and Nigerians, self-support practices, and understandings of self-reliance, focused much more on meeting 'basic needs' (most notably shelter, food and water, and access to informal employment opportunities), as well as on questions of how to spend their days in a valuable way. Since refugees[60] in the city do not have the right to work formally until they receive refugee status, and even then very few opportunities exist, both informal-market[61] and non-monetary forms of self-support – like food recycling and squatting[62] – can play a key role for a significant number of refugees and migrants supporting themselves in the city.

Shared nationality with refugees and migrants already living in the city was also a key factor of support for some new arrivals.[63] At times, this can be the most significant factor in helping arrivals to find accommodation (including squats), develop networks and informal livelihood opportunities (which can also be heavily based on nationality), and understand and navigate the city.

Gender was also found to be a significant factor in practices of self-support in the city. Refugees and migrants engaging with the city's solidarity initiatives, for example, tended to be mostly male – and where women engaged during the period of research, this tended to be limited to accessing material support, rather than fuller participation (for example in assemblies). Although this reflected the demographic of refugees in the city (arrivals to Greece were 52% men, 17.7% women and 30.3% children in 2016),[64] and, as mentioned by one interviewee, of cultural norms around appropriate behaviour for women (for example, women were much more likely to be travelling – and spending the majority of their time – with families), solidarity initiatives might do more to interrogate the gendered nature of their support (for example, identifying gendered barriers to participation in assemblies).

Social and Political Practices of Self-Support in the City's Solidarity Initiatives

Although autonomous solidarity initiatives provide material support, it is the social and political processes they facilitate that offer perhaps the most interesting and important contribution to refugee self-support. These processes take place both in the absence of, and in addition to, assistance

from UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs. Given the limited number of refugees engaging in the solidarity initiatives, the impact of these processes should not be overstated. Nevertheless, they can be considered emerging practices that suggest alternative ways of understanding and approaching refugee support and self-reliance in the city.

Thessaloniki's solidarity initiatives support the political engagement of refugees in the city, both by facilitating refugee voice in the day-to-day running of the initiatives, and by providing a platform for organising to challenge broader political practice – including by encouraging democratic or civic participation of those engaged in the initiatives. One solidarity initiative states: 'Our target is not the creation of another political group but the creation of a social centre which will host different groups, actions and initiatives'.[65] Participation in a solidarity initiative is also inherently political in and of itself (whether participants make this choice explicitly or not), given the broadly stated aims of building alternative economic and social approaches.

To different extents, each of the solidarity initiatives supports refugee participation in decision-making through participative, horizontal assemblies. Steki, for example, holds weekly open assembly meetings to discuss the management of the centre, as well as assemblies for specific issues – including those experienced by refugees and migrants. At another of the city's collectives, participants (a mixture of refugees, migrants and solidarity actors) also discuss the management of the space in an open assembly format on a weekly basis. Discussion includes the week's rota, plans for developing the collective's income and how to spend it, updates on the context for refugees and migrants in the city, information on available services, and other aspects of community life.

The use of an assembly approach aims to give each person the opportunity to engage with and participate in planning,[66] with the possibility of influencing the approach and work of the collective. One interviewee from a local NGO stated: 'refugee participants react really well to the approach taken by the social spaces', noting that she often refers refugees and migrants to the initiatives. As one interviewee explained, participation in the assembly process feels particularly significant given a wider context that so often silences refugees and migrants, and in which humanitarian responses have offered little opportunity for input and influence. In such cases, assemblies appear to have the potential to facilitate a sense of agency solely through being recognised as an active subject, which research has shown has implications for what some participants then feel they are able to do.[67] Supporting meaningful elements of democratic or civic participation is also significant in a context of transit, in which conventional understandings of citizenship tied to nation states do not necessarily apply.[68]

The assembly approach used by the city's solidarity initiatives also creates the conditions for shared problem solving and collaboration – at times supporting refugees to exchange experience and offer skills to support each other (although

this no doubt also happens outside of the assembly environment). For example, at one assembly meeting during the research period, one participant who had recently been granted refugee status in Greece coordinated with other participants in the social space to support them in their processes of applying for asylum.

Beyond participation in assemblies, a number of interviewees felt the personal significance of being a valued member of a social space – of contributing to a shared project, finding value through time spent there and, for some, through voluntary work. One participant, a Syrian student who had been in his final year at university, teaches Arabic in one of the social spaces while he is waiting for his relocation to be processed. In the absence of opportunities to continue or begin studying or training – or legally engage in work – a number of refugees and migrants interviewed were volunteering their time and skills, including in supporting others to develop skills (like learning languages), cooking for the spaces, or involving themselves in other ways in the day-to-day running of the initiative. Through such practices, solidarity initiatives (and the social networks they provide a platform for) support participants to use what agency they have in the context to shape their own time spent in the city.

The solidarity initiatives also provide a physical place for the development of networks of support. One interviewee described how those he met through a solidarity initiative had supported his application for asylum, and then once he had received asylum in Greece, in finding a job (as a translator for a Greek NGO) and an apartment. Some self-organising groups also cultivate networks of support. For example, when refugees were known in the solidarity initiatives to be providing for their shelter by squatting in abandoned buildings, self-organising groups have coordinated with pro-bono legal support groups to assist in cases of arrest, and found locals to assume legal responsibility for those arrested, in order to expedite their release from custody. Another solidarity initiative was in the process of organising the collection of data on the dysfunctional Skype asylum application process,[69] by encouraging as many participants as possible to apply using the space's internet facilities, so that the lack of response could then be recorded as evidence of the system's failings.

Beyond these types of participation, the solidarity initiatives provide space for leisure activities and semblances of normality. For example, a number of Syrians held birthday parties at the spaces during the period of research. They also address basic human needs for interaction for those experiencing the isolating effects of dispersed accommodation in an unfamiliar city. For example, at a number of the social spaces, locals, solidarity actors, refugees and migrants eat together, and hold cultural events that share aspects of refugees and migrants' cultures with locals and others. They also provide access to reading materials and spaces for study, and free access to the internet.

Although solidarity initiatives involve limited numbers of people, the significance of the social aspects of support that they contribute to the wider

civil society response, including the friendships that have developed in these spaces, should not be underestimated. A number of refugees have returned, or intend to return, to Thessaloniki, citing better possibilities for social aspects of support in the city. One participant expressed his intentions to return to Thessaloniki once he receives refugee status, citing the support of local groups and friends he had made in the city, and the comparison with news he had received from friends in Germany, who had reported feeling isolated from the local community, and where there were perceived to be limited social opportunities for self-support.

Another interviewee, a Syrian who had received refugee status in Germany after travelling there in 2015, when the borders were still open, had since returned to Thessaloniki (albeit not permanently as yet). Discussing how he felt arriving in Germany in 2015, he said 'it felt like a victory at the time, but it was a fake victory. My life in Germany is not full. I want my days to feel full'. His return to Thessaloniki represents the opportunities he perceives in the city beyond basic survival, in spite of the fact that he was accumulating significant debt in order to be there. This interviewee spent his time engaging with refugees, locals and international volunteers – including through the city's solidarity initiatives – doing what he could to support other refugees in the city, and acting as a 'fixer' for a variety of actors seeking access to refugee populations, such as a Syrian family living in an apartment in the city, or people in nearby camps (where he still has friends waiting for their resettlement applications to be processed).

The approaches taken by the city's solidarity initiatives have resulted in qualitatively different forms and experiences of support and self-support to those resulting from the humanitarian response to date. For example, a number of interviewees reflected that the city's local groups, especially its solidarity initiatives, are much more inclined to listen to refugees than humanitarian organisations, and to adapt their actions accordingly. For example, Alkyone,[70] a day centre in Thessaloniki that developed from Oikopolis' refugee response, responded to participant's requests for washing machines and dryers as something required to better support themselves; something that no other actors in the city had thought to provide, or responded to requests for. In contrast, interviewees expressed their frustration with humanitarian NGO responses. One interviewee who had recently received refugee status in Greece, reflecting on his experience in Thessaloniki, stated: 'NGOs don't know how to listen'. Another, an interviewee from a local NGO, stated 'INGOs have been deciding what people need and how they need it'.

An interviewee working for an international agency stated: 'Our communication with refugee communities is horrible'. During the research period, there was much talk of 'assessment fatigue' among the refugee population in the city, but, as pointed out by the interviewee, 'there would not be fatigue if people felt this information was used to inform the approach

being taken, to improve their position – then they would likely be happy to keep providing information to humanitarian organisations'. The fatigue, it was suggested, came from the extractive nature of the information collection and use – the feeling among interviewees that their time was being wasted, since it would not change the approach taken by the response – and the lack of coordination between humanitarian actors often asking the same questions of the same people.

The abilities of humanitarian NGOs to work iteratively and to involve intended beneficiaries as meaningful participants, including to influence local programming and policy, have long been questioned.[71] In the urban context, however, with such a variety of different actors present and responding in different ways, according to different logics, the problems actors from the humanitarian sector face in delivering appropriate programming – their difficulty in adapting plans based on feedback – is perhaps starker than in other contexts, where there might be less 'competition' or choice. This contrast in approaches to communication and planning is significant for the potential participation of refugees in the humanitarian response's planning for self-reliance – with current approaches implying that refugee input into the development of plans for their self-reliance will be limited. Meanwhile, the city's solidarity initiatives have been actively engaging on a day-to-day basis, facilitating opportunities for refugees to undertake processes of self-support.

Unlike humanitarian actors in Greece, the city's solidarity initiatives do not generally distinguish between refugees (or, more specifically, those defined by humanitarian agencies as 'persons of concern') and migrants, or between these groups and locals in need of support.[72] One informant explained that this was especially significant as 'it responds to humanitarian principles, which the relocation scheme in particular doesn't respect' (since it offers assistance based predominantly on nationality[73] rather than needs).[74] The politicised nature of support, which leads to this segregation between those classified as 'persons of concern' and others, makes little sense to local solidarity initiatives. These groups generally plan their activities for all those requiring support – those affected by conflict, poverty, discrimination and repression, both locals and non-Greeks – as well as those who fit the definition of a 'person of concern', as used by humanitarian actors in the context. As one solidarity initiative states, the aim is 'organisation of solidarity and material support towards all oppressed and excluded social groups'.[75] Under this approach, solidarity is understood not just as the practice of supporting people materially ('assistance and protection'), but also as a challenge to the approaches and wider context that prevent people from supporting themselves. Instead of treating the situation of refugees in the city as a 'crisis' – language which might downplay many of the political and economic choices that have been made at a number of levels to create or sustain this situation – the solidarity approach focuses on identifying and denouncing the politics of these causes.

Where the state-led response (which set the parameters for the humanitarian response) has predominantly placed refugees outside of view and away from cities, the response by local solidarity initiatives has aimed to place and include refugees at 'the centre of social life, where they can be accepted and included within society'.[76] In actively encouraging this integration, these spaces provide a platform for people to engage with others who may be, in different ways, economically, socially or politically marginalised[77] – other refugees and migrants, as well as locals. As such, their approach supports the potential for narratives and practices of 'shared struggle' to emerge, in which participants are more likely to see their interests as aligned rather than antithetical (as can often be the case between 'host' and refugee populations). In this regard, solidarity, understood as 'a transformative process which works through the negotiation and re-negotiation of forms of political identification',[78] provides a potentially effective approach for organisations in 'recipient' countries seeking to alter public opinion on refugee policy and presence.

UNHCR's urban strategy – to house people in hotels and apartments – has resulted in dispersing refugees under its care, including removing people and families from the wider refugee community and existing networks.[79] Although this is to be expected in an urban area, the cutting of social ties and the isolation that can result from it can have implications for refugees' mental health, as well as for their social capital. Isolation, boredom and sense of limbo – and its potential psychological and social impacts – have been highlighted in a number of urban assessments,[80] and humanitarian agencies are aware of the need for more social activities and spaces. A number of interviewees spoke of an increasing interest in social or community centres among INGOs in Thessaloniki. However, the majority of interviewees from international agencies either didn't know about or didn't appear to value the solidarity initiatives. For example, an interviewee from UNHCR stated that no informal spaces existed in the city for refugees to meet. Such plans therefore may reproduce what is already being supported by the city, and even divert people from the solidarity initiatives, potentially undermining what one local interviewee saw as the 'big opportunity to bring refugees into semi-formal political groups', drawing on the city's 'strong history of organising at the local level'.

At their best then, the city's solidarity initiatives have the potential to support refugee voice, helping to challenge the stereotypical image of refugees as passive or dependent recipients;[81] to provide opportunities for participation and input into planning; to help participants develop a sense of contribution and value to their time spent in the city; to support horizontal relationships and friendships, including between locals and refugees; and to help to strengthen a sense of social solidarity in the city.

Limitations of the City's Solidarity Initiatives

Humanitarian actors have played an enabling role in the environment in which the solidarity initiatives have been operating. The humanitarian apparatus has stimulated the local economy (directly and indirectly), housing and supporting many refugees, and providing jobs for both 'skilled' and 'unskilled' local workers (a factor likely to influence local responses to refugees) as well as for some refugees.[82] Local responses would not have had the capacity to house the number of refugees in the city and in nearby camps, and would likely only have been able to offer material support to a small portion. Solidarity initiatives operate on a relatively small scale – many refugees don't use them at all or don't use them to their full extent; they are, as one participant suggested 'as helpful as people want them to be'.

Engagement from refugee and migrant participants can also often be limited and superficial, especially given the intention of many to leave the city in the short to medium term. However, many in the EU Relocation Programme have been in Northern Greece much longer than expected.[83] The closure and strict surveillance of the borders, and the detention and at times inhumane treatment of refugees and migrants on the route to Western Europe, have contributed to refugees and migrants staying longer in the city than they may initially have intended – or returning to it.

Analysis of the impact of Thessaloniki's solidarity initiatives on the forms of political and economic organisation that they are set up to challenge goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, in response to arguments that have been made about horizontal movements more broadly – that they 'express an authentic rage that remains unable to transform itself into even a minimal positive programme for socio-political change'[84] – research for this study suggests that the approach taken by the city's solidarity initiatives can provide qualitatively different day-to-day experiences and opportunities for those engaged in them.

Self-Reliance and Local Markets

Markets form a key dimension of the urban context. As both physical spaces and sites of exchange, negotiation and power relations between different actors and social groups, they can determine the ability of refugees to meet needs and pursue aspirations.[85] As such, markets form key sites for practices of self-support or self-reliance in the city, as refugees negotiate access to resources, networks and livelihood opportunities, shaping markets both through their presence and through the presence of diverse responses to them.

Each of the city's solidarity initiatives engages in different ways, and to different extents, in local markets – but in every case with explicit social or political intent. One initiative runs a cooperative, selling food and other produce from local businesses and initiatives, including a self-organising business (Vio.me, a factory run by a group of its workers after owners attempted to close the factory during the financial crisis). Other initiatives receive donations from local businesses, for example food for distribution at Steki consists mostly of items that have not sold at a local chain. Solidarity initiatives also support practices of self-support through local markets, with one self-organising group retrieving still edible food thrown away every evening at the city's central food market to make up the majority of their nightly meal, which they cook and eat together.

One solidarity initiative makes iced tea out of 'recycled food' to sell in local markets, as well as selling food and drink at local events or 'bazaars' that solidarity groups organise both to generate income and to attempt to facilitate social and cultural exchange between refugees, migrants and locals. A number of the larger solidarity initiatives receive income from the bars they run in their social spaces, donations from locals and internationals who support their values and approaches, and from larger events they organise – such as the city's annual Antiracist Festival. As such, local markets are used as a vehicle not only to raise funds to support the approaches taken by the solidarity initiatives, but also explicitly to support the facilitation of social and cultural exchange between new arrivals and locals, as a step towards integration in the city.

These local market activities reflect the engagement with the local economy, and its specific social intent, that has taken place in the context of social movements in the city over recent years. Solidarity initiatives challenge the assumptions[86] of an economic approach that doesn't work for many in the city, especially not for those who already face political or social marginalisation. In contrast, current planning for self-reliance by humanitarian actors in the city does not appear to question – and continues to operate under – the assumption that supporting refugee self-reliance in Thessaloniki is a case of integrating refugees into the existing political economy.

Current plans for facilitating refugee access to the labour market in Thessaloniki – as a key part of plans for supporting the self-reliance of those who plan to remain in the city – are being led at the local level by the Municipality of Thessaloniki and UNHCR. These plans centre on the establishment of a hub for entrepreneurial initiatives and business ideas, where people can also register skills and identify areas for training. Planning was still underway at the time of research and the level of non-market intervention that would accompany the hub was unclear. Important questions therefore remain regarding the response to the economic environment in which the hub would be developed – crucial given that market-based approaches 'cannot alone remove the more extreme inequalities of asset ownership or political empowerment'.[87]

Substantial evidence exists for the ways in which market-based approaches without sufficient non-market interventions and an adequate institutional environment can create or exacerbate inequalities,[88] including by fostering social exclusion and creating conditions for adverse incorporation[89] – not least because those with the existing capital to engage are the most likely to benefit.[90]

Efforts to enable refugee self-reliance in Thessaloniki take place in a context in which practices of self-support have been increasingly employed by locals during the economic crisis, with its resultant cuts to state services and support (such as pensions), high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and evictions for those no longer able to pay mortgages or rent. As such, the Greek crisis produced an increased number of locals who were not self-reliant by UNHCR's definition. Given the economic consequences of the Greek crisis, including on livelihood opportunities, a focus on facilitating self-reliance through entrepreneurship appears to be a distraction from broader, structural changes that need to be made in the economy in order for refugees, as well as a significant number of locals, to become self-reliant.[91]

A focus on the entrepreneurial abilities of individuals as a key element of self-reliance programming is indicative of a broader trend towards the transferral of responsibility for the well-being of citizens from the state to the individual that has taken place over recent decades.[92] This has been reflected in a number of refugee experiences in Thessaloniki, with one local NGO worker outlining how over the years she has seen refugees reduced to activities for survival in the absence of adequate state support. These practices of survival, she noted, 'usually cut their dreams', such as gaining a better education, leaving much of their productive and creative potential unrealised.

It is here that the contrast between the approach of humanitarian agencies and solidarity initiatives is most stark. While the humanitarian response has contributed to the individualisation of responsibility through its emphasis on self-reliance and entrepreneurship, solidarity initiatives have promoted the 'active participation of citizens in political society'.[93]

Humanitarianising Solidarity

The discrete, measurable interventions of humanitarian agencies aimed at promoting self-reliance reflect an increasingly technical approach to humanitarian action that has developed over the last 25 years, as humanitarian agencies and donors have placed growing emphasis on effectiveness and deliverable projects.[94] One interviewee working for an international humanitarian organisation criticised humanitarian NGOs for not being vocal enough about the situation of refugees and migrants in Northern Greece

– accusing them of being overly concerned with protecting their space for 'small projects'. The interviewee claimed that this prioritisation of projects above all else meant there was no vision or strategy for challenging the 'fundamentals of the situation' from the international response. Beyond the ideological preference of humanitarian agencies, funding plays a part in this: A single donor – the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) – is providing the vast majority (over 85%[95]) of funding for the response, with the EU also dictating policy (in a context in which Greece holds a weak negotiating position in Brussels following the economic crisis). This funding situation means that 'NGOs have requested ECHO funding in order to conduct advocacy against EU policies'.[96] For local solidarity initiatives, meanwhile, voicing objections to the political causes of the plight of refugees in Thessaloniki, as well as the political motivations shaping the international response, has been a priority. In contrast, humanitarian actors have advocated safe and legal resettlement, but they have generally avoided thornier issues related to the politics and economics of resettlement. The solidarity initiatives have regularly challenged humanitarian actors to think structurally about refuge in Greece, and indeed across Europe.

Meanwhile, already in early 2017,[97] the presence of humanitarian organisations was having an impact on local responses and practices of self-support. A local interviewee stated that the increase in humanitarian organisations' involvement in the city has led to a significant increase in employment opportunities for skilled professionals. These have included new opportunities for lawyers, many of whom had been doing a significant amount of pro-bono work in solidarity with refugees and migrants. The interviewee noted that much less pro-bono work and volunteering was being done at the time of research, in part because much of this was now being covered by NGOs. The interviewee also noted that social workers and educators who had been volunteering in the local response were drawn into the humanitarian response, in part by better wages.

The trend towards international humanitarian agencies working with (or through) implementing partners – local NGOs or local humanitarian workers – and, subsequently, the increased distance between donors, humanitarian strategies and programme implementation, have meant that those most aware of realities on the ground are less likely to be listened to or to have influence. One informant in Thessaloniki suggested that, as a result, local initiatives were either being turned into NGOs or ignored. This points towards the privatisation of solidarity and its gradual subsumption under the technocratic imperatives of the humanitarian system – 'quantitative goals, laws of efficiency and cost effectiveness'.[98]

Conclusion

Given its location, Thessaloniki will likely continue to receive significant numbers of refugees in the coming years, and therefore questions about how best to receive and accommodate these arrivals will remain relevant.[99] The approaches taken by Thessaloniki's solidarity initiatives provide insight into structures that can facilitate types of support that have not been available from the various humanitarian interventions in the city to date. As humanitarian agencies scale up their support for refugees, they are compelled to reflect on how they might provide better opportunities for the meaningful participation of refugees in programme planning. The significance of inclusive and accessible social spaces and leisure activities, including those where refugees can develop and share skills (regardless of intention to leave or remain in the city), should also be kept in mind. And, given the emphasis placed on livelihoods in self-reliance programming, humanitarian agencies should give greater analytical focus to questions of political economy in their programme planning, seeking to engage with local markets, through their investments and their very presence, in ways that directly attend to the demands of refugees.[100]

The case of Thessaloniki also brings to the fore questions regarding appropriate humanitarian response in a context with a very active civil society, and how best to engage with different local actors, guarding against undermining practices of solidarity. Greater investment by humanitarian agencies in understanding context, including through the adoption of qualitative approaches drawing on anthropological, sociological and urban-specific methods, could also support more appropriate policies of engagement and disengagement.

APPENDIX

A Note on Methodology

This study used semi-structured and unstructured interviews across a range of actors in the context: refugees and migrants – both those receiving support from humanitarian NGOs and UNHCR, and those without support; locals, including from a variety of civil society and solidarity actors; actors across a variety of functions at UNHCR, INGOs and Greek NGOs; as well as at the Municipality of Thessaloniki. Interviews were conducted in English, unless interviewees didn't speak English, in which case local translators – in many cases, connected to the solidarity initiatives – were used. Given the focus of the research on solidarity initiatives in the city, a site-based approach was employed to sample the majority of refugee and local interviewees. Although awareness of gender and age were key considerations in participant sampling, given the demographics of those engaging in the solidarity initiatives during the time of research, findings are more representative of male refugee experiences. It was not possible to verify interviewees' eligibility for refugee status beyond their stated nationality, and as such, the term 'refugee' is not used in a strict legal sense. It is also used to refer to those in the process of seeking asylum who had yet to receive refugee status. Participant observation was also carried out where appropriate.

ENDNOTES

77. This paper benefited greatly from review and comments by Jonathan Darling, Fotini Rantsiou and Evan Easton-Calabria.

78. United Nations News Centre. *UN Daily News*, 7th August, 2015. http://www.un.org/News/dh/pdf/english/2015/07082015.pdf

79. UNHCR press release, 7th August, 2015. http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2015/8/55c48ea69/unhcr-warns-deepening-refugee-crisis-greece-calls-urgent-bold-action.html

80. Approximately 8% of new arrivals (4% of all Syrians) applied for asylum in Greece between January-June 2015, implying a highly transient refugee and migrant population. UNHCR. *Greece Operational Update 21 July-21 August 2015.* http://www.unhcr.gr/fileadmin/Greece/Extras/Operation/Greece_Operational_Update___1.pdf

81. As well as the construction of fences and the heightening of other border control measures along other countries' borders, including Hungary and Austria.

82. Save the Children Greece Refugee Crisis Situation Report #43 25th May 2016 – statistics taken from UNHCR operations portal in May 2016. http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83

83. Although most camps are significantly detached from the city, some staying in camps near Thessaloniki also come into the city and use its services.

84. This move was funded predominantly by the European Commission's Department of Migration and Home Affairs. An informant stated that delays it faced were in part due to poor coordination between actors, and to the difficulties INGOs faced in finding apartments in the city, 'usually because of lack of knowledge of the city'.

85. UNHCR's Thessaloniki office went from approximately 12 to 110 staff.

86. UNHCR. 'Stronger cooperation crucial to ensure sustainable refugee response in Greece'. 27th March, 2017. http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/3/58d8f15a4/stronger-cooperation-crucial-ensure-sustainable-refugee-response-greece.html

87. UNHCR. 'UNHCR Recommendations for Greece in 2017'. 2017. http://www.unhcr.org/58d8e8e64

88. The main international organisations programming in Thessaloniki at the time of research were Medecins du Monde, Save the Children, and Terre des Hommes, although a number of others were also considering how best to engage. The main national NGOs programming were ARSIS, PRAKSIS, and Solidarity Now. REACT – Refugee Assistance Collaboration in Thessaloniki – a coalition of actors led by the municipality and funded by UNHCR and the European Commission also includes The Hellenic League for Human Rights, The Greek Council for Refugees, the YMCA Thessaloniki, and other neighbouring municipalities.

89. Lolos, Yannis. 'Via Egnatia After Egnatius: Imperial Policy and Inter-Regional Contacts'. *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22(2), 2007: 273-293.

90. Rossos, Andrew. *Macedonia and the Macedonians: A History.* Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2013, 2.

91. Hatziprokopiou, Panos Arion. *Globalisation, Migration and Socio-Economic Change in Contemporary Greece: Processes of Social Incorporation of Balkan Immigrants in Thessaloniki*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 6.

92. Pelagidis, Eustathios. 'Thessaloniki as a Crossroad and Shelter of Refugees (1912-2012)'. *Papyri Scientific Journal* 4, 2015.

93. Ibid, 299.

94. Museum of Macedonian Struggle, Thessaloniki. http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/ Museums/History_And_War/Mma_Thessalonikhs.html (accessed 13th June, 2017).

95. Ibid

96. One interviewee involved in the local response asserted 'we are a city of refugees'.

97. It should be noted that refugees arriving in Greece following the forced population exchange with Turkey increased the ethnic and religious homogeneity of the city.

98. Save the Children Greece's rapid assessment for urban response in Thessaloniki and Athens, carried out in early 2017 (24th January to 14th February), defined 'urban' according to population density, total population, and the nature of livelihoods, with no attention to political and socio-economic characteristics.

99. For example, fears by concerned parents over the vaccination status of refugee children attending local schools.

100. This experience contrasts with statements from different actors in the humanitarian response regarding the difficulties faced in finding accommodation.

101. Different actors held contrasting opinions on the role of the church in support of refugees – especially around its role in the eviction of a squat housing refugees, migrants and solidarity actors in an abandoned orphanage (Oreokastro) owned by the church. Further research is required on the role of religious institutions (especially the church) in refugee support in the city.

102. Interviewees from a local NGO stated that although the tiered system for accessing the job market (in which recognised refugees were third tier and asylum seekers were fourth tier) had been abolished in April 2016, theoretically placing refugees and asylum seekers in an improved position for legally accessing employment, in practice there was 'no work for refugees and asylum seekers', who continued to engage in the same practices as they did before legal options for work were expanded.

103. Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. 'Civil Society in Greece in the Wake of the Economic Crisis'. *Report for Konrad Adenauer Stiftung und ELIAMEP*, 2014.

104. Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. and Dimitris Bourikos. 'Economic Crisis, Social Solidarity and the Voluntary Sector in Greece'. *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance* 2(2), 2014: 33-53.

105. Broadly, the representation of a group of people by elected officials.

106. Horizontalism as 'the negation of hierarchies, representation and closed ideologies'. Kioupkiolis, Alexandros and Giorgos Katsambekis. Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today: The Biopolitics of the Multitude Versus the Hegemony of the People. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, 3.

107. Kokkinidis, George. 'Spaces of Possibilities: Workers' Self-Management in Greece'. *Organization* 22(6), 2015: 847-871.

108. Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis. *Radical democracy*. 1.

109. Micropolis and the Social Solidarity Clinic.

110. Karyotis, Theodoros. 'Criminalizing Solidarity: Syriza's War on the Movements'. *Roar*, 31st July, 2016.

111. Interviewee working in the local government response. For example, student demonstrations and democratic demands started in Thessaloniki in the 1960s, before spreading to Athens.

112. For example, the tobacco workers' strike around May Day, 1936, which led to demonstrations of approximately 200,000 people.

113. The politicisation of Greek youth has varied over recent decades, but has increased since the 2010 economic crisis.

114. Sitrin, Marina, and Dario Azzellini, *They can't represent us! Reinventing democracy from Greece to Occupy*, Verso Books, 2014.

115. Social Clinic of Solidarity, accessed 10th June, 2017. http://www.kiathess.gr/en/

116. Social Centre/Immigrants Place, accessed 5th May, 2017. http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/

117. Which means 'hang out' in Greek.

118. Social Centre/Immigrants Place, accessed 5th May, 2017. http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/english/

119. 'The deep economic recession which Greece has experienced since 2009 has led to an increase in the levels of housing exclusion in the country. According to Klimaka's figures [a Greek NGO], the number of homeless amounts to around 17,000–20,000 people, a rise of 20-25% compared with two years ago [2009]'. Fondeville, Nicole and Terry Ward, European Commission Research Note 8/2011, 'Homelessness during the crisis', November 2011, 13.

120. Social Centre/Immigrants Place website, accessed 5th May, 2017. http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/english/

121. Inactive during the research period.

122. Micropolis Social Space for Freedom website, accessed 8th May, 2017. http://micropolis-socialspace-en.blogspot.co.uk/

123. Economides, Spyros and Vassilis Monastiriotis (ed.). *The Return of Street Politics? Essays on the December Riots in Greece*. London: The Hellenic Observatory, LSE, 2009.

124. Micropolis Social Space for Freedom website, accessed 8th May, 2017. http://micropolis-socialspace-en.blogspot.co.uk/

125. Oikopolis website, accessed 8th May, 2017. http://oiko-polis.gr/

126. 'Vulnerable persons include in particular: minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation'. European Asylum Support Office, accessed 1st July, 2017. https://www.easo.europa.eu/questions-and-answers-relocation

127. Details on accommodation provided by UNHCR can be found here: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/56403

128. Details on UNHCR managed cash programming can be found here: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/53754

129. This was only in the planning stage during the research period, however, and those involved in the implementation cited likely bureaucratic barriers to implementation: accreditation would be carried out by a separate government body, not the municipality.

130. For example, different hospitals in the city take turns throughout the week in functioning as the emergency hospital for that day.

131. Although interviewees from the various international humanitarian and local government responses were aware of a desire for continued training and vocational practices (and these were discussed in relation to self-reliance), little was being done or planned beyond child education in these areas during the research period. For example, no data had been collected on the existing skills and education profiles of the refugee population under UNHCR and NGO programming. An interviewee from a local NGO stated that in her experience plans for training and education are a central element of support. She suggested that future plans for self-reliance should focus on both typical and non-typical education – rather than being

solely aimed at the labour market, such programmes could also be understood as a valuable tool in and of themselves, to get people 'out of the house and socialising'.

132. UNHCR, Promoting Livelihoods and Self-Reliance, Operational Guidance and Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, 2011, 15.

133. The European Asylum Support Office states that a person is eligible for relocation to a European state if they are 'in clear need of international protection and a national or a stateless resident of certain countries. The eligible countries as of 1st July 2017 are now Eritrea, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen or a stateless person previously residing in one of these countries'. Eligible countries are determined on the basis of an average recognition rate equal to or higher than 75% on the basis of EUROSTAT data for the previous quarter. For the first quarter of 2017, Iraqis received a 60% recognition rate and Afghans a 47% recognition rate on average: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report#Decisions_on_asylum_applications; http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_in_the_EU-28_by_outcome,_selected_citizenships,_1st_quarter_2017_V2.PNG. Other criteria includes having arrived in Greece after 24th March, 2015, and applying for international protection first in Greece. European Asylum Support Office, accessed 1st July, 2017. https://www.easo.europa.eu/questions-and-answers-relocation

134. This is limited to legal services and limited instances of funding some local organisations with wider focuses, such as indirect support from UNHCR through funding of projects e.g. ARSIS on street work.

135. Changes have also taken place in the funding environment for local NGOs based on the nationalities donors are willing to support. Interviewees working for a local NGO stated that there is now little donor interest in funding programming for non-Syrians, the majority of their work prior to 2015. Although this organisation still operates an 'open door policy' they are unable to meet required costs, for example to pay legal fees, for many nationalities.

136. Asylum seekers until they receive refugee status.

137. ARSIS is currently conducting UNHCR funded research on street work undertaken by refugees and migrants, looking at the activities and incentives of both those in official shelters who have their 'basic needs' met, and those outside of shelters.

138. Types of squats vary from activist-organised and run, to one or two people seeking shelter in an abandoned building.

139. Informants suggested this has been true, for example, of Afghans, Palestinians, Syrians and Nigerians towards their own nationalities. This was particularly clear in research conducted for the study in the groupings within solidarity initiatives, where groups of the same nationalities or region tended to spend time together – although certainly not exclusively. Given that the research discovered minimal mixing of nationalities outside of solidarity initiatives, it suggests that the initiatives provide an environment to facilitate this exchange.

140. UNHCR. *Operational Portal – Refugee Situations, Mediterranean Situation.* http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179

141. Social Centre/Immigrants Place website, accessed 5th May, 2017. http://socialcenter.espivblogs.net/english/

142. The extent to which 'participation' in assemblies led to equal opportunities and outcomes for participation was beyond the scope of this study, but further research in this area would be welcomed. Research has been undertaken on gender in horizontal decision-making in other contexts, which might provide useful references. See Sobering, Katherine. 'Producing and Reducing Gender Inequality in a Worker-Recovered Cooperative'. The Sociological Quarterly 57(1), 2016: 129-151.

143. Kabeer, Naila, Simeen Mahmud and Sakiba Tasneem. 'Does Paid Work Provide a Pathway to Women's Empowerment? Empirical findings from Bangladesh'. *IDS Working Paper* 375, 2011.

144. Friese, Heidrun. 'The Limits of Hospitality: Political Philosophy, Undocumented Migration and the Local Arena', *European Journal of Social Theory* 13(3), 2010: 323-341.

145. Skype was the main channel through which people outside of 'formal sites', such as those in cities like Thessaloniki, were going through the initial stages of the asylum application process. http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/W001-8-Where-can-you-Pre-Register.pdf

146. Funded internationally and run under a different structure to the solidarity initiatives.

147. See, for example, The Listening Project, *The Listening Project and Development Effectiveness*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2011; or Fiori, Juliano, Fernando Espada, Jessica Field and Sophie Dicker. *The Echo Chamber: Results, Management, and the Humanitarian Effectiveness Agenda*. London: Humanitarian Affairs Team & Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, 2016.

148. This view was also expressed by a Syrian interviewee (involved in the solidarity initiatives) who stated that refugees and migrants shouldn't be discriminated between.

149. And, to a lesser extent, a vulnerability criteria.

150. 'Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions'. OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles. https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf

151. Press release: The debt of the ex-refugee shelter in Thessaloniki, accessed 9th May 2017. http://keepstekipluggedin.com/2017/02/10/hello-world/

152. Karyotis. 'Criminalizing solidarity'.

153. A number of the spaces make clear the intersectional nature of their solidarity, acknowledging a variety of factors that may combine impede agency, including against racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

154. Featherstone, David. *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*. London: Zed Books, 2012, 37.

155. An interviewee cited gendered impacts of this separation anecdotally: men were more likely to have mobiles and therefore able to stay in touch with others in the city.

156. Deprez, Simon and Eléonore Labattut. *Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees. Thessaloniki, Greece*. Brussels: NRC, 2016. https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/study-on-adequate-urban-housing-for-refugees-in-thessaloniki/

Also UNHCR's Urban Assessment, carried out in early 2017. Unpublished.

157. On the subject of narratives of dependency of urban refugees within UNHCR, including in relation to cash programming, see Jeff Crisp and Mary Beth Morand on UNHCR urban refugee policy formation: Crisp, Jeff and Mary Beth Morand. *Better Late Than Never? The Evolution and Implementation of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy*. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. May, 2015.

https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/news/better-late-than-never-the-evolution-and-implementation-of-unhcrs-urban-refugee-policy-dr-jeff-crisp-and-marybeth-morand

158. A number of refugees have been employed by local and international NGOs, predominantly as translators or cultural mediators.

159. As of 20 March 2017, 10,012 of the 66,400 original target had been relocated from Greece to other EU Member States. UNHCR website, last accessed 30th April 2017. http://www.unhcr.org/58d8e8e64

160. Zizek, Slavoj. 'Occupy Wall Street: What is to be Done Next?' *The Guardian*, 24th April, 2012.

161. Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London and Humanitarian Affairs Team, Save the Children UK, 'A framework for the analysis of refugee self-reliance and humanitarian action in urban markets', 2; 2017.

162. Assumptions including 'that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximisation of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterised by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade'. Harvey, David. 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610(1), 2007: 21-44.

163. Department for International Development. *Making Markets Work Better for The Poor – A Framework Paper*. London: DfID, 2000, 5.

164. For example, see Hall, Jeremy, Stelvia Matos, Lorn Sheehan and Bruno Silvestre. 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Base of the Pyramid: A Recipe for Inclusive Growth or Social Exclusion?' *Journal of Management Studies* 49(4), 2012: 785-812; Kaplinsky, Raphael. 'Globalisation and Unequalisation: What Can Be Learned from Value Chain Analysis?' *Journal of Development Studies* 37(2), 2000: 117-146; Gereffi, Gary and Joonkoo Lee. 'Economic and Social Upgrading in Global Value Chains and Industrial Clusters: Why Governance Matters'. *Journal of Business Ethics* 133(1), 2016: 25-38.

165. Hickey, Sam and Andries Du Toit. 'Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion, and Chronic Poverty'. In *Chronic Poverty*, edited by Andrew Shepherd and Julia Brunt, 134-159. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

166. Hall et al. 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation'.

167. Livelihood opportunities are likely to be determined by 'the general productivity of the economy at large, which determines the going rate for employment of the skills utilised'. Kaplinsky, Raphael and Mike Morris. *A Handbook for Value Chain Research*. Ottawa: IDRC, 2001, 89.

168. See Reid, Julian. 'The Disastrous and Politically Debased Subject of Resilience'. *Development Dialogue* 58, 2012, 69.

169. Duffield, Mark. 'Global Civil War: The Non-Insured, International Containment and Post-Interventionary Society'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21(2), 2008, 149.

170. Fiori et al. *The Echo Chamber*. 59

171. Of the total funding made available for Greece in 2017, of US \$306,370,438, ECHO contributes US \$262,555,642 (in addition, the European Commission contributes \$1,415,643). Financial tracking service, UN OCHA, last accessed 25th July, 2017. https://fts.unocha.org/countries/86/donors/2017

172. Rantsiou, Fotini. 'Humanitarian Response in Greece: A System Not Fit for Purpose', 23rd December, 2016. Accessed 13th June, 2017. https://fotinirantsiou.com/2016/12/23/humanitarian-response-in-greece-a-system-not-fit-for-purpose-parts-of-this-piece-were-edited-and-published-in-irinnews-org-and-ekathimerini-gr/

173. Before many self-reliance programmes in the city had fully got underway.

174. Karyotis. 'Criminalizing solidarity'.

175. EU funding currently runs until 2020 for some aspects of response.

176. Deprez and Labattut outline areas such as investment in building regeneration, homelessness, and supporting resource-poor local authorities, but also point out that funding doesn't allow for that. Deprez and Labattut. 'Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees'.

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Overview: Refugee self-reliance in urban markets – Halba, Delhi, and Thessaloniki

Juliano Fiori, Andrea Rigon, Estella Carpi, Sophie Dicker, Jessica Field, Yamini Mookherjee, Anubhav Dutt Tiwari, Fernando Espada, Camillo Boano, and Cassidy Johnson

Summary

This research project has addressed the subject of refugee self-reliance in cities by analysing humanitarian programming and refugees' own self-support practices in three cities: Halba (Lebanon), Delhi (India), and Thessaloniki (Greece). Economic self-reliance is typically framed as a means to, or a reflection of, integration, or at least assimilation. It is often framed as a duty of the refugee. However, self-reliance becomes an unachievable goal when access to the formal labour market is restricted by political and legal barriers that humanitarian actors can do little to break down. Therefore, humanitarian livelihoods interventions focused on self-reliance end up providing a form of distraction through leisure activities, or, at best, supporting refugees' own coping strategies. Meanwhile, the conception of self-reliance in primarily economic terms has often allowed for less attention to be given to important and interrelated social and political factors that determine refugee experiences.

From saving lives to self-reliance

Over the last 30 years, the language, focus and ambition of humanitarian organisations has shifted. In the early 1990s, in the context of an emboldened liberal interventionism, human security became the stated goal for a 'new humanitarianism' that forthrightly rejected the absolute sovereignty of states and imagined a role for itself, beyond saving lives, in the promotion of the sovereignty of individuals. In the new millennium, as a changing conception of crisis has privileged the management of vulnerabilities, resilience – celebrated as a means of connecting relief and development – has become a guiding objective for the humanitarian sector. On the one hand, this evolution in humanitarian discourse has allowed for an expansion of the sphere of humanitarian activity; on the other, it has reflected a steady reduction in the ambition of humanitarian organisations as to what they can practically do.

Increased emphasis on self-reliance by humanitarian organisations now seems to mark a new stage in this paradoxical trajectory, at least conceptually. The concept of self-reliance has informed humanitarian responses to 'protracted refugee situations' for more than a decade. But the programmatic approach associated with self-reliance has taken shape more recently, as humanitarian organisations, facing donor demands for greater 'efficiency', have responded to increased refugee flows into cities by prioritising market-based refugee livelihoods programmes.

The changing focus of humanitarian organisations – from meeting people's basic needs and maintaining their biological life, to improving their access to basic freedoms (human security), to strengthening their coping capacities in response to external 'shocks' (resilience), to supporting them so that they can independently 'meet essential needs... in a sustainable manner'[1] (self-reliance) – reflects a generalised transfer of responsibility for personal well-being, from society and the state, to the individual, as an agent in a rational marketplace. Humanitarians withdraw from 'the field', and 'the market' becomes a primary (and expansive) site of activity. This concludes the shift towards non-interventionary modes of humanitarian action, once justified as promoting staff security and efficiency, and now presented as the guarantee of 'local empowerment'. It also concludes the conversion of humanitarian organisations into willing enablers of inclusive and frictionless markets – champions of a pure, productive, and equitable capitalism.

As humanitarian organisations expand their urban operations, the city offers a testing ground for new market-based humanitarian technologies, but it also contributes to redefining the focus and limits (temporal, spatial, operational) of humanitarian action.

The end of the 'humanitarian marketplace'?

The attention to markets for standard goods and services perhaps signals a move away from the idea of the 'humanitarian marketplace' – a notional space, distinct and hermetic, in which humanitarian organisations engage in well-meaning, but not always effective, transactions with their intended beneficiaries, who, as clients, might hold them to account.[2] This alters the importance and meaning humanitarian organisations ascribe to local empowerment. To the extent that it was previously a concern (for more 'developmental' humanitarian organisations), local empowerment was desirable but incidental, and it was associated with participation, imagined as the exercise of agency by 'crisis-affected people' in the humanitarian marketplace. As the humanitarian marketplace disappears, participation becomes redundant, or at least difficult to operationalise. And local empowerment then becomes a principal objective of humanitarian action – self-reliance itself, as freedom from,

or a lack of, dependence. In this context, local empowerment goes from a concrete positivity – the attainment of something known and observable – to a negativity – a 'lack'.

This reconceptualisation of local empowerment has two important implications. The first is that the transfer of responsibility for personal well-being to the individual (part of a broader process of neoliberal development) comes to appear empowering, and the attention of humanitarian organisations is thus turned further away from the structural conditions (political, social, economic) that might have led to an individual becoming an intended beneficiary of humanitarian action and that might continue to shape this individual's everyday experiences. The second is that humanitarian organisations strip themselves of agency – they can only empower by withdrawing. Particularly since 'do no harm' principles were mainstreamed in the humanitarian sector, humanitarian organisations have intervened in conflicts and after disasters with caution that their aid should not foster dependence among its recipients. But once local empowerment becomes a primary objective, synonymous with self-reliance, they intervene to prevent dependence on their interventions – a strangely circular logic.[3]

We might therefore ask what material impact humanitarian organisations can have on the self-reliance of their intended beneficiaries through self-reliance programmes. The three studies carried out as part of this research project – in Delhi (India),[4] Halba (Lebanon),[5] and Thessaloniki (Greece)[6] – address this question with attention to refugees. And all three highlight the tension between the ambition to enable refugee self-reliance and the limits of humanitarian programmes.

Political and legal barriers

The main barriers to refugee autonomy in these cities are political and legal. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Additional Protocol set out conditions and protections to which refugees are entitled. However, many countries are yet to sign and ratify the convention. In some of these countries, refugee status is determined according to specific domestic legislation. In others, refugees are subject to laws that draw little or no distinction between immigrants in general and people escaping persecution in another country.

India has not signed the Refugee Convention, and has no domestic legal framework for refugee status recognition and protection. The Indian government offers *prima facie* recognition for Tibetan and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, and allows UNHCR to issue Refugee Certificates to people from a small number of countries, who are then able to apply for Long Term Visas (LTVs). Other forced migrants, who in countries party to the Refugee Convention might be recognised as refugees, are only granted permission to

remain on a case-by-case basis, if, like other foreigners, they can meet visa requirements (enrolment in education, marriage to a citizen, etc.). The practice of refugee status determination reflects and reinforces an exclusionary ethno-religious politics through which Muslim refugees in particular (such as the Rohingya, whose case is addressed in the Delhi study authored by Field, Tiwari, and Mookherjee) are cast as unwanted outsiders, even when, against the odds, they are legally recognised. When refugees are entitled to legal recognition, they are often unable to access services and excluded from the labour market on account of decisions by government officials, who demand illicit payment and reject valid documentation, or on account of arbitrary delays resulting in part from the absence of a clear legal framework for status recognition. Since the introduction of a new resident identification system, in 2009, refugees have increasingly been dependent on obtaining an identification card (referred to as an Aadhaar Card) to access services and obtain jobs. But there has been confusion among government officials as to the documents a refugee requires in order to obtain this card, and some employers have denied refugees jobs on the basis that they must have obtained the card illegally.

   Neither is Lebanon a signatory to the Refugee Convention. The administration of the Palestinian refugee population was the priority of Lebanese refugee policy for many decades. The Lebanese government established the Central Committee for Refugee Affairs in 1950, in response to the arrival of Palestinian refugees following the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. It established the Department of Palestinian Refugee Affairs in 1959. But since the outbreak of war in Syria, in 2011, Lebanese refugee policy has focused on Syrians, who have poured over the border – more than two million of them, subsequently constituting approximately a third of the total Lebanese population. In her study on Halba, Carpi points out that the Lebanese government has progressively tightened residency regulations for refugees since 2015. In January of that year, it established two categories for Syrian refugees seeking to renew their residency permits: those registered by UNHCR, and those not registered, who would require sponsorship by a Lebanese citizen or company. Then, in March, it requested that UNHCR stop registering refugees. According to Human Rights Watch, prohibitive paperwork and fees, as well as the inconsistent application of regulations, have effectively barred those in both categories from legally remaining, working, and educating their children in Lebanon.[7] As part of a bilateral agreement signed in 1993, Syrians have generally been allowed to work in Lebanon (and Lebanese in Syria). However, in 2015, in response to an expanding labour supply, a suppression of wages, and a rise in unemployment, the Lebanese government placed tighter restrictions on the jobs that Syrian refugees could do. Even with a work permit, they can now only work in agriculture, construction, cleaning, and gardening, they are generally limited to temporary contracts, and they are easily exploited by employers who take advantage of their precarious circumstances.

Greece is a signatory to the Refugee Convention and its Additional Protocols. However, as Dicker discusses in her study on Thessaloniki, access to services and accommodation for refugees who have recently arrived in Greece is dependent on status recognition and the acceptance of asylum claims, which may take a long time. UNHCR and INGOs have concentrated on supporting those refugees registered under the EU Relocation Programme. Refugees are only eligible for the EU Relocation Programme if they come from countries that, according to EUROSTAT data for the previous quarter, have an EU-wide asylum recognition rate of more than 75 per cent – of the refugees in Thessaloniki, it is almost exclusively Syrians who qualify.

Identity, not circumstance

Despite differences in refugee governance in India, Lebanon, and Greece, in all three cities studied in this project it is primarily the identities (national, ethnic, and even religious) of refugees, not their individual circumstances, that determine their legal status, and therefore their access to support services and their employment prospects. Once identity becomes a criterion in humanitarian triage, starker divisions can be drawn between outsider-foreigners and insider-citizens. In Thessaloniki, local 'solidarity initiatives', in many cases set up in response to the 2010 Greek debt crisis, have offered an alternative to 'ethnicised' aid, creating opportunities for refugees (recognised and *de facto*) and locals to access the same services, and support one another. In Halba, humanitarian organisations initially focused their activities on Syrian refugees, contributing to a sense of injustice among Lebanese nationals, who had previously lived under Syrian occupation. However, having made their livelihoods programmes accessible to Lebanese locals too, humanitarian organisations now contribute to a new 'ethnicisation of care', reifying the refugee-host dichotomy precisely through their attempts to mitigate it, partly because it is only the host community, whose legal status is unquestionable, that can genuinely use humanitarian programmes as a means to becoming more self-reliant. In this context, then, humanitarian programmes, even when carried out in the name of refugee self-reliance, appear to be part of a social cohesion regime that promotes the stability of the host community.

Self-reliance or self-occupation?

In emphasising the economic aspects of refugee self-reliance, humanitarian organisations have often prioritised the provision of professional training. However, with structural impediments to the integration of refugees into

the labour market, professional training can have only a very limited impact on refugees' economic self-reliance. Field, Tiwari, and Mookherjee relay the frustrations of refugees they interviewed in Delhi, who, despite being referred by UNHCR to NGO vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes, had been unable to get a job, partly because they did not have appropriate documentation. Of course, alongside their training programmes, humanitarian organisations can and do campaign for the rights of refugees to live and work in the countries that receive them (there should arguably be even greater investment in such campaigning).[8] But it is not only legal and political barriers that reduce the material impact of humanitarian organisations on refugee self-reliance. Even when informed by market analysis, livelihoods programmes cannot effect changes in the composition and accessibility of labour markets, or changes in labour demand. During her research, Carpi met Syrian and Lebanese women who were participating in a chocolate-making workshop in Halba, run by the EU and UNHCR, in partnership with INGOs. She followed up with both groups once the workshop had finished, and neither had been able to sell their chocolate even on a small scale.

Since, in the cases studied here, participation in livelihoods programmes made little difference to the economic circumstances of refugees, these programmes came to be seen by refugees as providing leisure activity. Unable to alter the material conditions of refugees, humanitarian programmes alter the person of the refugee – not just their professional profile. Livelihoods programmes work to develop the adaptability and resilience of the individual refugee. Humanitarian organisations then go from promoting self-reliance to promoting what looks more like 'self-occupation': on the one hand, they provide opportunities for refugees to stay busy, to 'occupy themselves'; on the other, they reconstruct the identities of refugees, who are drawn into a 'discursive occupation of the self'.[9]

Self-reliance in markets

There is a certain irony in refugees approaching livelihoods programmes as a source of leisure activity. With the emphasis on markets and employment, humanitarian organisations have arguably neglected the social aspects of refugee self-reliance. All three studies highlight the market focus of self-reliance as a programmatic approach. Humanitarian organisations go beyond professional training in their efforts to facilitate the engagement of refugees in local markets: they also seek to enable refugees to create their own businesses and consume. In Thessaloniki, UNHCR and the municipal government are planning the development of a business hub so that refugees can set up and participate in entrepreneurial initiatives. In Halba, Save the Children carries out unconditional cash transfers under the banner of food security, and the

International Rescue Committee offers cash for work, cash for products, and services for work, as part of its Economic Recovery and Development Programme. In Delhi, ACCESS, an Indian NGO, gives start-up grants to refugees wishing to set up small businesses.

Understandings of self-reliance

During interviews conducted by the authors of the three studies, refugees expressed different understandings of self-reliance. For refugees in Halba, self-reliance is generally seen not merely as an ability to engage independently with market forces but as an 'existential status', which cannot be reached while they wait for their legal and political status to be determined. In Thessaloniki, refugees stated that self-reliance depends on factors such as mobility and transportation, access to information and health services, cultural integration, and maintenance of traditional social ties. Yet these perspectives are rarely reflected in economicistic humanitarian narratives on self-reliance, which discursively construct every component of refugee autonomy according to a market logic.[10]

Social aspects of self-reliance

Social activity plays an important role in the well-being of refugees. Refugees interviewed in Thessaloniki expressed their satisfaction that local solidarity initiatives have provided spaces for them to gather and socialise; for example, to hold birthday parties, eat together, learn new languages, study together, and access the Internet. In Delhi, music has been a main pastime for Afghan Christian and Sikh refugees, particularly in their respective places of worship, and it has helped them maintain a sense of community. And work itself also has a social value for refugees, even when it has little market value: domestic work, for example. Field, Tiwari, and Mookherjee discuss the gendered character of humanitarian livelihoods programmes in Delhi, which, in focusing on preparation for formal employment, can contribute to a 'double burden' on female Rohingya refugees, who maintain their traditional responsibility for unpaid domestic work and childcare. Almost all of the Rohingya women interviewed as part of this study said that they missed their lives in Burma: the food, the landscape, etc. Displacement inevitably results in a weakening of refugees' social ties; resettlement programmes, which often break up communities and even families, can then compound these feelings of loss. Social activity that connects refugees to each other and to their customs is therefore particularly meaningful.

In situations in which humanitarian organisations do not have the expertise or legitimacy to contribute to such social activity, they might offer support to existing local initiatives that do. However, some local initiatives, such as those described in the study on Thessaloniki, will prefer to maintain their distance from international humanitarian organisations. Carpi and Dicker both discuss the broader impact of the presence of humanitarian organisations. While humanitarian organisations have provided jobs in Halba and Thessaloniki for refugees and locals with particular skills (translation, for example), they can also 'crowd out' local initiatives. By developing a greater understanding of the impact of their presence, humanitarian organisations can avoid reducing the space for activities that might complement their own objectives. Dicker shows that, while local groups in Thessaloniki challenge the causes of forced displacement and the politics of refugee exploitation in a way that humanitarian organisations often cannot or will not, these groups are at risk of being transformed according to the technocratic imperatives of the humanitarian system. By emphasising collective support, they continue to promote a sense of shared struggle that humanitarian organisations, focused on the individual, do not.

Between the individual and the collective

Focused on facilitating market access and stimulating market activity, humanitarian livelihoods programmes inevitably offer an individualised form of support. Yet refugees have multiple and mutual dependencies that the promotion of individual self-reliance can do little to address. Carpi's Halba study shows how, in some cases, refugee family members have become dependent on each other to collect enough money to survive. (Families, in turn, are often dependent on their communities). Meanwhile, Field, Tiwari, and Mookherjee reflect on the inter-generational dependencies of refugees in Delhi: refugee families in Delhi see their self-reliance as an objective to be achieved in the future through the education of children; but parents also face challenges that have an impact upon the education of their children. This points to the value of approaches to refugee support that are multi-scalar (for the individual, the household, the community) and multi-temporal (providing assistance that addresses immediate needs, as well as ensuring children can access good education – reducing the likelihood of inter-generational dependencies in the future).

Re-imagining self-reliance

The three studies point to many shortcomings in the conceptual and programmatic frameworks associated with refugee self-reliance. If it is to inform efforts to support the well-being of urban refugees, self-reliance should be conceived as an abstract and perhaps ultimately unachievable status, dependent on structural changes, but to which humanitarian programmes might yet in some way contribute. Such a re-imagining would encourage humanitarians to reflect on and challenge structural barriers to refugee well-being. Based on the evidence of the limitations of their programmes, humanitarian organisations should advocate for residency rights and adequate protection for refugees (recognised and *de facto*). In accordance with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, they should promote refugee rights regardless of legal status. If humanitarian organisations cannot themselves contribute directly to removing structural barriers to refugee well-being, they can give more attention to holding governments to account and to educating government officials on refugee rights, through specialist staff. To do this effectively, they must deepen their understanding of the political and legal contexts in which they work, and of the incentives required to shift governmental policy. In their refugee education programmes, they can also place greater emphasis on providing information about entitlements and rights. And, complementing the activities of informal support networks and solidarity initiatives, they can provide safe spaces for refugees to discuss coping strategies, 'work-arounds', and forms of political contestation through campaigning and representation. These are of course more overtly 'political' activities than the delivery of livelihoods training, which inevitably bring into question the idea – reflected in OCHA's New Way of Working[11] – that there is a basic consensus among the various actors responding to forced displacement (be they humanitarian and development NGOs, social movements, governments, UN agencies, private companies, financial institutions, or others) and that the differences between these actors are temporal and methodological, not political.

In this way, humanitarian organisations should look beyond the market in their efforts to contribute to refugee self-reliance. Their support for refugee livelihoods can itself be strengthened if they approach self-reliance as multi-dimensional: not just economic, but political, legal, social, and cultural. By investing in the participation of refugees throughout the programme-cycle,[12] humanitarian organisations can develop their understanding of how refugees themselves define self-reliance, whether it is a concern for them, and what they feel they might need to achieve it. Where possible and appropriate, humanitarian organisations should seek to address other aspects of self-reliance, directly or indirectly. This might mean designing multi-scalar programmes that address

not only the needs of individuals, but the needs of families, and communities, and multi-temporal programmes that take account of how activities in the short term can provide a basis for the well-being and autonomy of refugees in the longer term, reducing inter-generational dependencies.

Although humanitarian organisations have increased their activity in cities in recent years, they are still some way off developing a rounded understanding of what 'the urban' entails, and the most appropriate role for them in responding to urban conflicts and disasters. They should continue to invest in developing knowledge of the nature of cities and processes of urban transformation, and of the impact of different types of humanitarian action in the city. Carpi's study reflects on the local impact of humanitarian presence; further research into how humanitarian organisations contribute to urban change is necessary, if these organisations are to avoid doing harm indirectly and inadvertently. They should seek to strengthen their engagement with local authorities, promoting continuous knowledge transfer networks rather than reaching out only when they need local legitimacy and access to local populations.

ENDNOTES

1. UNHCR. *Handbook for Self-Reliance*. Geneva: UNHCR, 2005, 1.

2. For a discussion of accountability and the humanitarian marketplace, see Fiori et al. *The Echo Chamber: Results, Management, and the Humanitarian Effectiveness Agenda*. London: Humanitarian Affairs Team & Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, 2016, 42-48.

3. Circularity has become a common theme in humanitarian practice as humanitarian organisations have introduced neomanagerial reforms over the last 25 years. For a discussion of how categories are created and activities designed in order to justify existing categories and activities, see Fiori et al., *Echo Chamber*.

4. Field, Jessica, Anubhav Dutt Tiwari, & Yamini Mookherjee. 'Refugee self-reliance in Delhi: The limits of a market-based approach'. *In Making Lives: Refugee Self-Reliance and Humanitarian Action in Cities*, edited by Juliano Fiori & Andrea Rigon, pp.37-72 London: Humanitarian Affairs Team, Save the Children, 2017. A longer version of this paper was originally published by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), as a Working Paper entitled 'Urban Refugees in Delhi: Identity, Entitlements and Well-Being in India's Capital' (October 2017). The research in Delhi was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), through the Urban Crises Learning Fund managed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The fund is part of DFID's Urban Crises Programme on the urban aspects of humanitarian action, which involves IIED and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Further details can be found at www.iied.org/urbancrises.

5. Carpi, Estella. 'Learning and earning in constrained labour markets: The politics of livelihoods in Lebanon's Halba'. In *Making Lives: Refugee Self-Reliance and Humanitarian Action in Cities*, edited by Juliano Fiori & Andrea Rigon, pp.11-36 London: Humanitarian Affairs Team, Save the Children, 2017.

6. Dicker, Sophie. 'Solidarity in the city: Platforms for refugee self-support in Thessaloniki'. In *Making Lives: Refugee Self-Reliance and Humanitarian Action in Cities*, edited by Juliano Fiori & Andrea Rigon, pp.73-103 London: Humanitarian Affairs Team, Save the Children, 2017.

7. Human Rights Watch. '"I just wanted to be treated like a person". How Lebanon's refugee residency rules facilitate abuse of Syrian refugees'. Accessed 15th September, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lebanon0116web.pdf

8. In 2003, Jeff Crisp, at the time a member of UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, argued that 'there is also a need to link the question of livelihoods with the issues of rights and protection'. Crisp, Jeff. 'UNHCR, refugee livelihoods and self-reliance: A brief history'. Geneva: UNHCR. Accessed 13th September, 2017. http://www.unhcr.org/research/eval/3f978a894/unhcr-refugee-livelihoods-self-reliance-brief-history.html

9. Humanitarian organisations can be seen as changing the subjectivity of refugees.

10. Emerging through a hegemonic discursive operation, in this way, self-reliance becomes what the political theorist Ernesto Laclau refers to as an 'empty signifier'. Laclau, Ernesto. 'Why do empty signifiers matter to politics?' In *Emancipation(s)*, edited by Ernesto Laclau, 34–46. London: Verso, 1996.

11. OCHA. *New Way of Working*. New York: OCHA, 2017.

12. Listening more, as part of a 'participation revolution', is one of the ten commitments many humanitarian agencies have signed up to as part of the Grand Bargain. See https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861 (Accessed 17th September, 2017).

Bringing together three studies, on Halba (Lebanon), Delhi (India), and Thessaloniki (Greece), *Making Lives* offers a critical perspective on self-reliance as a conceptual and programmatic framework that privileges economic aspects of refugee well-being and market-based interventions by humanitarian organisations. Economic self-reliance through employment becomes an unachievable goal for humanitarian organisations when access to the formal labour market is restricted for refugees by political and legal barriers. Therefore, humanitarian livelihoods interventions focused on self-reliance end up providing a form of distraction through leisure activities, and, at best, supporting refugees' own coping strategies. The authors propose that, if it is to inform efforts to support the well-being of urban refugees, 'self-reliance' should be imagined as an abstract and perhaps ultimately unachievable status, dependent on structural changes, but to which humanitarian programmes might in some way contribute; and as multi-dimensional (not just an economic concern, but also a political, legal, social, and cultural one), multi-scalar (a challenge for individuals, households, and communities, with their mutual dependencies), and multi-temporal (dependent on conditions in the short term and long term).