Refuge in a Moving World

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena

Published by University College London

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena.
Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/81874.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/81874
Introduction
Refuge in a moving world: Refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

Setting the scene

People have been displaced throughout history and across all geographies, and yet attention to displacement ebbs and flows across time and space. Since the mid-2010s across Europe and North America, for instance, various political, humanitarian, media and civil-society spotlights have shone on particular displacement situations, including people from the Middle East and from South and Central America seeking sanctuary at and within the borders of, respectively, European and North American states. At the same time, other people and conflicts have been left in the shadows, their very existence often ignored or overtly denied. In effect, the everyday lives of most of the world’s displaced people – who have sought sanctuary in cities, towns and camps in their countries and regions of origin for protracted periods of time, and who are often ‘stuck’ in contexts of forced immobility – continue to be invisible from the vantage point of European and North American states precisely because they are of no consequence to powerful states and regional bodies. This invisibility is only punctured, and punctuated, when moments interpellated as ‘crises’ – including cases perceived to be ‘exceptional’ and particularly ‘newsworthy’ – arise, demanding immediate, if only short-term, attention (see Snow, and Davies, both in this volume).

The increased visibility of particular people affected by conflict and displacement in diverse public spheres has not necessarily led to people or peoples being granted the rights (or the right to access the rights) to which they are entitled. Nor has it led to the development and implementation
of political solutions to the violence, occupation, exploitation and discrimination that underpin conflict and displacement situations. Instead, across the globe – whether in Australia or Bangladesh, Chile or Denmark – increased public and political attention to people seeking asylum has been characterized by framing people on the move as ‘waves’ and ‘masses’ threatening individual, communal, national and international security, leading to policies and practices of control, surveillance, rejection and expulsion (Pallister-Wilkins, 2019; see Wilde in this volume).

Indeed, the hyper-visibility of refugees and migrants has often been accentuated due to the ways that people on the move have been securitized, a framework through which refugees’ and migrants’ agency has been represented, and constituted, as threatening in nature. In the context of migration and displacement, hyper-visibility and agency are not benign terms: as Jacques Derrida noted, ‘The blessing of visibility and daylight is also what the police and politics demand’ (Derrida, 2000: 57).

While many people who are refugees enact ‘strategic invisibility’ for multiple reasons (Haile, this volume), humanitarian actors have widely projected and circulated a range of counter-narratives as an apparent corrective to widespread xenophobic and violent responses to the real, anticipated or imagined arrival and presence of migrants and refugees around the world. ‘Pro-refugee’ narratives and images typically represent, and therefore constitute, refugees as suffering victims, grateful recipients of aid and/or as unique ‘ideal refugees’ who are truly worthy of international sympathy, assistance and protection (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014a, 2017).

These ‘worthy’ refugees fit humanitarian narratives of victimhood, suffering and – more recently – of what I elsewhere (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017) call ‘the super-refugee’: the Olympian swimmer who has overcome herculean feats (Jones, 2017), the hyper-successful multilingual entrepreneur (Kuper, 2017), the genius who changed the world (UNHCR, 2009). However, the projection of such figures – vulnerable and suffering, or appropriately resourceful and positively contributing to the local and global neoliberal economy – is, of course, itself not an apolitical depiction of reality. While such narratives may lead to compassion – even acts of solidarity – they nonetheless actively constitute problematic and at times deadly realities: both for the ‘worthy’ refugees and migrants who are forced to fit into this narrative of exceptionalism (and who must accept being instrumentalized in different ways), and for the ‘unworthy’ refugees and migrants against whom they are explicitly and implicitly compared and contrasted (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014a, 2016, 2017; see Snow’s, Davies’, and Mole’s chapters, all in this volume).

On the one hand, these representations and responses are permeated by hierarchical processes of inclusion and exclusion, including on
the basis of gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and location: only certain faces, bodies, identities, voices, stories or words are seen, heard, read and empathized with, while others continue to be constituted as threats or remain – or are purposefully rendered – invisible and ignored (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017; see Part II of this book). On the other hand, these representations and responses tend to position refugees as particular ‘types’ of people who require external intervention to variously ‘save’, ‘assist’, ‘protect’ or ‘control’ them. Whether humanitarian agencies, states, NGOs or civil-society organisations use these narratives and images to elicit citizens’ donations, compassion or solidarity, or to justify the cessation of sea-rescue missions or the closure of borders, these representations position non-refugee actors as actual and potential agents, while refugees are, and have to be, acted upon.

These representations and discourses position humanitarian agencies, states, NGOs and citizens as being necessary and paradigmatic responders. Such an approach constitutes certain people and places as requiring external intervention precisely because they are assumed to be either violent or oppressed, and resolutely incapable (Rajaram, 2002; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014a, 2014b, 2018). Such discourses and justifications for certain modes and directionalities of response put and keep displaced people ‘in their place’ (see Malkki, 1992, 1995) and are simultaneously underpinned by and reproduce diverse forms of epistemic violence. Concurrently, state and non-state actors not only fail to acknowledge, but in fact erase from view, the ways that people who have been displaced do not merely ‘experience’ displacement, but also actively respond (where structural conditions do not prevent them from doing so) to displacement – whether their own or that of other people. As demonstrated by many authors in this volume, such responses are enacted by people with personal or family experiences of displacement in their capacity as researchers, writers and artists, teachers, solidarians, first responders, NGO practitioners, neighbours and/or friends.

This acknowledgement powerfully disrupts rather than reproduces the frequent framing of who ‘we’ and ‘they’ are in relation to understanding and responding to displacement (see Qasmiyeh, 2016). It challenges, rather than taking for granted, the implicit and at times explicit assumption that ‘we’ are active (non-refugee) responders while ‘they’ are passive (refugee) problems to be fixed through ‘our’ interventions. This acknowledgement encourages us to critically reflect on ‘who we are’ and ‘who we are to one another’ across a range of fields of thought, practice and (in)action (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018). In the powerful words of Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, the Palestinian poet and scholar who has been writing into literature the situation of different groups of displaced people in North Lebanon:
Refugees ask other refugees, who are we to come to you and who are you to come to us? Nobody answers. Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Kurds share the camp, the same-different camp, the camp of a camp. They have all come to re-originate the beginning with their own hands and feet. (Qasmiyeh, 2016, and in this volume)

In effect, the process of ‘re-originat[ing] the beginning’ in ‘the same-different camp, the camp of a camp’, through an encounter between refugees, as explored through a process of ‘writing the camp, writing the camp archive’ (the title of Qasmiyeh’s chapter in this book), powerfully invokes four intersecting themes emerging throughout this volume: time, space, relationality and interdisciplinarity.

The first two themes relate to the necessity of being attentive to history, time and temporalities, on the one hand, and to space and spatialities, on the other. This is essential in order to challenge the current tendency to (re)produce ahistorical and presentist accounts of displacement, a tendency that has framed the current situation through a ‘lens of historical and geographical exceptionalism and a narrative of “crisis”’ (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Berg, 2018: v). Instead, it is urgent that we continue tracing ‘historical and geographical resonances, relationalities, continuities, and discontinuities’ in processes of displacement (ibid.). The importance of spatial modes of analysis – underpinning, inter alia, the contributions in Part IV of the book – includes acknowledging the multiple geographies and directionalities of displacement, including but transcending the recognition that the vast majority of displaced people seek safety either within their country of origin (and are known as internally displaced people, IDPs) or in neighbouring countries. It involves developing nuanced understandings of the ways that spaces such as cities, towns, camps, reception centres, markets and schools are (re)constructed, shared and controlled by different actors throughout processes of displacement – and of the significance of scale, which requires that equal attention be given to actors and processes across micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

The third, related theme is that of the need for analyses to be relational in nature (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016, and in this volume). On the one hand, this involves carefully tracing the nature and implications of the many encounters, connections, mutualities and both modes of solidarity and of rejection that exist and emerge between different groups of people, organizations, states and systems throughout displacement. On the other hand, it enables us to directly challenge the rhetoric of exceptionalism and crisis by demonstrating the above-mentioned continuities...
and discontinuities that exist across diverse ‘situations’ of displacement: those of the past and the present; across different geopolitical regions; and spaces of arrival, (co)habitation, immobility and rejection.

A pivotal form of ‘relationality’ arising throughout the volume is that of intersectionality (inter alia, see Mole, Tayob, Berg and Vandevoortd, all in this volume). Intersectionality was first developed as a means of exploring, explaining and resisting the overlapping experiences of oppression and marginalization faced by African-American women by virtue of their race and gender in a society characterized by everyday, institutionalized racism and patriarchy (see Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). A commitment to intersectionalist analysis simultaneously entails sensitivity to the importance of race and processes of racialization, gender, sexuality and age as being mutually constitutive rather than independent markers of identity, and careful attention to diverse and overlapping power structures and systems of inequality, marginalization, exploitation and violence. In the context of displacement studies, intersectional modes of analysis demonstrate the ways that experiences of displacement and seeking refuge are framed by a range of intersecting and overlapping identity markers (including race and ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and age) and also by a range of power structures (such as racism and xenophobia, Islamophobia, patriarchy, homophobia and capitalism). Importantly, the relative significance of these identity markers and related power structures shift across time and space, including in processes of displacement, demonstrating the extent to which vulnerability is contextual rather than related to particular ‘categories’ of identity.

In effect, as suggested above, an intersectionalist mode of analysis pushes us away from homogenizing and reductive depictions of refugees as passive victims waiting to be ‘saved’, ‘assisted’ or ‘protected’ by non-refugee others. Instead, it highlights the extent to which power structures – including those of international and national institutions and humanitarian agencies – create situations of violence and marginalization, and prevent displaced people from finding and enacting solutions to their own problems (with the kinds of externally provided support that they themselves prioritize).

In turn, the preceding lenses – historical, spatial and relational/intersectional – point to the necessity of the final approach flagged here: that of interdisciplinarity. As demonstrated below and throughout this volume, it is by building, and opening up critical space and conversations across multiple disciplines and fields of research and practice – including the social sciences, the humanities and the arts, and with and through art, advocacy and activism – that we can develop more nuanced
understandings of the history, causes, experiences, representations and implications of diverse shifts in people, politics and perceptions, and in turn stimulate more meaningful ways of responding to the human, material and representational effects of the moving world around us.

Invoking the concept of *refuge*, rather than centralizing the figure of ‘the refugee’ per se, and thinking through the notion of a ‘moving world’ centralizes both an interest in critically tracing the nature of and connections between processes of mobility and migration (in addition to their frequent corollary: immobility) and to engaging with processes and experiences that can and do ‘move us’ – inviting, demanding and requiring different forms of emotional and political engagement with questions of displacement. In so doing, we go beyond a focus on ‘the refugee’ as a figure or a particular kind of subject – whether as the ‘ideal’ victim to be assisted or potential threat to be controlled – and beyond the fetishization of either this discursive figure or the numerical figures that are so central to the responses prioritized by politicians; policymakers; and, indeed, many humanitarian practitioners (also see Elliot, Declercq and Maqusi, all in this volume). Instead, this multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary endeavour draws together multiple perspectives, including those of people who conduct research about, or on the margins of, refugee, displacement and hosting situations; and those who respond in different ways, through academia, activism, art and a combination of these.

**Part I: Researching and Conceptualizing Displacement in a Moving World**

The eight chapters that form Part I of this volume critically reflect on the complexities of conducting research into, and conceptualizing, diverse processes and experiences of (forced) migration. Part I opens with Semhar Haile, Francesca Meloni and Habib Rezaie exploring the paradoxical nature of participatory research approaches. They delineate and explore ethical challenges arising from the perspective of researchers who share many of the characteristics and life experiences of their interviewees, many of whom were simultaneously friends and peers. Noting the epistemic violence that often underpins and arises through research, they ‘highlight the need to problematize the ways knowledge is produced’, advocating for the usage of creative methodologies – including photography and art – to ensure that interlocutors ‘[are] in control of the narrative’ they share with researchers. In turn, in her sole-authored chapter, Semhar Haile starts from the acknowledgement that during her
participation in a theatre-based research exercise, ‘few of us expressed the desire to be seen, under the light of refugeehood or migration stories’. Through challenging the notion of the ‘refugee voice’, Haile argues that ‘in the realms of refugee experiences and social interactions that reiterate the violence of storytelling in establishing the legitimate refugee, strategic invisibility is often a necessary coping mechanism’.

The following two chapters, covering a range of historical periods and geographical settings – from Eastern Europe to North America, East Africa to southern Africa and the Middle East – explore the ways in which refugee and migrant journeys and histories can be written into literature, thereby tracing the roles that the humanities can play in creating nuanced understandings of processes of recognition, inclusion and exclusion. A conversation between the authors Eva Hoffman and Jonny Steinberg and art historian Tamar Garb provides a dynamic opportunity to explore the roles that autobiography and non-fictional reportage can play in providing insights into what it is to be displaced. Reflecting on the process of writing *Lost in Translation*, Hoffman describes ‘the contours of a personal experience of movement and migration that can be traced to 1959’ while Steinberg discusses the process of chronicling, in *A Man of Good Hope*, the travels of Asad from Somalia across and beyond Africa. Through their exchanges around writing about and through migration, Garb in turn suggests that writing, including through the use of the present tense, ‘is used to chronicle something of the past in a way that ‘brings that into a vivid relationship with the present’. Subsequently, Yousif M. Qasmiyeh ‘assesses the ways in which refugees write the camp into their own multiple narratives vis-à-vis markers (and beings) of temporality, permanence and liminality’. Qasmiyeh’s project vis-à-vis the camp of his birth, Baddawi camp in North Lebanon, aims to ‘document the lives of its residents in both life and death through processes that would privilege the ordinary and the everyday at the expense of the extraordinary and the unique, which rarely belong to the community itself but to those who claim its representation’. In so doing, Qasmiyeh asks, ‘Could there be, after all, an archival writing or a writing of an archive by and for the refugee in a time when neither the camp nor its inhabitants, as always suggested, are born to remain in their writing?’ His chapter concludes with a series of Qasmiyeh’s poems and creative fragments, including the eponymous fragment, *Writing the camp*, cited above.

Further challenging the ahistorical and decontextualized crisis narrative that pervades many popular accounts of displacement, Christophe Declercq explores local and national-level responses to the arrival and presence of Belgian refugees in the United Kingdom during
the First World War, asking whether the history of Belgians in the UK has ‘been excluded from public memory not only because it was a temporary one but also because it was successful’. In so doing, Declercq traces a series of continuities and discontinuities between this historic case – in which 250–265,000 Belgians were largely welcomed in the UK – and current-day representations of and responses to displacement – which have been much less hospitable in nature. In parallel with other chapters that explore diverse spaces and places of encounter between different groups of people affected by displacement (including in Parts III and IV), both Declercq and, in the subsequent chapter, Michela Franceschelli and Adele Galipò, draw on interdisciplinary approaches to study local community members’ perceptions of and responses to the arrival and presence of refugees in their villages, towns and cities. Recognizing that research is itself a particular form of sociopolitical encounter, Franceschelli and Galipò explore the role that film can play – in the broader context of an ethnographic research project – in documenting and sharing the stories and ‘experiences of Lampedusans as they position themselves in the polarized representations of the island as a community of hospitality or hostility’. By offering ‘reflections on the intersections between academic modes of knowledge production and artistic expressions’, their chapter documents the ways in which visually recording ‘Lampedusans’ responses to the arrival of migrants relates to their diverse performances in front and behind the video camera, and so between the unequal fields of visibility and audibility.

The final two chapters in Part I critically engage with a key question: What processes are, and are not, conceptualized as being linked to ‘forced migration’, and with what effect? Alice Elliot – an ethnographer of migration and mobility in, across and from North Africa – draws on her research with people who are neither defined (by others) nor define themselves as ‘refugees’ in order to explore the “distinction work” actualized by the idea – and category – of “forced migration”. By critically engaging with ‘forms of movement that are legally and socially defined as distinct’, she examines the dangerous implications of ‘paradoxical hierarchies and artificial distinctions … between moving subjects’. Where Elliot explores the significance of ‘the force of hope’, conceptualizations of ‘force’ in relation to (im)mobility are also explored by Ilan Kelman, whose chapter challenges the conceptual and methodological framework of direct causation that underpins many media and popular accounts of so-called ‘climate refugees’ and ‘climigration’. Far from denying the multifaceted significance of climate change in relation to migration-related decisions, including in relation to the cases of low-lying islands and
coastal communities in the Pacific, Kelman draws on insights from the physical and social sciences to challenge the causal framework that journalists and politicians often use in their responses to specific forms of migration, carefully ‘exploring the nuances, subtleties, complexities and provisos that have always pervaded human choices and lack of choices for migration and non-migration’.

**Part II: Responding to Displacement: Advocacy, Aesthetics and Politics in a Moving World**

Part II includes artistic interventions and chapters based on the social sciences and humanities in order to explore how different people, organizations, states and international systems have responded, and encouraged particular forms of response, to displacement.

The opening contribution, by the We Are Movers collective, is the creative outcome of an arts-based collaboration between migrants from the Helen Bamber Foundation and Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network in London, and a group of researcher-activists at UCL. Established as a way of bridging ‘academic research and the lived experiences of migration’, the project and accompanying museum exhibition present the collective’s response to mainstream depictions of migrants and to concepts such as integration; collective members have also lobbied for universities such as UCL to develop proactive and meaningful institutional responses in support of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. In the following chapter, Thibaut Raboin explores the discourses and strategies used by NGOs and refugee advocates to ‘engage a wide public in caring for the plight of LGBTI asylum seekers’. Focusing in particular on how NGOs mobilize discourses of distance and proximity, Raboin then traces the ways in which LGBTI asylum seekers are constituted as ‘deserving subjects’, and with what effect. The chapter concludes by arguing that ‘[e]ngaging and constituting responsible publics in relation to LGBTI asylum might also involve orienting their attention (their ears, their gaze) towards the cracks of social invisibility through which queer asylum claimants may fall because of their systemic exclusion from participation … by the asylum apparatus’.

Shifting from a national focus on the UK, Ralph Wilde in the next chapter explores the ways in which states and regional bodies have been responding to the actual and prospective arrival of people seeking international protection, ranging from push-backs to border closures and
restrictions on the resettlement of refugees to third countries. Noting the extent to which such responses have coincided with changes in international law – in theory, becoming more progressive – Wilde examines the ways in which refugee-law protection seems to be simultaneously expanding in theory and contracting in practice. The chapter thus argues that holistic and multiscalar analyses are essential when examining the changing nature of international protection systems.

The next two chapters in this section explore the ways in which journalists, photographers and graphic artists have responded to particular scenarios of displacement, and how representations of people who have been displaced are developed and mobilized in the political and cultural spheres. Tom Snow analyses the visual politics surrounding the death of Alan Kurdi, tracing the nature and limitations of state, journalistic and artistic responses to the widely circulated photograph of Kurdi’s lifeless body. Ultimately, Snow argues that we must ‘treat images themselves as traceable agents that urgently require responding to, acting in some sense as antagonists that intercede with popular consciousness and imagination and which might move against the grain of the more ambiguous discursive forces that come to frame them’. Concurrently, Dominic Davies explores the ways in which journalists and photographers have sought to ‘accurately’ depict the perils of sea crossings in order to consciously build ‘empathetic solidarity’ among readers/viewers, before turning to ‘testimonial comics’ as a particular, slow and contextualizing mode of documentation. Davies argues that this medium, ‘which differ[s] from written journalistic non-fiction or single photographs by combining both visual and narrative components … might be especially effective at reconstructing the human rights’ of refugees.

The roles of theatre in responding to displacement are then explored by Marta Niccolai and Tom Bailey in their respective chapters. Niccolai examines the processes through which the founder and director of the Teatro di Nascosto theatre company, Annet Henneman, has developed her approach to ‘Theatre Reportage’, a form of theatre that combines ‘facts and performance’ and which explicitly ‘aims to influence people’s opinions on fundamental social issues’. Niccolai describes the processes of preparing and performing two plays – Lontano dal Kurdistan (Faraway from Kurdistan) (1998) and Rifugia-ti (Refugees/find refuge) (2005) – both of which involved actors who arrived in Italy as refugees, and which have been informed by the director’s visits to Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey. Another model of theatre making, which also involves the mobility of theatre makers and directors, is explored by Tom Bailey in his account of his involvement with the Good Chance Theatre in the so-called
‘Jungle’ camp in Calais. Where Teatro di Nascosto has performed in the European Parliament among other venues, the Good Chance Theatre operated in a very different space – a space documented, in the second part of his reflection, by Bailey and photographer Tom Hatton through a creative intervention in the form of a natural historical ‘Field Diary’ guide to the Calais ‘Zone Industrielle des Dunes’. The theatre (based in a geodesic dome) was one of the only covered public spaces available in the precarious space of the Calais camp, and Bailey aimed not ‘to direct a show but to provide a space where people could express themselves spontaneously in a safe environment’. In this sense, Bailey’s approach to theatre in the Calais camp ‘was not about “performing one’s journey” or returning to a site of trauma to process it; it was about opening awareness to the here, the now, the emotion in your body, the partner’s hands touching your hands with acceptance’.

In the second of four reflections included in this book on the Calais camp, Sarah Crafter and Rachel Rosen explore the complex ‘ecolog[ies] of emotion’ and caring landscapes that have developed in the camp, including caring practices delivered by women for women. To explore the question ‘What does it mean to care in the context of extreme adversity’, Crafter and Rosen use Sophie Bowlby’s framework of carescapes and caringscapes to examine the case of Liz Clegg – a volunteer who started the Unofficial Women and Children’s Centre in the Calais camp in 2015 – and to trace the nature and power dynamics underpinning and resulting from ‘her care relationships with some women refugees and their children, as well as unaccompanied children living in the camp’. While tracing the potential for a feminist ethics of care, the chapter carefully ‘speaks to the inequalities of “caring for” in these situations’. Highlighting the precarious nature of such situations, Part II concludes with a poem written by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh in response to the demolition of the ‘Jungle’ camp in 2015; while the camp was subsequently rebuilt, the poem was originally published in June 2016 – shortly after the camp had been demolished once again, in March 2016.

**Part III: Ongoing Journeys: Safety, Rights and Well-being in a Moving World**

Part III examines the ways in which different people – including across axes of religion, sexuality, gender and age – experience and respond to their own situations, and how these responses intersect with initiatives developed by others on their behalf.
The first chapter – by Tyler Fisher, Nahro Zagros and Muslih Mustafa – offers a nuanced reading of the ways in which members of the Yezidi people, who have been persecuted and displaced in and from northern Iraq, make sense of the violence that they and their communities have historically experienced. Through a focus on Yezidi interlocutors’ perceptions of the roles played by shamans in the past and present, Fisher, Zagros and Mustafa argue that ‘the religion that has rendered them a target for extremists has also proved resilient and adaptive in significant ways’. The chapter thus ‘foregrounds the personal and communal aspirations, nuanced apprehensions, and complex human experiences’ of members of this ethno-religious minority. The following chapter, by Richard Mole, focuses on the ways in which ‘international refugee law and national asylum regimes create “worthy” and “unworthy” queer refugees’. Through a close analysis of the ‘personal narratives of two queers from Russia who are going through the asylum process in Germany’, and attentive to the ways in which sexual orientation intersects with (real or imputed) political activism and religious identity, Mole highlights ‘how the different forms of harm that they have suffered prompted them to apply for asylum and the impact that their different experiences may have on the likelihood of their applications being successful’.

The next three chapters apply a psychosocial lens in order to examine the ways in which people navigate their everyday lives in situations of displacement, and how people’s resilience and ability to cope in situations of precarity is viewed, evaluated and – it is hoped – supported through different means.

Maureen Seguin starts by exploring the ways in which internally displaced women in Georgia deal with the trauma and loss resulting from the 2008 conflict in South Ossetia. In addition to highlighting women’s gender-specific challenges and problem-solving strategies, Seguin delineates the importance of holistic responses being attentive to power structures when aiming to support the well-being of people affected by displacement. Indeed, a psychosocial approach ‘examines the economic, social and cultural influences on mental health’ and ‘favours non-medical interventions for mental-health problems, based on the assumption that the mental-health impact of armed conflict is largely or completely mediated by the stressful social and material conditions that it creates’.

The limitations and possibilities of psychosocial interventions to support displaced children is then explored by Karolin Krause and Evelyn Sharples. Their chapter traces the ways in which different responses are developed and implemented to support the well-being of children and their families, and broader communities. Indeed, advocating a
multiscalar, multidimensional and systemic approach that is attentive to ‘the interplay of risk and protective factors at the individual, family, community and sociocultural levels’, the authors stress that people’s experiences and approaches to coping with trauma and violence are ‘both historically and culturally embedded’. In turn, they agree that the ‘development of interventions should be based on a detailed understanding of the cultural, political and social context’, and must ‘address chronic stressors, and … structural risk and protective factors’.

Helen Chatterjee, Clelia Clini, Beverley Butler, Fatima Al-Nammar, Rula Al-Asir and Cornelius Katona then examine the ‘social and psychological impact of cultural and creative activities on displaced people’, by bringing together the authors’ findings from two collaborative and participatory case studies: the cultural activities led by the Helen Bamber Foundation in London and the Heritage Project established by the Women’s Programme Centre in Talbiyeh refugee camp in Jordan. The chapter – which draws on approaches from the social sciences, psychology, critical heritage and the health sciences – concludes:

whether you are an individual who is a second- or third generation long-term refugee, such as residents from Talbiyeh, or a first-generation ‘new’ refugee, as with Helen Bamber Foundation clients, the value of creative-arts activities to improve psychosocial well-being, provide a sense of belonging, develop skills and make meaning of your life is potentially profound.

In all, Part III reminds us of the different ways in which people affected by displacement understand and respond to their own situations, and the extent to which external interventions must be historically and contextually grounded, attentive to intersecting power inequalities and based on interdisciplinary modes of analysis.

**Part IV: Spaces of Encounter and Refuge: Cities and Camps in a Moving World**

The final part of this book draws together in-depth empirical research with refugees and migrants in cities, towns, camps and informal settlements in southern and eastern Africa, the Middle East and Europe, to offer critical insights into the ways in which people inhabit and negotiate living, working and learning in diverse spaces of refuge.
Huda Tayob’s socio-spatial analysis focuses on the roles played by two particular buildings in Cape Town as ‘part of an emerging landscape of hospitality and support in the city’ for Black African migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who have been subjected to deadly xenophobic violence since 2008. Drawing on the work of AbdouMaliq Simone and bell hooks, and attentive both to processes of racialization and the reproduction of gendered hierarchies across time and space, Tayob develops the concept of Black Markets to explore the intersections between spaces of Blackness and refuge. In so doing, she argues that ‘these markets are marginal spaces that act to disrupt entrenched apartheid racial divisions in space – and they therefore … act as radical spaces’.

Nerea Amorós Elorduy then examines the significance of formal and informal learning spaces for young children’s learning and development in refugee camps in Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda. Grounded in an interdisciplinary, participatory and collaborative research project that involved ‘architects, urban planners, encamped parents, caregivers, children and humanitarian-education experts in a collective effort to create new knowledge on the cases’, the chapter documents the barriers faced by children in these camps, how camp residents develop informal learning spaces across the camps, and how UN agencies and NGOs do – and do not – work to promote children’s safe access to appropriate spaces for play and learning.

The subsequent two chapters examine different spatial and political dimensions of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan. Through a nuanced analysis, Samar Maqusi traces the ‘spatial, architectural evolution of the Palestinian camp’, examining ‘what happens on the ground when displaced people inhabit spaces of refuge that are “designed and operated” by both host governments and UN relief agencies’. She explores cases of camps being destroyed and reconstructed, surrounded by cement walls and controlled via metal gateways, and subjected to the ‘softer spatial mode of rescaling the camp’ by the Lebanese and Jordanian governments – and of Palestinian refugees’ construction of elevated walkways between buildings ‘to safeguard their spaces and their lives’ during the War of the Camps (1985–8). In so doing, Maqusi explores ‘refugee acts and responses to conflict inside the camp space, and both host state’s and refugees’ own use of the architectural scale of the camp’. Subsequently, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh explores the ways in which Palestinian refugees in Baddawi refugee camp in North Lebanon have responded to the arrival and presence of refugees from Syria since 2011. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh argues that acknowledging the complexities of ‘refugee-refugee relationality’ ‘shift[s] our gaze away from relationships
that have become archetypal in the field of refugee studies and refugee response: … between refugees on the one hand and INGOs, UN agencies, states and citizens on the other’. Such an approach neither denies the roles played by non-refugees nor idealizes the responses developed by people who have been displaced; indeed, the chapter sets out numerous ways in which ‘bifurcated [aid] structures and external interventions … [create] tensions in this refugee camp’ and (re)create inequalities between the camp’s residents.

Also in the context of northern Lebanon, Estella Carpi’s chapter examines the encounter between NGOs that are ‘supporting’ Syrian refugees in the villages of the Akkar region. As one of the key ‘international’ humanitarian principles, ‘neutrality’ pertains to the imperative not to take sides in conflict – and yet precisely how aid providers, and people who have been displaced by conflict, conceptualize and engage with this principle has received scant attention. Through her ethnographic research with representatives of secular local and international organizations and of Arab Gulf-funded NGOs, Carpi explores the hybrid and nuanced ways in which ‘Humanitarian and political actors in northern Lebanon adopt diverse strategies to bring humanity into politics and politics into humanitarianism’. The ways in which Syrians in the city of Gaziantep negotiate the fluctuating politics and policies of refugee response in the context of Turkey is then explored by Charlotte Loris-Rodionoff. In particular, Loris-Rodionoff examines ‘the multilayered effects of state policies and legal status on Syrians’ everyday lives, their future-oriented decisions, their intimate and family lives, and the construction of a community in exile’. As such, the chapter highlights the importance of time and temporalities in displacement, tracing the ways in which people experience daily challenges, how these challenges have changed since their arrival in Turkey, and how they imagine and seek out ‘migratory horizons and paths’, including to Europe, in order to navigate the acute insecurity of both the present and the future.

The final four chapters in the book then shift to Europe in order to examine the ‘spatial politics of refuge’ and the everyday encounters that characterize life in camps, towns and cities in France, Italy, the UK and Belgium.

S. Tahmineh Hooshyar Emami complements Part II’s chapters by exploring the Calais camp through a creative spatial intervention that takes Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass as a starting point for exploring ‘various scales of spatial inhabitation’ in the camp. Through a focus on the bed, the door, the house and the corridor/passage, Hooshyar Emami examines these ‘four motifs
as metaphors to analyse architectural spaces and their significance in the context of the journey or that of the encampment’. In so doing, she investigates the ways in which these objects ‘stand in for larger-scale notions of checkpoints, borders and countries’ (as is also explored in Maqusi’s chapter). Processes and practices of dwelling in the Italian city of Brescia are then explored by Giovanna Astolfo and Camillo Boano, who draw on their teaching-based research in partnership with the Local Democracy Agency in Zavidovići, to explore urban systems of reception, assistance and hospitality towards migrants and refugees. Noting that ‘One of the mechanisms through which conditional hospitality works is that of spatial and social separation’, the chapter examines the spaces that are inhabited by asylum seekers and refugees in Italy, and how these spaces are conceptualized by their residents, asking the question: ‘Where do refugees find home?’ The authors conclude by arguing that it is essential ‘to unpack and problematize not the simple, given space of hospitality in the form of assistance (camp, centre or house) but the micro, banal, humble and everyday practices of the spatial politics of refuge’.

The final two chapters then turn to the barriers and opportunities that frame migrants’ and refugees’ experiences of living, working and building (or attempting to build) relationships in European cities and towns. Mette Berg explores the case of Latin American migrants and refugees in the ‘super-diverse’ London borough of Southwark, against the backdrop of the UK’s hostile environment towards racialized non-citizens and the politics of austerity. The chapter documents the ways in which a range of barriers (including access to employment, housing, schooling, health services and English-language classes) ‘interact with each other’ and with gender and immigration status, to ‘create[e] different degrees and conditions of precarity for men and women, children and adults, EU and non-EU citizens, and between individuals subject to different legal statuses and with different migration trajectories’. This serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of contextually grounded analyses that are attentive to the intersectionality of identity makers and systems of inequality alike.

The book’s last chapter, by Robin Vandevoordt returns us to the case of Belgium – explored in Part I by Declercq in relation to the experiences of Belgian refugees who sought safety in the UK during the First World War – by focusing on the ways in which Syrian refugees have sought to build social relations with Belgians since 2011. While physically sharing spaces with Belgian citizens, Vandevoordt’s informants explain that Syrians ‘are trying to find the key to open the door to Belgian society. They want to break [down] that wall. But [for] now, they’re still outside. They can’t get in.’ The barriers that Vandevoordt’s interlocutors navigate,
with greater or lesser success, include linguistic ones but also racial and religious discrimination, thereby reminding us that sustainable encounters in spaces of refuge require ‘a hospitable social environment that is void of racial and religious discrimination’, and that ‘forging … social bonds … can only be done by a party of two’.

Indeed, the challenge that endures beyond the chapters in this book is how to promote equitable forms of mutuality and the constitution of social, political and spatial systems that challenge rather than reproduce such systems of discrimination, exclusion and violence.

**Conclusion**

As stressed throughout this volume, a commitment to centralizing the interests and rights of people who have been displaced – rather than serving the interests of those in power – must precisely be grounded in a recognition of the inequalities and structural barriers that characterize and frame encounters in displacement situations. Responses to displacement – whether by academics, artists or advocates, politicians, practitioners or people with or without personal or family displacement histories – must be acutely critical of, rather than risk reproducing, paternalistic and neocolonial discourses and practices, including the drive to ‘help’ and ‘save’ ‘them’. As part of the process of questioning the locus of our gaze – and of considering the implications of our positionalities, privileges and potential investment in and complicity with diverse power structures – looking critically through different lenses emerges as a priority. Such lenses must, inter alia, be attentive to time (the histories and temporalities of displacement) and space (including camp and non-camp settings, and across scales, from the international level to the individual home). They must simultaneously be cognizant of the importance of relationalities and intersections between differently positioned people, power structures and displacement scenarios – recognizing the ways in which people with displacement backgrounds interact with and respond to their own needs and those of other displaced people; barriers interact to create new forms of precarity; and situations from the past and present, and from different parts of the world, connect to and constitute one another. Finally, working collaboratively through interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies – from poetic to spatial interventions, ethnographic research, theatre, discourse analysis and visual methods – has the potential to more carefully, and creatively, document the complexities of refugees’ and migrants’ journeys, and to develop more sustained and sustainable modes of responding to our moving world.
Notes

1. The first part of the introduction to this book – the foundations of which emerged through a series of events and projects hosted by the Refuge in a Moving World network at UCL, as discussed in the Acknowledgments – builds upon Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016, 2017). This introduction and the framing of the volume are indebted to insights and processes emerging throughout the AHRC-ESRC-funded interdisciplinary research project ‘Local Community Experiences of and Responses to Displacement from Syria: Views from Lebanon, Jordan and Syria’, known by its short title ‘Refugee Hosts’ (www.refugeehosts.org), on which the author is Principal Investigator (Grant Agreement Number: AH/P005438/1). With sincere gratitude to Yousif M. Qasmiyeh for his feedback on earlier drafts of this chapter.

2. This is also the rationale for the title of the ‘Moving Objects: Stories of Displacement’ project and exhibition led by Helen Chatterjee, Beverley Butler and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh with support from the UCL Centre for Critical Heritage Studies, the UCL Grand Challenges Programme and the UCL Department of Geography. See https://refugeehosts.org/2018/06/08/moving-objects-heritage-in-and-exile.

3. This term is used both by Hooshyar Emami, and Astolfo and Boano in their respective chapters.

References


