



The Refugee (Tale) Paradox: Narratives of Vulnerability and Aspirationality

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Abstract

The global refugee regime can be characterized by central paradoxes, similarly to how our societal narratives around displacement and refuge are fundamentally contradictory, yet immanent to the system they help to maintain. Following Hannah Arendt's notion of the 'aporia of human rights', I discuss one particular salient set of contradictions as the 'refugee paradox'. It describes a set of policy expectations and narratives around the figure of the refugee as vulnerable and hence deserving of protection, yet self-sufficient and self-reliant; one who must be happy to have survived and not aspire to much more, but, once the asylum status is approved, must display agency and aspirations for upward mobility; a victim of their circumstances, yet a role model of integration and economic success in the host society. I analyse the discursive charging and real-life consequences of the refugee paradox with a particular view to discourses of 'worthy' and 'unworthy', or 'deserving' and 'undeserving' refugees in the present geopolitical landscape. Existing interventions, be they local aid, humanitarian intervention or political activism, necessarily move within the narrow confines of this paradox and therefore seldom accomplish more than symptom control. Thus, at its core, the refugee paradox is naturalized and serves to legitimate the status quo.

Keywords: paradox, refugee regime, borders, worthiness

Zusammenfassung

Das globale Flüchtlingsregime ist durch Paradoxien gekennzeichnet, ähnlich wie auch dominante gesellschaftliche Narrative zu Flucht und Vertreibung; diese Paradoxien sind als systemimmanent zu charakterisieren, erhalten sie doch den Status quo aufrecht. In Anlehnung an Hannah Arendts ‚Aporie der Menschenrechte‘ widmet sich der Beitrag dem ‚Flüchtlingsparadox‘ als einem besonders augenscheinlichen Widerspruch. Das Flüchtlingsparadox beschreibt eine Reihe von politischen Erwartungen und gesellschaftlichen Diskursen rund um die Figur des Flüchtlings, welche zugleich als verletzlich und daher schutzbedürftig, aber auch in hohem Maße autark und eigenverantwortlich gesehen wird; glücklich zu sein hat, überhaupt überlebt zu haben und nicht nach mehr streben soll, aber, sobald der Asylstatus anerkannt ist, Selbstwirksamkeit und soziale Mobilität an den Tag legen soll; ein Opfer seiner Umstände ist, aber auch ein Vorbild für Integration und wirtschaftlichen Aufstieg. Der Beitrag analysiert die diskursive Aufladung und die realen Folgen des Flüchtlingsparadox mit besonderem Blick auf Diskurse über ‚legitime‘ und ‚illegitime‘ bzw. ‚echte‘ und ‚unechte‘ Flüchtlinge vor dem Hintergrund aktueller geopolitischer Verwerfungen. Bestehende Interventionen, seien es ‚Hilfe vor Ort‘, humanitäre Intervention oder politischer Aktivismus, bewegen sich notwendigerweise innerhalb der engen Grenzen des Paradoxes und erreichen daher selten mehr als Symptombekämpfung. In seinem Kern ist das Flüchtlingsparadox naturalisiert und dient somit der Legitimierung des bestehenden Flüchtlingsregimes.

Schlüsselwörter: Paradox, Flüchtlingsregime, Grenzen, Legitimität

The tales and narratives that Europe spins and receives about displacement and the displaced from the Global South are fundamentally contradictory in both their intent and effect. As such, the current refugee-management paradigm – that is, the policies and legal frameworks governing forced migration, settlement and visa schemes, and asylum-seeking – demonstrates a set of paradoxes. Such paradoxes render inconceivable any attempts to solve the European refugee question, or even imagine improving the status quo. Similarly, cultural narratives, stories, and discourses that reflect upon displacement and refuge are rife with ambivalences. They involve a set of expectations directed at the displaced that are impossible to conform to, at least not simultaneously and by the same person. Nevertheless, these paradoxes are not only permanently embedded in the global system of asylum and refuge, but they also fortify it. These reinforcements are most obvious when we recognize the proliferation of wall-building and securitization efforts around the world.

Following Hannah Arendt's notion of the 'aporia of human rights,'¹ which she applies to the exiled, I will give an overview of one salient set of contradictions that illustrate what I have called the 'refugee paradox'² with a view to European host countries. This concept describes a set of policy assumptions about and narratives around the refugee figure as inherently vulnerable and, hence, deserving of protection; yet, at the same time, they are interpellated as being highly independent and capable. Refugees are expected to be humble and content with having merely survived, showing no further aspirations at all. At the same time, they are required to display self-reliance, agency, and (high) ambitions for upward social mobility, once their asylum status has been approved. Refugees are thus regarded as victims of their circumstances and, simultaneously, expected to act as role models of integration and economic success within the host society. Existing interventions – be they local aid, humanitarian intervention, or political activism – must navigate within the narrow confines of this paradox. As a result, the best that these efforts can do for refugees is minimize symptoms without mitigating the underlying forces. Working within this paradox means that systemic-political and personal-individual decisions can only be made in the context of the contradictions that accompany them.³ Thus, the refugee paradox, at its core, can be conceived as a particular form of 'refugee (life) writing' by the nation – one that calls the figure of 'the refugee' into being in the first place. This process of refugees being 'written into existence' by political and state actors is, as I will argue, fundamentally based on a set of contradictory expectations and attributes, such as being conceived as 'victim' and 'threat' all at once. Inscribed into our policies, institutions, and legal system, the paradox legitimizes the status quo, having become

so normalized that it is perceived as the ‘natural’, ‘no-alternative’ condition of the current asylum regime.

In this article, I will analyse the refugee paradox’s discursive power and real-life consequences, focusing on the systems of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘aspiration’, and emphasizing how these two concepts are applied as well as denied in European host countries. While the geographical restriction to Europe results in certain intellectual, political, and ethical limitations of my analysis, it allows me to zoom in on the specificities of European policy and discourse on externalization, fortification, and deterrence. I will discuss both political and academic consequences that arise from the refugee paradox, considering how the figure of the refugee emerges as a political actor rather than a victim, a threat to, or a foil of, the ‘true’ citizen – tensions that challenge the tales surrounding refugees.

Making the refugee: tales of (overcoming) vulnerability

Recalling Simone de Beauvoir’s insight about women,⁴ I posit that refugees are not born but made. They are just as much the product of nation states and their borders as they are of conflict and expulsion, written into being by policies as much as political narratives and media discourse. Without nation states, there would be no such thing as stateless persons or refugees who flee from repressive or failing national regimes. Consequently, the state constitutes refugees as such, and relies on mechanisms for oppressing refugees for its own identity. In fact, states *depend on* the refugees they try to repel. Refugees, after all, validate the state’s ability to extend its power and sovereignty internally; and the state can, in turn, instrumentalize refugees to distinguish their excluded status from citizens’ rights and those given to residents regarded as *demos*.⁵ The refugee thus legitimizes the limiting and decision-making power of states. He or she is thus the negation of the citizen *per se*. The refugee and the citizen are locked into a dialectical relationship to such an extent that one is defined in opposition to the other.⁶

On a more profane level, European host countries depend upon refugee labour supply to maintain their welfare systems and to make up for an aging society and rapid demographic change. It is not a coincidence that migrants and refugees were instrumentalized in much-celebrated, but still low-paid ‘essential’ jobs during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, from nursing to seasonal agricultural work. Some workers were even imported via special charter flights or overnight trains, creating an asymmetrical regime of border-closing and -opening, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities based on class, gender, and migration.⁷ A significant number had,

however, already arrived in Western Europe a few years earlier, during the last major ‘crisis’ in 2015 – a term which media outlets repeated during the long summer of migration.

Polish-British philosopher Zygmunt Bauman has succinctly summarized the nation states’ need for and defence against refugees. In his view, regimes of the Global North resort to two strategies of exploitation and deferral when foreigners ask to be ‘let in’: 1) ‘anthropophagy’, i.e., the process of assimilating, digesting, and incorporating into one’s own social fabric; and 2) ‘anthropoemia’, i.e., the spitting out or vomiting, a process that banishes refugee subjects from ‘the world of order’.⁸ The former is inscribed in the orthodoxy of integration, which, in European public discourse, often insists on having newcomers assimilate completely into the host state – from its economic to its social and cultural fabric. Ideally, the one who blends in becomes untraceable at the end of the process. Fierce moralizing and emotionally-charged discussions on ‘hotspot schools’, the ‘Islamic threat,’ or ‘imported patriarchy’ further signal this push for assimilation and absorption of the Other by the nation state. The latter can be classified as a salient case of ‘femonationalism’, as Sara Farris (2012) describes it, referring to the attempted appropriation and interpellation of feminist ideas within right-wing and nationalist parties in Europe and beyond.⁹ Frequently, it involves a discourse of supposed ‘anti-liberal’ or ‘misogynistic’ socialization, whose prevalence in refugees’ countries of origin validates host countries’ efforts to fend off foreigners in the name of protecting their rights and freedoms.

Narratives of the backward foreigner demonstrate how the refugee paradox relies on ‘the moralisation of bordering’, an exclusionary practice of selecting some asylum seekers while refusing others, thus managing to maintain ‘a high moral ground for which the EU and its Member States stand’.¹⁰ To protect the European welfare states and/or liberal rights, one must keep out those who threaten both. This discourse of moralized bordering recalls Etienne Balibar’s notion of ‘racism without race’,¹¹ in which biological arguments that assign negative attributes to phenotypical differences give way to culturally-constructed differences. Refugees from Muslim countries are thus perceived as having been culturally conditioned to be anti-Semitic or misogynistic by virtue of their upbringing and socialization. Reinforcing this perception thus places the moral responsibility on host countries to protect their upright citizens from any contamination by foreigners and their backward values.

Balibar’s analysis helps expose the binary between ‘taking in’ and ‘pushing’, aligning with Bauman’s conceptualization of ‘anthropophagy’ and ‘anthropoemia’ as an arbitrary and, ultimately, untenable distinction. Both extremes of the spectrum serve the same cause: either nation states digest and, hence, neutralize refugees

completely; or they deny entry in the first place, thus safely keeping the Other at bay. In neither case do they welcome or involve it, or even ask it to contribute. Nevertheless, this is exactly what the displaced are repeatedly told to aspire to after arriving in the host country.

Once the status of ‘refugee’ has been ascribed, newcomers run into a series of ambivalences with which they must contend. These ambivalences form a contradictory set of expectations that I describe as the ‘refugee paradox’. In brief, it involves a two-pronged process, which I will delineate below. First, the refugee paradox presents itself in the shifting degrees of aspiration that are granted (or denied) to refugees. Refugees are supposed to be happy to have arrived in the ‘first safe country’, without aspiring to migrate further. Within the asylum regime, the discourse on the ‘choice of destination country’ for refugees is morally fraught. According to the current public consensus, that choice is not and should not be granted. What lies behind discussions about ‘immigration into the welfare state’ (an argument that has been debunked as a mere, if persistent, myth),¹² or behind debates about why refugees do not want to stay in country A but move on to country B, is the assumption that refugees resist aspiring for a *good* life which they think (for one reason or another) cannot be achieved in country A. They are not entitled to the biblical ‘land flowing with milk and honey’ (Exodus 3:8) as a place of longing – despite one of the oldest refugee tales, the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, promising exactly that: an escape from oppression and the prospect of a better existence.

In today’s world, there is hardly a trace of either milk or honey left for those who seek refuge. Pure survival is deemed enough; were they to aspire to anything more, they would be characterized as ‘economic migrants’, which would render them ineligible for protection under current asylum law. Again, this tenet ought to be recognized as paradoxical. After all, the key document for guaranteeing refugees’ rights, the Geneva Refugee Convention, does, in fact, entitle refugees to significantly more than mere survival, including provisions for basic needs such as the right to work, education, and property.¹³ Consequently, host states must enable refugees to lead a self-determined and good life. Such protections would, however, essentially undermine refugees’ perceived vulnerability¹⁴ – a problem that produces the second part of the refugee paradox.

Once refugees are granted asylum in the host country, they are expected to demonstrate (heightened) aspirations and agency. Political mottos such as ‘integration through education’, prevalent in many countries of the Global North, demonstrate these expectations rather overtly: anyone granted asylum is expected to become a self-efficient, active, and productive member of society as quickly as possible. Often, these

expectations entail learning the language of the host country, becoming economically independent, adopting the host country's customs and traditions, or even engaging in volunteer work. Quite obviously, this seems easier to do in a country like Germany, which offers appropriate structures, integration support, free language courses, and a receptive labour market with a stable economy. This stands in stark contrast to Hungary, for example, where refugees are largely left to their own devices and cut off from almost all state benefits. Existing networks and ethnic communities can also provide meaningful assistance,¹⁵ and these are again unevenly distributed across European countries. Yet – and this is where the next paradox emerges – refugees are deterred from making an informed choice between these countries based on their own interest (and, judging by the resulting economic benefits, the state's interest). This effort to discourage refugees from having such aspirations and deterring them from freely choosing the host country famously culminated in the EU's Dublin Agreement and its various reforms.¹⁶

To sum up, the refugee paradox thus operates on two interconnected levels. First, refugees are supposed to be vulnerable and in need of protection while, at the same time, willing to perform, excel, and integrate. They do so by finding employment, learning a new language and set of skills, and 'contributing' to society in various ways. The fact that it is precisely the most vulnerable among them, such as the elderly or the chronically ill, who are the most difficult to integrate into the labour market or the educational system, remains largely and even deliberately ignored in the prevailing integration discourse. Secondly, refugees are expected to uphold as few aspirations and as little agency as possible. They are also urged to show eternal gratitude for how they are received in the host country, without making any demands on those reception conditions. Refugees are expected to lead self-determined lives as soon as possible, but have no influence on the conditions in which they find themselves. Even in refugee camps, resilience and personal responsibility are demanded, while at the same time its inhabitants are meant to prove they are the weakest and most in need of protection to have earned this special protection in the first place. As Dursun and Sauer point out in their contribution to this special issue, such paradoxes are predicated upon (partly) contradictory interests of heterogeneous societal groups in the host countries, which are structured according to different state apparatuses.

Such internal contradictions pose an unsolvable conundrum to those who are supposed to conform to these contradictory expectations. At its core, the refugee paradox demands one become a superhuman who can accomplish the seemingly impossible. Its counterpart is a xenophobic cliché: the refugee who exploits the host country's social system, while at the same time taking the locals' jobs. Most recently,

host countries' reactions to arriving Ukrainians illustrated how well-off Western Europeans, on the one hand, seem to long ardently for refugees who display cultural and visual similarities to them, with media reports over-emphasizing Ukrainian Caucasian appearance.¹⁷ On the other hand, they must not be too similar, as a certain status gap between refugees and the resident population needs to be maintained. This was illustrated by heated discussions about expensive SUVs with Ukrainian license plates taking up precious parking space in European cities, defying public expectations of refugees being helpless and destitute. For, only if 'the refugee' is completely different from us, then distinction, differentiation, and unequal treatment of the (supposedly) unequal is considered legitimate in accordance with law and custom.

The existing refugee regime¹⁸ fundamentally builds on the refugee paradox, since it is legally and (even more consequentially) ethically based on recognizing the fundamental need to protect refugees. This ethical system relies on seeing weakness, powerlessness, and vulnerability. The asymmetry between those actively providing and those passively receiving help is evident at both the state and humanitarian levels. Granting protection is thus always structurally distributed unevenly from top to bottom, from the strong to the weak, from the powerful to those in need.¹⁹ In many cases, this perpetuates economic exploitation and post-colonial dependency relationships,²⁰ even in countries whose colonial past remains largely undiscussed. Even by the (mostly) well-intentioned efforts to provide humanitarian aid, refugees are transformed from applicants based on their legal rights to mere supplicants²¹. Paradoxically (and mostly unintentionally), presenting refugees primarily as recipients of humanitarian aid, as highly vulnerable or as victims to be rescued, enables the potential host (country) to regard them as ineligible for rights and claims, because their legitimate claim to asylum remains underemphasized.²²

Children in the pond: morality tales of humanitarian intervention

Between a humanitarian and a (human) rights-based approach to refugee reception and perception, a tension emerges alongside the popular parable of the drowning child. This story takes on manifold variations, in the media as much as in political and NGO discourses, in an effort to argue for cross-border refugee protection. In its original form, the parable was devised by the Australian philosopher Peter Singer, who used it to explore questions of international moral responsibility.²³ Singer argues that most of us would immediately help a child drowning in a pond if we happened to walk by at that very moment, even if it came at a personal cost (such as getting our

own clothes wet and dirty or risking hypothermia). Compared to what would happen if we did not act (namely the potential death of the child), these costs are relatively small. At a moral level, the situation seems less clear-cut when we think of children in need in the Global South or in refugee camps. In these instances, we do not necessarily feel obliged to help by, for example, foregoing excessive consumption to mitigate its effect on poorer countries, or by donating to or hosting refugees.

According to Singer, however, this spatial differentiation is morally irrelevant. It should not matter to the moral calculus whether the child is about to die right before our eyes or several thousand miles away. The objective value of a human life cannot be measured by its (geographical or emotional) proximity to us. 'If it is within our power to prevent something terrible without sacrificing something of comparable moral significance,' as Singer maintains in this famous 'child in the pond' comparison, 'then we should do it'.²⁴ Undoubtedly, as he further argues, people in the Global North have the kind of power to help prevent such 'terrible things' from happening in the world via their consumer and voting behaviour, through development aid and donations, as well as with refugee acceptance.

The 'child in the pond' analogy has repeatedly been used to argue for activism and refugee aid, much like the comparison of refugees with an infant abandoned on one's doorstep in the middle of winter.²⁵ Surely, the reasoning goes, we would not hesitate to take the baby inside, regardless of the costs this may incur in the end. In a similar way, activists and researchers alike draw upon parallels from the pond analogy to dramatize the moral stakes of helping refugees. For instance, the German philosopher Matthias Hoesch argues that '[t]hrough no fault of their own, they have come into a situation in which they are dependent on the help of others'.²⁶ This would entail that whether one suffers from political persecution or from famine is an irrelevant distance, as in either case basic human needs are threatened.

In recent years, both scholars within refugee and forced migration studies have questioned these moral thought experiments.²⁷ Singer's 'child in the pond' comparison now seems particularly cynical, given the sheer number of actual deaths by drowning in the Mediterranean. But even Hoesch's less drastic diagnosis is based on several central, yet unspoken assumptions that continue to shape our perceptions and tales of forced migration and refugees. First and foremost, the moral system mandates that the emergency situation from which refugees flee must by no means appear 'self-inflicted'. According to this view, which tends to dominate mainstream media, 'self-inflicted' typically includes all reasons for emigration that are not covered by the Geneva Refugee Convention, which would turn refugees into (much less accepted) 'economic migrants'. In this narrow reading, even push factors – such as famine and

natural catastrophes – qualify as ‘self-inflicted’, insofar as they do not stem from persecution ‘for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion’, as the Geneva Refugee Convention defines the reasons for asylum.²⁸

Secondly, according to Hoesch’s moral assertion, basic needs must be ‘acutely threatened’.²⁹ In the absence of other actors in the analogy, it is up to the one who passes by the pond to judge whether this is the case. The person in need has no authority to interpret and present their plight on their own terms. This interpretation builds upon the available moral authority of the passing witness, which is by no means guaranteed. Finally, the third and last deduction that follows from the parable is the one which is the most consequential and, at the same time, most unstable: Refugees are passively affected and have little or no possibility to act. The passer-by, who can either decide to jump courageously into the pond or to continue their stroll, is an agent in the best sense. The child drowning in the pond, however, is incapable of action. Much as the comparison stresses a moral obligation to help and protect, it thus infantilizes refugees by regarding the globally displaced as weak victims in need of protection and incapable of action.³⁰

This deprivation of agency and self-efficacy – in other words, depriving refugees of their power to act and thus make a difference – can be conceptualized as a form of dehumanization. Though a much subtler one than the one we witness at Europe’s borders or in the radicalizing speeches of the far right, it is, nevertheless, dehumanization at its core. This follows especially when one understands the ability to act, based upon desires and goals, as a basic element of what makes us human. In the above-mentioned moral analogies, this ability to act is denied to refugees, while at the same time, their aspirations and goals are excluded from the decision-making process of a potential rescuer (to jump into the pond or not). As Jessica Gustafsson relates in this issue, in her article on the narrative podcast project *Flyktpodden*, a key challenge for refugee communities remains the struggle to act by asserting a voice that matters,³¹ one that is ‘valued, attended to and recognised’.³²

Within the refugee paradox, both voice and agency are routinely denied to refugees, so that the only ‘tales’ about them become those told by others, spun by media and political debates, such as the one on ‘burden sharing’,³³ i.e. the ‘fair’ distribution of refugees within the EU to ‘relieve’ member states with external borders. Within the nation states, similar debates emerge regarding the efforts to carry out a nationwide distribution of asylum-seekers between federal states, provinces, and municipalities. Every town and every village, so they argue, must bear its fair share of the burden of refugees.³⁴ While residents will, in most instances, be given a

say in the matter – at the very least through petitions, protests, media coverage, local elections, and the ballot – those who are subject to this distribution assemblage are typically excluded from any decision-making process. Just like the child in the pond, they must be happy to be rescued (and distributed) at all.

Under such circumstances, tales of seeking and finding refuge seem to lack what Hannah Arendt considers essential for avoiding extreme evil or banal stupidity, namely ‘to imagine what is actually going on with the other person’.³⁵ Arendt sees radical evil as nourished by an unwillingness, or even an inability, to put oneself in the place of (actual, visible, and tangible) others. In her view, this inability amounts to ‘outrageous stupidity’,³⁶ paving the way to comprehensive, total evil. She understands the idea of putting oneself in someone else’s place as basic empathy, which, however, requires some sort of equal footing as its foundation. Only equality in the most fundamental sense would enable connections to emerge and hence to overcome (personal, but even more so political) isolation. If refugees are consistently denied basic equality as humans, due to constant dehumanization, infantilization, and victimization, creating spaces that allow empathy to emerge becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible.

The economic vs. humanitarian tale

To locate better this (un)equal footing that forms a basis for empathy and humanization, one can always turn to the similarly paradoxical undercurrents within economic debates. In this context, the refugee paradox revolves around the ongoing effort to avoid ‘conflating’ forced with voluntary migration. According to this logic, a refugee should by no means have economic reasons for leaving their country, but only ones based on personal persecution. If the reasons for fleeing are recognized as legitimate and asylum is granted, the host society demands that refugees integrate into the labour market as quickly as possible, become taxpayers, and start contributing to the welfare state. At the same time, political analysts on both sides of the political spectrum reject the system of ‘economizations’ that undergird the refugee question – for example by emphasizing newcomers’ human capital (i.e., their skills, qualifications, and thus employability). While some worry that refugees’ advent will put domestic workers at a disadvantage and lead to wage dumping, others reject ‘economizing’ human beings, as this process indirectly denies refugees their impulse for self-preservation and self-realization. Such drives necessarily rely upon one’s professional career.

Public discourse often pits the trope of the ‘economic migrant’ against the ‘real refugee’.³⁷ The former supposedly takes up space that belongs to the latter, tying up resources, clogging the asylum system, and blocking access entirely for those who truly need protection. This pervasive narrative regarding refugees does not do justice to the complexity of (forced) migration dynamics.³⁸ At the same time, it buys into and fosters the prevailing myth of an ‘overburdened’ asylum system at its limits and of European host countries ‘running out of space’ for newcomers. In its extreme version, this creates artificial emergencies and a constant sense of crisis through images and narratives of a ‘mass exodus’.

As several studies have shown,³⁹ the distinction between ‘economic migrants’, on the one hand, and ‘refugees’, on the other, is not only questionable due to the assumed ‘voluntary’ nature of departure. It continues to be an arbitrary (albeit a structurally necessary) one, even after entering the host country.⁴⁰ In reality, labour and refugee migration must be conceptualized as communicating, rather than structurally separate, categories⁴¹. Hence, in view of the effectiveness of integration policies and the immigration perspective, one might find it useful to rely less heavily upon a rigid separation between humanitarian and labour migration. Work is a central driving force for integration, and a new language is more easily acquired at the workplace, among teammates and colleagues. Traumatic experiences, from which many refugees suffer before or during their journey to Europe, can be more readily overcome if meaningful activities in the host country are possible, as they help build agency, a strong social network and daily routines, all of which, in turn, re-create and improve mental confidence and resilience. This is particularly important for young refugees, who are fit and willing to work, thereby (potentially) counteracting the increase in social and healthcare expenditures of an ageing society.⁴²

Despite this wealth of evidence, the labour market ban for asylum-seekers persists as a particularly salient tale in European host countries. Its permanence exemplifies the extent to which the democratic paradox,⁴³ whereby members of a nation state decide on laws with supranational effects, regulates questions of social, economic, and cultural inclusion and exclusion. Border demarcation by the nation state also controls social participation and belonging in a figurative sense, stretching beyond the official, regulatory border regime.⁴⁴ Even after inclusion within its geographic borders, the state continues to govern mobility and movement in multiple ways, both at the level of state government (such as through access controls to public institutions) and at the level of material resources, such as access to the welfare system, labour market, and health services.⁴⁵

In this context, it is pertinent to add that migration policy and discourses, as well as migration studies as an academic discipline, take part in constructing the refugee paradox. They do so by producing evidence that validates, for instance, distinctions between voluntary and involuntary migration, or helps bolster ‘humanitarian’ versus ‘economic’ arguments around refugee reception. As Hatton (2018) convincingly argues, modes of knowledge production and their relation to state agencies and (inter)national policy responses are key considerations in the academic field of migration and refugee studies.⁴⁶ Not only can the latter lay open contradictions in the discursive production of ‘the refugee’, like the present article strives to do, but it may simultaneously erect, fortify, and naturalize new and existing paradoxes. As migration scholars’ voices have become increasingly prominent in public debates on refugee reception, settlement and integration in Europe,⁴⁷ i.e. the ‘tales’ about and around refugees, their representations must remain open to critique just like political and humanitarian contributions.

The do-it-yourself refugee

The evidence of internal contradictions that shape exclusion and mobility control is even sharper at Europe’s borders and in the countless refugee camps it maintains at its fringes. Universal, fundamental claims cannot be asserted here either. Rather, refugees are kept permanently immobile and are thus further constructed as passive, receptive, acquiescent, and unable to act, contributing to the refugee paradox. Refugees are thus produced as inactive recipients of aid, from whom passivity is expected (because Europe knowingly and willingly encourages it). At the same time, their deliberately produced inactivity is used against them as soon as their asylum procedure is finalized and as soon as they are expected to integrate into the destination country.

But even within the refugee camps, such paradoxical tales are already constructed. Transformations of large, permanent camps like Zaatari in North Jordan into more or less functioning cities with their own stores, schools, and even start-ups exemplify this, as they are meant to illustrate the unwavering will, even indeed the ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ of refugees. Zaatari, with its approximately 80,000 residents, grew to become Jordan’s fourth-largest city, boasting a busy main street ironically referred to as the Champs-Élysées. While its residents nevertheless see it as a slum⁴⁸, it garnered international attention by hosting such diverse activities as upcycling workshops for single parents, urban farming, 3D-printing for prosthetics, art and photography exhibitions, as well as fashion and robotics workshops.⁴⁹

The colourful potpourri of opportunities for gainful employment and leisure cannot, however, conceal a central paradox at the core of refugee camps like Zataari, namely that refugees are encouraged to settle into a state of permanent lawlessness and statelessness, while being expected to showcase supreme agency and self-reliance. Again, Bauman offers a valuable critique of refugee warehousing, considering camps can never function as permanent solutions. He refers to the displaced as ‘the superfluous’ in the globalized world, because they do not and must not belong, their housing rests outside of ‘normal’ society. ‘Since they cannot be physically destroyed [...], they must be isolated, neutralised, and disempowered, so that the likelihood that their massive but individually experienced hardships and indignities could be condensed into collective (and even effective) protest is further reduced, and ideally reduced to zero’,⁵⁰ as he argues. His critique succinctly addresses the proliferation of permanent rather than temporary camps at the periphery of the Global North.

At the same time, however, another refugee tale emerges that contradicts Bauman’s assertion. The notion that camps disempower refugees into a state of utter isolation and (political) neutralization implicitly plays into the discourse of the utterly destitute, vulnerable, passive victim. Instead, what undermines these observations is the obvious power that camp residents have in shaping and acting upon their circumstances, thereby challenging the image of the ‘drowning child in the pond’. Refugees’ aspirations animate their activities and endeavours, and they demonstrate strength and resilience through the act of fleeing their countries. This rather uncommon tale of refugee ingenuity generates glowing media coverage, such as an article carried in 2014 in the *New York Times*, which refers to Zaatari as a ‘Do It Yourself City’.⁵¹ While celebrating the fact that people who seek international protection have to ‘build and design’ their own shelter can (and should) elicit suspicion, such a tale of self-efficacy does present a useful outlook on displacement. For the emphasis on ‘doing’ is rarely found in the prevailing asylum regime, as actual aspirations and decision-making are imparted upon refugees when they are conceptualized as moral patients, rather than moral agents.

In the dominant refugee tales, the power to act and to exert self-efficacy – a power which enables refugees’ self-determined emigration and their long, dangerous journey to safety – is rarely seen as admirable courage. Instead of being recognized as embodying ‘strength and intelligence and versatility and imagination and love of life’, as Peter Waterhouse has it,⁵² their actions are evaluated as reprehensible risk-taking, endangering their own lives and/or their children’s. The weighing of risks that necessarily precedes such a decision – of potentially losing one’s child to war vs.

during a crossing of the Mediterranean – seems to lie beyond the scope of the European imagination. It is this ‘inability [...] to think in the place of everyone else’ that Hannah Arendt had in mind when conceptualizing evil as ‘outrageous stupidity’.⁵³ In her view, such an attitude is not only ‘thoughtless’ and out of touch with reality; rather it amounts to a comprehensive intellectual deficiency, namely to be unable to think, judge, and act morally and politically at all.⁵⁴

This dramatic degree of self-efficacy informs the construction of a person as ‘refugee’. After all, someone who actively, and under much duress, manages to leave a situation of coercion and oppression powered by their own energy, resources, and connections, is quite incompatible with the image of the drowning child. As another nuance in the refugee paradox, this aspect exemplifies that there is hardly anything more self-determined than the act of fleeing; yet, at the same time, no one lives under more passive and immobilizing conditions than refugees. In this context, the ‘emancipatory potential of refugees’⁵⁵ helps shed light on an understanding of forced migration, or indeed forced emigration, as a political act and the opposite of passivity. The departure is a self-determined reaction to the political conditions on the ground, be they war, persecution or general lack of freedom. Refugees take a clear stance against the state that proves incapable of protecting its citizens. Fleeing a country is thus an expression of political resistance and, with recourse to Michel Foucault,⁵⁶ a clear challenge to national power relations. Refugees permanently reject the state’s power, since by fleeing (and, as a consequence, applying for protection under the Geneva Convention) they reject their original citizenship. A notably absent refugee tale is thus one that questions how organs of state power de-politicize refugees – a pattern so normalized in the current asylum regime.

Unheard tales: the political actor

One could argue that both political action and political activism are already inscribed in the Geneva Refugee Convention as defining features of who qualifies as ‘refugee’. In fact, the Convention was initially criticized for its implicit focus on the young, politically active man⁵⁷ fleeing persecution by his government. Historically, this invited feminist criticism,⁵⁸ as women were either not included at all, or, if they were, cast solely as apolitical bargaining chips or hangers-on. Nowadays, however, it is precisely those ‘young politically active men’ that some host countries seem to want to exclude from international protection altogether.

Since the ratification of the Geneva Refugee Convention after the Second World War, the political focus within the international protection regime gradually changed

to a humanitarian one. This shift largely developed out of changing political conditions, such as the dissolution of the bipolar world order of Western powers and the Eastern bloc (Betts 2013), making the Geneva Refugee Convention a 'product of the manifest interests by sovereign states at the beginning of the Cold War'.⁵⁹ In addition, the refugee's origin is a factor to consider. Whereas the politically persecuted, heroic exile was predominantly conceived as a white European male at the time when the Convention was drafted, today's refugees mostly stem from Africa or the Middle East. As such, they are mainly perceived as recipients of humanitarian handouts, if not even as 'waves', 'storms', or 'floods' threatening the European order⁶⁰. The stark distinction between Black or Brown 'asylum seekers' from the Global South and white 'displaced persons' from Ukraine in spring 2022 also reflected this historical evolution within common refugee tales. Indeed, the development from heroic exile to threatening and/or weak refugee can be traced over the course of the twentieth century, as can the change in the dominant discourse from one of acceptance to one of defence⁶¹. As Helga Ramsey-Kurz demonstrates in this special issue, refugees' own life writing can serve as a powerful corrective to their narrative construction as danger to or nuisance for the nation state, while at the same time prioritizing collectivity and communality over individualistic authorship.

Furthermore, refugees may not only express themselves through writing in the traditional sense, but also by leaving their countries due to political persecution, and by arriving in the countries of destination as (irregular) political actors. Such actions take the form of, for example, demanding their right to asylum, thereby forming a political and legal claim. This struggle for recognition can be understood as an action, not only in the abstract and philosophical sense but also in a more profane one. In contrast to tales of refugees passively waiting for their procedure to be finalized, a time during which they subsist on state handouts and spend their days in limbo, many of them are actively involved in the asylum procedure, be it through legal support, lobbying, activation of social and financial resources, or protests.⁶²

The latter is a particularly striking example, since protesting implies claiming and exerting rights, and refugees demand them by the very act of claiming them. In response to undocumented migrants' strikes in the USA, Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak describe protests by non-citizens as 'performative contradictions', which can also be applied to asylum seekers: 'They have no right of free speech under the law although they are speaking freely, precisely in order to demand the right to speak freely'.⁶³ Refugees protest to be accepted in a community that would allow free speech and political protest in the first place. In this very active role, refugees act as holders of rights they have not yet been formally granted.⁶⁴ To remain within the initial

metaphor offered by Singer, this perspective also transforms the passer-by at the pond, who could just as well decide against jumping in, into the addressee of concrete (legal) claims and demands. As a result, a form of reciprocity emerges that analogies like the drowning child parable cannot grasp. The right to asylum thus becomes visible as a political right and not as a purely humanitarian gesture.

Claiming political rights will, of course, affect the political community from which they are claimed. Through the pressure they exert in demanding asylum, refugees who are not (yet) part of the community, influence the way that receiving communities shape their asylum and integration practices. It is therefore short-sighted to characterize refugees as ‘mere flotsam and jetsam’, as Peter Gatrell argues,⁶⁵ since by their very presence they affect the host country. The example Gatrell offers is Russia during the First World War, when numerous minorities, including Ukrainians, Armenians, Jews, Poles, and Latvians, fought for (the independence of) their nation states, which they were eventually granted. They hence literally ‘made’ their states as refugees. Some of these exiled and displaced people who, at that time, led or supported refugee aid programs, founded cultural and religious organizations or started educational initiatives, later took political office in the Soviet Union.

Today, the arrival of refugees demands that national governments offer solutions in terms of integration and economic support as well as development cooperation⁶⁶. It was only in response to the arrival of thousands of refugees in the autumn and winter of 2015 that many European governments felt compelled to pass laws and draft policies to regulate the mutual rights and obligations between the state and the newcomers, and to streamline integration processes. Similarly, Europe’s civil society was strengthened by the influx of and provision for refugees⁶⁷ and proved to be an important support structure when host countries had to cope with the next crises, such as the Coronavirus pandemic or the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine. Without the ‘long summer of migration’, citizens’ contributions to effective crisis response would probably not have been this strong and streamlined, nor would host countries have had refugee essential workers in critical infrastructure such as nursing and harvesting to fall back onto during national lockdowns. ‘Refugee history is everyone’s history’, as Stonebridge argues,⁶⁸ thus calling to mind that the history of those who endured persecution and displacement is inextricably linked to the history of the states that took them in – or even just repelled them.

Conclusion

While displacement always happens with a degree of compulsion and can therefore never be classified as voluntary, the actual decision of when, in what ways, and how it happens nevertheless involves action and deliberation. It is for this reason that recent research, in particular with a view to climate-induced mobility, conceptualizes (forced) migration as an adaptation or even indeed a survival strategy.⁶⁹ Migration and mobility are always also an opportunity. These forces also call upon the destination country to stand by its democratic values and legal obligations. Not by chance, one could argue, did the refugees stranded in the Polish-Belarusian border region in the winter of 2021 spark ‘another rule of law crisis’⁷⁰ in Poland. Refugees therefore exhibited, at the moment of immobilization between two competing power blocs, their own form of (self-) efficacy and agency.

Refugees are thus a litmus test for modern democracies, exposing the tale of pure victimhood as incomplete, even grotesque – despite host countries going to great lengths to maintain and foster it. A much more accurate tale pays tribute to refugees’ central political function, namely to ‘point to the contradictions, limits, and blind spots of political communities’⁷¹. Their actions thus expose deficits and gaps in the existing democratic order as well as the paradoxes inherent to our democracy. Refugees lay bare institutional deficits because they stand, by definition, outside the community of states and thus challenge both the regime they left behind and the one they seek to be included in.⁷² By their very presence, refugees reveal where the dangers to modern democracies lurk.

In addition to potential dangers on the horizon, refugees also reveal the abyss that has already been created, namely by continuously violating asylum and human rights, outsourcing responsibility, ignoring excesses of violence, suspending the rule of law, tolerating moral neglect and furthering what sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer refers to as ‘the brutalisation of society’, the title of his book of the same name.⁷³ Tales that portray refugees as apolitical, ahistorical, and uncritical – as mere recipients of alms and arbitrary acts of mercy – because they are outside of citizenship or between two citizenships must be exposed as cynical and unsubstantiated. For, in fact, the figure of the refugee is ‘not an object of pity, but a theoretical perspective on a shattered world’⁷⁴, as Ned Curthoys argues. Perhaps, as one might conclude from the refugee paradox, this is precisely why Europe continues to invest in defence and deterrence. For who among us likes to be shown their own potential destruction, even more so when it has so evidently been self-inflicted.

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Notes

¹ Arendt, Hannah, 'Es gibt nur ein einziges Menschenrecht', in: *Wandlung* 4 (December 1949) 754-770, 757.

² Cf. Kohlenberger, Judith, *Das Fluchtparadox: Über unseren widersprüchlichen Umgang mit Vertreibung und Vertriebenen*, Wien: Kremayr & Scheriau, 2022.

³ Scherr, Albert, 'Grenzziehungen: Soziologie der paradoxen Forderung nach offenen Grenzen', in: Kersting, Daniel and Marcus Leuoth (eds.), *Der Begriff des Flüchtlings: Rechtliche, moralische und politische Kontroversen*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2020, 137-155.

⁴ Beauvoir, Simone de, *The Second Sex*, New York: Vintage, 1997.

⁵ Barnett, Michael, 'Humanitarianism with a Sovereign Face: UNHCF in the Global Undertow', in: *International Migration Review* 35:1 (2001) 244-277; Foucault, Michel, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, New York: St Martin's Press, 2008.

⁶ Cox, Emma et al., *Refugee Imaginaries: Research Across the Humanities*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2021.

⁷ Dobusch, Laura and Katharina Kreissl, 'Privilege and Burden of Im-/Mobility Governance: On the Reinforcement of Inequalities During a Pandemic Lockdown', in: *Gender, Work & Organization* 27:5 (September 2020) 709–716.

⁸ Bauman, Zygmunt, 'Making and Unmaking of Strangers', in: *Thesis Eleven* 43:1 (1995) 1–16.

⁹ Farris, Sara R., 'Femonationalism and the "Regular Army" Called Migrant Women', in: *History of the Present* 2:2 (2012) 184–199.

¹⁰ Vollmer, Bastian A, 'A Hermeneutical Approach to European Bordering', in: *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25:1 (2017) 1–15, 4.

¹¹ Balibar, Étienne and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Rasse, Klasse, Nation: Ambivalente Identitäten*, Hamburg: Argument, 1990.

¹² Spahl, Wanda et al., 'Immigration and the Social Welfare State in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland: A Comparative Meta-Study', in: *Vienna Institute of Demography Working Papers* 18, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017, 1–33.

¹³ Oudejans, Nanda, *Asylum: A Philosophical Inquiry into the International Protection of Refugees*, Oisterwijk: Boxpress, 2011.

¹⁴ Müller-Funk, Lea, 'Possibilities and Limitations of an Emerging Research Agenda on Migration and Aspirations in Contexts of Displacement and Constrained Mobility', unpublished talk, *18th IMISCOE Annual Conference*, 8 July 2021, Belval, Luxemburg.

¹⁵ Kohlenberger, 2022.

¹⁶ Nowak, Manfred and Antonia Walter, 'Flucht und Asyl in der Geschichte der Menschenrechte', in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 28:2 (2017) 170–192.

¹⁷ Gowayed, Heba, 'The Human Toll of War', *The New Humanitarian*, 28 February 2022, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/02/28/human-toll-war>, date accessed: 29 October 2022.

¹⁸ The term 'refugee regime' describes implicit as well as explicit principles, norms, rules, and codes of conduct governing forced migration (Krasner, Stephen D. (ed.), *International Regimes*, Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1983.). In a broader understanding that this paper follows, it also includes socio-economic conditions for different forms of mobility as well as their social organization. The idea of the 'international refugee regime' dates back to 1921, when the League of Nations, which emerged from the Paris Peace Conference, legally defined the term 'refugee' and subsequently created an international legal regime for persecution and displacement (Barnett, Laura, 'Global Governance and the Evolution of the International Refugee Regime', in: *International Journal of Refugee Law* 14: 2–3 (2002) 238–262; Feller, Erica, 'International Refugee Protection 50 Years On: The Protection Challenges of the Past, Present, and Future', in: *International Review of the Red Cross* 83:843 (September 2001) 581–606.). In its modern sense, the refugee regime describes a 'national-international institutional structure' (Kuzmany, Börries, and Rita Garstenauer, 'Nichts Neues in Österreich: Wandel und Konstanten in der Bewältigung von Flüchtlingskrisen in den letzten dreihundert Jahren', in: Kuzmany, Börries and Rita Garstenauer (eds.), *Aufnahmeland Österreich: Über den Umgang mit Massenflucht seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2017, 7–41, 36; my translation.) and regulates the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of countries of origin and host countries (and, in more recent manifestations, transit countries) of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of asylum.

¹⁹ Fassin, Didier, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2012.

²⁰ Cherem, Max, 'Refugee Rights. Against Expanding the Definition of a "Refugee" and Unilateral Protection Elsewhere', in: *Journal of Political Philosophy* 24:2 (June 2016) 183–205.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Kersting, Daniel, "'Flüchtling" – Einführung in einen umkämpften Begriff', in: Kersting, Daniel and Marcus Leuoth (eds.), *Der Begriff des Flüchtlings: Rechtliche, moralische und politische Kontroversen*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Springer, 2020, 1–40.

²³ Singer, Peter, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality', in: *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1:3 (1972) 229–243; Singer, Peter, *Praktische Ethik*, 2nd edition, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994.

²⁴ Singer, 1994.

²⁵ Cf. Betts, Alexander and Paul Collier, *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System*, London: Penguin, 2018; Gibney, Matthew J, 'Refugees and Justice Between States', in: *European Journal of Political Theory* 14:4 (2015) 448–463.

²⁶ Hoesch, Matthias, 'Allgemeine Hilfspflichten, territoriale Gerechtigkeit und Wiedergutmachung: Drei Kriterien für eine faire Verteilung von Flüchtlingen – und wann sie irrelevant werden', in: Grundmann, Thomas and Achim Stephan (eds.), *Welche und wie viele Flüchtlinge sollen wir aufnehmen? Philosophische Essays*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016, 15–29, 25.

²⁷ Kersting, 2020; Breitenstein, Peggy H., 'Bilder halten uns gefangen – und andere draußen. Ideen zu einer philosophischen Kritik der politischen Sprache', in: Kersting, Daniel and Marcus Leuoth (eds.),

Der Begriff des Flüchtlings: Rechtliche, Moralische und Politische Kontroversen, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2020, 179–198.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, 'Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees', *United Nations, Treaty Series*, 189 (28 July 1951), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>, date accessed: 11 July 2023.

²⁹ Hoesch, 2016, 25.

³⁰ In view of the troubling undercurrent of such analogies, Peggy Breitenstein (2020) characterizes the role refugees are thus forced to perform as one of moral patients – a role typically attributed to children, animals or the terminally ill – as opposed to moral agents.

³¹ Couldry, Nick, *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism*, Los Angeles & London: Sage, 2010.

³² Dreher, Tanja, 'A Partial Promise of Voice: Digital Storytelling and the Limits of Listening', in: *Media International Australia* 142:1 (2012) 157–166, 159.

³³ Breitenstein, 2020.

³⁴ Rosenberger, Sieglinde, 'Umstrittene Relocation aus Moria. Proteste gegen die konservativ-grüne Regierungspolitik in Österreich', in: *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 34:4 (2021) 1–10.

³⁵ Arendt, Hannah qtd in Arendt, Hannah and Joachim Fest, *Eichmann war von empörender Dummheit. Gespräche und Briefe*, München: Piper, 2011, 44; my translation.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 45.

³⁷ Kortendiek, Nele, *Problematische Paradoxe*, ZU Daily, 2021.

³⁸ Carling, Jørgen and Kerilyn Schewel, 'Revisiting Aspiration and Ability in International Migration', in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44:6 (2018) 945–963; De Haas, Hein, 'A Theory of Migration: The Aspirations-Capabilities Framework', in: *Comparative Migration Studies* 9:8 (2021) 1–35.

³⁹ Cf. De Haas, 2021.

⁴⁰ Indeed, decoupling asylum status from labour market access remains the norm in several European countries, such as Sweden, where asylum seekers are allowed to work (and support themselves) as early as three days after arrival. In Switzerland, this is the case after three months. In the EU, Ukrainian displaced persons, whose protection status fell under the category of 'temporary' (and must be renewed every six months), receive immediate labour market access, even though they require an easily issued employment permit in most countries. Thus, the right to work that refugees also enjoy can be ensured in such a way that both humanitarian and economic concerns are met. In fact, the EU Reception Directive stipulates that asylum seekers must be granted access to the labour market no later than nine months after the start of the asylum procedure (Directive 2013/33/EU) – a guideline that has, so far, not been met in the majority of EU member states.

⁴¹ Czaika, Mathias and Hein de Haas, 'The Effectiveness of Immigration Policies', in: *Population and Development Review* 39:3 (September 2013) 487–508; Kohlenberger, 2022.

⁴² Kohlenberger, Judith, 'Gesundheit', in: Tabea Scharrer et al. (eds.), *Flucht- und Flüchtlingsforschung: Handbuch für Wissenschaft und Studium*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2023, n.p.

⁴³ Mouffe, Chantal, *Das demokratische Paradox*, Wien & Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2008.

⁴⁴ Mezzadra, Sandro and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Durham & London: Duke UP, 2013.

⁴⁵ Scherr, 2020.

⁴⁶ Hatton, Joshua, 'MARS attacks. A cautionary tale from the UK on the relation between Migration and Refugee Studies (MARS) and migration control', in: *Movements* 4:1 (2018) 103–129.

⁴⁷ Scholten, Peter, 'Policy Relations and Migration Studies', in: Zapata-Barrero, Ricard and Evren Yalaz (eds.), *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies*, Cham: Springer, 2018, 287–302.

⁴⁸ Crisp, Jeff, 'Zaatari: A Camp and not a City', *Refugees International Blog*, 9 October 2015, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/zaatari-a-camp-and-not-a-city/>, date accessed: 26 December 2022.

⁴⁹ Betts, Alexander, Louise Bloom and Nina Weaver, 'Innovation at Zaatari: How do Refugees Make Tents and Caravans into Homes?', *The Guardian*, 22 July 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/global->

development-professionals-network/2015/jul/22/zaatari-refugee-camp-jordan-creativity-innovation, date accessed: 29 October 2022.

⁵⁰ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Discomfort in Postmodernity*, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999, 107.

⁵¹ Kimmelman, Michael, 'Refugee Camp Evolves as a Do-It-Yourself City', *The New York Times*, 5 July 2014,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/world/middleeast/zaatari-refugee-camp-in-jordan-evolves-as-a-do-it-yourself-city.html>, date accessed: 29 October 2022.

⁵² Waterhouse, Peter, 'Versuch über Flucht und Recht und Sprache', in: Kersting, Daniel and Marcus Leuoth (eds.), *Der Begriff des Flüchtlings: Rechtliche, moralische und politische Kontroversen*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2020, 99–112, 110.

⁵³ Arendt qtd in Arendt and Fest, 2011, 45; my translation.

⁵⁴ Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen* [1964], München: Piper, 2011.

⁵⁵ Riemann, Moritz, 'Schutz (o)der Freiheit? Flucht und politisches Handeln', in: Kersting, Daniel and Marcus Leuoth (eds.), *Der Begriff des Flüchtlings: Rechtliche, moralische und politische Kontroversen*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2020, 215–227, 221; my translation.

⁵⁶ Foucault, Michel, *Was ist Kritik?*, Berlin: Merve Verlag, 1992.

⁵⁷ Kersting, 2020.

⁵⁸ Krause, Ulrike, 'Die Flüchtling – der Flüchtling als Frau. Genderreflexiver Zugang', in: Ghaderi, Cinur and Thomas Eppenstein (eds.), *Flüchtlinge: Multiperspektivische Zugänge*, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017, 79–93.

⁵⁹ Kersting, 2020, 9; my translation.

⁶⁰ Fischer, Carolin, 'The Flood of Refugees in our Heads: Metaphorical Framing of Refugees in German Newspaper Discourse', in: *Journalism Research* 3:1 (2020) 29–45.

⁶¹ Stonebridge, Lyndsey, *Placeless People: Writing, Rights and Refugees*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018.

⁶² Kersting, 2020.

⁶³ Butler, Judith and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging*, New York: Seagulls Books, 2007, 64.

⁶⁴ Balibar, Étienne, "'Menschenrechte" und "Bürgerrechte". Zur modernen Dialektik von Freiheit und Gleichheit', in: Menke, Christoph and Francesca Raimondi (eds.), *Die Revolution der Menschenrechte. Grundlegende Texte zu einem neuen Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011, 279–305.; Rancière, Jacques, 'Wer ist das Subjekt der Menschenrechte?', in: Menke, Christoph and Francesca Raimondi (eds.), *Die Revolution der Menschenrechte. Grundlegende Texte zu einem neuen Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011, 474–490.

⁶⁵ Gatrell, Peter, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013, 283.

⁶⁶ Gatrell, Peter, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999.

⁶⁷ Simsa, Ruth, 'Beiträge der Zivilgesellschaft zur Bewältigung der Flüchtlingskrise in Österreich. Herausforderungen und gesellschaftliche Rahmenbedingungen', in: *Sozialwissenschaftliche Rundschau* 3 (2016) 343–361.

⁶⁸ Stonebridge, Lyndsey, 'Refugee Genealogies: Introduction', in: Emma Cox et al. (eds.), *Refugee Imaginaries: Research Across the Humanities*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2021, 15–17, 15.

⁶⁹ Vinke, Kira et al., 'Migration as Adaptation?', in: *Migration Studies* 8:4 (December 2020) 626–634.

⁷⁰ Schmalz, Dana, 'Die andere Rechtsstaatlichkeitskrise', *Verfassungsblog*, 2021,

<https://verfassungsblog.de/die-andere-rechtsstaatlichkeitskrise/>, date accessed: 29 October 2022; my translation.

⁷¹ Schulze Wessel, Julia, *Grenzfiguren. Zur politischen Theorie des Flüchtlings*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2017, 43; my translation.

⁷² Loick, Daniel, 'Wir Flüchtlinge: Überlegungen zu einer Bürgerschaft jenseits des Nationalstaats', in: *Leviathan* 45:4 (2017) 574–591.

⁷³ Heitmeyer, Wilhelm, *Die Durchrohung der Gesellschaft*, Berlin: edition Suhrkamp, 2023.

⁷⁴ Curthoys, Ned, 'Theories of the Refugee, After Hannah Arendt', in: Emma Cox et al. (eds.), *Refugee Imaginaries: Research Across the Humanities*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2021, 36–49, 47.