

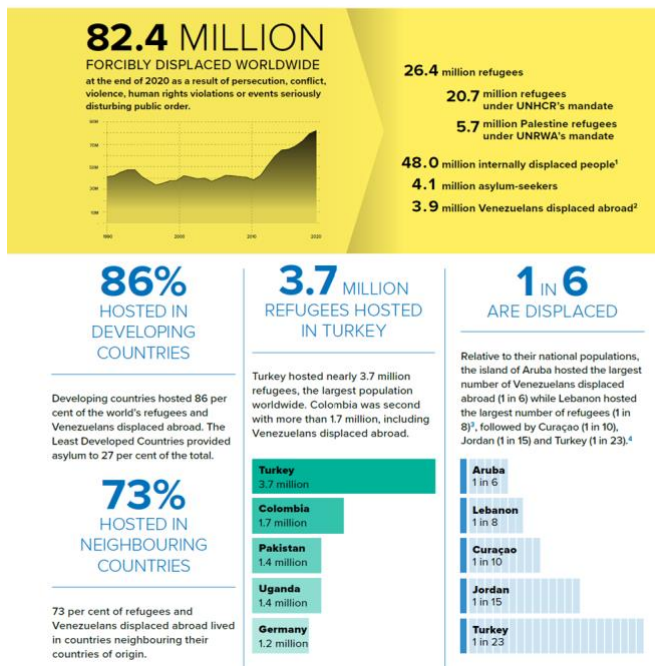
“Introduction through Optimistic Numbers: SDG 4, 2030, and The Other 5%”

Johanna Fassl
Franklin University Switzerland

KEY WORDS: SDG 4, UNHCR, tertiary education, university, migration, refugee, reflection

I started to write this introduction in mid-August of 2021 and made a pretty good start when the images of Afghans clinging to an US Force airplane in a disparate attempt to flee the Taliban rule brought my writing to a halt. The graphic images visualized the failure of Euro-American strategic thinking in Afghanistan and became the powerful symbols of yet another humane tragedy that the West’s procrastination failed to prevent. On August 27th UNHCR launched a Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan which envisages a worst-case scenario of 500’000 Afghan refugees arriving in neighboring countries by the end of the year. I picked up the pen again in September after a three-day symposium at Franklin University Switzerland, which took a look at the SDGs from the perspective within the context of environmental and social justice. At stake for this volume is Goal Number 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” How to design, plan, and deliver value formation for all and especially how to get access to secondary education for displaced students up to the 15% benchmark that UNHCR plans to reach in 2030. Without secondary education, there is no tertiary education and the current number of 5% of displaced students enrolled in higher education will stagnate or even fall. Before addressing the contributions by the authors in this volume, this introduction highlights the alarming numbers when it comes to forced migration that down one’s hope that 2030, which is almost around the corner, will be the maker for having made a significant difference.

Trends at a Glance



Source: UNCR “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020,” <https://www.unhcr.org/60b638e37/unhcr-global-trends-2020>.

In 2020 UNHCR counted 281 million international migrants, which makes up for 3.6 percent of the global population. There are 128 million more migrants than 30 years ago in 1990 and migration has tripled since 1970. Migration is not all negative: we live, study, and work in countries other than where we were born; we cross borders every day to get to and from work; we travel to conferences, meetings or for leisure and to enrich our lives; we cover great distances to reunite with loved ones or decide to stay with a special one in a foreign country. We move by choice for economic, professional, and private reasons, also because we seek political climates that grant more freedom of expression. Voluntary movement for a better existence, luckily, makes up for most migration. But it is the 82.4 Million forced migrants (equaling the total population of

Germany) that were counted in 2020 that make up for a human tragedy that has doubled since the beginning of the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011. It currently seems to be sliding off the radar given the continuous waves of the Covid-19 pandemic and the pressing issues caused by climate change. Forced migration is also an effect of climate change, however, not counted as such but in dire need official recognition.

In 2020, out of the 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, there are 26.4 million refugees, 48 million internally displaced people, 4.1 million asylum seekers, and 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad (please see the latest numbers for end 2022 as published by UNHCR in the addendum at the end of this article). This distinction matters for the legal status of the individual. Officially recognized refugees are lawfully protected: by the immigration laws of their new host country, by the 1954/67 Geneva Convention, and under the UNHCR mandate (including the UNRWA decree for 5.7 million Palestinian refugees). Asylum seekers are not (yet) protected or just have limited safeguard from their new host country until obtaining refugee status; often they are subject to both detention and deportation. IDPs, internally displaced people, have no legal protection other than the one from their home country, which is often the reason for migration in the first place together with climate change effects.

The term “climate refugee” is widely used but not officially recognized. The Global Compact on Refugees of 2018 (which is not legally binding as the Geneva Convention) states that “[w]hile not in themselves causes of refugee movements, climate, environmental degradation, and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements. In the first instance, addressing root causes is the responsibility of countries at the origin of refugee movements.”¹ However, educated refugees are part of the future hope to mitigate climate change: “Every young person is our responsibility because every young person will help us face the challenges of health care, climate change, poverty, tech and employment, equality and human rights, and more.”²

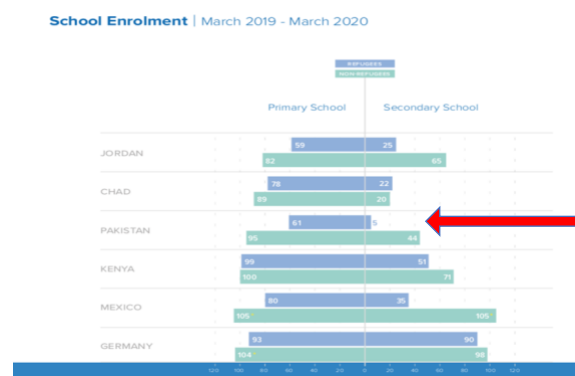
The last quote is taken from the most recent UNHCR report “Staying the Course’: The Challenges Facing Refugee Education,” issued on 9 September 2021.³ The agency had predicted 85 million forcibly displaced people by the end of 2021 but the number most likely will be higher, given its brief of 17 August 2021 that estimates an additional 500,000 Afghans refugees arriving in neighboring countries (Pakistan and Iran) by the end of 2021. As I am writing, catastrophes are unfolding in Ethiopia, Myanmar, in the Channel, and at the border between Belarus and Poland, where refugees, including children, are being treated as human capital in the political interests of autocrats.

Children account for 30% of the world’s population and make up almost half of all forcibly displaced people. Almost 1 million children were born in displacement between 2018 and 2020, an average of 290-340,000 per year. Many of them are at risk of remaining in exile for years to come, some potentially for the rest of their lives. In more concrete terms, one of the most alarming figures in *Staying the Course* is provided by the graph on school enrolment in 2019-20 for Afghan refugees. Pakistan and Iran host 90% of Afghan refugees but only 5% of them attend secondary school in Pakistan, 95% have no chance to ever make it to university at all and will make up a good chunk of a “lost generation” when it comes to education beyond the primary level.

¹ United Nations, New York, The Global Compact on Refugees, 2018, p.4, <https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4.pdf>. Ironically, the only other page that mentions “climate” in the 50-page document is on page 13, where it mentions a “business climate” that should provide opportunities for refugees.

² UNHCR Education Report 2021, “Staying the Course’: Challenges Facing Refugee Education,” 9 September 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/612f85d64/unhcr-education-report-2021-staying-course-challenges-facing-refugee-education.html>, p.45.

³ UNHCR Education Report 2021, “Staying the Course’: Challenges Facing Refugee Education,” 9 September 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/612f85d64/unhcr-education-report-2021-staying-course-challenges-facing-refugee-education.html>.



Source: UNCR “Staying the Course”:
The Challenges Facing Refugee Education,
9 September 2021

But who are “the other 5%” of the global refugee population with access to tertiary education? To what kinds of institutions are they admitted? What is the success rate of them finishing an undergraduate degree? And, what kind of impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on education for refugees?

Stating a positive figure, there are more refugees attending tertiary education courses than ever. On the occasion of world refugee day in 2019 the German Foreign Office, UNHCR, and the German Academic Exchange Service co-hosted a conference titled “The Other 1 Percent - Refugee Students at Higher Education Institutions worldwide,” which aimed at fostering discussion of promising practices and to identify needs and gaps to integrate refugees in institutions of higher education.⁴ Two years later in 2021 the fruits may be visible as “Staying the Course” states: “The good news is that the most recent enrolment level for higher education is at 5 per cent, up from 3 per cent year-on-year and 1 per cent only a few years ago.”⁵ The number itself is promising but the raw data somewhat taints that hope. Good and bad is that UNHCR improves the methodologies for gathering reliable information every year. This might mean that the numbers are on the rise or that they are (finally) counted due to improved data collection but factually are not increasing. In 2020 the agency reported data for 12 countries that host around half of the global refugee population. In 2021, that number has risen to 40 countries assessing the situation of 12.65 million refugees, which makes up for more than half of the refugee population and Venezuelans protected under UNHCR mandates. The other half, plus data from asylum seekers and IDPs, approximately 69.75 million displaced people in 2020, is missing, which means that 5% is a rather optimistic figure.⁶ Furthermore, for 2020 counting stopped in March when most schools closed as a result of the pandemic; here enrolment statistics do not account for the impact of Covid-19 on access to education.

What kinds of institutions and degrees actually make up the educational landscape for displaced students? Analysis shows three types: informal education, hybrid programs, and formal higher education. Formal education of course consists of recognized courses of study at accredited institutions, such as universities or polytechnics or institutions of applied sciences that bestow credentials (degrees) accepted by national education authorities. Informal programs might seem of lesser value, which they are in terms of officially recognized qualifications and assessment; however, they are important and have key functions during the Covid-19 pandemic. They are

⁴ German Federal Foreign Office (FFO), German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “The Other 1%: Refugees at Institutions for Higher Education Worldwide,” 2019, https://www2.daad.de/medien/microsites/the-other-one-percent/report_2019.pdf.

⁵ UNHCR Education Report 2021, “Staying the Course,” p.7.

⁶ The average gross enrolment rate for the year from March 2019 to March 2020 for reporting countries was 68 per cent for primary level. For secondary level, the corresponding rate for reporting countries was 34 per cent, illustrating that significant structural barriers remain for refugee learners to access post-primary education. UNHCR Education Report 2021, “Staying the Course,” p.9.

mainly composed of low intensity workshops and seminars, in addition to or as alternatives for formal education; they are offered to guarantee the right of access to education for all (one of the mandates of SDG 4). Hybrid programs often serve as bridges in the transition from informal to formal education, such as open lecture halls with recognized certificates that might be steppingstones to degree programs. All these forms of education have their place and contribute to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” and work towards the goal of 15% of all refugees to be enrolled in tertiary education by 2030.

At Franklin University Switzerland we established *Scholarships Without Borders* in 2015 (<https://www.fus.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/swb>). The program grants funded scholarships to immigrated refugee students to finish or embark on their university education, obtaining a BA or Masters in the field of their choice. Our first student graduated in 2020 with BA in Economics and International Management and currently we have two more students enrolled in the program. We are small, which allows us a boutique approach to education, and we make a very small but hopefully effective contribution to “the other 5%.” The assessment of our program shows that the main criteria of success for a refugee student to graduate is a functional network of both on- and off-campus support and resources with the following components:

- Formal scholarships with financial support
- Trial semesters and academic bridge programs
- Workshops, tutor and “buddy” programs
- Specific language courses
- Early integration into research or creative programs
- Direct interaction with faculty
- A designated point-to person for all concerns
- Constant communication with (local) service providers and NGOs
- Professional psychological care providers

In discussion in our networks with the Swiss initiative *Perspektiven Studium* (<https://www.perspektiven-studium.ch/en/>) and the *European Universities Critical Futures-Higher Education* project (<https://projects.au.dk/european-universities-critical-futures/working-groups/refugee-access-to-higher-education/>), we found that the main obstacles for refugee students to get through the doors of a university and to make it to graduation are:

- Political barriers
- (Missing) Documentation and recognition of home diplomas
- Language level (C1)
- Bureaucracy (in another language)
- Opportunities provided by institutions of higher education
- Easily accessible information of opportunities
- Rigidity of academic admission processes
- Finances
- Understanding the university system
- Personal trauma
- Stigma: social definitions and visual representations of “the refugee”

Scholarships Without Borders saw its first graduate in 2020, the second will follow in 2023, and the third in 2025, after that, hopefully many more to come. With a program this small and with such a tight-nit support structure of faculty, staff, tutors, interns, and volunteers, and all the support from the university administration, it is easy to trace progress and intervene immediately when

problems arise. The question for me has always been how many of “the other 5%” will actually hold a degree in their hands? The UNHCR reports provide no data with respect to dropout or graduation success rates and at this point it is impossible to assess how effective we are with our efforts. An additional stumbling block for both tracing records and for students themselves to be able to focus on classes and to complete their programs is presented by disruptions of pandemic.

Global measures to contain the spreading of the Covid-19, such as border closures and lockdowns, have had a detrimental effect on the refugee crisis. Globally speaking, migrants had to either return to the place they fled due to closed borders or take extreme risks to cross borders illegally. Shutdowns have the potential to reinforce preexisting inequalities in the global system. What concerns migrant education, learners who are already protected by refugee status, lost an average of 142 school days from the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak until March 2021, which is “an enormous deficit to recover.”⁷ However, counter intuitively, refugee students with access to varying forms of instruction in some instances dealt reasonably well with school closures and lockdowns and used more forms of education than their host communities.

A study by Haakon Gjerløw and Gudrun Østby (both from the Peace Research Institute Oslo) and Sabrina Karim (Government Department at Cornell University), published in *Frontiers in Education* (16/6/2021), aimed at understanding the sources of educational services before and after the shutdown in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh.⁸ It used phone-survey samples of 719 households: 366 from the Rohingya refugee and 353 from host population. The Rohingyas had access to 4 education providers: NGO based learning centers, Madrasa/religious schools, community based private tutoring, and private home tutoring. The Bangladeshi host community did not have the NGO option, as such services are not available to them, but went to government or private schools, to which refugees have no access. The survey showed that the refugee population on an average used two or more education providers while the host community mainly relied on one provider.⁹

As encouraging as it may sound that refugees actually had the chance to receive more instruction, the report also raises the question about the quantity and quality of such informal education. It was impossible to ascertain how regularly informal learning took place and what kind of material was taught by private tutors and religious schools. Given the lack of sustained funding and resources and the lack of oversight and standardization organs, the quality of alternative options most likely cannot make up for formal education. Although providing an important safety net, informal instruction is not of significant value to bridging the gap between refugee and host education.

Is there anything positive that we take away from the pandemic for our understanding on how to better integrate refugee learners? Surely that official protection under UNHCR and host government laws is essential. Beyond that, building platforms, networks, and 360-degree services for refugees in higher education systems, requires getting out of ivory towers and strict academic thinking to shift the focus on constructing comprehensive safety systems for displaced students that include a broad offering of educational services in both formal and informal sectors. While the focus must remain on the mandate that at least 15% of all refugees be enrolled in tertiary education by 2030, the informal tutors, NGO offerings, religious, and community schools play an

⁷ UNHCR Education Report 2021, “Staying the Course,” p.7.

⁸ Since August 2017 more than 650’000 Rohingya people have fled their persecution in the Myanmar Rakhine State, totaling the Rohingya refugee population in Bangladesh to more than 900’000, thus making up a rather large number of communities. *Frontiers in Education*, Brief Research Report, “When Governments and International Organizations Shut Down: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees’ and Host Community’s Use of Educational Services in Cox’s Bazar,” 16 June 2021, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2021.696176/full>. See also Save the Children, Child Rights and Resource Center, Cox’s Bazar Education Sector: COVID 19 Response Strategy, 2020 – Reaching Every Learner, March 2020, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/coxs-bazar-education-sector-covid-19-response-strategy-2020-reaching-every-learner/>

⁹ *Frontiers in Education*, “When Governments and International Organizations Shut Down,” p.5.

important part as well and should be reciprocally interlinked with formal education.

In 2017 Scholarships Without Borders hosted the two-day international workshop “Connecting the Dots: Refugees in Higher Education in Switzerland and in Europe” at Franklin University Switzerland. The intention was to literally to connect the dots of institutions on the European map that offer educational services with degree, certificate, and support options to refugee learners and to assess challenges and best practices. The aim of our presentations and discussions was to learn how to overcome obstacles and structure education offerings for refugees from a cross section of individuals who came from within or travelled to Lugano from Bard College Berlin, Kiron Open Higher Education, the Municipal Center of Education Hamburg, SOS Ticino, MORE/UNIKO (Austrian Universities Conference Refugee Program), Perspective - Studies Switzerland, the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration, Università della Svizzera Italiana, and Franklin University Switzerland. Four years later, all programs contributed to the current 5% of refugees enrolled in programs of higher education, the vision of raising that number to 15% by 2030s, and the overall mission to fulfill SDG 4. They have evolved and are better connected at the benefit of the refugee students in them. But challenges and obstacles remain and crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, should provide the opportunity not only to reflect on what does not work but also on what works and how to improve education for displaced students. It is also a chance to examine how refugees are perceived from in the global social and visual worlds and in what manner this perception may be a root cause obstacle to their success.

This volume picks up from the 2017 workshop and aims to take Covid-19 as an opportunity to reflect up what the pandemic brought to the surface in terms of general perceptions of borders, migration, and the perception of the migrant. It also highlights specific initiatives that prove to be successful and will find applications in the future, and, most importantly, lets displaced students speak for themselves through their creativity and critical thinking.

The volume is roughly divided into two sections. Part 1 opens with a poetic contribution by Raisan Hameed, visual and multi-media artist at the Leipzig Academy of Fine Arts. Hameed's photography and his text are marked by rifts, voids, discontinuities, which, at the same time, become part of a greater whole and reflect on his background, his roots, and his journey. Johanna Fassl met Hameed and their conversation provoked her to take a closer look at the visual culture of migration in award winning photography and its impact on refugee education; she advocates for a tipping point in the portrayal of displaced people for them to have a real chance to arrive at the lecture halls of institutions of (higher) education. The subsequent article by Marie-Agnès Détourbe explains how the pandemic has reconfigured people's movement and connections on different levels and calls for a rethinking of the sociological and philosophical definition of “the migrant.” Intellectually, Caroline Wiedmer's contribution continues the discussion of what it means to be “foreign,” by examining what happens when the migrant has reached a “final shore.” It is presented as an *essai* in the technical and French sense of the word, reflecting on the archaic concept of *xenia* (translatable as both the hospitable and the foreigner), and taking arrival rites in the ancient texts by Homer and Plato as a basis to examine contemporary welcome-cultures. While Part 1 is characterized by more philosophical and systemic reflections, Part 2 presents a concrete voice and examples from situations that actually manifested during the height of the pandemic. It starts with an article by Emrah Bal who is a participant in the Open Lecture Hall at the University of Basel, in which he ponders the notion of time: how time stood still during Covid-19 and how the pandemic not only stifled progress but also invited reflection due to the standstill. Heike Koelln-Prisner's concluding article assesses the concrete situation of how the pandemic has changed the situation for refugees enrolled or wanting to enroll into study programs in Germany and what kind of support systems are sustainable and resilient to pressures from the crisis.

As this volume became delayed and articles went through a number of iterations, contributors had the chance to revise their text or insert addenda at the end of their articles in order to stay *au courant* with contemporary developments, which, when it comes to discussions of forced migration, means increased numbers and an escalation of local and global crises.

Is there an overall conclusion to be drawn from all the contributions in this volume? Other than a call to continuous reflection upon our own constructions of “the migrant” and how we handle processes of welcome and integration, I leave it to the reader at a moment where a whole continent is struggling to find solutions on how to respond to a raging war and growing streams of migration.

jfass@fus.edu

ADDENDUM UPDATE:

As the numbers concerning migration continue to drastically change due to the war in Ukraine, which adds to the already existing crisis zones, it is necessary to include this addendum. Here are the latest statistics as published by UNHCR data finder, reporting the numbers for the end of 2022:

[HTTPS://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/REFUGEE-STATISTICS/](https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/)

- **108.4 MILLION** FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE WORLDWIDE.
- **62.5 MILLION** ARE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE
- **5.4 MILLION** ARE ASYLUM-SEEKERS
- **35.3 MILLION** ARE REFUGEES
- **5.2 MILLION** ARE OTHER PEOPLE IN NEED OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

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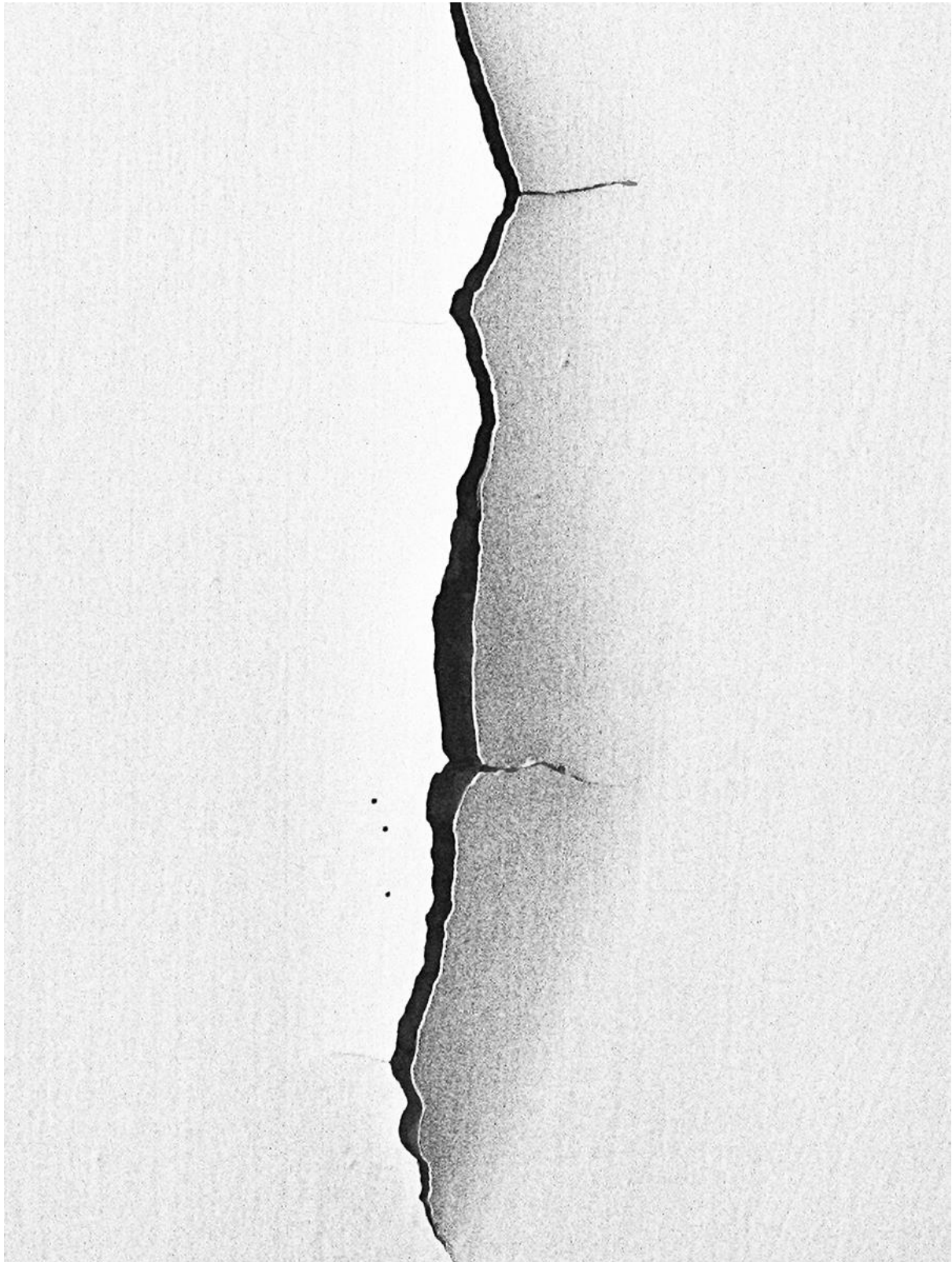
BIOGRAPHY

Johanna Fassl is Professor of Art History and Visual Communication and the Co-Director of the Scholarships Without Borders Program at Franklin University Switzerland. She received her PhD with Distinction from Columbia University and has been the recipient of numerous fellowships, including from the Mellon and Getty research foundations. Her research analyzes the production and reception of art within an interdisciplinary framework of science, philosophy, and the psychology of perception whereby she places a specific emphasis on the void and other forms of abstraction. In 2023 she was invited to become a fellow at the Siebold Collegium Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Würzburg.

jfass@fus.edu

Zer / störung

Raisan Hameed
Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig



Raisan Hameed, *Zer-störung, Risse (Fissures)*, Mossul 2012/Leipzig 2022 (Image courtesy ©Raisan Hameed)
<https://raisanhameed.com/Zer-störung>

Die Mutter - die erste Heimat und das letzte Exil.

Wie könnten alte Familienbilder in der Zukunft aussehen?

Warum werden manche Geschichten zurückgelassen, während man andere weiterführt?

Mit dieser Fotoreihe aus den Familienbildern möchte ich eine neue Form und Perspektive schaffen, eine Geschichte zu erzählen.

Vielleicht trage ich damit zu einem umfassenderen Verständnis von Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft bei.

Die Geschichte meiner Stadt Mossul, die den Krieg im Irak erlebt hat. Mossul liegt im Norden des Irak mit drei Millionen Einwohnern und war die Hauptstadt des Assyrischen Landes um etwa 4000 v. Chr.

Meine Mutter brachte mich 1991 auf der Flucht zur Welt. Die Stadt Mossul erfuhr Luftangriffe, so dass meine Familie ihr Haus verlassen musste.

Ich bin im Krieg geboren und vom Krieg geflohen. Meine Generation wurde unterdrückt und betrogen.

Durch die Familienbilder wird mir vieles wieder sichtbar, ich sehe auch die Gesellschaft als Bild, viele Bereiche erscheinen mir klar, andere sind überbelichtet und verschwommen.

Die Spuren in den Familienbildern sind nicht nur Erinnerungen für mich, sondern auch Reflexionen und Untersuchungen sowie Beschäftigung mit dem Thema.

Durch diesen Prozess der Auseinandersetzung verlieren die Archivbilder ihre Funktion und verändern die Erzählungen. Dadurch entsteht eine Abstraktion.

Die Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit.

Ich sehe es immer als Kreislauf.

Zerstörung ist nur ein Punkt in dem Kreislauf, es hat mit der Zeitlichkeit und der Vergänglichkeit zu tun, welche sich darin verbergen.

Was passiert, wenn wir versuchen, unsere Wurzeln zu identifizieren?

Welche Antwort gibt man auf die Frage „Woher kommst du“?

Die Diaspora-Reise trennt den Menschen von seiner Heimat, seiner Nation und seiner Gemeinschaft. Sie versetzt uns in eine Kategorie von fehlplatzierten Identitäten. Aber die Karte und ihre Beziehung zu diesen zusammenhanglosen Identitäten haben einfach etwas an sich.

Es erhält und fördert unsere Verbindung mit der Geschichte des Transits, der Migration, der Entdeckung, der Vernetzung und des Reisens. Das kann uns helfen, die Diaspora zu identifizieren.

Die Stadt Mossul, die ich kenne, ist nicht mehr dieselbe.

Die Wahl von Mossul als eine der Landkarten für mein Zuhause, ist meine Art, die Erinnerung oder Vorstellungskraft, die wir an unsere Heimat haben, beizubehalten und herauszufordern...

Nichts bleibt als Erinnerungen, schwer von Traurigkeit und Schmerz sowie voller Überraschungs- und Freudenmomenten.

Für den Menschen bleibt vielleicht nichts weiter übrig als Bilder.

Die Wände verbergen diverse Erinnerungen von einer offenen als auch mysteriösen Welt.

Die Risse sind vielleicht ein Aufbruch - etwas Neues zu schaffen und anders zu sein, oder können auch meine Wunden sowie Verletzungen darstellen.

Die Symbolik des Ortes und die Privatsphäre der Dinge sind konzentrierte Zeichen, um den Widerspruch zwischen zwei verschiedenen Zeiten und gegenwärtigen und abwesenden, auf dem Glas verstreuten Gedanken aufzuzeigen.

An der Wand erscheinen Momente voller Leben als Spiegel, die Momente unserer Freude und unserer Zerbrochenheit widerspiegeln, die sich auf transparentem Glas als friedliche Seelen manifestieren, die an die Wand der Erinnerungen genagelt sind, und andere, die im Schmelzofen des Lebens verloren gehen.

Diese Prozesse öffnen Türen, bilden hybride Räume, machen Vermittlung, Verhandlung, Reflexion und Austausch möglich.

Ich widmete mich in dieser Arbeit den Phänomenen Identität, Wahrheit und Perspektiven. Ich vertiefte meine Geschichte, Zurückgehen und über die Vergangenheit nachzudenken, um den Dialog zwischen Bewegung, Erinnerung, Reflexion, Brechung, dem Offensichtlichen und dem Verborgenen zu erforschen.

Die Arbeit ist für mich auch eine Art Befreiung.



Raisan Hameed, *Zer-störung, Mossul Dream*, 2021 (Image courtesy ©Raisan Hameed
<https://raisanhameed.com/Zer-storung>)

BIOGRAPHY

Raisan Hameed (b. 1991) is an Iraq-born visual artist currently living in Leipzig. He received a Diploma in Fine Arts in 2022, and is currently a Meisterschüler at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig. In his works, Hameed deals with different dimensions of truth. While he concentrates on making the inside visible, he simultaneously identifies with the outcome. He is often the subject of his images, processing his experiences metaphorically through acting and experimentation. Hameed's works have been exhibited in various exhibitions in Rotterdam, Berlin, Dresden, Bonn, Leipzig, Rome, Palermo and Sharjah. <https://raisanhameed.com/>

info@raisanhameed.com

“We all die until the Times Photographer wins the prize”: Visual Culture of Forced Migration and Its Possible Impact on Displaced Students’ Access to Higher Education

Johanna Fassl
Franklin University Switzerland

KEY WORDS: Visual culture, migration, predictive coding theory, refugee, education, photography, collective consciousness

On 21 August 2021, in the middle of the human tragedy unfolding in Afghanistan, poet and artist Elyas Alavi posted on his Instagram story the words that give the title to this article: “We all die until the Times photographer wins the prize.”¹⁰ The sentence was shared through a number of reposts and arrived in my feed via artist Raisan Hameed who is also contributor to this volume. I had just visited Hameed a few days prior in Leipzig for an interview about his work in photography and multi-media installations and his experience studying at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst (Academy of Fine Arts) in Leipzig, Germany.¹¹

Alavi’s words resonated heavily following my conversation with Hameed who had arrived in Germany from Iraq. Talking about his journey, he described one of the moments when landing on Europe’s shores: “There they were, the CNN photographers with their expensive equipment and big lenses, ready to shoot. They shoot and then go back to their hotel rooms and eventually get a publication out of it, and maybe an award, while we continue without any certainty.” When he left Iraq and the Mosul University College of Fine Arts, Hameed’s journey continued to the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst with a scholarship from the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, where he finished his BA in Fine Arts in Photography and is currently working on his Masters in the class of Tina Bara. While still working on his degree, he participated in a group show at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, and had further exhibitions in Leipzig, Dresden, Berlin, Rotterdam, Rome, Palermo, Sharjah and in Oman. Hameed’s journey really has just begun while others end before reaching a shore.

What actually happens when the ‘Times Photographer’ does win the prize? What constitutes the official visual culture of forced migration and how does this visual culture potentially shape migrants’ journeys to arrive at the lecture halls and seminar rooms of institutions of higher education?

These questions prompted me to look into photography that depicts forced migration and that has won some of the most prestigious prizes over the past six years (since the onset of refugee crises of 2015/16): World Press Photo Awards; Monovisions Awards; Pulitzer Prize; Sony Photo Awards; and IPA International Photo Awards. The result is surprisingly clear: the prized ‘Times Photographers’ most of the time take a step back and largely adhere to a ‘visual culture of the fence’ that sets up an inside-outside dichotomy of us-against-the-other. Or they zoom in closely to arrive at a ‘Langian’ picture, a photograph closely resembling Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother*, showing humans dressed in rags and most of the time in utter despair.

In the process from ‘shore-to-show,’ award-winning photography creates an official canon through repetitions and reiterations of the same type of image in the channels of exhibition halls, press coverages, social media, and personal websites to ultimately shape all of our perceptions of what migration looks like. Neurologically speaking, our process of reading the visual world is guided by explicit prior knowledge to make sense and allocate meaning to external stimuli. We look for what we already know, for what has been validated and gives us certainty. Our perceptual system selects information based on what it is familiar with so that it can interpret new visual cues. We simply cannot escape the icons of official standards; they are the backseat drivers of our interpretative system.

¹⁰ Elyas Alavi was born in the Daikundi province in Afghanistan with Hazara background and moved to Iran as a child when the war intensified in his home country. Since 2007 he has been living *and working on Kaurma Country in Tarntanya* (Adelaide, Australia), where he graduated with a Master of Visual Arts at the University of South Australia in 2016, following his Bachelor of Visual Arts with Honors in 2013. He received numerous scholarships and published three poetry books in Afghanistan and in Iran for which he received prestigious prizes. <https://www.elyasalavi.com>

¹¹ <https://raisanhameed.com/>

In 2020 Nicolò Filippo Rosso won Third Prize in the category Contemporary Issues of the World Press Photo Awards. His project *Exodus* “chronicles the epic journey of the Venezuelan migrants in 2018, driven by desperation and hunger, at the stake of forces beyond their control.”¹² His black-and-white close-up shot of a group of Venezuelans is startlingly close to Dorothea Lange’s award winning 1936 *Migrant Mother*: people with dirty faces huddled together, women’s hands close to or over their mouths, clothes in rags, gazes that blandly stare into the distance. A few years ago, I was sitting in a modern dance performance in a well-known theater in Toronto when one of the spectators behind me remarked shortly after the performance began: “Why do they always have to look like bloody refugees?” It was a Martha Graham piece and the dancers were clothed in layers of ripped black, grey, and brown fabrics. They closely resembled the ‘Langian’ type and the spectator’s remark confirms how deeply this image is engrained in our minds. It took Florence Owen Thompson 34 years to have her name put under the iconic image of her face. Will the individuals in Rosso’s project ever be known by name?

Beyond the ‘Langian’ type of close-up photography of migrants, the fence is one of the most dominating elements in award winning photography. Since 2016 Syrians, Afghans, Africans, Rohingya, Venezuelans, and Mexicans have been shown behind a fence or trying to climb up or passing through it. Barbed wire and vertical posts of steel or concrete have become some of the key identifiers in this iconography of migration. It doesn’t matter which border, camp, or crossing, the fence is always a marker that creates an inside-outside, an us-versus-them dynamic. Angelos Tzortzinis’ *Trials of Migration* (Sony Photo Awards 2016, First Place, Category: Current Affairs)¹³, Joseph Patronite’s *The Wall, Work, and Liberty* (Monovisions Award 2021, Category: Honorable Mention)¹⁴, and Reuters’ coverage of migration in South America (Pulitzer Prize 2019, Category: Breaking News Photography)¹⁵ are all excellent projects. They aim at showing thousands of refugees and migrants fleeing political and social turmoil, giving an idea about their lives while on their journeys or once they land in a camp. They show the urgency, desperation and sadness of migrants and provide an essential perspective for all who do not get first-hand exposure to refugee camps.

There is no question that depicting the disasters and the hardship of migrants’ journeys is important and that all the ‘Times photographers’ are fully deserving of prizes they win exactly for that. How else would we know? Photographers take the public to places they would never travel and inform viewers about the continued tragedies of human lives; they equally risk their lives and often remain traumatized. Their physical and mental wounds resonate in their minds and haunt them well beyond the time of their documentary missions. The portraits of hardship and suffering also play a key role in the push for action – they raise the kind of awareness that is needed to generate crucial funds for both government organizations and NGOs to continue their work. But cumulatively and collectively this type of visual culture is not enough to create a different kind of perception that might pave the way for migrants to arrive at institutions of higher education. In 2021 UNHCR counted 89.3 million forcibly displaced people and the number is constantly rising.¹⁶ If the perception of the migrant does not shift from the image of the ‘bloody refugee,’ the world is creating a demographic and social time bomb, given the exponential rise in numbers of forced migration since 2015. In Antonio Guterres’ words: “We can’t deter people fleeing for their lives.

¹² 2020 Nicolò Filippo Rosso <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo-contest/2020/nicolo-filippo-rosso/2>

¹³ <https://www.worldphoto.org/es/sony-world-photography-awards/winners-galleries/2016/professional/winners/current-affairs/1st-place>

¹⁴ <https://monovisionsawards.com/winners-gallery/monovisions-awards-2021/show/6181>

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/reuters-wins-pulitzer-prize-for-migrant-idUSRTX6RS1A>

¹⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> For the breakdown of this number, see the Introduction of this volume. At the moment when this volume is going live, we are in the middle of the war in Ukraine and can already add more than 4.8 million refugees to UNHCR’s 2021 figures to arrive at the total number of 89.3 million refugees in 2021. Addendum: UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement has reached 103 million at mid-2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

They will come. The choice we have is how well we manage their arrival, and how humanely.”¹⁷ And how well we integrate them into our societies.

Just how much the path from ‘shore-to-show’ can influence migrants’ futures becomes clear by taking a closer look at the neurological process described as Predictive Coding Theory (PCT).¹⁸ It states that the “process of perception is controlled by explicit prior knowledge and is based on active selection of information at very early stages of sub-cortical processing.”¹⁹ Visual perception thus is never just receptive but an active process very much based on what we already know and have stored as familiar. In their article on PCT and photography, Henric Jokeit and Daniel Blochwitz take Dorothea Lange’s 1936 photograph *Migrant Mother* as the archetype and prime example of how photography is engrained in collective minds, and subsequently also becomes collectively owned,²⁰ through a process of canonized iconization. In the case of *Migrant Mother* canonized iconization started at the root of the project, as Lange was officially assigned to document the effects of the Great Depression through the governmental organs of both the Resettlement Administration (1935) and the Farm Security Agency (1937), hereby establishing the formal face of migration.

Jokeit and Blochwitz distinguish between anterograde episodic memory, the memory of pictorial information that we have only seen once, and semantic visual memory, which is visual data that we have seen countless times.²¹ The issue with semantic visual memory is not only that we immediately recognize a picture’s visual content. It is more that this memory, because we consistently have been confronted with the same type of information, is also biographically decontextualized and no longer gives information about its initial time and place of encoding. That’s how it came about that the person behind me in the theater labelled the Martha Graham dancers as ‘bloody refugees’ as soon as they appeared on stage. Anybody with some prior interest in photography or knowledge of American history can retrieve Lange’s *Migrant Mother* from their memory and picture it mentally. This is what Jokeit and Blochwitz call memorability, the capacity “to generate a memory image in front of an inner mental eye and to describe it verbally.”²² Memorability is different from recognizability, which is information that can only be identified when presented with a selection of visual information.²³ Ladislav Kesner confirms PCT and states that, according to Barret and Bar’s model, past experience conditions and modulates present perception whereby “the integration of top–down expectations and bottom–up sensory input can already be observed in the early visual cortex.”²⁴ Immediate recognition of visual content is experienced as a kind of cognitive reward that leads to a pleasurable sensation.²⁵ Thus the interpretation of images is guided by prior visual memory rather early in the perceptive process, whereby the affective impact of the visual information is crucial, assuming significant control in the encoding and subsequent memory of that information.²⁶

¹⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/36293-70th-anniversary-of-the-refugee-convention-a-legal-instrument-which-remains-as-relevant-today-when-forcible-displacement-has-reached-record-levels.html>

¹⁸ H. Jokeit and D. Blochwitz, “Neuro-aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography,” *PsyCH Journal* (26 August 2020): 444-457. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pchj.379>

¹⁹ Jokeit and Blochwitz, “Neuro-aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography,” 446.

²⁰ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Migrant_Mother_by_Dorothea_Lange

²¹ Jokeit and Blochwitz, “Neuro-aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography,” 447.

²² Jokeit and Blochwitz, “Neuro-aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography,” 447.

²³ Jokeit and Blochwitz, “Neuro-aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography,” 447.

²⁴ Ladislav Kesner, “The Predictive Mind and the Experience of Visual Art Work,” *Front. Psychol.* (16 December 2014) Sec. Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, Volume 5 – 2014. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01417> See also L.F. Barrett and M. Bar, “See it with feeling: affective predictions during object perception,” *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. B Biol. Sci.* 364 (2012): 1325–1334. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2008.0312>

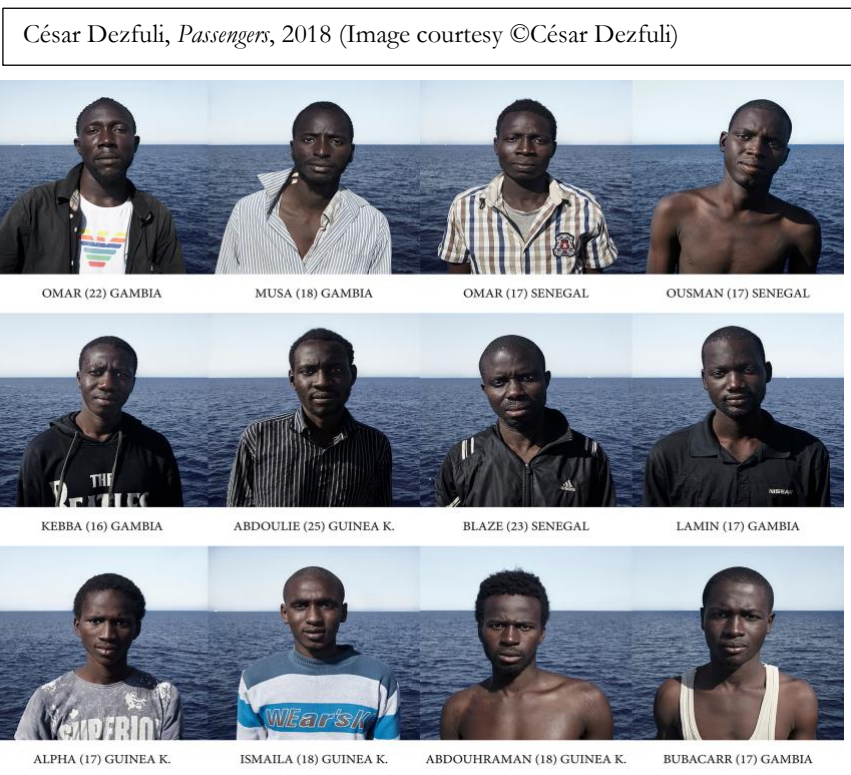
²⁵ Kesner, “The Predictive Mind and the Experience of Visual Art Work.” See also S. Van de Cruys and J. Wagemans, “Putting reward in art: a tentative prediction error account of visual art,” *Iperception* 2 (2011): 1035–1062.

²⁶ See M. Mather and M. R. Sutherland, “Arousal-Biased Competition in Perception and Memory,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6(2) (2011): 114-133.

The question that comes to mind is whether we are doomed in a perpetual cycle ‘from-shore-to-show-to-shore-to-show’ that reproduces the same types of images over and over again?

One might think so, given that the very institutions whose endeavor it is to safeguard refugees’ well-being and to ensure their futures through education, reproduce the same visual canon in their official documents. The 2019 conference report *The Other 1%: Refugees at Institutions for Higher Education Worldwide*, which was issued jointly by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Global Refugee Forum, and UNHCR, features a young woman with a hijab on its title page: https://www2.daad.de/medien/microsites/the-other-one-percent/report_2019.pdf. Her expression is joyful but projected across her face is the shadow of a fence. The goal of the Berlin conference and its report was to reflect a shared vision to **help refugee youth realize opportunities for selfreliance** [original emphasis] for themselves and their communities.”²⁷ As mentioned in the Introduction of this volume, the good news is that from 2019 to 2021 the percentage of refugees accessing higher education has risen from 1% to 5%. But why the shadow of the fence in the key image of the report? It is fair to assume that the photograph was selected with all good intention but the fence by now is so deeply engrained in the visual culture of migration that even institutions whose aim is integration, the exact opposite of separation, unconsciously tap into the encoded memorability that characterizes the image of the migrant.

But not all is lost and the cycle has already been interrupted – it just needs a tipping point to effect more comprehensive change. Jokeit and Blochwitz also explain the effect of prediction errors, mismatches between expected and actual data or between actual data and anticipated interpretation, and how “prediction errors are processed because only these have a high value for behavioral adaptation.”²⁸ This means that deviations of canonical images have the power to irritate the adaptive and interpretative systems of the viewer and thus can initiate a point of departure for the creation of new memory.



What concerns award winning photography, Cesar Dezfuli’s project *Passengers* could mark such a turning point. It is all about arrivals and one of the projects that won the Category Portraiture in the 2020 edition of the Sony Photo Awards. At first sight it seems to be the type of ‘in your face’ photography that Hameed described as disturbing due to its proximity to the subject. Getting extremely close physically or through the camera view finder also creates expectation. To be the subject of attention gives hope to being recognized as an individual

²⁷ https://www2.daad.de/medien/microsites/the-other-one-percent/report_2019.pdf, p.4,

²⁸ Jokeit and Blochwitz, “Neuro-aesthetics and the Iconography in Photography,” 448.

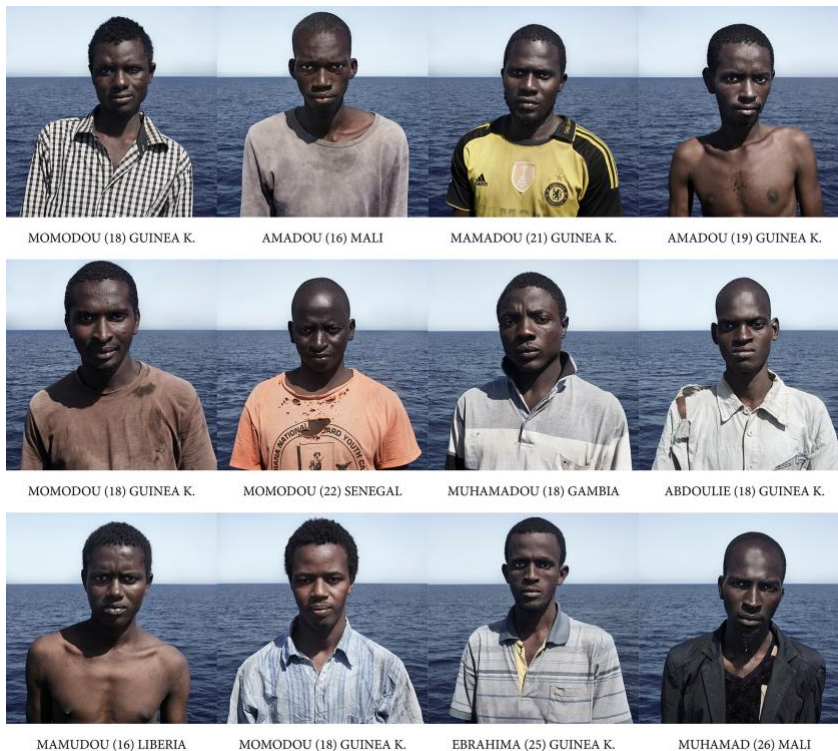
and as a human being. Dezfuli himself became aware of this, and, rather than being the completion of a documentary, his photography of the migrants' arrival marks the beginning of a remarkable project.

“On 1st August 2016, 118 people were rescued from a rubber boat drifting in the Mediterranean Sea. The boat had departed some hours prior from Libya. In an attempt to give a human face to this event, I photographed the passengers minutes after their rescue. Their faces, their looks, the marks on their bodies all reflected the mood and physical state they were in after a journey that had already marked their lives forever. It was the beginning of a project that has been evolving ever since.

It soon became clear that the people I photographed on that August day were not themselves. Their identities had become diluted somewhere along the way - hidden as a result of fear or stolen through past abuses and humiliations.

Over the last three years I have worked to locate the 118 passengers of the boat, now scattered across Europe, in a bid to understand and document their true identities. I wanted to show that each individual had a latent identity that just needed a peaceful context in order to flourish again.”²⁹

César Dezfuli, *Passengers*, 2018 (Image courtesy ©César Dezfuli)



The effort to locate the human beings in his *Passengers* project is laudable and extremely important to make an impact on a global culture of migration. It also received wide critical acclaim, it has been shown in over 20 group and solo venues and received or has been nominated for over 30 awards.³⁰ In a recent conversation, Dezfuli told me that he now has located 105 of the 118 *Passengers* and that his journey in the project is now focused on tracing their integration processes. It goes beyond the scope of this article to relate these stories but

some of them are mind boggling, especially the one of a minor who eventually came to France where he founded an NGO that promotes better education for refugees. With his NGO he managed to get the attention of the French Government and has been working ever since to improve education opportunities for immigrants. Dezfuli, who had spent three weeks on a rescue boat in 2016 shuttling between Malta and Libya, has travelled all over Europe to trace his *Passengers* with the mission to demonstrate the complexity of their journeys and to provoke empathy. All this will be relayed in a documentary that he is currently working on.

²⁹ <https://www.worldphoto.org/sony-world-photography-awards/winners-galleries/2020/professional/winners/1st-place-passengers-cesar>

³⁰ <http://www.cesardezfuli.com/about>

Passengers is about the paths of human bodies, minds, and souls, rather than politics and policies. The visual culture of migration needs projects like this in order to move away from the image of the ‘bloody refugee.’ That *Passengers* is precisely a case of a prediction error is sadly confirmed in an instant of tragic afterlife, or better aftermath. In 2021 it was shown at the IAF in Basel, Switzerland, where on October 2nd in an act of racist violation, the faces of five known migrant portraits were torn into shreds. Dezfuli commented the violation at the time in an Instagram post: “If just a few photos generate this reaction in those who have destroyed the exhibition, what will be their reaction or their thoughts when they encounter people different from them every day?” The violence in Basel confirms not only the social time bomb of missed integration; it also highlights the power of photography and its potential to shape our perceptions, consciously, unconsciously and subconsciously. It would be advantageous to take note of these types of incidents, and, besides the canonical photography awards, in which all photographers incontestably are well deserving of their prizes, to create a kind of ‘prediction error prize’ of photography that forges new visual pathways and sets up new types of canons to give forcefully displaced humans a better chance to arrive at the lecture halls of educational institutions.

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BIOGRAPHY

Johanna Fassl is Professor of Art History and Visual Communication and the Co-Director of the Scholarships Without Borders Program at Franklin University Switzerland. She received her PhD with Distinction from Columbia University and has been the recipient of numerous fellowships, including from the Mellon and Getty research foundations. Her research analyzes the production and reception of art within an interdisciplinary framework of science, philosophy, and the psychology of perception whereby she places a specific emphasis on the void and other forms of abstraction. In 2023 she was invited to become a fellow at the Siebold Collegium Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Würzburg.

jfassl@fus.edu

Reflections on Covid-19 and Displaced Students: Movement as a Conceptual Framework and Suggested Research Avenues

Marie-Agnès Détourbe
INSA Toulouse / Centre for Anglophone Studies (CAS)

KEY WORDS: access to higher education, forcibly displaced students, higher education pathways, migration

1. Introduction

The issue of access to higher education for displaced students is particularly relevant in times of pandemic as it invites us to look at the ways migration and higher education intersect from a new perspective, taking stock of the global disruptive force of COVID-19. Displaced learners are fundamentally characterized by movement, from forced migration to dynamics of inclusion and exclusion both during their journey and upon arrival in their host countries. Students with a forced migration background who try to access and complete higher education studies are faced with multiple and intersecting geographical, cultural, social, administrative hurdles (inter alia D  tourbe & Goastellec 2018; Fleay et al. 2019 ; Goastellec 2018; Gr  ttner et al 2021; Jungblut & Pietkiewicz 2017; Naylor et al. 2019; McKenzie et al. 2019). By hampering the circulation of people across continents, countries, and even regions and cities within the same country via strict travel regulations and lockdowns, the pandemic has led to new mobility dynamics and shaped new migration patterns (inter alia IOM 2022, EASO 2021, Espinoza & Gandini 2020). The ways in which people move and connect at different levels have been deeply reconfigured, and displaced students in higher education systems are a case in point. In this short reflection paper, I purport to reassess the way we define movement through the pandemic in relation to “the figure of the migrant” (Nail 2015) in order to raise questions and open research avenues about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on displaced learners’ higher education pathways.

2. Redefining movement and the “figure of the migrant”

The issue of access to higher education for displaced students can fruitfully be re-examined through the lense of movement, at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped mobility dynamics across the world with such phenomena as forced immobility, or new migration patterns such as return migration or re-emigration (e.g. Espinoza & Gandini 2020). As insightfully recalled by David Madden about a different social issue, homelessness:

Social problems are inseparable from how they are defined, understood, and measured. Defining a problem is a political act itself. The ways that a problem is imagined and delineated shape the extent to which an issue can be acted upon. (Madden 2021, p.36)

Migration is a case in point. The definition of the “figure of the migrant”³¹ by Thomas Nail (2015) stems a stimulating reflection on migration and movement. Rather than considering the migrant as a figure devoid of stability, and excluded from a certain number of rights granted to so-called “stable” social figures such as citizens, the author suggests that we shift perspectives and try to understand the figure of the migrant through its fundamental characteristic, i.e. movement:

[T]he migrant has been predominantly understood from the perspective of stasis and perceived as a secondary or derivative figure with respect to place-bound social membership. Place-bound membership in a society is assumed as primary; secondary is the movement back and forth between social points. [...] Thus, more than any other political figure (citizen, foreigner, sovereign, etc.), the migrant is the one least defined by its being and place and more by its becoming and displacement: by its movement. If we want to develop a political theory of the migrant itself and not the migrant as a failed citizen, we need to reinterpret the migrant first and foremost according to its own defining feature: its movement. (Nail 2015, p. 3)

Movement should not be considered in relation to stasis, i.e. to the forms perceived as permanent and stable in society, but as the very essence of social life:

³¹ « [T]he figure of the migrant is a political concept that identifies the common points where these figures are socially expelled or dispossessed as a result, or as the cause, of their mobility » (Nail 2015, p. 11).

Society is always in motion. [...] Societies are not static places with fixed characteristics and persons. Societies are dynamic processes engaged in continuously directing and circulating social life. In a movement-oriented philosophy there is no social stasis, only regimes of social circulation. (ibid., p. 4)

Fundamental laws of Newtonian mechanics remind us that motion – the movement of a body in space – is driven by *and* generates a complex interplay of forces.³² When applied to migration as movement, these laws allow for a deeper understanding of migratory movement dynamics and impact. According to Nail, the figure of the migrant is characterized by two types of movement. “Extensive movement” refers to “movement as change of place, or translation” (ibid., p. 13) between distinct points in space, which typically characterizes the migratory journey. From a qualitative perspective, “intensive movement” designates “a change in the whole, a transformation” (ibid.).

Movement should therefore not only be defined and understood as a displacement from one point to another, but also as a vector of change. By moving, the figure of the migrant generates transformations within the societies it leaves, crosses or enters:

The migrant is always in motion. The migrant only appears to have "permanently" settled from the perspective of its extensive movement between presumed static social points (sites, states, regions, etc.). However, from the perspective of its intensive movement, a migrant is continuously changing the supposedly static points from which it departed or to which it arrives. For example, by leaving, migrants may depopulate a labor force, break up a family, deplete the intellectual or cultural climate, be deported, or be deprived of social status in a variety of ways. This changes the qualitative character of the whole society. (Nail 2015, p. 30)

In the case of access to higher education for displaced students, the transformative power of movement intersects with access dynamics and rules. The concept of access refers both to the possibility *and* the ability to benefit from certain rights, services, statuses or goods, to share ideas, knowledge, to participate in networks, democratic processes, etc. It is necessarily a dual process which involves two parties – those who provide, open, or share access, either openly or under certain conditions, and those who gain, have, benefit from access, on the condition that they have the ability to do so (Détourbe 2018, pp. ix-x).

Successful access to higher education for displaced students therefore encompasses a complex fit between properly aligned migration, social, economic and educational policies and mechanisms, and students’ aspirations and choice within the specific context of migration. The disruptions generated by the pandemic on both the extensive and intensive migratory movement, and the way they impact access dynamics and rationale across the world raise new questions and call for new ways of understanding the complex issue of access to higher education for displaced students.

3. Some research questions

Physical movements across continents, countries, and within countries and regions themselves, have been hampered by the pandemic: travel restrictions, border closures, as well as lockdown and curfew measures across the globe have impacted mobility and migration. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2022), the pandemic has increased migrants’ vulnerability, not least by narrowing access to support and care facilities provided by civil society. Restricted international and national mobility and travel have also led to a sharp decrease in asylum

³² One of Newton’s laws of motion states that “a force applied to a body can change the magnitude of the momentum or its direction, or both,” while another states that “when two bodies interact, they apply forces to another.” Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/science/Newtons-laws-of-motion> on 07/01/2022.

applications, especially in Europe³³ (EASO 2021), while many resettlement programs were either dramatically reduced or cancelled (EASO 2021, IOM 2022). The extent to which the disruptive forces generated by the pandemic have impacted the dynamics of intensive and extensive migratory movement and access to higher education has yet to be further documented and researched, but the complex interactions at play for opening and sustaining access to higher education will undoubtedly be impacted at various levels, which raises several questions.

To what extent have travel restrictions and border closures narrowed or delayed access to the various legal statuses that frame displaced people's higher education access pathways? Which impact have they had on the complex web of actors which provide support and guidance to displaced learners and are key to access and success? Have the "gaps and overlaps in service" (Unangst & de Wit 2021, p. 8) provided to displaced learners worsened or been adapted, through digital tools for instance (Lintner 2021)? More generally, have some of the broader struggles and power structures that shape university access for displaced learners been shifted, reinforced or lifted? As "borders keep moving" (Messari 2018, p. 65) and "new forms of involuntary or forced immobility" arise (Lintner 2021), the impact of the pandemic on the many hurdles that displaced students face at a legal, administrative, social, cultural, economic and educational level needs to be better documented in the long run.

In line with the intensive movement concept, the ability of migrants "to redefine space according to their needs and to their priorities" (Messari 2018, p. 69), and to transform existing spaces within society and higher education should not be overlooked. Several authors and students themselves have called for a better integration of the student perspective in shaping learning spaces and curricula to better meet displaced learners' needs and aspirations³⁴. To what extent have the new digital or blended spaces of teaching and learning which arose when campuses shut down impacted displaced learners? Have new communities of learners arisen in these virtual or blended spaces, and to what extent have displaced students contributed to shaping them? Have learners with a migrant background been more resilient than others in adapting to shifting learning spaces? Have these new digital spaces offered them new opportunities, or have they isolated displaced learners even more from the rest of the student community? Have not all learners been displaced through the pandemic, one way or another, and will this lead to a redefinition of teaching and learning spaces for all students? While such questions open new research avenues, they also call for suitable scientific approaches.

4. Closing remarks on potential scientific approaches

The study of displaced students' higher education pathways, from one higher education system to another, or several others, calls for comprehensive and multi- or interdisciplinary approaches which can capture both the characteristics of certain national or regional higher education systems and institutions, and the social dynamics at work in each of them, which displaced students' trajectories shed light on but also transform.

Consequently, suitable scientific approaches should go beyond "methodological nationalism" (Dale 2005, p. 14) which often characterizes international comparative higher education research. The limitations of national scales for the study of higher education have largely

³³ "2020 saw the lowest number of asylum applications in the EU+ since 2013. The 485,000 applications marked a 32% decrease compared to 2019 (716,000), and a 64% decrease compared to the peak in 2015 (1.4 million). [R]educd applications were primarily due to restricted mobility and travel", retrieved from <<https://www.easo.europa.eu/news-events/easo-asylum-report-2021-covid-19-exposes-strengths-and-weaknesses-eu-asylum-systems>> on 07/01/2022.

³⁴ Several examples were provided in the webinar series organized in 2020-21 by the Working Group on Access to Higher Education, as part of the European Universities-Critical Futures project led by Prof. Susan Wright at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Recorded sessions and summaries can be accessed at <<https://projects.au.dk/european-universities-critical-futures/working-groups/refugee-access-to-higher-education>>.

been underlined and debated (see Kosmützky & Nokkala 2014, pp. 374-76) in so far as “higher education institutions and systems are locally, nationally and internationally bound at the same time [...], and thus, simultaneously influenced by global trends and forces and national as well as local traditions” (Kosmützky & Nokkala 2014, p. 375). Moreover, “migration is not about a single pathway but a multiplicity of reversible and unpredictable trajectories or circuits” (Nail 2015, p. 30). Therefore, tracing displaced students’ complex higher education trajectories in times of global pandemic, mapping the complex web of actors they interact with and the diversity of spaces they cross and (re)shape, and understanding the dynamics at play require attention to “naturally occurring data” (Kosmützky & Nokkala 2014, p. 377), and to students’ perspectives (Unangst & de Wit 2021). Tracing and understanding the constantly shifting group boundaries and “entanglement of interactions” (Latour 2005, p. 65) that arise from displaced students’ trajectories under the disruptive forces of the pandemic calls for “adaptable and sensitive” scientific approaches (Mol 2010) that use naturally occurring data. While Actor Network Theory purports to equip sociologists with conceptual and methodological frameworks for tracing such “fluid” social material (Latour 2005; Mol 2010), other approaches such as network analysis, discourse analysis, visual analysis, or self-ethnography have been put forward as interesting alternatives to more traditional international comparative methodologies (Kosmützky & Nokkala 2014, p. 377), whichever disciplinary perspective is chosen.

Bringing displaced students into the heart of research designs, understanding the impact of the pandemic from their perspective, as called for by many researchers, is also a way of acknowledging that “they have a significant impact on the space in which they find themselves” (Messari 2018, p. 64), and letting them drive the redefinition of the research space as well.

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BIOGRAPHY

Marie-Agnès Détourbe is Full Professor at the French *grande école* Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Toulouse. Her research is in the field of Educational Policy, Higher Education and Comparative Education, with a recent focus on access to higher education for students with a forced migration background. Her recent publications include “Inclusion through Access to Higher Education. Exploring the dynamics between access to higher education, immigration and languages” (Brill, 2018), “Revisiting the Issues of Access to Higher Education and Social Stratification through the Case of Refugees: A Comparative Study of Spaces of Opportunity for Refugee Students in Germany and England” (*Social sciences*, 2018), and “Understanding networks of actors involved in refugee access to higher education in Canada, England and France. A digital comparative approach” (*Latiss*, 2021).

detourbe@insa-toulouse.fr

Cultures of Welcome: What Odysseus Can Teach Us About Hospitality

Caroline Wiedmer
Franklin University Switzerland

KEY WORDS: refugees, Switzerland, conditional and unconditional hospitality, S-status, education, Ukraine, asylum regimes, narratives

1. Prologue

In the summer of 2022, in the waning months of COVID-19 and some four months after Russia had invaded Ukraine, I found myself at a conference in Bosnia Herzegovina at the Memorial Centre in Srebrenica, the site of the massacre perpetrated by the Bosnian Serb forces in 1995 roughly one month before the Dayton Peace Accord was signed at the end of the Bosnian war. In his opening speech, Emir Suljagić, the director of the Center and himself a child witness to the massacre, said he envied the Ukrainians because despite being invaded and subjected to the ongoing war, Ukraine was at least acknowledged in the global media as part of Europe, and Ukrainian refugees were being welcomed all over Europe and given the kind of unconditional asylum that enabled a dignified life. Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), by contrast, had not been shown the same respect and aid in the early to mid-1990s, not during the siege of Sarajevo and not in the months leading up to the massacre in Srebrenica: those fleeing, he concluded, were not white enough and altogether too Muslim to be seen as Europeans.

Suljagić's remarks echo some of the debates currently underway in Switzerland, about the different kinds of welcome bestowed upon successive refugee groups fleeing turmoil in their respective countries of origin in recent years. Not all refugee groups in Switzerland, it turns out, have been offered similar largesse in the past; and of course, this raises questions: why are different groups of asylum seekers, such as people fleeing war in Bosnia, Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine treated differently? Are the motives indeed racist or sectarian, as Suljagić suggests? How are asylum regimes aligned with ideals of nationhood and humanitarianism, the latter of which has long been a pillar of Switzerland's national self-understanding? How can we think of welcome cultures as extensions of the stories and images that circulate nationally and internationally? What role do geopolitical histories and relations play and how do they express themselves? And how, precisely, do welcome cultures enable crucial aspects such as education? If we think of storytelling as powered by the differing concerns of conditional and unconditional hospitality as outlined in some of Jacques Derrida's work, how are these two modes of welcome different from one another and who are the stakeholders involved?³⁵

This article is an *essai* in the proper French sense of the word: an attempt to reflect on questions such as these which have of late coalesced around the notion of cultures of welcome. This topic is itself fuelled by different definitions and notions of hospitality, long a concern in ethics and political philosophy which itself builds on the archaic concept of *xenia*, translated intriguingly as both the hospitable and the foreigner, and figuring as central *topoi* more than two millennia ago in some of the central Greek texts handed down to us. I hope to use these questions and the texts and imaginaries they shape as perch to reflect on forms of hospitality and welcome as a symptom of larger geopolitical forces that influence nation- and community-building, particularly in Switzerland.

To set up the ideas around conditional and unconditional hospitality, I begin my analysis with the origin story of hospitality, Homer's *Odyssey*. I follow that with a consideration of Plato's use of the figure of the foreigner in his record of Socrates' trial and Derrida's deployment of this

³⁵ Derrida develops the question of hospitality mostly in the following texts: (1) Anne Dufourmantelle and Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Asks Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmmelei Levinas*, trans. P.-A. Brault & M. Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida," in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. R. Kearney, M. Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 65-83; Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality," *Angeloki*, 1999, 5, pp. 3-18; Jacques Derrida, «The Principle of Hospitality," in *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), pp. 66-69; and Oerrida "Hospitality," in *Acts of Religion*, edited and with an introduction by Gil Anidjar (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 358-420.

ancient text in his theorizing on hospitality in the late 1990s in Paris. The second part brings us to the present and asks how this notion of unconditional hospitality is mirrored in the so-called Status-S ("S" for *Schutz*, or protection) which is offered to people fleeing the war in Ukraine and which has prompted the widespread current discussions about the overall fairness, and putative racisms of the Swiss asylum system. My focus in analyzing the S-status is on the extent to which it enables its holders to continue dignified lives. Since what is offered in terms of welcome is often tied to the way a people is perceived I also consider how Ukraine has been imagined in the post-Soviet era. In so doing my goal is to argue that our imaginaries of countries and their relations to one another—i.e. the level on which ideas of national and supranational relations are negotiated—might be a more useful way to frame the current discussion about the relative fairness of the asylum system; it might just be that within another epistemic framing, the S-status can be read as a corrective to the current asylum system in Switzerland.

1. *Xenia, or Hospitality*

One way to think about border crossings from one political realm to another is that they constitute heightened moments of storytelling and story reception both for those seeking refuge and for those granting it. The question of how political entities welcome foreigners is not new of course. If we go back a few millennia, we see that the question of *Xenia*, or hospitality, also often translated as guest-friendship, is considered a moral obligation and runs as a prominent thread through the *Odyssey*. Odysseus, who crossed several borders after the Trojan War on his ten-year trek back to his home in Ithaca, asks at one of the last stations on his journey after he is washed up on Scheria, home to Princess Nausicaa: "What is this country I have come to now? ... Are all the people wild and violent or good, hospitable, and god-fearing?"³⁶ Odysseus's question about the make-up of the people who will decide on his fate can be conceptualized from a modern perspective as a question about the narrative context of the realm he is about to enter, and the characters and belief systems that narratives have shaped. He is asking how the realm has constructed itself through stories, what sorts of stories are told, and what sorts of imaginaries these stories have created. Most importantly he wants to know whether he, who belongs to a certain kind of story world, can fit in and find a place among the country's particular stock of stories, and indeed be recognized by his would-be hosts as someone who fits in. His questions are meaningful within the context of ancient Greek *xenia*, a religious obligation expressed in rituals of hospitality that involve food and drink, baths and gifts, and shelter and protection. As a stranger then, ignorant of the local customs and the local belief system, and on the textual level Odysseus asks specifically: do its people hold with the stories of the Gods, and thus with the precepts of *xenia*, or do they tell unknown stories, that might not include instructions for the kind of hospitality he is familiar with and that would render the hosts "wild and violent," and hence dangerous? And, even if the locals do belong to a community which shares the same stories about *xenia*, do they adhere to its tenets?

Of course, these questions also refer to the host country, to the stories they tell about different sorts of foreigners, to the customs and laws they have built around their welcome, and to the way the negotiation between the cosmologies of foreigners and natives is conducted. As Odysseus weaves his way from Circe's doorstep to that of Calypso and on to the Phaeacians on his homeward journey to Ithaca, where a band of suitors have installed themselves like locusts in his house, vying for his wife Penelope, we understand that one central strand of the *Odyssey* is a demonstration of the various registers of hospitality for both hosts and guests. Until he reaches Ithaca, Odysseus gives us the perspective of the wanderer in need of hospitality; now, in this last part of the epic, he presents the host's perspective: when he finally arrives home in Ithaca, disguised

³⁶ Homer, *The Odyssey*. Translated by Emily Wilson. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018, 6:19-21.

as a beggar so he can pass unhindered by suitors, he is confronted by the rash Ctesippus, one of Penelope's suitors, mocking the rituals of hospitality by throwing an ox's hoof at him. Disguise, in fact, is part of the way the Gods can test whether a mortal adheres to the good kinds of *xenia* required by Zeus in this world; part of what keeps mortals tied to the custom is the belief that deities can appear as humble strangers to test their moral rectitude. Odysseus in this scene performs just this conceit, lifting himself somewhat precariously, but effectively, close to the Gods. Questions such as the ones posed in ancient Greece by Odysseus, anxious about his welcome as well as his position as host, and about clashing stories and colliding belief systems, resurface some 300-400 years later in classical Athens in the dialogues of Plato, albeit from a somewhat different viewpoint. In a series of seminars on hospitality held in Paris in 1996, Derrida reminds us of a scene in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, one of four dialogues in which Plato recounts the trial of his teacher Socrates, which would ultimately end in his mentor's death by hemlock.³⁷ The stated charges against Plato are two-fold: "corrupting the young" and "not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other *daimonia* that are novel" to Athens.³⁸ In narrative terms, then, Socrates' crime is that he tampered with the cosmology of the times, with its strict hierarchy that placed the gods at the very top, followed by a structured hierarchy of mortals—a design that was mirrored in Athens society. To introduce new characters—the *daimonia* who figured somewhere below the Gods but above mere mortals—into this mix proved explosive. The charges, as summed up in the words of Plato's Socrates, who speaks of himself in the third person, are, accordingly, of an even more dire nature than the ones actually levelled against him: "Socrates is committing an injustice, in that he inquires into things below the earth and in the sky; and makes the weaker argument the stronger; and teaches others to follow his example."³⁹ This charge concerns not only shaking up the power structure of the pantheon and the societal hierarchies that follow from it but the reach and import of mortal knowledge itself. The realms "below the earth and in the sky," though we moderns like to think of them as constructed by the human imagination, belong—within the cosmology of the ancient Greeks—firmly to the Gods, and are not accessible to mere mortals, certainly not those who would attempt to introduce new players, change the power of arguments and teach others to follow.

Part of the way we know has to do with the way we speak. Plato's *Apology* speaks to the paradoxical situation refugees find themselves in linguistically with relation to the law by featuring the figure of the foreigner as a conceit for Socrates to make his rhetorical point; to ask, as Derrida puts it, the "question of that which is foreign."⁴⁰ In his address in *The Apology* to the 54 jurors who are to judge him, Socrates announces that in contrast to the liars who accuse him, he will speak the truth, but without the elegant rhetoric or beautiful language of the sophist. Rather, he will use the same language people have heard him use so often in the agora, the central marketplace. He declares further that he is a stranger to the language of the court, to the rhetoric of law, to the processes of accusations and defence, and that as such he stands before the tribunal and the tribunals *like a foreigner*: "For that is the fact of the matter." Socrates says, "I appear before court the first time, at the age of seventy, so I am entirely unfamiliar with (foreign to) the customary way of speaking. Just like you would forgive me if I really were a foreigner, the fact that I would converse with the accent and language in which I was raised."⁴¹ The subtlety of this rhetorical

³⁷ Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality, Anne Dufourmantelle Asks Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans by Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

³⁸ Plato, Aristophanes et al, *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's "Euthyphro", "Apology of Socrates", and "Crito" and Aristophanes' "Clouds"*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1998, trans by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West, introduced by Thomas G. West, p. 73. See also "Socrates," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 16 Sept. 2005, Doug Lindner, "The Trial of Socrates," Univ. of Missouri-Kansas City Law School 2002, and Stone, I.F. (1988). *The Trial of Socrates*. New York: Little, Brown. *Why Socrates Died: Dispelling the Myths* by Robin Waterfield, Norton, 2009.

³⁹ Plato, "Apology of Socrates" in *Four Texts on Socrates*, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, p. 13.

⁴¹ Plato, "Apology of Socrates" in *Four Texts on Socrates*, p. 17.

framing, as Derrida observes, allows Socrates to accuse the would-be arbiters of his fate of extending him less courtesy than they show foreigners in the context of the good kind of *xenia* we learned about from Odysseus.

More than a clever accusation, the figure of the foreigner becomes a trope for someone whose thinking is neither insulated by the habit or customs of law of a given political entity nor by the entrenched political order and social hierarchies of the day. Socrates dons the garb of a foreigner to question the very epistemic norms that governed Athens at the time by extending the realms of inquiry "below the earth and in the sky." The injustice Plato's Socrates says he is accused of, in a nutshell, is the danger foreigners are often perceived to pose to a nation's imaginary. The anxiety over the narratives refugees import, frequently recited in languages most inhabitants of the host country do not know, or based on religions or ideologies not shared by the mainstream, often find their way into the visual rhetoric of political posters—as seen for instance in the poster by the Swiss People's Party "Maria instead of Sharia"⁴² or into laws, such as the minaret law in Switzerland, or the Burka law—understood by some to emerge decades later to offer counter-histories to a country's self-representations of humanitarianism.⁴³ And this, in the end, is also one of the perceived threats posed by foreigners who enter any country: that they will bring with them new kinds of imaginaries in religion, law, or customs that often coexist uneasily with the national narratives; "foreign" narratives that might even threaten to upend "native" ones.⁴⁴

Then as now, several contradictory meanings, desires and anxieties can be effectively projected onto the figure of the foreigner. Referring to Socrates' claims that he felt like a foreigner in the courtroom, Derrida points out that whatever Socrates in his guise as a foreigner might represent to us, actual foreigners are exactly in the situation he describes when asking for hospitality in a host country: typically not proficient in the tongue of the new country, and often ignorant of the language of the court and of its laws, in which the obligation of hospitality, the right to asylum, its norms, its borders, and its police are constructed. This uneven match between foreigners and the legal institution of a country constitutes, according to Derrida, an initial act of violence, because the host (the king, the realm, the courts, the state, the nation) forces strangers to translate their life stories into the language of the host. Here, for Derrida, the question of hospitality begins. He asks:

Should we demand from a foreigner before, and so that, we take him in, that he understand us, that he speak our language, with all that this expression entails, and in all its possible extensions? If he already were to speak our language with all this implies, if we already shared everything that

⁴² See the image for instance in an article from 2009: http://www.rhetorik.ch/Aktuell/09/02_10/index.html, accessed March 2023.

⁴³ The so-called Bergier report, for instance, is a controversial study published in 2001 on the treatment of Jewish refugees seeking refuge in Switzerland. See <https://www.uek.ch/de/schlussbericht/synthese/uekd.pdf>, accessed February 28, 2023.

⁴⁴ A closer look at the backstory of *The Apology*, for instance, shows some of the same political struggles over the meaning of democracy that we see today in the United States, one of Athens' modern-day successors. Sceptical of Plato's depiction of the trial, and of Socrates, his mentor, the journalist I.F. Stone, author of *The Trial of Socrates*, considers possible reasons, other than those charged, for which Socrates might have been put to death in his seventieth year after a lifetime of teaching on the streets of Athens, a place where the exercise of free speech was much like breathing. "I believe," Stone says in an interview, "the case against Socrates was political and that the charge of corrupting the youth was based on a belief – and considerable evidence – that he was undermining their faith in Athenian democracy.... Those are the realities his (Plato's) *Apology* was calculated to hide." Seen in this light, Plato's Socrates, in presenting himself as a foreigner unversed in the language of the courts, might be read to encompass the language of democracy itself, and the final verdict an indictment of his—and Plato's—anti-democratic stance. In Stone's reading of the trial, some 2400 years after the fact, the jurors of the trial were defending not the pantheon, but democracy itself. See I.F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates*, Anchor Press: 1989. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/socrates/ifstoneinterview.html>, accessed February 20, 2023.

is shared with a common language, would the foreigner still be a foreigner, and could one still speak of hospitality and asylum when referring to him?⁴⁵

This fundamental paradox in conditional asylum—that we expect foreigners to be able to ask for hospitality and defend their bid within a legal and social system using a language, and by implication a societal and legal code, of hospitality and a national imaginary, which if they knew it, would mark them as a non-stranger—is an aporia that typically underpins modern asylum regimes today. A further fundamental paradox Derrida points to is the difference between absolute and conditional hospitality. "Absolute hospitality," he states, requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names.⁴⁶

Absolute hospitality, in Derrida's definition, is granted even before the foreigner's name is known, thereby obviating the need for narratives on the part of an individual. He or she would be granted asylum, and legal status, on the strength of belonging to a certain circumscribed group alone. To speak in the context of the S-status, which comes as close as any nation will allow to this kind of 'absolute hospitality,' he or she is admitted on the strength of being in Ukraine at the time of war, but not on the strength of being a particular kind of individual, with a heritage; an individual 'with a family name'. The reason this works in the case of absolute, or as I will call it unconditional asylum is that both paradoxes are essentially resolved: the asylum seeker is not required to speak in the tongue of a non-foreigner in a court as though he or she were a native, and the pact or reciprocity is solved on the supranational level through Switzerland's participation in regulations agreed on with the European Union, rather than on the national level through an agreement between state and individual which is the typical way. On this political level then the trust it takes for such an agreement is between political entities. At the same time, this trust, and the alliances that spring from them, also speak to the legitimization of borders, and hence nations. This brings us to the level of geopolitics.

2. *Conditional versus Unconditional Hospitality*

Unconditional asylum, that is asylum based on foreign relations and geopolitical circumstances such as war, and *conditional* asylum based on an individual's plight, such as personal persecution, one of the main definitions of a refugee in the 1952 Geneva Convention, have fundamentally different goals.⁴⁷ Conditional hospitality which is the kind individuals receive when they are fleeing their countries not because of war, but because they are personally persecuted, is embedded within a whole host of stories that have regulatory functions. These are the stories told by the asylum seeker about their particular circumstances, the events that made them flee their home countries and their journeys; they are then translated and recorded by officials at the asylum centres, accompanied by their own interpretations of the stories to serve as bases for legal decisions by more senior officials; and they end up condensed into decisions handed down by state representatives, which determine the fate of the displaced person. This relatively contained circle of stories passed on from refugees to administrators to lawmakers and back again operates within larger informal story cycles: information shared by refugees and traffickers on what to include and what to omit in their stories to achieve asylum; stories told among case workers at the asylum centres about what sounds

⁴⁵ Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 25.

⁴⁷ See the definitions of refugees in the text of the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees in the UNHCR document, <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>, accessed March 9, 2023.

authentic and what does not; stories told by the laws and regulations of the respective asylum regimes; and stories, finally, recounted in the larger culture about refugees: who they are, and what they potentially bring to, or take away from, the communities in which they hope to make a new life. This cultural level is also where anxieties about race, religion and gender are located.

Each of these linked levels of storytelling—the personal, the bureaucratic, the legal, the political, and the cultural—is informed by its intents and interests, its own legal and moral codes, and its histories, authorities, and ideological underpinnings. And quite often these linked narrative contexts are contradictory and controversial, sitting at uneasy angles to one another, and yet making up a whole that determines the situated experience a refugee will have in a given country, at a given time. To make things even more complicated, these narrative clusters never arise in a vacuum; they all have their specific historical contexts, which have evolved, often over centuries, in the way foreigners and their countries have been thought about, talked about, represented, rendered invisible or visible, profited from or damaged by, legalized or criminalized in larger national, and supranational contexts.⁴⁸

It is at this national and supranational level where I would situate the story the S-Status tells; a narrative that is concerned with historical legacy, and a self-understanding of nationhood in alliance, or in conflict with, other nations. To tell stories on this level then is a complex business; the analysis of the S-status as used in Switzerland and the EU provides an insight into this complexity. The S-status, in the books since the war in Kosovo, was first activated in Switzerland and in the EU in the spring of 2022 to grant asylum seekers fleeing the war in Ukraine temporary legal status without their having to go through the arduous and often unsuccessful asylum process reserved for other asylum seekers, and without overwhelming the asylum system.⁴⁹ The S-status is not a novel legal instrument; in fact, it was first created in 1998 in response to the very wars Suljagić was referring to in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Kosovo when tens of thousands of people seeking refuge threatened to overwhelm the Swiss asylum system.⁵⁰ But the important thing to keep in mind about the S-status is that (while it is still somewhat conditional as it refers exclusively to Ukrainians, or people living in Ukraine when the war began) the condition of this asylum does *not rest with the individual*, but rather with *the country of origin*, Ukraine, and the circumstance that it was invaded by Russia. This distinction means that individual stories, which are influenced in part by identity markers, such as religion, race, gender, age, or the circumstances under which a person arrives in Switzerland—the latter important because of the first entry clause in the Dublin Regulations, which mandates that most refugees must seek asylum in the European country they first set foot in—become somewhat irrelevant to the question of asylum.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Caroline Wiedmer, "Forced Entanglements: Stories of Expulsion, Sovereign Power and Bare Life," *Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*, de Gruyter, vol. 2, 2019, p. 73.

⁴⁹ The S-status enables a swift reaction on the part of the Swiss federal government to an acute rise in the numbers of asylum seekers due to war in a country; it grants temporary legal status until the immediate crisis has passed, without overly taxing the asylum system. It also comes with the permit to work, and financial support for housing and health insurance. See also <https://www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch/themen/asyl-in-der-schweiz/aufenthaltsstatus/status-s> for further information on the S-status, provided by Flüchtlingshilfe Schweiz, accessed February 20, 2023. See also the Swiss Asylum Code Article 4 and 66 ff for the legal language on the S-status, <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/358/en>, accessed February 25, 2023.

⁵⁰ While the S-status was introduced into law back in the late nineties, it came too late for those fleeing the circumstances that had, three years earlier, led to the massacre in Srebrenica, and in the end, its activation was deemed unnecessary because the war in Kosovo came to an end in 1999 and the numbers of asylum-seekers decreased thereafter. For an overview of precise data and practices concerning the different groups of asylum seekers over the last four decades in Switzerland, see Stephan Parak, *Asylpraxis der Schweiz von 1979 bis 2019*, published by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). <https://www.bj.admin.ch/ejpd/de/home/aktuell/mm.msg-id-80176.html>, accessed February 20, 2023. See also <https://www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch/themen/asyl-in-der-schweiz/aufenthaltsstatus/status-s> for further information on the S-status, provided by Flüchtlingshilfe Schweiz, accessed February 20, 2023.

⁵¹ The Dublin Regulations were originally established as the Dublin Convention in 1990 and implemented in 1997. It is now in its third iteration, the Dublin Regulations III, in force since January 2014.

I would argue that it is because it is situated on the supra-national level, and hence represents an alliance with the EU, and thus the developing alliance of the EU with Ukraine, the S-status comes with generous conditions. The holders of this status are not only granted unconditional residency status for the duration of the war but health care, housing and a modest stipend to cover living costs as is the case for all refugees who are granted asylum. Most importantly, education on all levels (as is the case with other people seeking *conditional* refuge and recognized as refugees and thus granted either temporary or permanent asylum) is part of the package: children on the primary and secondary levels (from ca 7-16 years of age) are admitted into special classes soon after their arrival and integrated into the regular classes when their language skills permit. There are several pathways after S-status holders finish the ninth grade, which in Switzerland marks the end of compulsory education: on the one hand, they can theoretically take up an apprenticeship, often supported by additional flanking measures, on the other, and again theoretically, they can pursue a path that leads to university education, the so-called Gymnasium. For Ukrainian students who arrive in Switzerland with the equivalent of a university-relevant high school diploma, the path is at least partially open to university education, albeit only for those with advanced language competency (usually a C1) in one of the Swiss languages, and already gained ECTS credits in a home university.⁵²

Because schooling in Ukraine that leads to a high school diploma includes only 11 years of education while the equivalent schooling in Switzerland lasts at least 12, and quite often 13 years, the Ukrainian diploma is only partially recognized. To compensate for this and following the Lisbon Convention, students from Ukraine can have 120 ECTS credits already granted by a university in Ukraine (so roughly half of a BA which is usually 240 ECTS credits) count as their 12th year. For those who do not already have the ECTS credits required, there are several possibilities. In Zurich for instance, there is a step program which combines remote learning with *in situ* language learning; clearly, the experience with COVID-19 has left an architecture of remote learning platforms in its path that can now be used on the one hand to enable students who had not yet gained the requisite 120 ECTS to continue to earn credits at the home universities in Ukraine while living in Switzerland, on the other hand, to learn a Swiss language while doing so. In Berne, a so-called preparatory year was created to help Ukrainian students learn German and gives them insight into Swiss politics. At the private Franklin University Switzerland in Lugano where English is the language of instruction, in the meantime, students are accepted for a first year during which they not only improve their English in courses on academic writing but also one of the Swiss languages while gaining some first insights into a range of disciplines offered at the university. They are only formally accepted once they have successfully passed all classes during the first year. Acquiring language competency in either German, French, Italian or English then remains of central importance for all students, and despite these innovative approaches often represents a formidable obstacle to being accepted at a university.

For those further along in their careers, from doctoral students to already established scholars and scientists from Ukraine, there has been a great deal of support in Switzerland since the war started in 2022, especially from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) which in partnership with the Swiss Sector of Scholars at Risk rapidly spoke some 9 million Swiss francs in March of 2022 to enable universities to host over 100 scientists and scholars in Switzerland. The SNSF also signed an agreement in the summer of 2022 with the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU) to coordinate a call for joint research projects from Swiss and Ukrainian scholars

⁵² In Switzerland, a country with three official languages, and public and private universities with programs that are taught in German, French, Italian and English, education is largely regulated on the cantonal level. This means that regulations regarding language, language levels and admittance can change depending on the canton in which an S-status holder lives. For an explanation for the canton of Zurich, see <https://www.zh.ch/content/dam/zhweb/bilder-dokumente/themen/migration-integration/ukraine-hilfe/ukraine-konflikt-informationen-zum-schulangebot/zugang-zu-schweizer-hochschulen-deutsch.pdf>, accessed March 2023.

and scientists.⁵³ The language requirement so prominent at earlier stages of education falls away for most of the advanced academics who are relatively fluent in English, which has become the lingua franca of science and to a certain degree also of scholarship. On the level of academia, then, Switzerland is very much following the spirit of unconditional hospitality in the context of the S-status, though there are certain conditions attached to certain stages of education. The welcome culture shown in Switzerland in the area of education is rather impressive, at least for those holding an S-status. However, that still leaves quite a number of people out who today live in Switzerland as recognized refugees and originally came from places like Eritrea (29'960), Syria (13'373) and Turkey (8'428).⁵⁴ There are indications though that the kinds of programs created in academia for S-status holders within the context of unconditional welcome are retroactively being opened to individuals who came within the context of conditional welcome. Once new regulations, rules and programs are created, especially in complex bureaucratic institutions such as universities, it is hard to walk them back when confronted with the need of others in similar situations. Or to put it somewhat differently: stories told by policies and regulations are infectious and create norms that then eventually are applied evenly across the board.

This does not necessarily mean that there is no xenophobia or racism at work in the Swiss asylum system, but it does mean that in the case of unconditional hospitality, we need to look at narratives not on the individual level, but rather on the national and supranational level. This also helps us analyze how the status of countries and their inhabitants is negotiated through images and stories that circulate on a global level. Looking back over the last two centuries, geopolitical developments include the imprints of war, violence and environmental devastation; the relentless carving up of stretches of land that has left human beings scattered and civilizations in tatters; industrialisation and technologization that have soiled territories and poisoned soils; imperialisms and colonialisms that have left in their wake nations and peoples still struggling for sovereignty. Together these events have influenced the way territories and their inhabitants have merged into countries with greater and lesser power, and ever-shifting positions vis à vis one another. Because of this question of whether, for instance, the Bosniaks aren't white enough or too Muslim, as Suljagić suggests, or whether the Ukrainians are admitted so freely, as many suspect, simply because they present as white and quite often Christian, the investigation of unconditional asylum needs to be re-framed to include these larger supranational narratives about the situatedness of Ukraine between two colonial powers, and within overarching political entities, in this case, the EU, Russia and indeed, the wider world.

3. Cultures of Hospitality as Tools of Nation Building

Overall, the history of asylum regimes in Switzerland offers a broad range of interpretations of what it means to be foreign, to be displaced, and to offer shelter and hospitality as a host, or indeed to be denied entry altogether. These varying constructions of "the refugee" and of hospitality employed over the last two centuries allow us to appreciate that there are various gendered and racialized nuances that attach to people in need of shelter.⁵⁵ After the Vienna Congress of 1815, when the 22 cantons of Switzerland were called upon to found a new state, they had little in

⁵³ See <https://www.snf.ch/en/ccX83GAUZFaJJ5Ly/news/a-year-of-commitment-to-researchers-from-ukraine>, accessed March 30, 2023.

⁵⁴ See <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/462169/umfrage/anerkannte-fluechtlinge-in-der-schweiz-nach-herkunftslandern/>, accessed April 15, 2023.

⁵⁵ Given the parameters of this paper I can only offer a small slice here in the form of a couple of examples of unconditional asylum, or its opposite, unconditional denial of asylum. Indeed, the study of migration in Switzerland is a field which in recent years has become increasingly rich and includes several disciplinary approaches, including literary, sociological, political, legal and historical approaches.

common aside from the history of the Old Swiss Confederation and the failed Helvetic Republic, neither of which seemed very useful as a basis from which to draw an uplifting foundation story (though courtesy of the German dramatist Friedrich Schiller who popularized the legend of Wilhelm Tell in 1804, revolutionary against the Habsburgian Gessler in the 15th Century, Switzerland has a national hero who still figures on the 5-franc piece).⁵⁶ In the meantime, political actors fell largely into one of two camps: the conservatives, whose aim was to maintain the political structures and ideology of the Old Confederation, and the liberals, who wanted to build a new political order on the principles of individual freedom and egalitarianism. This latter, ultimately victorious, ideology styled itself on notions of humanitarianism, which were further embedded in the national discourse around the time of Switzerland's founding in 1848 when the new nation-state welcomed some 15,000 people fleeing revolutions in France and Germany. The new federal government underlined its position with regards to asylum in a memo that for a time was to be foundational for its asylum culture to all cantons on February 28, 1848: "Wherever refugees come from, whether they enter the territory of the Confederation armed or not, they are to be granted peaceful residence in accord with asylum law and following the laws of humanity."⁵⁷

In terms of circumstance and numbers, the kind of unconditional hospitality currently demonstrated with the S-status is reminiscent of the asylum accorded the so-called Bourbaki troops in 1871 when the French army under General Charles Denis Sauter Bourbaki was welcomed into Switzerland after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71.⁵⁸ The 87,847 French soldiers who entered Switzerland over three days in the freezing cold of early February still constitutes the largest group of refugees Switzerland has ever taken in, but barely.⁵⁹ The effort it took to distribute, house, and feed what amounted at the time to an overnight increase of approximately 3% of the Swiss population of ca 2.8 million became one of the stories around which the relatively young Swiss nation, still more of an emigrant country than an immigrant country in the 19th Century, and bereft of the rich narrative fabric of revolution and military triumph most other European countries could draw from for their foundational legend, constructed its account of solidarity and humanitarianism.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, Tübingen, 1804. The legend of Wilhelm Tell had appeared earlier in Johannes von Müllers *Geschichten der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, 1780 which in turn goes back to the *Cronicon Helveticum* written by the chronicler Aegidius Tschudi about Swiss history from 1001 to 1470. It appeared once as an original version (Originalschrift) in the mid-1530s, and once as an edited, final version (Reinschrift) drafted between 1568 and 1572. Schiller's play, which stayed close to von Müller's account, begins as a refugee story of sorts when Tell saves Konrad Baumgartner who killed the Burgvogt of Unterwalden because he threatened to rape his wife, and is fleeing Habsburgian soldiers.

⁵⁷ Marc *Spescha, Migrationsabwehr* im Fokus der Menschenrechte, Dike Verlag, 2007, p.152. The tug-of-war in the matter of ultimate authority on questions of asylum between the federal government and the cantons went on for some time and was only settled in 1925 when asylum became an entirely federal matter. See article 69 of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation 1925; see also Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/010374/2002-11-26/>, accessed March 4, 2023.

⁵⁸ This welcome is depicted in the so-called Bourbaki Panorama in Lucerne. The massive 360-degree painting, named after the defeated general, and painted by Edouard Castres in 1881, spans 112 by 10 meters and documents one of the first humanitarian acts of the Swiss Red Cross. It depicts scenes of a bedraggled and beaten-down army as it relinquishes its weapons before crossing the border at Les Verrières and is given first aid by civilians and members of the Swiss Red Cross. Between the painting and its viewers is a stage on which 3D groupings of life-like mannequins, a train car, and guns extend the painting and give the impression of real life. For some of these depictions, see for instance: <https://www.srf.ch/news/panorama/menschen-und-schicksale-die-bourbaki-internierung-im-monumentalen-panorama-gemaelde>, accessed March 8, 2021.

⁵⁹ This is true for the end of February 2023, when the numbers of Ukrainians with S-status reported were around 75'000; see <https://www.support-ukraine.bs.ch/registrierung/Zahlen-Status-S.html>, accessed March 5, 2023.

⁶⁰ While the welcome was unconditional, all this help did not come cheap. When they left, the French government was presented with a bill of 12, 2 million Swiss francs to cover the expenses they had incurred. See https://www.bourbakipanorama.ch/fileadmin/files/Dokumente/2_Vermittlung/Schulen_Internierung_Bourbaki_Armee.pdf, accessed March 6, 2023. Another, much smaller work, by the Swiss painter Albert Anker, entitled *Swiss*

At the other end of the spectrum that begins with the two gestures of unconditional hospitality when modern Switzerland was founded in 1848 and then again to the Bourbaki soldiers some twenty years later lies the unconditional withholding of hospitality, also based not on the stories individuals tell (though with fateful impact on all), but rather on the common race of a group of people fleeing war: Switzerland closed its borders to an estimated (and controversially discussed) 24'000 Jewish refugees on August 13, 1942. The circular order going out to all border patrols from the Swiss Police Department reads as follows: "Deserters, escaped prisoners of war and other military personnel, as well as political refugees are not to be sent back. Refugees merely for reasons of race, for example Jews, do not count as political refugees."⁶¹ These examples of unconditional welcome, or its opposite, show the breadth of responses asylum seekers have experienced at the Swiss borders and how Switzerland has positioned itself with regard to other nations in Europe; there are many other examples of both generosity and the lack thereof. If you consider pacts between countries in this light, it becomes clear that the focus in any asylum system *is as much on the sort of country hospitality enables as on the sort of hospitality a country enables*. In fact, during the 18th and 19th centuries of nation-building, the way the politics of border and asylum were conceived was often fundamental to how fledgling nations constructed and built their identities and their political structures, in the sense both of restrictive and open forms of welcome but also, and perhaps more importantly, on who and what had the authority to decide how and whom to grant asylum, and what this meant for foreign affairs at the time. How has Ukraine, as an imaginary space, been negotiated over the years from the inside and the outside? A short clip, taken out of context, of a talk given by the master storyteller President Volodymyr Zelenskyy himself at a press conference on the first anniversary of Russia's second invasion of Ukraine on February 25, 2023, can give us a hint.⁶² In this clip that caused an uproar among millions of viewers in the US, Zelensky is portrayed in right-wing social media as saying the following: "The US will have to send their sons and daughters, exactly the same way as we are sending, their sons and daughters to war. And they will have to fight because it's NATO that we're talking about. And they will be dying, God, forbid, because it's a horrible thing." In reality, he communicated what has been his argument all along to Western leaders, namely that if Ukraine is not supported, it might lose the war and then Russia might invade NATO member countries in the Baltics (Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) which under the treaty that governs NATO would oblige the US (and other NATO members) to enter the war, and to "send their sons and daughters".⁶³ What went lost in much of the Twitter noise over the supposed idea that American sons and daughter would have to fight in Ukraine was that Zelensky was reinforcing once more the message that the bodies of Ukrainian sons and daughters were effectively acting as a buffer for Europe, NATO and the West at large, against Russian aggression. And that no one seemed to find this unusual.

Hospitality, also hangs in Lucerne in the Panorama house and depicts the Bourbaki soldiers being taken care of in a manger by Swiss farmers. <https://www.bourbakipanorama.ch/museum/geschichte/>

⁶¹ "Deserteure, entwichene Kriegsgefangene und andere Militärpersonen sowie politische Flüchtlinge sind nicht zurückzuweisen. Flüchtlinge nur aus Rassegründen, z.B. Juden, gelten nicht als politische Flüchtlinge." Circular order from the police department dated 13th of August 1942, BAR E 4001 (C) 1, Bd. 259, und BAR E 4300 (B) 3, Bd. 20. See also Ludwig, *Flüchtlingspolitik*, 1957, S. 205; see also Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz, *Zweiter Weltkrieg Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, <https://www.uek.ch/de/publikationen1997-2000/fberd.pdf>, p.93-94, accessed March 4, 2023.

⁶² <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/02/politics/fact-check-zelensky-americans-fighting-ukraine-video/index.html>, accessed March 8, 2023.

⁶³ The correct quote is as follows: "The US is never going to give up on the NATO member states. If it happens that Ukraine, due to various opinions and weakening – depleting – of assistance, loses, Russia is going to enter Baltic states, and NATO member states, and then the US will have to send their sons and daughters, exactly the same way as we are sending, their sons and daughters to war. And they will have to fight because it's NATO that we're talking about. And they will be dying, God forbid, because it's a horrible thing. I wish peace and Ukrainian support to the United States." Ibid, accessed March 8, 2023.

But then again, why should this be surprising? For Zelensky's argument fits seamlessly into a century-old perception of Ukrainians as commodified buffers. As art historian Asia Bazdyrieva argues in her 2022 article "No Milk, No Love":

For decades, Western Europeans have cast Eastern Europeans as bodies that perform cheap labor, bodies to prostitute, bodies made to sustain the pollution of the West's outsourced industries; they are to wear second-hand clothes from the EU and drive old cars that are no longer considered safe or ecological. They are the buffer zone, they are the production site, they are "developing," they don't have a political voice they are to be helped because they form a lower stratum whose presence is needed to serve those of a higher stratum. So the reason for this unprecedented support from the West at least when it comes to sending weapons and accepting certain refugees is not only that most Ukrainians are read as white, but also because they, too, belong to the category of the inhuman.⁶⁴

For Bazdyrieva then the more important form of racism plays itself out in a very specific kind of register, namely that "a group of majority-white Europeans is added to the rendering of subracial, underclass, inhumane subjects."⁶⁵ Her broader argument undergirding this statement is about Ukraine-as-territory through the dual colonization by Western Europe and the Russian empire over the course of the 20th century focuses primarily on "living and nonliving matter cast as inhuman resources" by both imperial powers. This played out in the perception of Ukraine as a sheer endless resource, ready for the taking, including the extraction of coal and iron ore around the turn of the last century which would expand into the industrialization of the country for the benefit of the two dualling colonial powers; as well as in the popular notion of Ukraine as the "breadbasket" of Europe, a perfect example, according to Bazdyrieva, for the socio-technical imaginary which enables the making of a resource.⁶⁶ This imaginary, she argues, "helps to see how Ukraine's territory and its people are imagined as a component of material exchange."⁶⁷

This shift from the framework of critical race theory familiar from the US context, which maps only imperfectly onto the European context, to a postcolonial framing of the issue helps us understand Ukraine as a transactional zone in the intersection of two imperial powers—positioned geographically at once in the middle of both powers, and the periphery of each-- where, precisely because it is imagined as having rich soul, and geological riches, land and humans have been commodified and, as Bazdyrieva would argue, rendered subracial and subhuman, over the last two centuries. This competitive commodification also makes some sense of the grain debacle between Russia and the West in the summer of 2022: the deal brokered by António Guterres, the UN's secretary-general, and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with Russia's President Vladimir Putin for the export of grain last July only to have Russia halt that export with missiles on the port of Odesa the very next morning.⁶⁸ Zelensky's ongoing and repeated attempt to join the EU and

⁶⁴ Ava Bazdyrieva, "No Milk, No Love" in e-flux Journal, issue 127, May 2022; see <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/127/465214/no-milk-no-love/>, accessed March 5, 2023. See also the recent course entitled The Making of Modern Ukraine by historian Timothy Snyder at Yale, in particular class 9: <https://online.yale.edu/courses/making-modern-ukraine>, accessed May 2023.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. See for a further discussion of the history of Europe and territorialized statehood, John Agnew, "Borders on the mind: re-framing border thinking," in *Ethics & Global Politics*, 1:4, 175-191, 2008. DOI: 10.3402/egp.v1i4.1892, p.180.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Grain export from Ukraine during the war was widely reported. See for instance *The Economist*, in July 2022: https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/07/22/after-agreeing-to-let-ukraine-export-grain-russia-rockets-its-port?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=18151738051&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=CjwKCAiAu5agBhBzEiwAdiR5tFuWwf7ZDMxwYA8ndllapVVRCqekge0G1j21SMRiPl0W1bKEYBRgKxoCjIsQAvD_BwE&gclid=aw.ds; and *The Guardian* in November of 2022: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/31/ukraine-ships-out-record-tonnage-grain-russia-withdrawal-scheme>, both accessed on March 5, 2023.

NATO meanwhile are thwarted by what Bazdyrieva calls an "infantilizing narrative" furthered by the treatment of its citizens as commodities and inscribed in Russian textbooks and in the self-stylization of Ukraine itself.⁶⁹

4. *Epilogue*

Such a postcolonial understanding of Ukrainians as a people who have historically been colonized and exploited both by the West and the East puts a somewhat different spin on Suljagić's claim that Ukrainians today are being offered refuge more readily than Bosniaks in the mid-nineties because they are not as brown, and Christian to boot, and therefore fit more readily in with the Swiss. Certainly, this postcolonial framing offers a more apt concept of how racism might be thought of in Western Europe and particularly in the context of this war. More relevant factors in this context might be that the unconditional welcome, though extended to all Ukrainians for the duration of the war regardless of their individual situation, is expected to be *limited in time*: when the war ends, the S-status ends. By contrast, the conditional asylum granted to some of the other nationalities and grounded in personal stories can be given indefinitely.

More relevant to this discussion than the putative racism on the part of the Swiss or the Swiss asylum system is the current relationship between Switzerland and the European Union. After Switzerland's population voted against joining the European Economic Area in a vote in 1992, Switzerland and the EU regulated their relations including important agreements for trade, freedom of movement in the EU and Switzerland, and the area of asylum and security. This seemed for quite a while to be the way to go. Then, within the area of migration, among other events, the conservative Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP), or Swiss People's Party, proposed a federal initiative titled "Against Mass Immigration" which demanded a limitation of migration, including refugees, into Switzerland with destabilizing implications for the bilateral agreements with the EU, and the EU itself has developed and changed as it went from 15 to 27 members states, many of the newcomers from former Eastern Europe. The S-status itself was designed by Switzerland in alignment with the regulatory stipulation used for the S-status by the EU. The current unconditional asylum for Ukrainians in Switzerland needs to be seen then against this international backdrop. This does not mean that there is no racism or xenophobia in Switzerland or in Europe, but rather that in the context of the S-status, these concepts need to be conceptualized in a way that considers the supranational backdrop and does not constitute a one-on-one adaptation to the discourse as it has developed in the US.

Returning to the notion that border crossings constitute heightened moments of storytelling and story reception both for those seeking refuge and for those granting it, I would argue that the S-status might be taken as a moment to reconsider how we collectively think of people living in our country because they need protection, regardless of their reason for leaving their homeland. In many of the conversations with Ukrainians I have had over the last year the question Odysseus asked when he arrived in Scheria: "What is this country I have come to now? Are all the people wild and violent or good, hospitable, and god-fearing?" have unclear answers. While a realization that the S-status comes with many privileges in contrast to what other asylum seekers receive, the narrative of the S-status comes across as something of a cover narrative: while there are many educational opportunities, including generous grants and language support, the period of the offered shelter which is contingent on an utterly unpredictable war means that only a few people are offered professional positions or study opportunities such as apprenticeships or doctoral studies. In other words, people tend on the whole to be perceived as "good, hospitable

⁶⁹ Ibid.

and god-fearing," but the broad story told by the system itself is unforgiving. Perhaps a return to the notion that hospitality shapes nations, and not the other way around, would help us all to find durable and equitable solutions in the area of forced migration.

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Caroline Wiedmer is professor of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies and the Co-Director of the Scholarships Without Borders Program at Franklin University Switzerland. She received her PhD from Princeton University with a dissertation on memory of the Holocaust in Germany and France. Her numerous books and articles circle questions of memory, motherhood, the intersections of law, narrative and culture, the maritime port as a space of trade and cultural exchange, various forms of sustainability, and refugee politics in Europe. She has received grants and research fellowships from Princeton University, the University of London, the Center for Gender Studies of the University of Basel, the NEH program at Stanford University, the Collegium Helveticum at the ETH in Zürich, the Center for Advanced German and European Studies of the Freie Universität of Berlin, and the Swiss National Science Foundation.

cwiedmer@fus.edu

Migration in Zeiten von Corona

Emrah Bal

Universität Basel, Verein Offener Hörsaal

KEY WORDS: Bildung, Corona, Einwanderung, Geflüchtete, Integration

Der Begriff „Zeit“ hat für Individuen oder Gemeinschaften sehr unterschiedliche Bedeutungen. Während er für manche bedeutet, mehr Geld zu verdienen oder Karriere zu machen, bedeutet er für andere, zu überleben oder unter neuen Umständen ein eigenes Leben aufzubauen.

Unsere Beziehung zur Zeit, die Rolle, die wir ihr zuordnen oder was wir im Laufe der Zeit tun, ist eigentlich das Bild unserer Beziehung zu unserem Leben. In dieser Hinsicht ist unser vergangenes-jetzt-zukunftsbezogenes Leben im Fluss der Zeit verborgen. Wir blicken zurück in die Vergangenheit, überprüfen unsere gegenwärtige Situation und entwickeln ein imaginäres Planziel für die Zukunft. Und natürlich erneuert sich dieser ganze Kreislauf ständig, je nachdem, was wir gerade tun und wo wir gerade stehen. Zum Beispiel „die Zukunft durch Bildung zu konstruieren und auf diese Weise ein eigenes Zeitleben zu schaffen“ ist vollständig mit Spuren der Vergangenheit, unserer Gegenwart und dem Traum von der Zukunft beladen. Auch wenn wir uns dieses Kreislaufs nicht bewusst sind, macht die Zeit dies mit uns allen und lässt uns mit den Folgen des Kreislaufs allein.

Natürlich wird dieser ganze allgemeine Zeitzyklus durch die sozialen Bedingungen des Einzelnen bestimmt. Die Migrationsgeschichte eines Geflüchteten, die er oder sie auf den Migrationsrouten erlebt hat, wird für die Zukunft immer Spuren hinterlassen. Gleichzeitig bestimmen die gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen im Zielland, was Geflüchtete jetzt tun können. Und die Zukunftsfrage wird immer präsent sein, wenn es darum geht, etwas im Rahmen der bestehenden Bedingungen aufzubauen. Kriege, Todesfälle, Traumata, die schmerzvolle Einwanderungsgeschichte, die für Einwandernde in der Schweiz geschaffenen Bedingungen (Lagerbedingungen, Asyl-Integrationspolitik, soziale Verhältnisse) bestimmen die Zukunft der Einwandernden. Diese sind durchschnittlich negativ.

Corona war ein mächtiger Eingriff in das menschliche Leben und den Rhythmus der Zeit. Unser gewohntes Leben wurde uns plötzlich genommen und uns allen wurde ein neues Regelsystem auferlegt, und wir alle waren plötzlich in einer Welt der Unsicherheit gefangen.

Eingewanderte erleben die größten Auswirkungen dieser negativen Ergebnisse. Unser Leben, das bereits vor der Pandemie von der Gesellschaft abgeschottet war, ist mit der Pandemie komplett verschwunden. Unser Leben ist auf das Lager oder unsere Häuser beschränkt.

Natürlich gab es einen ähnlichen Prozess für die Schweizer Einwohner:innen, aber für Eingewanderte ist es nicht derselbe. Geflüchtete müssen ihr Leben nach einer vom Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM) festgelegten Integrations- und Asylpolitik organisieren. Wird diese vom SEM organisierte Struktur unterbrochen, wirkt sich das direkt auf das Leben Geflüchteter aus.

Problematisch für Geflüchtete war dass der Schweizer Staat Unterstützungspakete, Kreditunterstützung, soziale und psychologische Unterstützungszentren für Unternehmen, Gewerbetreibende und von der Pandemie negativ betroffene Einzelpersonen geschaffen hat aber dass für die Geflüchteten solche Unterstützungspakete oder -programme auf der Strecke blieben.

Solidaritäts- und Unterstützungseinrichtungen nehmen im Alltag der Zugewanderten einen sehr wichtigen Platz ein. Diese Einrichtungen arbeiten mit Freiwilligen und während der Pandemie war es schwierig die laufenden Projekte am Leben zu halten. Diese Einrichtungen sind für Geflüchtete von entscheidender Bedeutung, da viele soziale Netzwerke der Geflüchteten eben genau durch diese Organisationen gebildet werden.

Hier können Geflüchtete als Individuen existieren, indem sie kostenlose soziale Aktivitäten, Sprach-Kultur-Kunst-Aktivitäten in Anspruch nehmen.

Als Geflüchteter erlebt man Integration auf unterschiedliche Weise erfolgen. So nimmt man beispielsweise wahr dass die bestehende Integrationspolitik in der Regel nach den Bedürfnissen des Wirtschaftsmarktes ausgerichtet ist. Meist liegt das Augenmerk auf bestimmten Bereichen. Wenn man aber zum Beispiel seine Tätigkeit als Künstler:in, Politiker:in, Hochschulabsolvent:in oder Handwerker:in in einem beliebigen Bereich fortsetzen möchten, hat man als Geflüchteter das Gefühl übermenschliches Talent und eine übermenschliche Anstrengung aufwenden zu müssen. Wenn ich mich als Beispiel aufzeige: 2021 war ich seit 3 Jahren in der Schweiz und habe mit 63 Franken pro Woche gelebt. Obwohl ich oft einen Sprachkurs beantragt habe, wurden diese Anträge nicht angenommen. Ich wurde ständig gebeten zu warten. Da ich keine Unterstützung vom Staat erhielt, habe ich mich um eine Stelle beworben um auf eigenen Beinen zu stehen, leider hat auch dies nicht funktioniert, da es mir ja an sprachlicher Kompetenz fehlt. Und in diesem Fall gibt es Tausende von Geflüchteten wie mich. Mein Gesuch, in der Schweiz ein neues Leben zu beginnen, wurde jedes Mal abgelehnt. Unterstützung kam dank der vielen solidarischen Institutionen und Einzelpersonen, die ich selbst kontaktiert habe.

Von einem Immigranten unter diesen harten Bedingungen Erfolge im Bildungs- oder Kunstbereich zu erwarten ist fast unmenschlich, tatsächlich sind wir *de facto* zum Scheitern verurteilt. Das integrationspolitische Programm vor Corona war nicht zuwanderungsorientiert und hat sich auch in den Corona-Zeiten nicht verändert. Obwohl sich unsere Bedingungen verschlechterten, blieb die Integrationspolitik dieselbe.

Dadurch wird der Integrationsprozess eines Geflüchteten in der Schweiz nicht nach den eigenen Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten gestaltet. Es ist auf die Bedürfnisse des Arbeitsmarktes zugeschnitten. Während der Corona-Zeit wurden Institutionen, die sich mit Eingewanderten und Geflüchteten solidarisch zeigten teils geschlossen oder nicht unterstützt. Solange die bestehende Einwanderungspolitik nicht auf Einwanderung und Integration ausgerichtet ist, scheint es sehr schwierig als Geflüchteter Fuß zu fassen.

BIOGRAPHY

Emrah Bal is a student in the Offener Hörsaal (Open Lecture Hall) program at the University of Basel. Together with Samira Marti (Nationalrätin SP BL) and Deniz Kili he registered the Podcast "Für eine menschliche Migrationspolitik" in the SOZ-CAST series (Podcast of JUSO City Basel) that advocates a human politics of migration. Bal also cooperates with the *Kaserne Basel* and the *Buchhandlung Labyrinth* on topics of migration. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/f%C3%BCr-eine-menschliche-migrationspolitik-mit-samira-marti/id1524295982?i=1000494368053> / <https://www.buchhandlung-labyrinth.ch/events/event/buechertisch-bei-isolation-menschen-erzaehlen/>

bal.emrah@yahoo.com

Integration Geflüchteter in das Studium in Deutschland in Zeiten von Corona

Heike Kölln-Prisner

Abteilungsleitung bei der Hamburger Volkshochschule (bis 2019)

Nationale Agentur für Europa

KEY WORDS: Geflüchtete, Studium, Deutschland, Corona, Dritte Mission

1. Einleitung

Mit dem starken Zustrom von Geflüchteten nach Europa, der 2015 und in den folgenden Jahren in fast alle europäischen Länder erfolgte, entstand neben den allgemein zu bewältigenden Integrationsaufgaben wie Spracherwerb, Wohnraumbeschaffung und Finanzierung auch die Herausforderung, die Geflüchteten in das Bildungs- und Arbeitssystem zu integrieren. Diese Herausforderung hat sich, je nach Bildungsbereich, unterschiedlich gestellt: während im Bereich der Primarschulen vor allem ein Kapazitätsproblem zu lösen war, daneben aber auch bereits erworbene Vorkenntnisse berücksichtigt werden mussten, ging es im Bereich der Beruflichen Bildung und besonders in der Hochschulbildung vor allem um die Anerkennung von Vorqualifikationen und die Integration in das jeweilige System. Was ist nötig, um Geflüchteten die Integration in das Studium und die Universität zu ermöglichen, welche Akteure sind wichtig, welche Voraussetzungen sind zu beachten?

Im Oktober 2017 hat die Franklin University Switzerland in Sorengo/Lugano in einer Konferenz versucht, die verschiedenen Zugänge in der Schweiz, Deutschland und Österreich auszuloten. Vertreter/-innen unterschiedlicher Organisationen wurden eingeladen, um ihre Ansätze vorzustellen und zu diskutieren. Der Austausch diente auch der Reflektion und Weiterentwicklung der eigenen Initiativen. Dort hatte ich als Vertreterin der Hamburger Volkshochschule, die Sprachkurse für Geflüchtete an Hamburger Universitäten durchführte, die Initiativen Hamburgs vorgestellt, die unter dem Hashtag #UHHhilft verschiedene Angebote für die Zielgruppe summierten.

Auch wenn die Anzahl Geflüchteter (nach einem Hoch in 2015) in den Folgejahren abnahm, wurde die Beantwortung der Frage nach Integrationsmöglichkeiten für Geflüchtete in Studium und Universität nicht weniger dringend: zum einen, weil die Interessent/-innen zwar mit einer gewissen Zeitverzögerung an die Universitäten drängten (die vor allem dem Spracherwerb geschuldet war), dann aber ein merkliche Steigerung des Interesses erkennbar wurde; zum anderen, weil die Sichtung von Kompetenzen und damit mögliche Studienwünsche erst nach einiger Zeit einsetzte. Die Sichtung der Kompetenzen machte aber deutlich, dass es ein beachtliches Potenzial in dieser Gruppe gab, dem stärker werdenden Fachkräftemangel besonders in den Naturwissenschaften entgegen zu treten. Da die Lösung der dringendsten Fragen aber vorerst im Vordergrund stand, wurden die Potenziale der Geflüchteten erst später erkannt.

2. Die Situation Geflüchteter 2015 und in den Folgejahren

In 2015 erlebte Deutschland den höchsten Zustrom Geflüchteter in einem Jahr, mit ca. 1 Millionen Menschen, die in Deutschland Schutz suchten (siehe Stat. Bundesamt, 2021). Zwar wurde die Zahl der Geflüchteten später auf ca. 750000 Personen reduziert⁷⁰(ebenda), trotzdem war dies eine sehr hohe Anzahl von Personen, die mit Wohnraum, den wichtigsten Gütern und später eben auch mit Arbeit oder Ausbildung ausgestattet werden mussten.

Bereits Anfang 2016 wurde die Frage virulent, wie es um die Qualifikationen der neu Zugewanderten stand. Zur Beantwortung dieser Frage, die für die Integration in den Arbeitsmarkt von hoher Bedeutung war, wurden verschiedene Erhebungsmethoden angewendet: Selbstbefragung oder Einstufung von (ausländischen) Bildungsabschlüssen nach deutschen Standards. Die zweite Methode musste aber mit der Problematik nicht vorhandener Dokumentation kämpfen.

Das Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung hat im März 2016 nach Selbsteinschätzung der Betroffenen folgende Zahlen veröffentlicht:

⁷⁰ Die Gründe für die Reduzierung waren u.a.: Doppelregistrierungen, Weiterreise in andere Länder, z.B. Schweden, Ablehnungen (z.B. allein in 2015 50.000 Personen, die u.a. aus dem Westbalkan kamen).

*Bildungsstand nach Selbsteinschätzung (in %) der Gesamtangaben)*⁷¹

Bildungsstand	Alter 18-24	Alter 25-34	Alter 35-64
Niedrig ⁷²	26	30	36
Mittel	31	29	32
Hoch	39	27	29
Sonstige	3	3	3

(Quelle: Auszug aus IAB (Hg), 2016, S. 4)

Mehr als ein Drittel der durch die Bundesagentur für Arbeit erfassten Personen gaben an, einen hohen Bildungsabschluss zu besitzen. Bezogen auf die Vergleichbarkeit mit dem deutschen Bildungssystem konnten zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch keine Aussagen gemacht werden, besonders, weil die Herkunftsländer unterschiedliche Bedingungen aufwiesen.

Da die Einstufung allein nach Bildungsabschluss aber eine zu grobe Einteilung schien, wurden unterschiedliche Methoden zur Feststellung von Qualifikationen und Kompetenzen entwickelt und eingesetzt: die Bundesagentur für Arbeit, die Handwerkskammern, ebenso einige Universitäten nutzten unterschiedliche Ansätze zur Ermittlung der Bildungshintergründe von Geflüchteten. Hier soll beispielhaft das Instrumentarium des Projekts «W.I.R.» (Work and Integration for Refugees) vorgestellt werden (siehe Lotzkat, P., 2017), das im Auftrag des Hamburger Senats für die Erhebung von Qualifikationen der Geflüchteten eingesetzt wurde. Das Ergebnis der Erhebung entschied darüber, welche Förderwege den Geflüchteten angeboten wurden.⁷³

3. Wesentliches Element der informalen Kompetenzerhebung waren:

- die Feststellung des Bildungshintergrunds: neben Schulbesuch oder Universitätsstudium wurden Sprachkenntnisse, Beherrschung der lateinischen Schrift und vorhergegangene Auslandsaufenthalte festgehalten.
- Es wurden Kompetenzerhebungen für diverse Berufsfelder (Gastronomie, Elektro, Pflege, Logistik etc.) durchgeführt, dies wurde in Form von Schnuppertagen in entsprechenden Einrichtungen getan, dabei wurden Kompetenzeinschätzungen durch Fachleute abgegeben.
- Personen mit Potenzial und Interesse für ein Studium wurden an die staatlichen Universitäten verwiesen, die ihre eigenen Kompetenzfeststellungen durchführten.
- Eine neu gegründete «Zentrale Anlaufstelle für die Anerkennung von Abschlüssen» (ZAA) ermöglichte auch die formale Prüfung und ggf. Anerkennung von Abschlüssen.

Bis 2/2017 wurden über W.I.R. mehr als 2800 Kompetenzprofile ausgewertet.⁷⁴

4. Geflüchtete auf dem Weg ins Studium: Situationsanalyse bis 2019

Immer mehr studierfähige Geflüchtete schafften aber auch den Einstieg in die deutschen Universitäten. Laut dem deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienst (DAAD) wurden bis 2019

⁷¹ Die Befragten haben freiwillige Angaben gemacht, sie wurden mit Hilfe des Erfassungssystems der Bundesagentur für Arbeit befragt.

⁷² Als niedrig wurde eingestuft: kein Schulbesuch oder Grundschulbesuch; als mittel wurde eingestuft: Besuch von Mittel- oder Fachschulen; als hoch wurde eingestuft: Besuch von Gymnasium, Fachhochschulen oder Universität; Sonstige umfassen Angaben, die nicht zugeordnet werden konnten.

⁷³ Selbstverständlich war die Sprachbarriere eine wesentliche Problematik, zumal zu diesem Zeitpunkt nicht ausreichend vereidigte Übersetzer/-innen in den Sprachen der Geflüchteten bereitstanden.

⁷⁴ Für eine ausführliche Beschreibung der Ergebnisse siehe die Veröffentlichung von P.Lotzkat.

rund 30000 Studierende mit Fluchthintergrund regulär eingeschrieben (siehe Hüttermann, N./DAAD o.J.).

Dieser Zahl zeigte, wie auch die folgenden, dass hier ein Potenzial vorhanden ist, das beachtlich ist: seit 2015 haben ca. 170.000 junge Menschen mit einem ersten Hochschulabschluss einen Antrag auf Asyl gestellt. Die Zahl der Studierenden mit Fluchthintergrund ist von 2015 bis 2018 um fast 9000 Personen gestiegen. Die wesentlichen Herkunftsländer sind dabei: Syrien, der Iran, Pakistan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Irak, Eritrea und Somalia. Die am häufigsten gewählten Studienfächer sind Ingenieurwissenschaften, Naturwissenschaften, Informatik und Mathematik sowie Rechts- und Sozialwissenschaften.

Dabei stieg der Anteil derjenigen, die an einer für diese spezielle Zielgruppe angebotenen Studienvorbereitung teilgenommen haben, stetig: 2016 waren es noch 34 Prozent aller Teilnehmenden eines solchen Angebotes, die angaben, ins Studium gewechselt zu haben, 2017 waren es bereits 47 Prozent, und dies bei steigenden Fallzahlen.

An den Programmen Integra (zur Studienvorbereitung) und Welcome (Integration ins Studium) des DAAD nahmen 2019 fast 130 deutsche Hochschulen teil, insgesamt wurden vom BMBF jährlich 27 Euro seit 2015 zur Verfügung gestellt. Für 2016 bis 2022 sind insgesamt sogar 160 Millionen Euro für diese Programme zur Verfügung gestellt worden (siehe Pressemitteilung des DAAD, 2019).

Die beiden oben genannten Programme zeigen, dass die Bemühungen der Universitäten sowohl einem top-down-Impuls folgten (Finanzielle und inhaltliche Unterstützung durch die Bundesregierung und auch Länderregierungen), aber die folgenden Beispiele zeigen, dass auch bottom-up-Initiativen, häufig von Studierenden ausgehend, Ausgangspunkt der universitären Programme waren.

5. Besonderheiten der Zielgruppe in der Pandemie – Erfahrungen von Kursleitenden

Was sind die Besonderheiten der Zielgruppe, worin liegen die Herausforderungen für Studierende und Universitäten? Zuerst einmal mag man denken, dass die Geflüchteten einfach eine Untergruppe der Internationalen Studierenden seien, mit den bekannten Problemen wie Sprache, Suche von Unterkunft, Verstehen des Universitätsalltags (siehe Blumental, J. 2018). Für Geflüchtete kommen aber eine Reihe weiterer Probleme dazu: Unsicherheit über den Aufenthaltsstatus, finanzielle Probleme, Rassismus, Traumata, Verlust von Familie/Freunden (oft ist nicht einmal klar, wer noch lebt), mangelnde Dokumentation von bereits absolvierten Bildungsabschnitten (siehe Lambert e.a., 2018, S. 4ff).

Die Pandemie hat eine Verschärfung für die Betroffenen verursacht, dies wird in Gesprächen mit Kursleitenden deutlich, die diese Gruppe unterrichten⁷⁵:

Die Unsicherheiten des Aufenthaltsstatus vergrößerten sich, weil «im Schatten» der Pandemie eine Reihe Abschiebungen nach Afghanistan und Syrien stattfanden. Diese betrafen auch gut integrierte Personen.

Ausserdem war bei vielen die Sorge um Angehörige in den Herkunftsländern gross, weil dort z.T. die Versorgung von Kranken deutlich schlechter ist, hier sei beispielhaft der Iran genannt. Gleichzeitig war es aber nicht immer einfach, Kontakt zu halten und Informationen zu bekommen.

Die Zusatzkosten für pandemiebedingte Ausgaben verschärfen die finanziellen Probleme.

Die Betreuungsangebote, die vor allem in der Studienvorbereitung wichtig waren, um Kontakte aufzubauen, konnten nicht mehr in Präsenz stattfinden. Die mangelnden Kontakte führen z.T. zur Vereinsamung und/oder zur Verschlimmerung der Traumata.

⁷⁵ Im Rahmen einer anderen Veröffentlichung habe ich mit 3 Kursleitenden für Deutsch, die geflüchtete Studieninteressierte unterrichten, über ihre Erfahrungen gesprochen.

Bei virtuellen Veranstaltungen waren die Geflüchteten oft im Nachteil, weil sie z.T. nur über ein Mobiltelefon verfügen, um solche Angebote zu verfolgen. Dazu kam, dass sie in einer solchen Situation noch seltener als sonst wagten, eine Frage zu stellen. Sehr häufig haben Geflüchtete keine geregelte Möglichkeit, im Internet zu recherchieren, weil in den staatlicherseits bereit gestellten Unterkünften keine Netzanbindung vorgehalten wurde. Orte, an denen ein Internetzugang ermöglicht wurde, wie Bibliotheken, waren geschlossen. Sprachkurse wurden eingestellt oder komplett auf Lernen mit dem Buch umgestellt. (siehe Štefančík, S., 2020). Initiativen ab 2016 an ausgewählten deutschen Universitäten

6. Beispiele

Beispiel 1: Universität Hamburg mit dem Programm #UHHhilft

Persönlich involviert war ich in die Aktivitäten der Universität Hamburg, die unter dem Hashtag #UHHhilft seit 2015 existieren. Im Frühjahr 2021 wurde das 12. Semester der Aktivitäten eingeläutet. Das strukturierte Angebot umfasst folgende Hilfen:

- Studienvorbereitung (dazu gehört auch die sprachliche und fachsprachliche Vorbereitung)
- Die Möglichkeit eines Probesemesters
- Eine Studienbegleitung
- Ein Buddy-Programm, das jeweils zu Anfang eines Semesters auf einer Buddy-Party Paare matcht, die sich dann nach eigener Wahl treffen und über anstehende Fragen reden. Die Studierenden, die sich ehrenamtlich engagieren, können ein Zertifikat erhalten über ihre Tätigkeit. Dieses Zertifikat ist einsetzbar für das PIASTA Zertifikat über Interkulturelle Kompetenzen.
- Es werden darüber hinaus Workshops angeboten, die z.B. Soft Skills vermitteln, aber auch Lernstrategien vermitteln.

Das Gesamtprogramm wurde von einem Team unter Verantwortung einer Flüchtlingsbeauftragten für die Universität entwickelt. (siehe Universität Hamburg, 2021).

Beispiel 2: Universität Mannheim nimmt Geflüchtete in das Duale Studium auf

Die Universität Mannheim bietet ein Duales Studium an, das zusätzlich zu dem Hochschulabschluss auch den Abschluss einer (handwerklichen oder kaufmännischen) Ausbildung ermöglicht, meist in Firmen der Region. Dieses vor allem im Bundesland Baden-Württemberg verbreitete Modell hat hohe Attraktivität für Studierende und (künftige) Arbeitgeber. Das Förderprogramm für Geflüchtete, das sich auf den Studiengang Wirtschaftsinformatik bezieht, sieht folgende Elemente vor:

- Sprachkurse
- Sprachtandems mit Studierenden der Universität
- Psychologische Beratung
- Eine Reihe «Mütterkurse» für einen sanften Einstieg in das Deutsche
- Ein Forschungsprogramm bei dem geflüchtete Studierende oder Studierwillige früh in Forschungsaktivitäten der Universität eingebunden werden können. Dies ist ein aktiver Schritt in Richtung Aufwertung von Kompetenzen. (siehe Universität Mannheim, o.J.).

Beispiel 3: Ruhr-Universität Bochum: Universität ohne Grenzen

In der Ruhr-Universität ist das Programm für Geflüchtete eingebunden in ein gesamt-universitäres Bekenntnis zur «Universität ohne Grenzen». Daher geht es nicht allein um Integration Geflüchteter ins Studium, sondern vielmehr auch um eine nachhaltige Berücksichtigung dieser Zielgruppe im gesamten Verlauf eines Studiums. Neben den üblichen Angeboten für Beratung und Sprachkursen in der Vorbereitungszeit gibt es:

- Forschungsnetzwerke, die Geflüchtete aktiv zur Teilnahme auffordern;
- gefährdete Wissenschaftler/-innen werden durch das Netzwerk «Scholars at Risk» gestützt;
- die Integration in den Arbeitsmarkt wird durch entsprechende Förderprogramme unterstützt;
- und selbst Geflüchtete in Schulen werden bereits durch die Universität angesprochen und auf dem Weg ins Studium begleitet.
(siehe Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2021)

Beispiel 4: Vereinigung Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen e.V. (VNB):Projekt KommMit Bildung

Tatsächlich sind es aber nicht nur Universitäten, die eine Integration von geflüchteten Studierwilligen in das Studium anstreben und durch Projekte und andere Aktivitäten fördern. Auch aus dem Bereich der Erwachsenenbildung (oft in Kooperation mit einer Universität) gibt es derartige Initiativen. Der VNB e.V. bietet seit längerem Sprachangebote für Studierwillige mit Fluchthintergrund an, diese werden vom Land Niedersachsen gefördert. In 2019 wurde z.B. mit der HAW in Hamburg zusammengearbeitet. (Siehe VNB 2020, S. 26). Darüber hinaus wurde aber auch im Projekt KommMit Bildung, vom Land Niedersachsen gefördert, für Menschen aus der Region ein Angebot gemacht, das der Studienvorbereitung, aber auch der Entscheidung für ein Studium dient, Inhalte sind:

- Studieren in Deutschland
- Der Weg ins Studium
- Durchlässigkeit im Bildungssystem – Was bedeutet das für mich?
- Kultur im Studienalltag
- Die Bildungsanbieter*innen stellen sich vor

Daneben gibt es aber auch ein Tandemprogramm, das nach dem Peer-Prinzip arbeitet. Für die soziale Anbindung gibt es das Treff „Café *KommMit*“, in dem Teilnehmenden des jeweiligen Kurses und weitere Interessierte sich zum Erfahrungs- und Informationsaustausch auf Augenhöhe treffen können. Selbst ein individuelles Coaching gehört zum Programm. Das Projekt läuft noch bis 2022 (siehe VNB 2021).

Gerade dieses Beispiel verweist auf die Tatsache, wie förderlich die Zusammenarbeit mit Trägern ausserhalb der Universitäten sein kann, seien es gemeinnützige Vereine, Einrichtungen der Erwachsenenbildung oder andere Institutionen. Oft ist hier der Zugang zur Zielgruppe einfacher, und die Methoden der Arbeit ergänzen die Arbeitsweisen der Hochschulen.

Während also die Universitäten grosse Anstrengungen unternahmen, die Studieninteressierten unter den Geflüchteten mit geeigneten Methoden zu unterstützen, änderte sich freilich das Klima in der Berichterstattung über Geflüchtete und es gab in der Bevölkerung Deutschlands viele kritische Stimmen bezüglich der hohen Anzahl von Geflüchteten und der Finanzmittel, die für ihre Integration aufgewendet wurden. Das hat aber meines Wissens nicht zu einer Abkehr von den Förderprogrammen geführt. Es gibt dazu keine offiziellen Stellungnahmen, meine Vermutung ist: die Universitäten sind eher Träger eines fortschrittlichen

und offenen Klimas und haben sich durch den stärker werdenden Diskurs über «zu viele Geflüchtete» nicht von ihrer Haltung abbringen lassen. Ausserdem hat die Bundesregierung die Programme zur Förderung kontinuierlich ausgebaut, was auch für einen politischen Willen zur Integration auf oberster Ebene spricht.

Es ist wichtig, bereits an dieser Stelle festzuhalten, dass die oben beschriebenen Aktivitäten während der gesamten Pandemie aufrechterhalten wurden, teils sogar ausgebaut wurden. Wie haben die Verantwortlichen kreative Lösungen gefunden?

7. Corona: welche Initiativen konnten aufrechterhalten bleiben? Was hat sich geändert?

Die Pandemie hat für die meisten Hochschulen einen schmerzlichen Einschnitt bedeutet, Veränderungsprozesse in Lehre und Beratung mussten schnell entwickelt und implementiert werden. Für eine vulnerable Gruppe wie geflüchtete Studieninteressierte waren diese Veränderungen naturgemäss stärker zu spüren als für andere Gruppen innerhalb des Systems Hochschule. Trotzdem hat sich die Anzahl der Förderangebote für diese Zielgruppe nicht verringert, es wurden andere und kreative Wege gefunden, wie das Ziel einer Integration ermöglicht werden kann. Wie funktionierten diese Angebote unter Pandemiebedingungen? Das soll an drei Beispielen verdeutlicht werden.

Beispiel 1: Universität für Angewandte Wissenschaften, Hamburg: Online-Lernmaterialien, Offline-Pakete und mehr

An der Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften in Hamburg (HAW) zeichnet die Arbeitsstelle Migration für die Integration der Studierwilligen mit Fluchthintergrund verantwortlich. Unterstützt wird die Arbeitsstelle von einer studentischen Initiative, «Bunte Hände» genannt. Sie führt die Beratung für Studierwillige online durch, dabei geht es auch um Finanzierungsfragen und andere persönliche Anliegen. Daneben haben die Studierenden der «Bunten Hände» aber auch sog. Offline-Pakete mit vielen studienrelevanten Informationen für Interessierte gepackt und verteilt. Sie haben ausserdem eine Reihe von Online-Lernmaterialien erstellt, dies in Zusammenarbeit mit der Arbeitsstelle Migration. Hier ging es vor allem um die Vermittlung von überfachlichen Kompetenzen. Für diese Themen hätten ansonsten Präsenzangebote stattgefunden, die aber während der Pandemie ausgesetzt werden mussten. Als Angebot zur sozialen Vernetzung wurde ein Gruppenchat eingerichtet, der zurzeit 250 Nutzer/-innen hat (siehe HAW 2020).

Beispiel 2: Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf: Refugees Law Clinic und Science4Refugees-Buddies

Auch an der Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf wurde die Umstellung auf Online-Angebote zur Unterstützung von Studierwilligen mit Fluchthintergrund zügig vorangebracht. Die zwei Angebote, die hier besonders herausragend waren, wurden auch weiterhin gemacht: eine Rechtshilfe von Studierenden für Studierende und Studierwillige, die Unterstützung in Rechtsfragen, meist Asyl betreffend, brauchen. Auch andere Universitäten bieten diesen Service mit Hilfe von Studierenden an, aber in der «Refugees Law Clinic» hat man sich auf Asylfragen spezialisiert. Genauso wichtig war und ist das Buddy-Angebot «Science4Refugees», das Teil einer EU-Initiative ist und die Vernetzung im eigenen Wissensgebiet an der Universität und darüber hinaus ermöglichen soll.

Beispiel 3 Universität Ulm: Buddy- Projekt und Lerncafé

Die Universität Ulm hat bereits seit Längerem ein breit gefächertes Angebot zur Integration geflüchteter Studieninteressierter vorgehalten, das folgende Bausteine umfasste:

- Sprachkurse und -sprachliche Nachhilfe, z.T. in Zusammenarbeit mit gemeinnützigen Vereinen in Ulm;
- Beratungsangebote, auch für psychologische Fragen z.B. zum Thema Trauma.
- Vorbereitungssemester mit fachlichen und organisatorischen Hilfen;
- Kulturelle Angebote, inkl. eines jährlich stattfindenden Festivals gegen Rassismus;
- Beratung und Vermittlung bei medizinischen Fragen.

Durch die Pandemie musste für einige Angebote eine andere Lösung gefunden werden: das Buddy-Projekt, das von studentischen Ehrenamtlichen durchgeführt wurde, hat kurzerhand auf ZOOM umgestellt, in 1:1- Sitzungen werden wichtige Fragen des Studiums und der Vorbereitung darauf besprochen. Auch die Hilfsangebote des Lerncafés wurden online weitergeführt: hier haben (nicht nur) Studienwillige die Gelegenheit, individuelle Nachhilfe und Lernunterstützung zu bekommen. Die Ehrenamtlichen und die Geflüchteten engagierten sich aber auch für die Kommune: sie nähten Masken und spendeten sie an Flüchtlingsinitiativen. Wie für die vorgenannten Initiativen wurde für diese Arbeit der Welcome-Preis 2020 des DAAD vergeben (siehe DAAD, 2020).

8. Preise für vorbildliche Integrationsarbeit für Geflüchtete 2021

In 2021 wurden drei Hochschulen in Deutschland mit dem Hochschulpreis für Integration, vergeben vom zuständigen Ministerium und DAAD, ausgezeichnet (siehe DAAD 2021A). Die ausgezeichneten Hochschulen haben sich um die Integration Geflüchteter ins Studium, in die Gesellschaft und in den Arbeitsmarkt verdient gemacht. Diese Initiativen, finanziert z.T. durch die seit 2015 zur Verfügung stehenden Mittel des Bundesministeriums für die Integration Geflüchteter, haben während der Corona-Krise ihre Arbeit aufrechterhalten und wichtige Integrationsarbeit geleistet, z.T. in Zusammenarbeit mit Einrichtungen ausserhalb der Universitäten. Es wurden Preise in drei Kategorien vergeben: «Brücke in das Studium», «Brücke in die Gesellschaft» und «Brücke in den Arbeitsmarkt». Hier eine kurze Beschreibung der jeweiligen Aktivitäten:

Gewinner in der Kategorie "Brücke ins Studium" wurde die HAWK Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Hildesheim/Holzminde/Göttingen. Die Hochschule hat ein Gesamtprogramm für Studieninteressierte mit Fluchthintergrund entwickelt. Neben Beratungen wurden Sprachkurse, Mathematikurse, informelle Treffen mit kulturellen Angeboten und auch die Teilnahme an Veranstaltungen vor dem Studium angeboten. Die Programme «HAWK open» und «HAWK start plus» haben pro Jahr mehr als 300 Interessierte verzeichnet. (siehe HAWK, 2021).

Die Christian-Albrechts- Universität zu Kiel, die den Preis für das beste Projekt «Brücke in die Gesellschaft» erhielt, arbeitete mit einem studentischen Verein zusammen, der 2016 entstanden ist. Hier werden Studierende und Studierwillige mit Fluchthintergrund gestützt, indem sie soziale Kontakte mit Studierenden der Universität eingehen. Das Projekt mit den Namen "kulturgrenzenlos» richtet sich allerdings nicht allein an Studierwillige, sondern an junge geflüchtete Menschen in Kiel und Umgebung. (siehe kulturgrenzenlos, 2021).

Für ihr Projekt "Refugeeks – Coding Academy Hannover" wurde die Hochschule Hannover in der Kategorie "Brücke in den Arbeitsmarkt" ausgezeichnet. Das Projekt besteht aus einer einjährigen akademischen IT-Weiterbildung, die sich an geflüchtete Menschen mit vorhandenen Programmierfähigkeiten richtet. (siehe Refugeeks, 2021).

Alle diese Aktivitäten wurden während der beginnenden Pandemie weitergeführt. Die Durchführenden haben, wie oben an anderen Beispielen beschrieben, kreative Wege beschritten, um ihre Ziele zu verfolgen.

9. Wie sind die weiteren Aussichten für die Integration Geflüchteter in das Studium?

Sicher ist, dass es in Deutschland auch weiterhin vom Bundesministerium geförderte Programme geben wird, die den Zugang zu Studium und Universität für Geflüchtete verbessern sollen. Die bestehenden studentischen Initiativen (Buddy Systeme, Beratungsangebote etc.) werden ebenfalls weitergeführt und sind sehr wichtig für die Integration über das «Formale» hinaus. Aber: reicht das?

Die Pandemie hat zwar gezeigt, dass diese Hilfsstrukturen recht stabil sind. Trotz der Pandemie sind nur sehr wenige der Programme abgebrochen oder unterbrochen worden, das zeigen die Vergleichszahlen von 2017 und 2020 zur Anzahl der beteiligten Universitäten, laut interaktiver Karte ist die Zahl der beteiligten Universitäten (oder zumindest der Programme) in 2021 sogar gestiegen. (siehe DAAD, 2021B). Es bleibt abzuwarten, welche dieser nun überwiegend virtuell angebotenen Massnahmen zur Integration in Zukunft wieder «offline» angeboten werden, mit allen Vor- und Nachteilen.

Aber es gibt Fehlstellen, die daneben bearbeitet werden könnten und sollten. Hier zwei Beispiele:

Beispiel 1: Interkulturelle Bildung für Studierende und Hochschulpersonal

Die steigende Zahl von Studierenden mit Fluchthintergrund macht deutlich, dass das System Universität sich mehr mit der Frage von Interkulturalität auseinandersetzen muss. In einem Interview mit Tina Patel, Trainerin für Interkulturelle Bildung, bestätigt sie aus ihrer Erfahrung, dass sowohl Studierende (mit und ohne Fluchthintergrund) als auch das Personal der Universitäten noch kultursensibler handeln müssen. Wesentliche Unterschiede in der kulturbedingten Wahrnehmung sind für die Konzepte über Zeit, Hierarchie, Individuum oder Kollektiv zu beobachten. Hier entstehen die meisten Konflikte. Wichtig ist, dass man/frau sich über die eigene Interpretation von beobachtetem Verhalten bewusst wird. Hier gibt es noch viele Aufgaben für die Universitäten, die über die akute Zeit der Pandemie, in der sich Kommunikationskonflikte noch verstärkt haben, hinausweisen. ((siehe Forschung & Lehre 2018).

Beispiel 2: UNESCO Qualifikationspass für Geflüchtete

Ein weiteres, sehr zukunftsweisendes Vorhaben ist der UNESCO -Qualifikationspass für Geflüchtete und vulnerable Migrant/-innen. Es geht darum, die Sichtbarkeit und Anerkennung von Kompetenzen und Qualifikationen für Geflüchtete zu verbessern. In einem 4-Schritt-Verfahren werden die vorhandenen Kompetenzen und Kenntnisse in diversen Feldern aufgenommen, bewertet und erklärt. Dann wird für einen gewünschten Abschluss der Weg aufgezeigt, mit entsprechenden Links oder Hinweisen für die Umsetzung. Das Dokument, das sich zurzeit noch als Projekt der UNESCO im Test befindet, soll 5 Jahre Gültigkeit besitzen. Es ersetzt kein formales Dokument, kann aber zur Abklärung von absolvierten und in der Zukunft zu tätigen Bildungsschritten verhelfen. Damit würde sich die Situation, vor der sich viele geflüchtete Studierwillige sehen, nämlich dass ihre bisher aufgebauten Kompetenzen wegen mangelnder Dokumente oder unklarer Vergleichbarkeit entwertet werden, wesentlich verbessern lassen. (siehe UNESCO, 2020). Universitäten sollten diese Bemühungen aufmerksam verfolgen, um auszuloten, inwieweit ihre eigenen Schulungen für den Eintrag in einen solchen Qualifikationspass kompatibel sind. Gleiches gilt für den Europass, auch dieser ist eine gute Gelegenheit, Kompetenzen sichtbar zu machen.

Berg plädiert dafür, dass Universitäten eine dritte Mission («Third Mission») für sich annehmen müssen: neben Forschung und Lehre bekomme der Dialog zwischen Universitäten und Gesellschaft eine wichtigere Rolle. Universitäten müssten sich ihrer sozialen Verantwortung stellen, dazu gehörten auch verstärkte Bemühungen um potenzielle Studierende aus vulnerablen Gruppen. Allerdings sieht Berg auch das Problem, dass bisher Bemühungen von Universitäten in dieser 3. Mission nicht die gleiche Wahrnehmung oder Wertschätzung, z.B. in

Universitätsrankings, erhalten wie die Forschung und Lehre. Hier müsse ein Wandel des Fokus erfolgen (siehe Berg, J., 2021, S. 229f).

Der Bildungssektor hat pandemiebedingt sehr viele Veränderungen in kurzer Zeit herbeiführen müssen, das trifft für die Schulen ebenso zu wie für Hochschulen. Es bleibt abzuwarten, wie gerade dieser Sektor die in der Pandemie gemachten Erfahrungen nutzt, um weiterhin für geflüchtete Studierwillige einen guten Einstieg zu ermöglichen. Dabei ist ein ganzheitlicher Blick auf das System Hochschule zu richten, auch bezogen auf die Zusammenarbeit mit ausseruniversitären Einrichtungen. Mit einem ganzheitlichen Ansatz stellt sich aber auch die Frage, wie die Integration Geflüchteter in das Studium und im Studium institutionell und strukturell verankert sein soll: als Projekt oder als Regelaufgabe? Welche Einbindung verspricht auch in Krisenzeiten mehr Nachhaltigkeit? Eine kurze Gegenüberstellung soll eine Annäherung an die Antwort ermöglichen.

10. Was spricht für eine Etablierung als Projekt ausserhalb der regelhaften Strukturen?

- Die Betonung der Aufgabe und damit die Aufmerksamkeit, die durch Aktionen erlangt werden kann;
- Die getrennte Ressourcenzuteilung, inkl. der Möglichkeit, hier Drittmittel aus Förderungen und Spenden einsetzen zu können;
- Die zeitliche Begrenzung der Aktivitäten, die eine bessere Zielverfolgung ermöglicht (durch Milestones, Zielzahlen)

Dagegen sind die Vorteile einer Einbindung als Regelaufgabe:

- Die Anerkennung der Tatsache, dass die Integration Geflüchteter eine Regelaufgabe ist (so wie z.B. die Integration von Studierenden mit Handicap)
- Keine Diskussion über die Existenzberechtigung in Zeiten von knappen Ressourcen;
- Die Anbindung an andere Teile des Regelbetriebs, wie Sprachvermittlung, Mobilitäten, Fortbildung von Personal, und zwar als Führungsaufgabe.

Die Antwort kann eine Einrichtung aber nur für sich selbst finden. Sie hängt eng von den vorfindlichen Bedingungen und Zielen ab. Der Fakt allerdings, dass in Zukunft eher mehr als weniger Studierende mit Fluchtgeschichte an die europäischen Universitäten drängen werden, kann dabei nicht ausser Acht gelassen werden.

ADDENDUM:

Seit 2021 hat sich in Deutschland die Situation Geflüchteter, die ein Studium aufnehmen wollen, in einigen Aspekten verändert:

- 1) Die Zahl der Asylanträge ist in 2022 gegenüber 2020 gestiegen und wird voraussichtlich in 2023 noch höher liegen. ([Asylanträge in Deutschland 2023 | Statista](#)). Dies ist nicht auf Kriegsflüchtlinge aus der Ukraine zurückzuführen, da diese keinen Asylantrag stellen müssen. Diese Personen erhalten in Deutschland einen sog. Sonderstatus, der ihnen erlaubt, in Deutschland zu arbeiten und zu studieren. Bezogen auf die Zahl der Einreisen aus der Ukraine zeigt sich, dass nach einem anfänglich sehr hohen Stand in 2022 die Zahlen in 2023 stagnieren und bei ca. 1 Mio Personen gesamt liegen. ([Kriegsflüchtlinge aus der Ukraine in Deutschland 2023 | Statista](#)). Ein großer Anteil dieser Personen sind Frauen im Alter von 30-39 Jahren und Kinder.

- 2) Die Schutzquote der Asylbewerber/-innen ist in 2022 gegenüber 2021 gestiegen und wird voraussichtlich auch in 2023 ähnlich hoch liegen wie 2022, nämlich bei ca. 50%. (Quelle: [Gesamtschutzquote der Asylbewerber bis 2023 | Statista](#))
- 3) Die Alterszusammensetzung der Geflüchteten hat sich gegenüber den Vorjahren etwas verschoben zugunsten der Altersgruppe der 18-29 jährigen Personen: während diese 2020 noch 24 % aller Personen umfasste, ist deren Anteil in 2023 auf 41% gewachsen. Die Zusammensetzung nach Herkunftsländern (ohne Ukraine) ist allerdings wenig verändert. ([Demografie von Asylsuchenden in Deutschland | Zahlen zu Asyl in Deutschland | bpb.de](#))
- 4) Der Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst hat in Zusammenarbeit mit anderen eine in Englisch erschienene Studie veröffentlicht, in der die aktuelle Situation von Flüchtlingen an deutschen Hochschulen beschrieben wird (einschl. der Förderprogramme für Interessierte).
Danach ist das Interesse an einer Studienaufnahme in Deutschland ungebrochen. Zur Zeit der Veröffentlichung waren ca. 40000 Studierende mit Fluchthintergrund an deutschen Universitäten eingeschrieben, ca. 300000 Beratungen wurden seit 2015 durchgeführt. Diese Zahlen geben den Stand von August 2022 wieder. ([studie_iv_en_final.pdf \(daad.de\)](#)) Aus der Ukraine kamen v.a. viele Studierende in die Beratung, die keine ukrainische Nationalität haben, aber in der Ukraine einen Studienplatz haben. Für diese Personengruppe ist je nach Herkunftsland die Situation eher prekär. Diese Personengruppe umfasst 26% aller Studierenden, die aus der Ukraine nach Deutschland eingereist sind. (ebenda).
- 5) Ein Beispiel für die Weiterentwicklung der Ansätze aus 2020 und 2021 lässt sich bei der HAW Hamburg finden: hier sind alle Programme fortgeführt worden, sie wurden in die Arbeitsstelle Migration integriert unter Leitung von H. Seukwa, Migrationsforscher an der HAW.
Erweitert wurde das Angebot z.B. um das Programm „BachelorUp“, das sich besonders an Jungakademiker/-innen mit Fluchthintergrund richtet. ([HAW-Hamburg: BachelorUP](#)). Mit diesem Programm trägt die HAW der Tatsache Rechnung, dass viele Flüchtlinge in der Zwischenzeit ihr erstes Studium erfolgreich abgeschlossen haben, aber noch nicht auf dem akademischen Arbeitsmarkt Fuß fassen können.
- 6) Auch auf dem Gebiet der Anerkennung von Kompetenzen für Geflüchtete hat sich etwas getan: zwar gilt auch weiterhin, dass nur 6% aller Geflüchteten Zugang zu höherer Bildung haben, im Vergleich zu 39% der nicht von Flucht betroffenen Bevölkerung ([UNESCO qualifications passport for refugees and vulnerable migrants | UNESCO](#)), aber die Anerkennung über das von der UNESCO geschaffene Instrument des Kompetenzpasses wird in weiteren Staaten umgesetzt, z.B. in Norwegen, Zambia, Iraq u.a. (siehe ebenda).

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BIOGRAPHY

Heike Kölln-Prisner, economist and certified pedagogue with an emphasis Adult Education, has worked in this field since 1985, first as a course instructor, then as an employee of a large institution in Hamburg. There she worked, among other things, as quality manager, head of the basic education department, and most recently as head of division for EU projects, basic education, and German as a foreign language. In this context, close cooperation with 7 Hamburg universities in the language program, including for refugees. Since 2019 freelancer for the National Agency in Europe, as evaluator and as ambassador for the e-platform EPALE, publishes articles on adult education topics, especially for vulnerable groups.

koellnprisner@googlemail.com