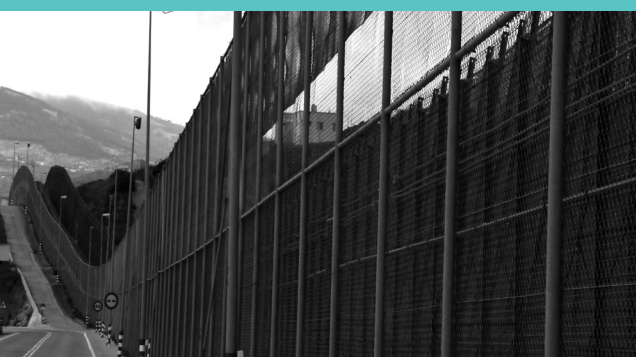


CITIES AS HUMANITARIAN ACTORS IN CONTEXTS OF DISPLACEMENT

MEGHA AMRITH



MIGRATION & CRISES

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At a time of unprecedented mass displacements across the world, migrants and refugees have come to occupy a central place on the international agenda, as well as in the media and public sphere. This research programme focuses on the relationship between migration and crises, both in terms of conflict and disaster-induced displacements that are occurring in the short and long-term; as well as the crises that have been newly introduced by particular migration, border and integration policies that have fallen short in terms of protecting the human rights and dignity of those on the move. The project focuses on displacement in different geographical regions across the world, with an understanding that these contemporary crises have not emerged out of a vacuum, but are located within particular historical, geopolitical, environmental and cultural contexts. The programme examines the human costs of these crises, as well as the new forms of solidarity that have developed.

Cities as Humanitarian Actors in Contexts of Displacement

Megha Amrith

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Summary

Cities, small and large, are at the forefront of receiving displaced persons who are fleeing from both recent, as well as longer-standing, humanitarian crises. In the imaginaries of many on the move, cities are spaces of opportunity and hope, where many seek to build new lives. They are also spaces where displaced persons may wait in transit, often for long periods of time. While cities have long been resilient to change, the current period is seeing the emergence of a range of new humanitarian challenges, particularly in a context where state policies are falling short and there is an increasing fragmentation in interests, policies and priorities. Taking a range of examples from across the world, this report will examine how new arrivals are received and integrated into cities within formal and informal spaces; how cities address everyday issues relating to housing and shelter, health and education; how urban citizens build socio-cultural communities of solidarity in periods of uncertainty and transition; and the role of civil society in these processes to support and engage with displaced populations. It examines the idea of cities as humanitarian actors, highlighting good practices and initiatives in different urban contexts that address current humanitarian challenges relating to migration and forced displacement.

Introduction

1. In the Report of the Secretary-General on the 'Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit', Paragraph 23 states 'the World Summit affirmed that forced displacement is not only a humanitarian challenge, but also a political, development and human rights one. The Summit proved instrumental to building consensus for a new comprehensive approach to addressing forced displacement based on meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, protecting their rights and providing greater support for sustained livelihoods and for strengthening the capacities and resilience of the displaced and host communities' (23 August, 2016).

2. This was also emphasised at the Barcelona Resilience Week, March 2016.

3. The New Urban Agenda: <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>

Over 60% of the world's refugees and 80% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) around the world now live in urban areas (UN Habitat, 2015: 2). There is growing recognition within the international community that the urban presence of displaced populations is a reality. This means significant changes in how humanitarian actors engage with displaced populations and in how best to meet their needs and protect their rights. Cities, small and large, are at the forefront of receiving displaced persons who are fleeing from both recent, as well as longer-standing, humanitarian crises. In the imaginaries of many on the move, cities are spaces of opportunity and hope, where many seek to build new lives. They are also spaces where displaced persons may wait in transit, often for long periods of time. While cities have long been resilient to change, the current period is seeing the emergence of a range of new humanitarian challenges, particularly in a context where state policies are falling short and there is an increasing fragmentation in interests, policies and priorities.

In preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 in Istanbul, a synthesis report of the consultations leading up to the Summit centrally highlights urban displacement as a key humanitarian issue (WHS, 2015: 79). It points to the importance of engaging local authorities given that they are in close proximity to displaced populations, and emphasises the need to adapt 'tools and approaches to improve assistance and protection for dispersed, mobile and less visible populations' (WHS, 2015: 80). The report also calls for a 'paradigm shift' in the global humanitarian system to recognise the need for 'multi-scale, multi-faceted, cross-sector based approaches well beyond traditional humanitarian and development boundaries' (WHS, 2015: 81)¹, that includes recognition of the urban dimensions of complex crises. This will mean engaging and coordinating with local authorities, urban planners, neighbourhood groups, households and individuals, civil society actors and the private sector; in short, these are diversifying communities of practice that are involved in some form or the other with the question of urban displacement.² Other key international processes, such as the New Urban Agenda, adopted in Quito in October 2016, puts forward a vision of the 'right to the city' that promotes inclusivity and equality of all urban populations.³ It significantly addresses the challenges facing migrants in cities (regardless of their migration status) as a key issue. One of its preparatory issue papers aims to 'raise awareness of how inclusive planning for rapid urbanization, migration and displacement - through improved rights and protec-

tion for migrants and refugees, access to adequate services, opportunities and space, and regulations that create an enabling environment – can maximize the skills, resources and creativity of migrants and refugees that drive sustainable development’ (UN Habitat, 2015: 1).

The ‘urbanization of refugee’ has led to significant spatial and paradigmatic shifts in addressing the needs, as well as the aspirations, of refugee populations as a consequence of their now decidedly urban presence. The UNHCR Urban Refugee Policy, published in 2009, ‘is based on the principle that the rights of refugees and UNHCR’s mandated responsibilities towards them are not affected by their location, the means whereby they arrived in an urban area, or their status or lack thereof in national legislation’. While the ‘camp’ has been the traditional, spatially contained location in which humanitarian organizations work with refugee populations, more and more people are seeking refuge in cities.⁴ As a result, supporting refugee populations is not just simply left to humanitarian organisations, but crucially, this concerns local governments, as well as urban citizens and communities. The UNHCR policy on ‘Alternatives to Camps’, published in July 2014, ‘reinforces principles of the urban refugee policy and seeks to move away from traditional camp-based operational response and create possibilities for refugees to live lawfully, peacefully and independently in communities with the ability to take responsibility for their own lives and families’ (cited in UN Habitat, 2015: 7). Indeed, the anonymity of living in an urban area – where one is not singled out as a refugee without agency, or left in limbo in a physically contained space – offers new possibilities to refugee populations. In urban areas, they may embed themselves within wider, more diverse local networks – where possibilities for work in formal and informal sectors may be found – as well as in spaces for social interaction. This is one of the reasons why cities may offer a sense of hope and opportunity to those who have been displaced.

It is, however, important to note that the urban displaced are not only asylum seekers and refugees, but also include IDPs and those who have been forced to move for reasons that do not fit within the international legal definition of a refugee, if one considers, for instance, someone who has moved away from drought, or an unsustainable livelihood. The urban displaced also includes migrants in vulnerable circumstances who have moved to the city in search of better opportunities and whose motives for moving to the city are wide-ranging. In this sense, there is a spatial dispersal and diversification of displaced populations within cities.

4. The notion of the ‘camp’ has been at the centre of many conceptual debates within the academic literature, with some arguments positioning the camp as a space of violence, exclusion and control, and others a space for the expression of political agency and formation of social networks. Some studies also examine the conceptual boundaries between camp and city – see e.g. Agamben (1993), Agier (2002), Malkki (1995), Sanyal 2014, Sigona (2014).

It is thus all the more crucial for global and local policy actors to re-think humanitarian responses to displacement. There are new challenges that displaced persons face when they arrive and settle in urban areas: for instance, precarious housing and land insecurity, with the frequent threat of eviction; poor urban health conditions in the living environments in which they find themselves; a lack of secure work opportunities and not having their skills and experience recognised; as well as prejudice and discrimination. Yet, while states across the world repeatedly fail to implement policies for migrant inclusion and are more preoccupied with viewing migration in terms of a security 'threat', cities have to deal tangibly, in close proximity and in a more immediate manner with the everyday concerns that their inhabitants face. It is in their interests to work towards rights-based, inclusive policies that enable the conditions for all urban inhabitants, including displaced populations, to contribute and participate in urban social, economic and cultural life. This requires an acknowledgement of the scale and reality of urban displacement, co-operation between national and local authorities, civil society organisations, intergovernmental organisations, urban citizens and the humanitarian and development sectors.

This report takes examples from across the world on how new arrivals are received and integrated into cities within formal and informal spaces. It will focus more specifically on two contexts: firstly, cities and urban-based initiatives in Germany that have been responding to a large increase in the numbers of asylum seekers and migrants over the course of 2015; and secondly, Nairobi, a city with a longer history of receiving displaced populations, often in protracted situations.

Resilience and Agency

Cities are by nature dynamic spaces, and have long experienced changes in their populations and communities. Beirut, for example, is a 'city that has offered shelter to displaced people throughout its history', not least when Armenian refugees moved to the city over a hundred years ago (Gustafsson, 2016). The city's identity is co-constructed by the forcibly displaced who have made the city their home, who have built new livelihoods and who have, with their agency, created new spaces of co-existence and interaction. As Gustafsson (2016) explains, 'refugeeness' in the Lebanese context is a more fluid process, a reflection of ongoing societal and urban change and this can be seen also with the more recent arrivals of

Syrian refugees in the city. At the same time, there are socio-spatial divisions in the city, and addressing these divisions remains a challenge in Beirut and a number of other cities that may simultaneously display dynamics of both openness and exclusion (Martin, 2015).

Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have made innovative contributions to urban economies around the world. The scholar Francesco Vecchio (2013: 29), for example, highlights these contributions in the case of Hong Kong based on an ethnographic study with asylum seekers and NGOs. Contrary to how asylum seekers are portrayed in the mainstream media and in the public discourse, Vecchio argues that they indeed ‘contribute to burgeoning economic activities that foster the distinctive features of the global city: diversity, cosmopolitanism and networking’. Yet, asylum seekers are ‘denied basic rights and de facto transformed into second-class residents’, particularly given that work is now officially prohibited among asylum seekers.



‘Chungking Mansions’ [an arrival point for many asylum seekers in Hong Kong], Kent Wang/CC BY-SA 2.0 - Hong Kong. 2010

The channels that the displaced use to seek opportunities and develop networks when they arrive in the city are varied. The International Organization for Migration's World Migration Report: Migration and Cities (2015: 90) highlights that 'traditional models based on dedicated delivery assistance in homogeneous camp settings might not work as well in urban contexts. In fact, urban displacement persons tend to rely much more on local communities, markets and institutions for their survival and well-being'. This has been corroborated by research in academic fields. Urban scholar Abdoumalik Simone (2004: 407) writes of how urban residents on the margins of Southern African cities may engage in new forms of sociability, co-operation and interdependence, in invisible and ephemeral ways, constituting a 'highly urbanized social infrastructure' that is often overlooked by urban governance structures and formal planning institutions. It is also important to recognise that those who have been displaced do not always end up in isolated vacuums, but remain embedded in historically-rooted diasporic or kinship networks in the new locales and regions to which they move (Marsden, 2008; Amrith, 2014: 1143). As such, they draw upon these social and cultural connections to rebuild their lives using their own agency. In a story about a refugee from Mogadishu, the writer Jonny Steinberg demonstrates how the ties to fellow clansmen (even those unknown or far-removed), offer an expansive and protective network to refugees who have been displaced in difficult circumstances and are arriving in a new city (Steinberg, 2015). It is therefore important to acknowledge the role of these informal networks, as well as to understand and engage them in processes that work towards urban inclusion. Equally, it is important to see the tensions within urban communities that can emerge as a consequence of constant change and to ensure that policies work towards understanding where these tensions are rooted and how they can be dealt with sensitively.

A 'Welcome Culture' in Germany's Cities

In 2015, Germany received over one million asylum seekers as it opened its borders to those fleeing persecution, primarily refugees from Syria (Al Jazeera, 2016). Media coverage of refugees' arrivals in German train stations in major cities such as Frankfurt and Munich depicted ordinary citizens and families holding up signs saying 'Refugees Welcome', as they welcomed those who arrived in a spirit of solidarity, both symbolically and materially (e.g. through donations of blankets, food and goods). Berlin is estimated to have

received 69,000 asylum seekers between January 2014 and December 2015 (Eurocities, 2016).

The Refugees Welcome initiative, which has now emerged in a number of cities across Germany, Europe and the world, was founded by three young Berlin residents in November 2014, asking 'why shouldn't refugees be able to live in flatshares or houses instead of camps?'⁵ The web platform allows people to register private accommodation, in which hosts and refugees are matched with the idea that it offers decent accommodation and opportunities for refugees to adapt more easily to their new surroundings. Their stays within flatshares are financed by a combination of funds from the social security office, job centres, private donations; or, refugees live in these apartments rent-free. The entire initiative is not-for-profit (Refugees Welcome, 2015). A European Commission project run by the EU Policy Lab has labelled this as an example of the 'less visible sharing economy',⁶ a bottom-up initiative that has emerged among urban citizens and civil society. Other examples of urban-based initiatives include a jobfair organised in Berlin by both the public and private sector with employers in sectors such as IT, tourism and construction, in which 4000 job-seeking refugees attended (though it was intended for those with protection status and with the right to work). Hamburg also hosted a conference, which was the first attempt for refugee groups in Germany and other European cities to collaborate and build a sense of solidarity (Al Jazeera, 2016). The conference was supported by German foundations and a crowdfunding campaign.

Leipzig is a city, which, since the late 1990s, has been encouraging, decentralised accommodation for asylum seekers. This has enabled many to live in their own shared apartments rather than in mass communal buildings for refugees. In 2012, the city also developed an integrated programme that combines housing support with social assistance. Asylum seekers are assigned to flatshares, alongside access to social services. In this scheme, social workers support asylum seekers with everyday practical matters and language learning; they furthermore mediate between local neighbourhood communities, asylum seekers and the local authorities. This has required the city to allocate resources and finances for social assistance to asylum seekers. The city also relies on a network of volunteers who are trained and act as mentors for recent arrivals to the city, in cooperation with the Leipzig refugee council (Eurocities, 2015). The city's integrated efforts to provide a network of support for the arrival of asylum seekers has been highlighted as a good practice, and other city leaders are

5. See: <http://www.refugees-welcome.net>

6. See: <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eupolicylab/the-less-visible-sharing-economy/>

7. See: <http://kitev.de/de/entry/refugees-for-co-creative-cities/de> and <http://refugeesforcocreativecities.eu>

8. E.g.: <http://www.wefugee.org/>

now coming to learn from their experience. As another example of good practice, Dusseldorf was the first German city to appoint a refugee commissioner (Eurocities, 2016).

Other urban initiatives include the 'Refugees for Co-creative Cities'⁷ that combines locally-specific solutions, alongside exchanges with other European cities. It is an initiative in the Ruhr area of Germany with a long-term vision to reconstruct and restore abandoned buildings in neglected urban spaces, which can then be used to house asylum seekers. This would enable refugees to be based in urban areas, rather than in remote accommodation centres in more rural areas which tend to isolate them from opportunities and social interaction. It is a novel plan to combine urban regeneration with practical and positive solutions that meet the needs for housing of asylum seekers, as well as giving them greater access to participating in an urban public sphere.

Beyond these schemes mentioned, internet platforms are set up to display the wide-range of projects that are emerging among volunteers, NGOs, foundations and government departments. This includes a database of interpreters and translators, information sources for refugees, mentoring, legal clinics set up by law students at universities and arts initiatives.⁸ Moreover, there are a number of refugee-led organisations that coordinate via social media platforms such as Facebook. One example is the 'Syrian Home in Germany' Facebook group that also offers classes, a workspace for refugees of all backgrounds, as well as a network for activists and journalists. One objective of these groups is to show others that the 'refugee' label is not one of helplessness and desperation, but can offer something new, productive, and



'Berlin, refugees welcome', Jeanne Menjoulet/CC BY 2.0 - Berlin. 2016

creative to urban societies. Neighbourhoods in Berlin are quickly becoming home to a wide-range of enterprises and projects that are being set-up by refugees (Al Jazeera, 2016). A new innovative social startup, Kiron Open Higher Education, aims to offer refugees access to higher education at the university level, for free and without bureaucratic hurdles, in partnership with many other grassroots organizations and startups.⁹

These examples reveal how cities and urban-based initiatives are responding positively and across a number of different sectors and levels to the challenge of ensuring that new arrivals find spaces of inclusion and welcome. They also demonstrate the key role that cities play in terms of the immediate and tangible support that they must offer in the face of housing, health and education concerns, and social networks. That said, there remain significant challenges ahead. Commentators on the 'welcome culture' have highlighted it as a positive force in German societies, but have also pointed out that longer-term solutions must be envisioned alongside the shorter-term open response (Richter, 2016; Akrap, 2015). One point raised in discussions during a symposium on migration is that while these initiatives for migrants and refugees in German cities and societies are welcome, they also have the tendency, even if well intentioned, to patronise those whom they are helping; moreover, the initiatives that are visibilised and funded are those led by German organisations and foundations, often overlooking the significant work that is emerging from the bottom-up among migrant and refugee groups themselves.¹⁰ Indeed, to gloss over the new tensions that have emerged alongside the welcome would be naïve and potentially dangerous. Far-right movements (for example, Pegida) and parties (Alternative für Deutschland) are gaining visibility in the current context, a trend that is exposing fractures along racial and religious lines, as well as xenophobic sentiments. This has to be taken seriously by local and national level governments given the risks of deepening social divisions and threatening the well-being of asylum seekers in the country. Similarly, the structures of reception vary from city to city, and local governments will face the challenge to ensure that asylum seekers, migrants and refugees are integrated spatially and socially. To take an example, the city of Mannheim is opening up spaces for Syrian refugees in former army barracks. However, these barracks are situated away from the city centre and there are fears that this could lead to social and spatial segregation (Olterman, 2016); or the case of the Tempelhof Airfield in Berlin, where many refugees have been waiting for long periods of time in cramped conditions.¹¹ Another challenge that has emerged is a distinction that is being put forward and reinforced between 'refugees' and 'economic

9. Kiron Open Higher Education: <https://kiron.ngo>

10. Points raised at the symposium 'On the move. Nowhere at home?', Karlsruhe, 23rd April 2016.

11. A photo essay captures this predicament: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/tempelhof-germany-refugee-camp-photos-876

12. See: <http://urban-refugees.org/nairobi/>

migrants', whereby refugees are seen as 'deserving' of inclusive responses, while 'economic migrants' are not. The distinctions between these categories are not at all clear-cut and there is risk of new forms of exclusion that neglect the rights and needs of those who do not hold refugee status, but who nonetheless face similar concerns when they arrive in a new place. A more comprehensive and inclusive approach would be to recognise the presence of all those who arrive in the city with different migratory trajectories and backgrounds.

Nairobi: Displacement, Settlement and Belonging

While the arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants in European cities have received significant media and policy attention, it is worth remembering that cities in other parts of the world have been facing these issues of urban displacement for years. Such cities continue to face significant challenges, particularly in the context of rapidly urbanising cities where the displaced settle alongside the urban poor. The case of Nairobi is one that can be analysed in further detail.

Internal displacement has been significant in Kenya over the past two decades, with many moving to Nairobi's slum settlements as a consequence of political violence, chronic poverty and natural disasters. Meanwhile, asylum seekers and refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Eritrea are found in Kenya's refugee camps, as well as in Nairobi.¹² In Nairobi, the Eastleigh neighbourhood is where many asylum seekers and refugees primarily from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia settle; kinship-based and religious networks and ties further attract migrants and refugees to the neighbourhood (Pavanello et al., 2010). It is also a neighbourhood that displays a thriving entrepreneurial economy with numerous employment and income-generating opportunities, as well as casual work in the informal economies of Nairobi's nearby central districts (even if these informal economic opportunities can be precarious, competitive and exploitative). Eastleigh has primary education schools, health services and self-help commu-

nity organisations that provide solidarity and social support to the neighbourhood's diverse communities. The primary schools are free for Kenyans, as well as for refugees and asylum seekers, though there remains a lack of awareness among refugees about this right, and they face barriers such as arbitrary 'admission fees', transport costs and the costs of books and uniforms; as well as congested classrooms and poor water and sanitation amenities (Haysom, 2013: 21-22; Pavenello et. al, 2010: Campbell, 2015; UNHCR, 2012). In 2002, the City Council of Nairobi's health department set up a community health centre in the Eastleigh neighbourhood to ensure that the most vulnerable migrants and refugee populations have access to healthcare close to their residence, and without fear of discrimination (IOM, 2015: 90).¹³ The services provided in this neighbourhood operate on multiple levels and involve refugee-organised groups, informal social and economic networks, departments of the city council and also UNHCR (Campbell, 2015). However, other urban slums do not necessarily offer the same access to services, neither for displaced populations nor the urban poor more generally.

On a broader level, there remains scepticism among sectors of the Kenyan population about engaging with and supporting the city's Somalis, many of whom live and work in Eastleigh. The neighbourhood is often regarded as dangerous and violent, and as a result of terrorist incidents in Nairobi and other parts of Kenya linked to the al-Shabaab militant organisation in East

13. For an example of a humanitarian organisation that found a way to enrol refugees in the National Health Insurance Fund see: <http://www.irinnews.org/opinion/2017/04/14/towards-blueprint-responding-urban-displacement>



'Somali refugee Iftin Ahmed Farah, 24, from Mogadishu pictured in the neighbourhood of Eastleigh, in Nairobi, Kenya', Andrew McConnell/IRC/Panos Pictures/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 - Nairobi. 2012

14. These suspicions have also been behind the Kenyan government's proposal to shut down the Dadaab refugee camp, an action that was blocked by the courts (Amnesty International, 2017). If it had gone ahead, it would have led to devastating consequences for the large population of (primarily Somali) refugees who would have had to return to Somalia where they would be at risk of harm and persecution; or move to Nairobi and face new urban insecurities as described in this report.

15. See: <https://storify.com/ajstream/eastleigh-crackdown>

Africa, many approach the city's Somali Muslim residents with a sense of distrust and hostility.¹⁴ However, reports have highlighted how the violence often stems from police practices of arrest, detention, torture and abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2013). There is clearly a need for awareness and information campaigns to dissociate the neighbourhood and its Somali residents from extremist factions and to avoid prejudice and generalisations towards entire migrant and refugee populations. Such awareness campaigns already exist informally via social media. For example, when the Kenyan government conducts mass arrests and detentions of Eastleigh residents, particularly Muslim residents, the Twitter response of Nairobi citizens indicates a sense of solidarity, a concern for the human rights of these residents and a critique of these practices that instil fears, hostilities and divisions.¹⁵

Aside from the Eastleigh neighbourhood, slum settlements are where many internally displaced persons and rural-to-urban migrants arrive and settle. In such contexts, poverty and violence continue to be rife, and there is poor access to quality services and infrastructure and to legal services and justice mechanisms; moreover, living conditions are unhealthy (Haysom, 2013). A study indicates that 'forced evictions by government and parastatal entities and private landlords...are a regular occurrence in the slums. Evictions are often conducted with little prior warning and frequently take place at night', and landlords use violence and threats in these evictions (Metcalf et al., 2011: 17). This is because, according to research conducted by Metcalfe and Pavanello (2011: 28), agreements between tenants and landlords tend to be verbal rather than written, with many landlords also often not owning the land, which they subsequently rent out. Furthermore, within these slum settlements, 'a wide range of actors outside of state governance structures have authority and influence over the lives of the urban poor and the displaced', making it difficult to guarantee the equal provision of services to all those who need it (Haysom, 2013: 25).

As a means of addressing these tensions, UN-Habitat and OCHA established a coordination mechanism in 2010 with the aim to 'guide humanitarian responses in informal settlements', 'to strengthen the coordination of interventions addressing urban vulnerability' and to set up policies and programmes that involve a wide-range of partners and that foreground the experiences of those displaced in such settlements. In this mechanism, they envisage granting local authorities an active role (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011: 24). It has been found that 'there is significant overlap in many cases between 'forced' and 'voluntary' movement to Nairobi and that 'displaced populations

have merged into the urban environment, living alongside the urban poor'; strategies therefore have to be wide-ranging and cross-sectorial.

A recent campaign by the Nairobi chapter of UNHCR in Kenya set up an arts initiative #artistsforrefugees based on the artwork produced by refugees from the Kakuma and Dadaab camps, and which was brought to display in a Nairobi exhibition. The exhibitions acted as a means of sensitising the public to the concerns of refugees, whilst also changing the victimhood narrative by demonstrating the creative and expressive art work that refugees produce in conditions of displacement, which can act as 'a source for livelihoods, as well as a form of therapy' (UNHCR Kenya, 2015). That said, critiques of refugee arts projects have warned that such initiatives should not depoliticise, and therefore normalise, the situations of those in protracted situations of displacement.¹⁶

The case of Nairobi reveals that displaced populations face a number of challenges that concern not only the humanitarian sector, but rather a whole range of actors, including local authorities, community-based organisations and other private actors. There have been small steps towards inclusion in the efforts of intergovernmental organisations and the city council. There is now a need for a comprehensive strategy on the issue with acknowledgement of these challenges by local authorities, because as much as private and community based actors contribute their resources and time voluntarily, they are not substitutes for sound urban governance. Negative perceptions of refugees in the city, and 'crackdowns' that lead to arrests and detention are jeopardising the recognition of vulnerable populations in the city, their needs and their rights. Many are still seen as 'threats' to security rather than as urban citizens with the right to equal opportunities and a dignified life. They may also be seen as temporary presences, whereas many of the displaced are in protracted situations of displacement and thus require long-term policy attention (Haysom, 2013: 25). Haysom (2013: 1) writes that 'in rapidly urbanising countries urban administrations are overburdened. Needs are greater than resources... and the needs of the urban poor rarely feature as priorities. Displaced populations are often viewed as an expense'. In this sense, state-level discourses and border policies are also influential and affect the extent to which any given city has the resources (and the will) to invest in cohesive urban governance that works for all urban residents.

16. Leila Mousa speaking on refugee arts projects at the symposium: 'On the Move, Nowhere at Home', Karlsruhe, 23rd April 2016.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The report highlights that the challenges facing urban migrants and refugees around the world are significant. However, while the vital role of the city in addressing the challenges that displaced populations face is clear in all cases, the particular impact of displacement varies widely. Debates about the role of cities in Europe have been on-going over the past years, but have intensified since 2015 as a result of an increase in the numbers of asylum seekers and migrants arriving and the need for quick responses. In other parts of the world, the experience of urban displacement has been longer standing and protracted; the urban displaced live alongside larger sectors of the urban poor – they are integrally involved in informal economies and service sectors that are crucial to the functioning of the city economically, socially and culturally; yet they experience acutely the social and spatial politics of class and inequality in the city and are displaced in marginal urban spaces. The challenges in addressing the specific needs of these populations are thus complex, and connect to multi-sectorial approaches that must also address broader urban socio-economic inequalities.

A number of recommendations can emerge from examining these different experiences, even if many are contextually specific:

17. Landau et al. argue that 'local literacy' is important, and that 'humanitarians need to complement their technical skills and national and global engagement with a nuanced understanding of the local political context'. See: <http://www.irinnews.org/opinion/2017/04/14/towards-blueprint-responding-urban-displacement>

- Addressing urban displacement requires cooperation and active collaboration between a range of sectors and actors: for example, humanitarian and development actors in dialogue with urban planning and governance institutions; civil society groups including migrant and refugee associations and networks; local communities and the private sector. This means understanding and engaging the languages and practices of other sectors and actors, particularly at the local level.¹⁷
- Placing migrant and refugee organisations at the forefront of inclusion initiatives, governance programmes and resilience planning will allow for an understanding from the ground of what their needs and aspirations are. This is why a human-based approach that recognises agency and voice is more respectful and inclusive than a charitable approach that sees displaced populations simply as passive recipients, as this can perpetuate distinctions on the basis of 'deservingness' that are problematic and excluding. Resources and funds should also go to these self-organized grassroots organisations and networks. These populations should also have 'free, active and meaningful participation' in urban decision-making processes, as well as national consultations (UN Habitat, 2015: 5).

- Basic conditions such as the right to work, to education, to health, and decent living conditions are fundamental to projects of urban inclusion that uphold the human rights and dignity of those displaced. It will also enable people the basic conditions to contribute in positive ways to the new societies in which they live.
- There is a need to engage the mainstream media and social media in awareness campaigns that send out positive messages on the contributions of migrants and refugees, as well as messages of solidarity, empathy and rights that challenge a divisive rhetoric that is put forward by politicians; national or regional level proposals on securitisation and threats; and xenophobic rhetoric put forward by far-right movements.
- Developing information sharing platforms to support migrants and refugees and to share good practices and research on the topic. The 'urban refugees' platform is one example of this. The initiative advises the humanitarian community to work directly with refugee-led organizations, which exist in most cities of the developing world; such organizations offer psychosocial support, health services and courses for children who are not in school. The initiative works via SMS messaging as a platform that enables urban refugees to self-organize easily and communicate time-sensitive information without an internet connection.
- Encouraging and promoting city-to-city partnerships is another positive way forward. An example is the Solidarity Cities initiative proposed by the Mayor of Athens that would see innovative partnerships among cities to support each other in the reception of refugees, including pledges to receive relocated asylum seekers in a spirit of humanitarian commitment and solidarity.^{18,19} Another city network is the International Coalition of Cities against Racism (UNESCO), aiming to give cities stronger voices in policy-making on urban displacement and related questions of inclusion and integration.

18. For an example on a proposal between Athens and Barcelona, see: 'Cities of Migration' <https://www.opendemocracy.net/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/janina-pescinski/cities-of-migration> and also 'Barcelona, Refuge City': <http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ciutatrefugi/en/>

19. This also requires clear engagement and negotiation with other levels of governance, as national actors will not always support (or might even block) such initiatives at the local level.

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