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Visions of Refugia: territorial and transnational solutions to mass displacement

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Over the last two years, we have been engaged in a dialogue on public platforms with each other and with colleagues and students about ‘what is to be done’ regarding the issue of mass displacement. Authorship of our ideas is therefore rather amorphous and mutually constitutive.¹ In the course of this dialogue we have explored a number of radical proposals and conceived some new ones ourselves. We have been surprised to find participants in various forums asking us rather earnestly ‘what is the problem you are trying to solve?’ In response, we spell out here ‘the problem of mass displacement’ by referring to three statistical measures in the bullet points below:

- Considerably more people are being forcibly displaced: 65.3 million people were displaced at the end of 2015, compared with 59.5 million a year earlier.²
- A large number of migrants and refugees are dying en route to safety each year – most dramatically, over 5000 people perished in trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2016.³
- Borders are closing to refugees all over the world. Even in the country best-known for its generosity to refugees and migrants, Germany, there have been significant changes. During 2016, 280,000 people applied for various forms of

legal protection, dropping from 890,000 the year before. The number gaining full refugee status averaged at 37 per cent, with big variations across nationalities.

As well as these somewhat bald statistical pointers, we offer three evaluative comments. First, we see no end to identity conflicts fed by ethnic, nationalist and religious loyalties continuing to convulse many parts of the world, particularly a swath of territory from Western China to Western Africa, where religious and ethno-nationalist insurgents slug it out. We anticipate that the big and 'emerging' powers – China, India, Russia, Europe, the USA, Brazil, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and others – will continue to be dragged into many-sided proxy wars. This global condition may loosely be deemed 'permaconflict', and millions of refugees are on the move as a result.

Second, there is currently not much confidence that the three conventional 'durable solutions' (local integration, resettlement and return) can address the challenge on the scale needed. There are serious limits and constraints – not least economic, ecological, institutional and political – that militate against realisation of the 'durable solutions'. Moreover the international institutional architecture set up to address mass displacement and find solutions for it seems unequal to the task at hand. The refugee and migration summits in the US in September 2016 rounded off no less than seven major international meetings in 2016 that have set out to solve the refugee and migrant 'crisis'. Indeed, 2016 was dubbed 'the Year of Summits'. Yet it is doubtful that such summitry holds much promise: the outcome was some pledges on resettlement and funding that are unlikely to be honoured, and the prospect of 'Global Compacts' on migration and refugees in two years' time – hardly inspiring confidence in the process or in the refugee 'regime' or the wider international migration architecture.

Third, and relatedly, those institutions and sections of civil society that support tolerant attitudes towards refugees and asylum-seekers, respect for humanitarian rights, law and principles, and internationalism are under fierce attack from right-wing and populist forces in many countries. Social democrats are caught in the

middle, but face long exclusion from office if they fail to take account of the rising tide of nationalism. We think it is unrealistic, not to say naïve, to continue to seek succour for refugees only by invoking the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees (establishing and safeguarding the right to seek asylum) and its 1967 Protocol (extending the coverage of the Convention beyond Europe) and urging the signatory countries to show kindness and openness. Of course, we need to continue such appeals. However, too many of the displaced fall outside the terms of the Convention, while the pace, scale, and persistence of the conditions causing displacement, together with the rise of nativism, have made conventional solutions inadequate.

So the problem we are trying to solve is to provide protection for many more displaced people than now, together with some opportunities for a fulfilling life, and the possibility for political and cultural expression. We fully recognize that, however radical the solutions proposed, they fall short of the optimal – that is to say, peace, security, employment and contentment in a self-chosen home: the transnational polity that we propose below – Refugia – reaches towards that objective.

Solutions: territorial and transnational

Beyond the three conventional ‘durable solutions’, there have been a number of imaginative ideas which seek to resolve the problem of mass displacement. These can roughly be divided into two. A number of solutions are predicated on the establishment of new legally-defined spaces or zones to provide a new life for refugees. Such proposals may be deemed ‘territorial’. As we will show below, we favour, by contrast, a predominantly ‘transnational’ solution, an affinity that binds together an archipelagic ‘Refugia’ in the form of a transnational ‘citizenship’, defined partly by the very fact of displacement and conditioned by refugees’ highly limited integration into existing, legally recognized, nation-states.

The term ‘Refugia’ was coined by Robin Cohen in his discussion of the limits and possibilities of Jason Buzi’s territorial solution (see below), but our solution has become more ‘deterritorialized’ as we have deepened our internal dialogue. We should also identify two background influences in our thinking. Our territorial/

transnational distinction parallels Zygmunt Bauman's distinction between solid and liquid forms of sociality, while our archipelagic metaphor is influenced by Edouard Glissant's *mise en relation* (establishing a connection).⁴ Three key territorial solutions are briefly discussed below, before we return to our preferred way forward.

1. A Refugee Nation

The idea of creating or promoting a separate 'refugee nation' was first promoted by Jason Buzi on a dedicated web site, with a more detailed proposal available as an e-pamphlet.⁵ His analysis of the scope of the refugee problem and the need for an urgent solution is similar to our own views. We depart from his solution – to create a new 'refugee nation' – for a number of reasons. He fails to make an intellectual break with the Westphalian system, whereby only nation-states or countries comprise the units of international affairs. He relies far too much on the benign intervention of wealthy benefactors, and moreover he makes a serious error in seeing Israel as a paradigmatic refugee nation. The obvious objection to his model refugee nation is that even if Israel provided a place of safety for distressed Jews, it created another disastrous refugee problem in the form of stateless Palestinians.⁶ Further displacements elsewhere cannot be part of a current solution. Buzi's intervention has, nonetheless, generated considerable news coverage and discussion.

2. Refugee cities and special economic zones

Several proposals for refugee cities or special economic zones have been proposed, though along different ideological axes. One axis is derived from neo-liberal economics and is modelled after the Special Economic Zones that have been established by many governments to promote free trade and manufacturing (see Akinci and Farole, 2011). A similarly state-led idea is to identify and legalize designated areas (sometimes called 'refugee cities') where normal regulations governing refugee settlement need not apply. In particular, refugees will be able to work and to establish businesses. Instead of being dependent on aid, they will establish viable mini-economies reliant on internal growth and external investments.⁷ These solutions are similar to, or can usefully be linked to, Paul Romer's ideas of 'free

zones' and 'charter cities'.⁸ We have not ourselves found Romer's ideas particularly well-articulated or tailored to the needs of refugees: his notion of 'charter cities' essentially addressed issues of failing governance of urban areas. However, Romer's position as chief economist and senior vice president of the World Bank has lent some authority to the idea. Certainly, Alex Betts, professor of forced migration and governance at Oxford, argues that Romer's notion can be reworked to allow refugee camps to become 'say, a university campus or a functioning city', allowing a degree of self-governance. He suggests, as one example, that the King Hussein bin Talal Development Zone, a Special Economic Zone in Jordan near the Za'atari refugee camp, could be reconfigured to include the camp.⁹ Betts and Collier (2017) have reworked this example to suggest it can be a model for a more general solution, though their views have been fiercely attacked for allowing rich countries to escape their international obligations and permitting exploitation of refugees (Crawley 2017).

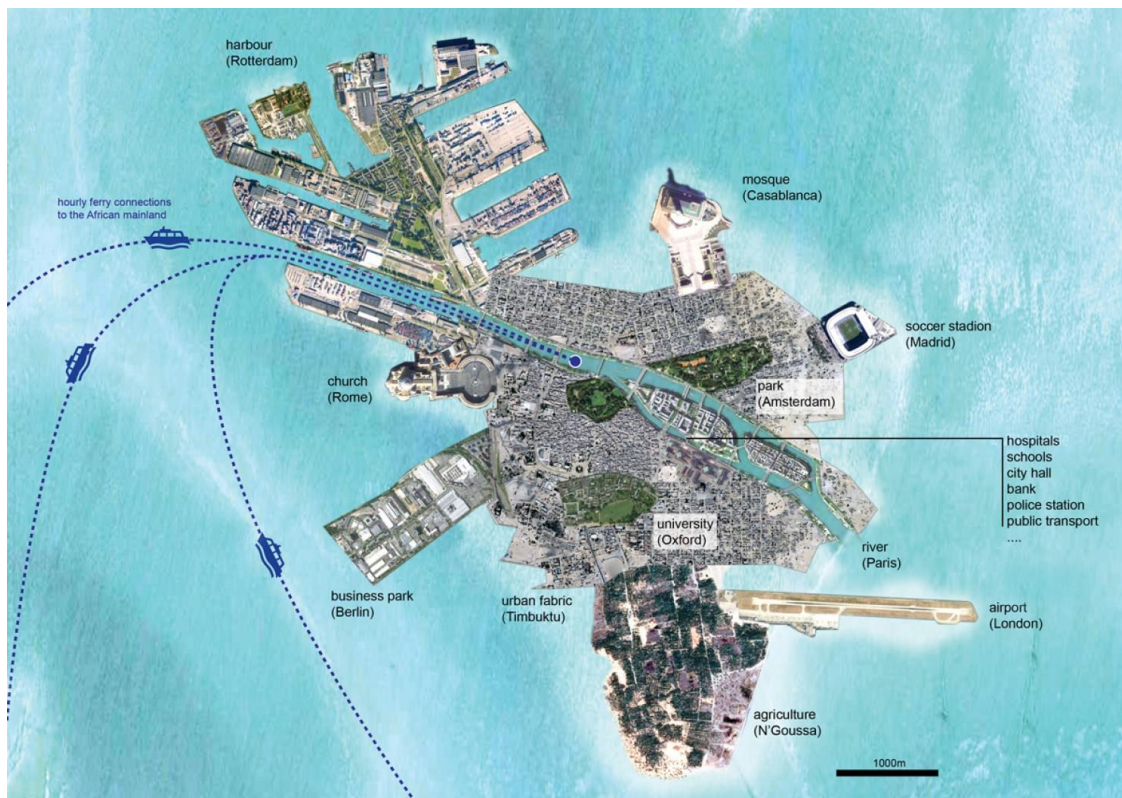
A second ideological axis emanates from community-led (rather than state-led) initiatives to encourage 'sanctuary cities' and to transform camps into 'refugee cities'. Though there is an overlap of terminology in the case of 'refugee cities' we discuss community-led initiatives below in our discussion of transnational solutions.

3. Refugee islands

It is remarkable how often islands appear in imagined solutions to the problem of mass displacement. They are points of isolation, insulation and containment, and easy to define territorially. They appear rather vaguely in Buzi's 'refugee nation', with reference to uninhabited islands in the Philippines and, more specifically, in the offer in September 2015, by an Egyptian telecoms billionaire, Naguib Sawiris, to buy an island from Greece or Italy as to house those otherwise facing death in crossing the Mediterranean.¹⁰ Sawiris's proposal has been tweeted many times, though seems as yet to have come to nothing.

The most elaborately worked-out island solution is to create a 'Europe-in-Africa' (EIA) city-state on the Tunisian Plateau – a thin strip of seabed that sits between Tunisia and Italy within the Mediterranean. Funded by the European Union, the level of the

seabed will be lifted and the resultant land rented from Tunisia and Italy on a 99-year lease, thereby creating a new country, with its own passport, constitution, economy and social system. The concept has been modelled in detail by Theo Deutinger, a respected Dutch architect. As can be seen in the diagram below, the design will incorporate elements from Europe and Africa: a mosque like Casablanca's, a church like St Peter's in Rome, a university like Oxford, an urban fabric like Timbuktu's, and so on. Initially EIA would cater for 150,000 people, but it can be expanded by pouring more sand onto the shallow shelving.¹¹ We understand there may be some ecological objections to the plan from marine biologists, but we are in no position to make a definitive judgement on this issue.



Credit: Europe in Africa city <https://www.europeinafrica.com/> Theo Deutinger, Spuistraat 272, 1012VW, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Refugia: transnational solutions

Cohen's initial notion of Refugia was implicitly territorially based. Van Hear modified this version by developing the idea of a future non-territorial transnational polity

which we now both broadly favour and designate 'Refugia'.¹² Our current vision is not of a new nation-state or single legally-defined zone, but rather a transnational or cross-national entity, a set of connections (*mise en relation*) between different sites developed through initiatives mainly taken by refugees and displaced people themselves, with some support from sympathizers. Confederal and archipelagic in character, it brings together refugee communities in territories and neighbouring societies in conflict, those in enclaves in transit countries, and other refugees in more distant countries of settlement.

Informed by our stance of pragmatic utopianism, we see Refugia as in part the outcome of a tacit grand bargain – among richer states and emerging countries, countries neighbouring conflicts and, crucially, refugees themselves. After discussions with representatives of Refugia, new constituent zones will in effect be licensed by the nation states within whose territories they lie. Though subject to the host states' laws, zones are created from below. They are self-governing and eventually self-supporting.

The upshot is that refugees are no longer primarily the responsibility of the nation-state that 'hosts' them, but belong to a more diffuse entity – Refugia. Refugians hold dual affinities: as well as affiliation to Refugia they can be long-term residents of the states which license their territories. They can move among different parts of Refugia, and, where negotiated, between sovereign nations.

Refugia is governed by a transnational virtual assembly, elected by Refugians from all the constituent components of the polity. This represents Refugia globally, but there are also constituent assemblies in each Refugia location designed to feed into this global representation, as well as to represent the interests of Refugians to the host society – and to channel the concerns of the host society to Refugians.

Refugians pay taxes or contributions to the nation-states within which they live, but also to the wider Refugia polity. A portion of the latter revenue provides support for those who choose to stay in their regions of origin, or can be used to leave such

regions – in a similar manner to the way in which remittances are deployed now. In this way disparities among different parts of Refugia will be ironed out.

Refugia is not based on ethnicity, nationality or religion. The experience of permaconflict has convinced many people of the fallacy of basing communities on such identifications. Moreover, people have been of necessity pressed into collective activity across such affiliations by their experience of forced mobility. Differences are respected, while we anticipate that Refugians will be impelled to create a new kind of polity that is democratic and self-sustaining – and not based on identity politics.¹³

Critics will probably brand us and our vision as utopian, a designation that we happily accept provided we add a qualification. Ours is a pragmatic utopia. We are reminded of Oscar Wilde's (1912/2007, p. 147) comment that, 'A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.'¹⁴

1. Prefigurative forms of Refugia

At the risk of straining our credulity, we suggest that Refugia already exists in a fragmentary and highly imperfect form. In countries that have long hosted large numbers of refugees and will likely do so for the foreseeable future – Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iran, Pakistan, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda among others – refugees have established tenuous communities in the face of challenging conditions and poor prospects. These populations have links with more fortunate kin and friends in global cities further afield – not just in neighbourhoods of New York, London, Paris, Berlin and Sydney, but in Istanbul, Cairo, Mumbai, Rio and many others in the emerging world, where people of diverse ethnicities and backgrounds are thrown together. Taken together, people in these dispersed locations constitute transnational communities through their diasporic connections. The transformational step towards a transnational polity would be to move beyond ethnic identification to a global affinity of the displaced.

As for governance, many diaspora groups have already created transnational bodies which – though again imperfect – could serve as partial models of governance. In some cases transnational elections have been held that sustain such transnational institutions.¹⁵ With regard to finance, reference has already been made to remittances by refugees to their troubled homelands and regions – in effect a form of global redistribution of wealth somehow akin to taxation. As is well-established, the scale of this transnational redistribution is huge.¹⁶ Again, a proto-Refugia exists in the realm of culture, seen in the transnational mobility of art, music, dance and language. In sport too: a refugee team was recognised at the Rio Olympic games – a very modest step in the big picture perhaps, but an inferred recognition of a body of connected people without a nation-state affiliation.

As significant are cross-ethnic and cross-national affinities that have emerged among people on the move: ‘mobile commons’ activities in which collective actions by migrants and refugees drawn from different nationalities and ethnicities have built solidarity and effected change (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013). Examples include sub-Saharan Africans thrown together in emergent communities crossing the Sahara or holed up in Libya, or those once in the Jungle, near Calais (now demolished). We also note how Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Eritreans and others have cooperated (along with concerned citizens) at the borders of Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Austria and Germany to force changes in European migration and asylum order – however short-lived such changes have proved to be. Squalid and desperate though the Jungle, Idomeni (a self-made camp in northern Greece) and their ilk may be, the positive side is that they show how communities can be formed and sustained by migrants and concerned citizens working together.

An alliance between sympathetic citizens and migrants (widening the category beyond displacees and refugees) has been seen notably in the establishment of ‘sanctuary cities’. Though sanctuary cities have deep roots in many countries (and derive from biblical examples), the most notable current example is the 613 (out of 3142) counties in the US that have limited the extent to which local enforcement officers can co-operate with federal agents to enforce immigration orders. Needless

to say, just five days after he assumed office, President Trump threatened to block federal funding to sanctuary cities.¹⁷

‘Refugee cities’, used in the sense of community-led initiatives, are even clearer pre-figurations of Refugia. As the time in refugee camps has lengthened and more refugees have been accommodated in or near cities, organic urban settlements have developed. A good example is Camp Domiz, a Syrian refugee camp in northern Iraq that has been badged a ‘Refugee republic’, as its inhabitants have set up community centres, shops and mosques. As an imaginative photo documentary by Dutch journalists shows, some kind of city has formed while Iraqi shoppers flock to the bakery and some other shops.¹⁸ Another example is the attempt to turn Lampedusa, the Italian island that has received many migrants and often been represented in dystopian terms, into a cultural meeting ground. Led by the Askavusa Association, and using documentaries, exhibitions and festivals, the organizers have transformed the conventional narrative, turning it from migrants as ‘imperceptible bodies’ – washed up, exhausted, only there to be rescued – to ‘subjects of power’ –with memories, aspirations and resources (Mazzara, 2016, p. 137).

2. ‘Designing out’ the problem of mass displacement

The expression ‘designing out’ is familiar to professional designers, though rather less so to those outside the profession. By way of illustration, one might seek to design out crime by providing better street lighting or design out tagging by using anti-graffiti paint. In 2016, an innovative design company in Amsterdam called ‘What can design do?’, supported by the Swedish furniture company IKEA, held a competition and conference devoted to seeing whether and how designers might design out the problems posed by mass displacement. IKEA itself has designed a much-praised flat-pack shelter. The competition attracted 639 entrants from 69 countries. The top five winners, who were given prize money to develop their ideas, were selected by an international jury of designers, policy-makers and academics.¹⁹

The resultant designs were an extraordinary potpourri of ideas and included: *Agrishelters* –self-build, ecologically-sound refugee housing; a *Welcome Card* – listing

asylum status, access to information and serving as an ID (see below); the online platform and app *Refu.Rendum*, which provides capacity for refugee consultation and elections (see above, on Refugia governance); *Eat and Meet* – food trucks staffed by refugees who would offer meals and conversation to host communities; *Makers Unite* – craft workshops for refugees and locals, upcycling items like red life-jackets; and *Reframe Refugees*, a photo app using smart phones to allow refugees the opportunity for self-representation. In themselves, such initiatives do not constitute a solution, but they can all contribute to making Refugia a reality and making it possible to open a dialogue between Refugians and their surrounding communities.

3. The Sesame Pass

The notion of a ‘Sesame Pass’ was first proposed by Robin Cohen at a panel discussion held at the Oxford Martin School in October 2015. Some minor changes have been made on the slide below, but the concept of the pass remains close to the original notion. The Sesame Pass is a tangible object that interlaces and connects all the nodes and zones of Refugia, through such elements as providing a collective identity, voting registration, legal status, entitlements and the facilitation of work, financial transfers and enhanced mobility.

The ‘Sesame Pass’: a smart card for liquid transnational citizenship



- **Ensures identification** (iris, photo, fingerprint, DNA, blood-group, police report)
- **Permits movement** (to all component parts of Refugia – camps, detention centres, legally-defined zones – and authorizing states)
- **Accesses credits** (for self-build housing, internet/phone time, travel tickets)
- **Grants entitlements** (Refugia voting, first aid kits, education, health care, food, clothing, bank loans)
- **Provides status determination** (*prima facie* decisions)
- **Facilitates work** (through an international labour exchange and work/residence visas issued by authorizing states)

The proposal draws some inspirations from the Nansen passport issued by the League of Nations to 450,000 stateless persons. The passport was eventually honoured by governments in 52 countries. Various Certificates of Identity (including a 1954 Convention travel document) were, and are, issued by national governments to stateless persons. Without wishing to disparage such certificates, which have provided support to many people in distress, many of them are no more than scrappy bits of paper consulted by border guards and police. Some illustrative uses of the multi-functional, digitalized Sesame Pass are:

- The incorporation of the functions of a Welcome Card (described above) thereby including such major items as informing refugees of the progress of their applications for legal recognition, or everyday entitlements like allowing them to use buses and the public library.
- Similarly, the functions of the Refu.Rendum application (see above) could be incorporated to facilitate consultation and representation in Refugia's governance institutions.
- If, say, the Gates Foundation (which has been very active in anti-malaria campaigns) wanted to protect South Sudanese refugees living in Uganda, they could upload an e-voucher for a sprayed net to all Refugians in the area, whose Sesame Passes would be readable in a simple card reader at the supply points.
- If, say, technical colleges wanted to tutor Refugians they could offer online courses, supported by volunteer tutors, for certificates in carpentry, metalwork, plumbing, musical composition, hospitality studies and a host of other skills.
- By representative decision, Refugians could establish their own online work platform or use existing platforms like Upwork, which has 12 million registered freelancers and posts 3 million jobs each year.
- The Sesame Pass could be developed as a machine-readable currency in itself. This will allow tax collection or the administration of a basic income grant for all Refugians. Again, credits recorded on the Sesame Pass could be exchanged

for banknotes, still preferred in many countries, which we will call Refugia Riyals.²⁰

When the idea of a Sesame Pass has been discussed with our students and fellow researchers at Oxford, a persistent objection has been to the high level of secure identification suggested and the intrusive surveillance that this could imply. The reasons for us persevering with this requirement are two-fold. First, as extended functions get loaded on to the Sesame Pass it will become a more and more valuable object, so any possibility of impersonation needs to be prevented. Second, there is no doubt that fear of terrorists posing as refugees (even though a very rare occurrence) underlies much of the anti-refugee and anti-migrant rhetoric in receiving countries. We arrive then at what might be called a Foucauldian paradox. We accept, as our critics have correctly asserted, that the Sesame Pass can be seen as a digital form of Foucault's Panopticon (an all-seeing tower once used in prisons). This capacity for enhanced scrutiny can lead, as Foucault (1979) indicated, to the normalization and even internalization of surveillance. Yet, without accepting the need for a secure ID, visas and travel to existing states and other sites in Refugia will be restricted by the anxieties of authorities in many states, whose goodwill is necessary to licence Refugia nodes and allow mobility. Perhaps we have here a Faustian pact combined with a Foucauldian paradox?

Conclusion

We have suggested that there is some sense in which an embryonic transnational Refugia already exists. Camps and communities near and in countries riven by conflicts, neighbourhoods in global cities, transnational political practices, money transfers, emergent communities and activities in disparate locations en route: all are fragments that taken separately do not seem to promise much. However, in the aggregate they could add up to Refugia, imperfectly prefigured.

As argued above, we particularly favour transnational versions of Refugia, as the territorial versions generally start and end with a design 'from above'. However well-intentioned and empathetic are designers, urban planners, architects and social

visionaries, their ideas have to be implemented by intermediaries and inhabited by refugees and displacees. Perhaps the most difficult impediment to implementing territorialized forms of Refugia is that the political landscape is so bleak. Nonetheless, we think that our brand of pragmatic utopianism will carry the day, since states (in their contemporary neoliberal fashion) will see it as in their interest to shuffle off the displacement problem to be managed by the displaced themselves, while the displaced and concerned citizens will relish the prospect of a self-managed new society that they create themselves.

Some might say that such a vision needs someone of the stature of a latter day George Marshall, the author of the Marshall Plan, to champion it. Such a 'champion' might help in an enabling sense – to draw attention to the proposal, to proffer support from international agencies and to facilitate travel and transactions between Refugia and the more conventional Westfalian-type states. However, we see Refugia as coming about organically, incrementally and cumulatively by the collective activity of refugees and sympathetic citizens organizing in the interstices of the nation state system and the international governmental architecture. In our vision, Refugia is essentially self-organised and self-managed, requiring not political or cultural conformity but simply subscribing to principles and deeds of solidarity and mutual aid.

It is conceivable that desperation might drive the European Union to come up with a radical blueprint for a territorialized and dystopian Refugia. We fear, however, that any such solution will be driven by military and security considerations or by a policy of repressive (and aggressive) containment, already foretokened in Victor Orban's (Hungary's right-wing prime minister) proposal to build a 'refugee city' in Libya. Not only is this explicitly about containment enforced by military might, Orban also declares that 'those who came [to Europe] illegally must be rounded up and shipped out'.²¹

While we must be on the guard for territorial forms of Refugia that are nakedly about repression, territorial forms of Refugia should not be discarded in principle. Indeed,

there is no reason why, where they comply with Refugia's democratic and tolerant values, they should not be incorporated as nodes in our transnational polity. In other words, the two forms of Refugia, territorial and transnational, can be complementary. The political judgement lies in when territorial solutions are captured by right-wing leaders, anxious to placate their electorates, and enforced with brutality and lack of respect for human rights. Precisely because they have been disempowered by their traumatic experiences, displacees do not need things done *to* them and may even resist things being done *for* them. Of course many refugees would be happy to co-operate in doing things *with* them. Ideally, however, Refugia should involve a large number of things (as large as is practically possible) done *by* them, recognizing and insisting on the agency of Refugians themselves. This is the promise of the many small initiatives and imaginative new solutions clustered together in a common archipelagic polity. Viva Refugia!

Notes

- ¹ In addition to video footage, see Robin Cohen 'Refugia: the limits and possibilities of Buzi's Refugee Nation', <https://nandosigona.wordpress.com/2015/07/30/refugia-the-limits-and-possibilities-of-buzis-refugee-nation/> and Nicholas Van Hear 'Imagining Refugia', <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2016/imagining-refugia/>. We have also been greatly helped and informed by our mutual friend Jeff Crisp, who worked for the UNHCR for many years, and whose own views are set out here: http://www.bafuncs.org/UNat70_OnlineReport.pdf.
- ² See <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>. These statistics include internally displaced people as well as those crossing international borders.
- ³ As a corrective, Nando Sigona points out that during the previous year, 2015, just one boat migrant died for every 1,049 who reached Greece via the Aegean route. See https://www.academia.edu/30859035/Visions_of_a_borderless_world.
- ⁴ Bauman's key work on liquidity was *Liquid Modernity* (2000). See also Bauman 2003, 2005, 2006a and 2006b). Edouard Glissant's relational and archipelagic theory is discussed in Cohen and Sheringham (2016: 127–9). Of many, Glissant's most relevant work in English is his *Poetics of Relation* (1997).
- ⁵ See <http://www.refugeenation.org/> and <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Refugee-Nation-Radical-Solution-Global-ebook/dp/B011JHEBVG>.
- ⁶ 'Refugia: the limits and possibilities of Buzi's Refugee Nation', Postcards from, 30 July 2015: <https://nandosigona.wordpress.com/2015/07/30/refugia-the-limits-and-possibilities-of-buzis-refugee-nation/>. Though now a property developer in California, Buzi is the son of refugee Jews from Iraq who had found refuge in Israel and in a discussion programme disclosed that he selected Israel as his model for a refugee nation because of his own biography. See <http://tvo.org/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/a-permanent-home-for-refugees>.
- ⁷ For the general site promoting this idea see <https://refugeecities.org/>. The concept paper is here: <https://refugeecities.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/refugee-cities-concept-paper-november-2016.pdf>.
- ⁸ See <https://paulromer.net/possible-responses-to-the-refugee-crisis/>
- ⁹ See <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/aug/04/refugee-nation-migration-jason-buzi>.
- ¹⁰ See https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/04/an-egyptian-billionaire-wants-to-buy-an-island-to-house-refugees/?utm_term=.bda115f7b227.

- ¹¹ See <http://www.europeinafrica.com/>. For a sympathetic account see https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/01/a-dutch-architects-plan-to-put-europes-refugees-on-a-man-made-island-near-tunisia/?utm_term=.4e9c343a9791.
- ¹² A lot of what follows in this section is derived from Nicholas Van Hear 'Imagining Refugia', <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2016/imagining-refugia/>.
- ¹³ This implies some kind of constitution for the proposed transnational polity. We suggest that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union together with key provisions of the South African Constitution could inform a planned Constituent Assembly of Refugians, brought together by the UN, to draft and approve a Constitution. We assume a Constitutional Court for Refugia would also have to be brought into being. We are taking further advice from constitutional lawyers to refine our thinking on these matters.
- ¹⁴ We also note in passing that last year (2016) marked the 500th anniversary of the publication of Thomas More's *Utopia*.
- ¹⁵ An imperfect example is the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), whose transnational assembly was elected in 2010 by Tamils living in more than 15 countries outside Sri Lanka. The technical means of holding such transnational elections are becoming more and more sophisticated: see <http://www.whatdesigncando.com/challenge/project/refu-rendum/>.
- ¹⁶ According to the World Bank, migrant remittances totalled US\$441 billion in 2016, more than three times the amount of aid, and the total has increased inexorably in recent years (World Bank Group 2016).
- ¹⁷ See <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/02/us/sanctuary-cities.html>. For a wider view see Lippert and Rehaag (2012).
- ¹⁸ See <http://refugeerpublic.submarinechannel.com/>.
- ¹⁹ Declaration of interest: Robin Cohen was a member of the jury. See, for the prize winners, <http://www.whatdesigncando.com/challenge/finalists/>.
- ²⁰ Riyals as they were a very old, Ottoman, currency and because many Muslim pilgrims are familiar with the Haj Pilgrim Receipts issued by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency in Riyals, which became widely accepted in Saudi Arabia.
- ²¹ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/europe-giant-refugee-city-libya-africa-hungary-prime-minister-viktor-orban-a7327931.html>. We add that we are indirectly aware of discussions in European military circles that echo Orban's plan.

Notes on contributors

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