

## Editorial

Welcome to Volume 6, Issue 1 of the Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration (OxMo).

This issue reflects the continuing importance of the European refugee crisis for Refugee Studies. The six articles on Europe all raise protection concerns for refugees in, or seeking access to, Europe. Academia is at times criticized for being slow to adapt in the face of a fast changing world but the OxMo showcases young researchers, in particular, using research as a practical way to challenge the injustices they perceive around them.

The protection concerns facing refugees in Europe highlighted in this issue are in part attributable to phenomenon that is often hidden from public view. Few refugees face return to Syria, in violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*; however this does not mean that their protection remains unchallenged or uncompromised.

Grundler highlights that, although Germany's response to asylum seekers has been widely presented as generous, recent changes to asylum law severely restrict asylum seeker's rights and freedoms. An example is the fast-tracking of asylum applications within just one week and the pitfalls such a process embodies.

Another way the law can restrict refugees' rights is through its application and interaction with political factors. Ihring argues that the closure of the border along the Western Balkans is not governed by the law, but rather political responses to 'compassion fatigue' amongst the public. Ihring further highlights the manner in which some refugees have been constructed within a dichotomy; as 'good victims' if they are from a 'war' country - which only includes Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan - and as 'illegal migrants' if they are from other countries.

The construction of refugees in Europe is also explored by Gartrell who carries out a critical discourse analysis of three major newspapers in the United Kingdom. Her piece demonstrates that the British press largely avoids identifying Syrian refugees as Muslim; instead, it chooses to portray them through an existing discourse of migration, which places them within debates about immigration and Britain's place within the European Union.

Protection concerns are also occurring in informal spaces, which exist outside the legal and formal channels. Manara explores an informal settlement next to the reception center of Borgo Mezzanone in southern Italy. She develops a typology of refugees living within that area and explains how the settlement is both a source of resilience and practical adaption to inefficiencies in reception arrangements, but that it also hinders refugees' integration into Italian society.

Turning to the edges of Europe, Jarahzadeh reveals the challenges refugees face in Turkey; they have no available opportunity for a durable solution and therefore face the choice of entering an 'invisible queue' for resettlement or pursuing clandestine journeys to Europe. Refugees experience the paradox at the heart of migration management that encourages refugees to wait in an intermediary country without any guarantee of eventual asylum.

It is important to note of course that criticism of European countries' treatment of asylum seekers precedes the current crisis. Blanchard et. al, based on their research and advocacy with the British Red Cross, highlight the wide range of difficulties failed asylum seekers face in the United Kingdom. Since 2009, for example they had been given monetary support on a pre-paid card. This card restricts where refugees' could buy essential items and their ability to save from week to week. The authors also highlight how the meager amount of £5 a day

means refugees often went hungry and how a successful advocacy approach helped to alleviate some of the harsh effects of this policy of pre-paid cards.

Su adds a strong theoretical dimension to this issue, discussing how the concept of the ‘climate refugee’ has been slowly abandoned and replaced with the more neutral concept of the ‘climate migrant’. Su engages with the debate over whether the concept of ‘climate refugees’ should be bought back. She illustrates how abandoning the concept could lead to significant protection gaps.

We are also delighted to publish the highly illuminating reflections of two refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sylvain Gaetan and Msenwa Oliver Mweneake. Despite restrictive and discriminative policies, Gaetan has been able to pursue education at a postgraduate level and return to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, where he was once a refugee, as a development practitioner. His words critique the increasingly held view globally that refugees are a burden that must be restricted; he demonstrates the resilience and motivation refugees, if granted their rights and allowed to integrate, and the contribution they can make to their host countries. He states

‘...refugees are not a burden but a great resource. Their life journeys make them more resilient to overcoming obstacles, and refugees ... can contribute to the well-being of their new countries... My past struggles have fuelled my present dedication to fight atrocities, violence and corruption around the world’.

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