



*Edited by*  
Sibylle Heilbrunn · Jörg Freiling · Aki Harima

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# Refugee Entrepreneurship

## A Case-based Topography

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# Foreword

Seventh of May, 2018. It is glorious summer as I write this piece today. The pristine blue canopies, the peace of humming bees in mellow, late afternoon sunshine in England. Everything is right with the world. But all things solid melt into air. On Wednesday, May 2 2018, a Syrian refugee living in Scotland is found critically injured after an alleged racist attack, while, earlier, one weekend in January, a group of around a hundred masked neo-Nazis marched in an illegal demonstration through the city center of Cottbus in Germany. The dialectic of the refugee experience is lost in this search for peace from danger, only to be confronted with a mix of existential and physical threats and its corollary: hate. Into these shadows, across country borders walk the 20 million refugees (out of 65 million destitute people). While technology and entrepreneurship has made it possible to have white gold, pink mobile phones with which to court artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, globally, the same modernity has displaced masses across seas and lands of human tragedy.

So, what stories can we write of our times that narrate the divergence of reality in alternative environments? So much has and continues to be written about technology and its uses that the ultimate irony might lie in machines making refugees of us all. Yet that prospect pales into insignificance when more than 25,000 migrants have died in their attempt to reach or stay in Europe since the advent of the new millennium, or when

5000 migrants lose their lives crossing the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, as they did in one year alone in 2016. Global refugee numbers are at their highest since the early 1990s. The stories of this reality are beginning to be told quietly and forcefully. But what is rare is the narrative about the opening up of possible new frontiers of creativity, new opportunities, the painfully difficult act of resource mobilization and the crystallization of economic hope and social dignity that entrepreneurship can bring to bear on the lives of people who have been denuded of every possible possession in their flight from abject danger.

So when there is the prospect of new literature arriving in our midst, there is a renewal of hope that is made possible by new knowledge, rigorous research and compassionate insight. To be asked to write this foreword for a highly original, new book on refugees and their search for identity through entrepreneurship is an honor and a privilege. Good, interesting books generate thought and engender new ones, and while that may be enough, this new book, *Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Case-based Topography* by Sibylle Heilbrunn, Jörg Freiling and Aki Harima, offers so much more.

Why do people move? The answer to this question lies somewhere between the simplicity of an anticipated response that could allude to necessity, and the more intractable one which could reflect an abstract concept of transition or a natural state of the human condition. Inherent in our understanding of this phenomenon of movement is what the Greeks called “xenophobia”, or the fear of the foreigner. While this sense of fear may have had its roots in early agrarian societies and nomadic pastoralists, migration and mobility were conceptualized as a problem only after the creation of a modern international system of nation states in that extended period of time since 1648 and the Treaty of Westphalia. Somehow the establishment of the notion of sovereignty needed a negative corollary, the threat posed by those who dared to cross sovereign boundaries.

For some time, “free migration” characterized the first wave, between 1840 and 1914, and the free flow of the three streams of globalization—goods, services and, crucially, people. Staggering levels of migration contributed to close to 30% of the increase in population, enabling countries such as the United States and Australia to emerge as developed nations of

economic power and dubious social morality. But then the world went to war in the first part of the twentieth century and with that migration, and its bilateral exchange in the form of immigration and emigration, found its critical apotheosis in the end of this first period of globalization and the free movement of people across borders. It was as if the usurpation of land through mass colonization and high levels of entrepreneurship (both productive and destructive) had, unwittingly, unleashed an abundance of servile, international labor, the consequences of which now needed mitigation. The war and its aftermath provided a new economic rationale for managed migration in what was to become a permanent state of alert over national security concerns. Migration has not stopped, and economists and sociologists have carved out various explanations for the justification of migration alongside many a parochial, political maneuvering of “xenophobe”. Much of the fear of the foreign was translated in the form of exporting warfare—no longer in Europe, but paradoxically in lands of plenty (of resources) and poverty (of people), coupled with the establishment of supplicant power bases of corruption in those far-off venues of blight and terror.

The world of refugees was created in and by these theaters of war that buttressed international entrepreneurship before WWI, during and after WWI and WWII and continuously, in the formation of zones of terror from 1945 to the present day. Migration did not cease during any of these times. An economic necessity in the formation of colonies was the organization of international labor, but refugees were not part of this entrepreneurial equation.

Danger, persecution, disorder, desperation and mobility—five words which define the refugee experience and fragment their *weltanschauung*, are not part of the common discourse of entrepreneurship or for that matter economic activity in general. Since refugees are frequently not even allowed to earn a living in countries into which they find themselves tossed, the five-word construct creates surreal possibilities of endeavor. In this extraordinary environment, we need to find stories, not just data, of the living, breathing group of “exception people”, as Ian Goldin and colleagues describe them. And this is what Heibrunn, Freling and Harim, do by reflecting on their journeys from refuge to business ownership in new countries of residence, demonstrating ways in which to generate

inventive and creative forms of entrepreneurship, setting the foundations for scaling them up and eventually claiming an important footing in global contexts as migrant and transnational entrepreneurs. This is accomplished by building on aspects of refugee theory which underpins the case study methodology, followed up by 16 riveting case studies, drawn from the “International Conference on Migration and Diaspora Entrepreneurship”, organized by the LEMEX Institute at the University of Bremen in Germany in November 2017.

Heilbrunn and Iannone’s excellent introduction sets the scene for the critical understanding of the entrepreneurial refugee experience. The much-banded notion of any refugee being a natural entrepreneur, as many a thoughtful soul sometimes tries to claim, is ignored in favor of a much more helpful critique of the current state of play in this very new and emerging field of study. This analysis makes the crucial distinction between a migrant and a refugee. Both get displaced, but the former exercises choice, quite often fulfilling the neo-classical economist’s dream of the rational individual, the psychologist’s explanation of motivation or planned behavior and the sociologist’s appreciation of networking and embeddedness, mixed, shaken or stirred! The refugee entrepreneur, navigating that unearthly place created by those five words of danger, persecution, disorder, desperation and mobility, disrupts the standard theoretical constructs developed to date about entrepreneurial people or indeed the entrepreneurship process. This necessitates the use of alternate theoretical lenses, and Heilbrunn and Iannone offer a distinctive interpretation of Miriam George’s model of refugee typology, inspired by Egon Francis Kunz and Anne Paludan, and based on three layers of characterization, namely “new” versus “traditional”, “acute” versus “anticipatory” and “majority-identified”, “event-related” or “self-alienated”.

The organization of the sixteen case studies using the categories mentioned above enables the capture of the richness of that early entrepreneurial experience of a myriad cohort of Congolese, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Iranian, Iraqi, Pakistani and Syrian refugees in Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Oman and Pakistan. The richness of these cases, produced by a wide range of authors, has two important implications. First, it is crucial that our understanding is informed by relative and comparative insights into the refugee experience. A majority



of refugees are in undefined camps of despair in countries near to the ones from which fled. A much smaller minority are lost in clouds of hate and confusion in nations states which depended on the forefathers of many of these refugees to help build their economies! The fact that even in such turgid environments they can find the compassionate, local abdicators of hate with whom they can set up their first ventures is also a story worth telling. These cases do just that. Second, the wealth of these case studies and the analysis using the Miriam George model referred to above provide for a distinctive and empirical base line founded in theory.

The authors have not only opened up new ground, but in the cross-case analysis by Freiling and Harima that follow the case studies, we find a really solid analysis of the contribution that the cases and their interpretation make to a more nuanced approach to understanding. Yes, it is about opportunity and the navigation of uncharted waters, the uncertainty of enterprise, the asymmetrical information and resource constraints. But researchers and scholars seldom pause to consider the necessary “mental energizers” that engender hope and which harnesses both the power of the will and the strength of finding a way forward. There is much more to entrepreneurship than self-efficacy and the locus of control! The reality of refugee entrepreneurship may have limited horizons. They may be small, necessity-based, solo ventures by vulnerable people in hostile places, but they plant the seeds of entrepreneurial hope and possibilities.

The migrant’s journey is complex enough, but their place is firm in the land of their choice. We need to learn and act on behalf of and with the refugees to create new spaces of hope. Sibylle Heilbrunn, Jörg Freiling and Aki Harima have, together with their case writers, produced a most unusual book of hope, rare in research circles. Their scholarly endeavor deserves high praise and close reading by researchers, students, third sector professionals and policy makers. I hope that their robust work lays the ground for the continuous study and nurture of exceptional people.

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Jay Mitra

# Acknowledgments

Embedded within the ongoing refugee and integration discourse, this project is devoted to giving voice to refugees doing entrepreneurship all over the world. It emerged based on a shared interest of the three editors, who are involved in entrepreneurship research from different perspectives. We wanted to explore and understand how people who experienced refuge were able to set up business or social ventures, alone or with others, in countries of transition or destination.

Our interest was initiated by personal encounters with some of these refugees, and we thank them first and foremost for that. It has been our privilege to bring together scholars from a variety of intellectual fields, social contexts and political geographies. These scholars have interviewed refugees from a variety of social contexts, political geographies and personal histories and all together, we hope that we have been able to present a taxonomy of cases exemplifying their entrepreneurial actions.

Primarily our deepest thanks go to the refugee entrepreneurs who took part in the project and who gave their consent and time for the interviews. To us and our readers they represent their families, communities and fellow refugees and asylum seekers. Secondly, we want to thank our coauthors of the chapters, with whom it was a pleasure to work.

Finally, we would like to thank Prof. Jay Mitra for writing the Foreword, Palgrave Macmillan for their support and effort and Ms. Katja Starke-Heinbokel and the LEMEX team from Bremen University for their invaluable technical assistance.

We dedicate this book to all refugees and especially to those who strive for entrepreneurship and also to those promoting refugees' voices and thereby foster universal human values of dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity.

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	<i>Sibylle Heilbrunn and Rosa Lisa Iannone</i>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Umayyad: A Syrian Refugee Business in Bremen, Germany</b>	<b>27</b>
	<i>Aki Harima, Manal Haimour, and Jörg Freiling</i>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Cham Saar: The First Syrian-German Cheese Manufacturer</b>	<b>39</b>
	<i>Carina Hartmann and Katharina Schilling</i>	
<b>4</b>	<b>“Our Table”: Between Activism and Business in Dublin, Ireland</b>	<b>55</b>
	<i>Joachim Kolb</i>	
<b>5</b>	<b>The Story of an Adolescent Afghan Refugee Who Became an Entrepreneur in France</b>	<b>71</b>
	<i>Crista Plak and Vincent Lagarde</i>	

- 6 “FlüchtlingMagazin” (Refugee Magazine): A Syrian Social Business in Hamburg, Germany** 83  
*Julia Freudenberg*
- 7 The Story of Jonny, an Eritrean Entrepreneur in Tel Aviv, Israel** 101  
*Sibylle Heilbrunn and Anna Rosenfeld*
- 8 A Case Study of an Ethiopian Refugee in Germany** 115  
*Bamrot Yekoye Abebe and Petra Moog*
- 9 The Blessing African Boutique and City Market Food: A Congolese Refugee Business in Darwin, Australia** 127  
*Jane Ruparanganda, Edouard Ndjamba Ndjoku, and Ram Vemuri*
- 10 Refuge to Centre Stage: The Story of Arash** 141  
*Rosa Lisa Iannone*
- 11 From Hell To ... An Entrepreneurial Life: An Iranian Refugee in France** 163  
*Adnane Maalaoui, Myriam Razgallah, Salomé Picard, and Séverine Leloarne-Lemaire*
- 12 From Refugee to Trader: In the Footsteps of Marco Polo** 175  
*Dilek Zamantılı Nayır*
- 13 Internally Displaced Entrepreneurs in Pakistan: The Case of Abdullah** 195  
*Humera Manzoor, Mehboob ur Rashid, Cherry W. M. Cheung, and Caleb Kwong*

<b>14</b>	<b>Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Case Study from the Sultanate of Oman</b>	<b>207</b>
	<i>Ramo Palalić, Léo-Paul Dana, and Veland Ramadani</i>	
<b>15</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship in Extreme Environments: Businesses in the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya</b>	<b>221</b>
	<i>Marlen de la Chaux</i>	
<b>16</b>	<b>From Cameroon to South Africa: From Refugee to Successful Businessman</b>	<b>231</b>
	<i>Robertson K. Tengeh</i>	
<b>17</b>	<b>The Resilience of a Syrian Woman and Her Family Through Refugee Entrepreneurship in Jordan</b>	<b>241</b>
	<i>Sophie Alkhaled</i>	
<b>18</b>	<b>Refugee Entrepreneurship: Learning from Case Evidence</b>	<b>255</b>
	<i>Jörg Freiling and Aki Harima</i>	
	<b>Index</b>	<b>279</b>

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# List of Figures

Fig. 1.1	Number of refugees worldwide, 2000–2016, by type (in millions). *Totals in the figure include IDPs, asylum seekers, refugees, returnees (including IDPs and refugees), stateless persons and others of concern (beneficiaries of UNHCR aid and services) (UNHCR 2018)	2
Fig. 1.2	Typology of refugees (based on George 2010, 381)	9
Fig. 6.1	Photograph of Hussam al Zaher	86
Fig. 7.1	Jonny at his kindergarten in South Tel Aviv	103
Fig. 10.1	Number of asylum applicants in Luxembourg 2012–2017. Source: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes (2017, 2018)	143
Fig. 12.1	Photograph of Ali Dede	178
Fig. 16.1	Photograph of Oliver	234

# List of Tables

Table 1.1	Yearly increase of total refugees, worldwide (2000–2016)	3
Table 1.2	Organization of the chapters according to the theoretical underpinning	12
Table 1.3	Patterns of migration of ‘new’ versus ‘traditional’ refugees	13
Table 3.1	Syrian asylum applications and decision (2017)	41
Table 6.1	Registration and asylum application figures in Germany, 2015–2016	84
Table 6.2	Registration and asylum application figures of Syrians in Germany from 2015–2016	85
Table 8.1	Key demographic factors	116
Table 8.2	Comparison of Germany and Ethiopia in key economic factors	118
Table 18.1	Refuge paths	260
Table 18.2	Hope in refugee entrepreneurship	271



# 1

## Introduction

Sibylle Heilbrunn and Rosa Lisa Iannone

### 1.1 Refugees Out of the Shadows

Global migration is a key factor of the twenty-first century and has become a matter of great interest—economically, politically, socially and culturally. Understanding the patterns and underlying impacts of global migration is of pressing importance, as both the increasing number of media reports and academic studies reflect. Whereas about 90% of the world's migrants move on a voluntary basis, usually for economic reasons, the remaining 10% seek asylum and refuge, having fled their countries in an escape from persecution and violence (Woetzel et al. 2016). Today, political strife and human rights violations, amplified by the ravages of war, play out on the international stage where refugees have

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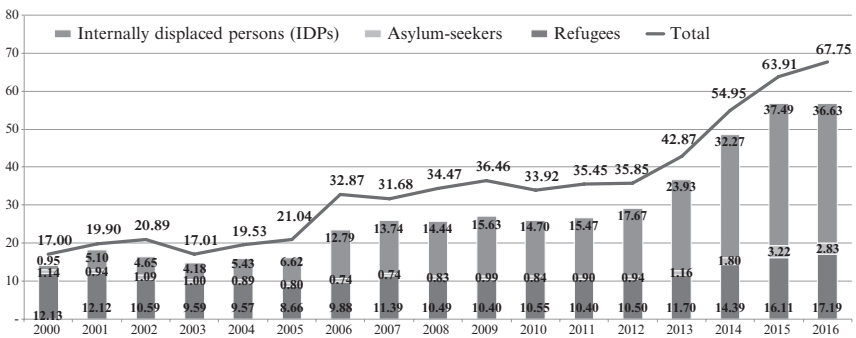


emerged as the “heart of the definition of the world order and the debates it raises” (Fassin and Rechtman 2009, 253).

With 67.75 million forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2016, and with that number rising, among which are 22.5 million refugees, our times are recording the highest levels of migration in history (UNHCR 2017). Figure 1.1 depicts the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers and refugees across recent years, with 17 million in 2000—an amount that nearly quadruples in 2016.

The highest yearly increase in the number of people seeking refuge, globally, was reported in 2005–2006, as shown in Table 1.1. From 2012 to date, however, there has continued to be increases, which has contributed to our current record numbers.

Indeed, the question of integrating migrants and refugees is one of ever-growing urgency. Globally, societies are becoming more diverse and heterogeneous, and therefore it has become essential that host countries find strategies that aim not to reproduce the hardships or injustices from which their many newcomers have often fled. Nevertheless, in a large number of communities, refugees and asylum seekers remain among the most marginalized groups of migrants, exposed to discrimination, impoverished living conditions and high rates of joblessness (Bloch 2008, 2014). Government policies regarding refugees have come into focus,



**Fig. 1.1** Number of refugees worldwide, 2000–2016, by type (in millions). \*Totals in the figure include IDPs, asylum seekers, refugees, returnees (including IDPs and refugees), stateless persons and others of concern (beneficiaries of UNHCR aid and services) (UNHCR 2018)

**Table 1.1** Yearly increase of total refugees, worldwide (2000–2016)

Year	Yearly increase/ decrease (%)	Year	Yearly increase/ decrease (%)
2000–2001	17.0	2008–2009	5.8
2001–2002	5.0	2009–2010	–7.0
2002–2003	–18.6	2010–2011	4.5
2003–2004	14.8	2011–2012	1.1
2004–2005	7.8	2012–2013	19.6
2005–2006	56.2	2013–2014	28.2
2006–2007	–3.6	2014–2015	16.3
2007–2008	8.8	2015–2016	6.0

<sup>a</sup>Percentages have been calculated based on totals from Fig. 1.1 (UNHCR 2018)

with a particular interest in employment issues, considered to be a key element of successful inclusion and integration (Ager and Strang 2008; Heilbrunn et al. 2010). Current academic research demonstrates that refugees face many difficulties when trying to enter the labor markets of their new countries of residence (CORs): they face country-specific legal restrictions, personal and structural discrimination, and an unwillingness on the part of authorities to accept documentation and credentials, among many other challenges (Ayadurai 2011; Bloch 2008; Fong et al. 2007; Heilbrunn *forthcoming*; Lyon et al. 2007; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). Additionally, refugees and asylum seekers often have to acquire foreign language skills and new knowledge, intensely and rapidly, in accordance with the demands of their respective host countries (Bloch 2008; Yi Cheung and Phillimore 2014; Lyon et al. 2007; Miyares 1998; Omeje and Mwangi 2014; Sheridan 2008). Such orientation and integration objectives must be prioritized, although placated by the complexities of immigration journeys that have often led to devastating circumstances, including acute stress (George 2010; Khoury and Prasad 2016; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008) and trauma (Silove 1999). Furthermore, within this unbalanced and fragile state of affairs, factors of diversity in needs, culture, generations and overall groups compound the necessity for targeted, effective responses. Refugees depart from a wide variety of countries of origin (COOs) at various points in their lives and, thus, do not establish homogenous groups in host countries (Vertovec 2007). For this very reason, a call for increased collaboration among stakeholders, including researchers and policymakers, beckons.

It is in this light that *Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Case Based Topography's* contributors have come together, with lessons learned from 16 case studies that examine the enablers and challenges faced by refugees who self-employ in their new CORs. As one of the strongest illustrations of self-determination in the backdrop of rebuilding one's life, the stories presented herein delineate the distinctive and shared experiences in entrepreneurship by refugees; where a vulnerable population, with little resources—human and social—transcend their disadvantage.

## 1.2 Refugee Versus Migrant

Discerning refugees from other migrant populations occurs on fundamental levels, in terms of legal characterization, migration motives and the institutional support they are afforded upon immigration. Firstly, refugees are persons fleeing from armed conflict or persecution and under international law, they are entitled to specific, guaranteed rights. According to Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol (UNHCR 1951) relating to the status of refugees, a refugee is a person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. What this entails is a journey and presence outside one's home country, prompted by a fear of persecution and an incapacity of one's state to guarantee safety and protection. Excluded from the definition are internally displaced people, victims of natural disasters, economic migrants and victims of violence who are not also subject to persecution.

Prior to being recognized as refugees, people who enter host countries are identified as asylum seekers—their claims are yet to be verified and legitimized by a host country's legal system. Whereas motives for migration are typically incited by hopes for a better life and economic improvement, refugees are driven by force and attempt to rebuild what they have lost (Chiswick et al. 1997; Joly 2002; Kunz 1973). This very profound difference in motivation influences host countries' policies and laws. Legal

decisions related to non-refugee migrants fall under national authority rather than international law and are therefore determined through country-specific immigration processes, such as selection criteria (Edwards 2015). Refugees, however, are subject to different forms of self-selection than other migrants, and this directly affects their human capital characteristics.

Pivotal to the theme of refugee entrepreneurship are how motives for migration influence investment opportunities in terms of pre-flight preparation—what tangible and intangible assets do refugees travel with and how. In turn, this impacts their capital compared to non-refugee migrants in CORs, often to a disadvantage. Further complicating issues are other systematized and social disadvantages, which can either be mitigated or aggravated by national institutional systems. Examples, broached in most of the chapters that follow, touch upon the fostering or hindrance of labor market integration: refugees can be banned from work altogether, they can be supported into employment or, as in some cases, encouraged towards self-employment.

As the literature currently suggests, and our case studies demonstrate, refugee entrepreneurship is gaining momentum, recognition and validation. Examining the distinctive features of this phenomenon will lead us to better understand the goals and needs of those who start new businesses in new CORs. Along with building-up social and economic integration strategies, it is our collective desire that refugee entrepreneurship progressively strengthens through informed and renewed policies and practices.

### 1.3 Insights into Refugee Entrepreneurship

The current situation in refugee entrepreneurship research has been presented in an extensive literature review article by Heilbrunn and Iannone ([forthcoming](#)) that brings to light a number of findings from 51 academic works, published between 1986 and 2017. Based on this and theoretical understandings of refuge, the editors of this book have related to a number of insights, briefly discussed below, in order to build an analytical framework for this book's chapters.

Aligned to the characteristic features that delineate refugees from other migrants, there are differences that distinguish migrant entrepreneurship from refugee entrepreneurship, although these distinctions have often been neglected in empirical studies (Bizri 2017; Piperopoulos 2010). Wauters and Lambrecht (2008) noted this shortcoming when discussing how refugees have consistently been considered as part of the larger group of “migrant entrepreneurs” and seldom researched in their own light. In one of the most prominent contributions to academic discourse on refugee entrepreneurship, they have listed six aspects (ibid.) that place refugee entrepreneurs in a position of comparative disadvantage to other migrant entrepreneurs, including: less extensive social networks; limited or no access to COO-resources; psychological instability due to flight and trauma; little or no preparation in migration processes; leaving valuable assets and resources in their COOs; and unsuitability for paid labor. While initiating the debate on the differences between refugee and migrant entrepreneurship has been important, some of Wauters and Lambrecht’s (ibid.) aspects seem to intimately interrelate, if not overlap, and there is a hidden tendency to generalize these comparative disadvantages for all refugees, despite marked heterogeneity in refugee populations (Vertovec 2007).

From the body of knowledge we have on refugee entrepreneurship, we can ascertain a combination of aspects that influence their activities, such as motivation and institutional, human, cultural and social capital factors (Gold 1988, 1994; Wauters and Lambrecht 2006, 2007, 2008). Refugee entrepreneurs report on the critical role of language and related communication challenges in CORs (Lyon et al. 2007; Omeje and Mwangi 2014). They also describe difficulties in connection to a lack of business knowledge and access to capital for their startups (Ayadurai 2011; Lyon et al. 2007; Omata 2017; Omeje and Mwangi 2014; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008), especially finance (Lyon et al. 2007; Sandberg et al. 2019; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008), impoverished support in the forms of information, guidance and advice (Lyon et al. 2007) and difficulties in navigating the institutional environments and contexts of CORs (Ayadurai 2011; Dahles 2013; Sepulveda et al. 2011; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). Refugee entrepreneurs also face cultural challenges, discrimination and fractured legal stability (Ayadurai 2011; Fong et al.

2007; Lyon et al. 2007). In addition, many face institutional constraints and institutional voids that further hinder their ability to make sense of their new environments and access appropriate schemes for their settlement processes, as well as their entrepreneurial aspirations (Heilbrunn *forthcoming*; Khoury and Prasad 2016).

The main personal motivations for entrepreneurship mentioned by refugees concern a longing to improve their living conditions and integrate into their new environments (Fong et al. 2007; Mamgain and Collins 2003; Sandberg et al. 2019; Sheridan 2008; Tömöry 2008; Wauters and Lambrecht 2006), as well as the very entrepreneurial drive to be independent (Fong et al. 2007; Sandberg et al. 2019). In a number of publications, blocked mobility in the labor market has been explicitly mentioned as a motivator (Price and Chacko 2009; Roth et al. 2012; Tömöry 2008). Alongside this—and mentioned as facilitators to entrepreneurship—are access to capital, particularly social capital (Sandberg et al. 2019; Mamgain and Collins 2003; Miyares 1998; Omeje and Mwangi 2014) and social inclusion (Miyares 1998; Tömöry 2008).

At the individual level, the impact of successful refugee entrepreneurship is empowering—generating income and self-creating a livelihood, which also includes activities that give one’s life purpose and meaning (Fong et al. 2007; Sabar and Posner 2013) and leads to integration (Basok 1989, 1993; Gold 1992a, b). Studies on refugee entrepreneurship as it evolves in camp economies denote a similar impact (Alloush et al. 2017; Jacobsen 2002; Sánchez Piñeiro and Saavedra 2016).

At a meso-level, entrepreneurial activities enhance the development of local refugee communities and services (Lyon et al. 2007). Moreover, and as can be seen in Ellie’s, Jonny’s and Edouard’s stories (Chaps. 4, 7 and 9 herein), refugee businesses often serve as community centers, where relationships, social capital and social identities can be built amongst refugees and also with the wider community (Mamgain and Collins 2003; Sabar and Posner 2013; Wauters and Lambrecht 2006). Particularly in deprived urban areas, refugee businesses can have a “multiplier effect” (Lyon et al. 2007) that can strengthen as well as transform entire neighborhoods.

Leading from this, the “multiplier effect” at a meso-level can impact the macro- or country-level of CORs (Jacobsen 2002), affecting social

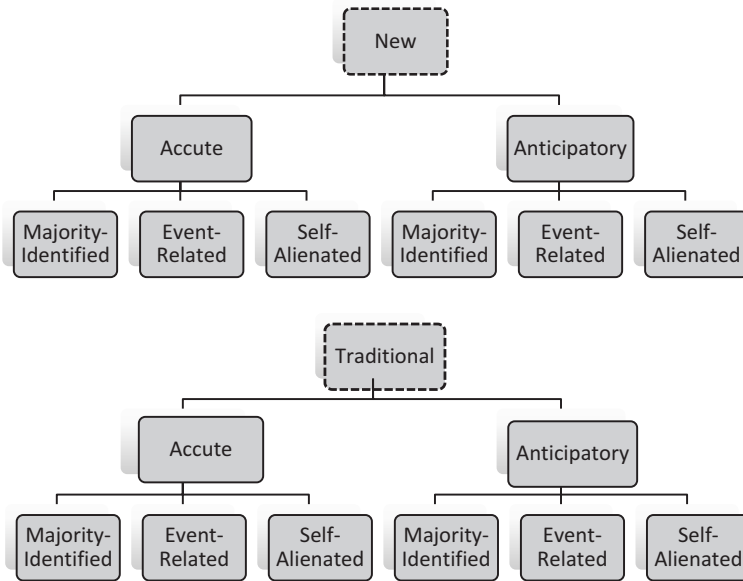
and economic arrangements, labor markets and overall productive capacity. In turn, this also involves CORs' "receiving economies" (ibid., 585). Thus, in market economies, supporting the launch and continuation of refugee entrepreneurship can have a comprehensively positive impact on national economies (Betts et al. 2016).

In view of these insights, yet the limited number of studies, there is a marked need to expand on empirical examinations of refugee entrepreneurship. There have been several notable contributions to our current knowledge of the field, however, research that comprehensively takes into account the nuances associated with the distinctiveness of refugees as entrepreneurs need to develop. These will help lead to greater conceptual and theoretical development and in turn, stronger policies and practices. Thus, the editors and contributors to this book have seized upon this momentum, developing a framework for the case studies that has helped structure each chapter, allowing for the cross-case analysis presented in Chap. 18 (Freiling and Harima 2018).

## 1.4 Theory Underpinning the Case Studies in this Book

In order to highlight the distinctions that exist amongst refugee entrepreneurship, we have linked some key perspectives that enable for useful categorizations, incited by Miriam George's (2010) typology that discerns differences between refugees. In order to enhance our understanding of refugee trauma, we have drawn from her model (ibid.) on refugee type, inspired by Kunz (1973, 1981) and Paludan (1974). This model enables us to analyze three layers of characterization, namely the "new" versus "traditional" (Kunz 1973) refugee, the "acute" versus "anticipatory" (Paludan 1974) and the "majority-identified", "event-related" or "self-alienated" (Kunz 1981) refugee, as depicted below (Fig. 1.2).

The "new" versus "traditional" layer concerns the degree of cultural and ethnical similarity between refugees' COOs and their new CORs (Paludan 1974), with the "new" ones being culturally, ethnically and racially divergent. This is often the case for refugees immigrating from a



**Fig. 1.2** Typology of refugees (based on George 2010, 381)

less developed country to a developed country, without family or community networks (George 2010). An Eritrean emigrating to Sweden within the last decade would likely fit into this category. “Traditional” experiences in refuge occur when a refugee’s COO is similar to the COR, for instance, where both countries are in a similar stage of development, where they are also culturally similar and where refugees can often rely on family or community networks (*ibid.*). Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union who immigrated to Israel in the 1970s are an example of this grouping.

The second layer of George’s (*ibid.*) model concerns the flight and settlement patterns of refugees (Collins 1996; Kunz 1973, 1981), from which two types emerge, namely, “anticipatory” and “acute” refugees. The former can plan their flight from a COO, whereas the latter cannot. Accordingly, it is typically implicit that “acute” refugees are exposed to higher risks and therefore may also experience trauma—a factor that must be taken into consideration in CORs.



The last layer of George's (2010) model concerns the reason for refuge (Kunz 1981; Collins 1996). "Majority-identified" refugees are those who, for instance, have fought against ruling regimes or events, while "event-related" refugees represent those who have suffered from active discrimination against the groups to which they belong. "Self-alienated" refugees, however, flee because of personal reasons.

In all, 12 categorizations of refugees emerge through George's (2010) model, which has yet to be empirically confirmed. In turn, these serve as the initial framework from which to analyze the 16 cases presented as the body chapters of this book. The immediate political circumstances of flight to refuge, as well as reasons for having to flee a COO and the extent of cultural difference to a majority population in a COR, are various, having a definitive impact on refugees' encounters within their new societies (*ibid.*) and in their entrepreneurial endeavors. In addition to these aspects, the cases and analyses presented in the pages that follow will consider the effects of trauma on refugees (Mollica et al. 2015). In concert, these encompass the influential mechanisms and resources (or lack thereof) at the supply side of entrepreneurial patterns, while leading us to contextually and characteristically consider refugee entrepreneurship in a comparative light.

## 1.5 Case Study Methodology

We have collectively chosen the case study methodology for our endeavor since we have aimed to understand the everyday experiences of the entrepreneurs who are portrayed (Steyaert and Katz 2004). The questions of "why" and "how" refugees start and subsequently maintain their businesses have been at the fore and thus called for the qualitative methods employed, including interviews (Creswell and Creswell 2017). Through case studies, we have been able to approach each entrepreneur's process in all its uniqueness, emphasizing its complexity as well as the richness of the narrations being shared—in other words, the "real-life context" (Yin 2003, 23). Moreover, a cross-case analysis has enabled us to draw out meaningful insights without over-generalizing from single case occurrences. This method has enabled comparisons of commonalities and dif-

ferences as to the processes examined within different environments (Miles et al. 2014). One major advantage of a case study methodology concerns the fact that the phenomenon that is addressed is treated as embedded within its context; therefore, careful analyses have allowed our researchers to delve into the meanings of interactions, as well as diverse and divergent intersections (Henry and Foss 2015). Especially in relation to refugees, the institutional settings of countries vary extensively, and the evolving entrepreneurial activities are often located at the intersection of legal, economic and social environments that may foster or hinder entrepreneurship.

As presented above, the academic state of the art of refugee entrepreneurship is still at an emerging stage, giving us an additional impetus for choosing case studies as a strategy for considering this rather unexplored phenomenon. In addition, and in response to some of the arguments made towards distinguishing refugee entrepreneurship from migrant or ethnic entrepreneurship, we found that this methodology was best suited to provide evidence for potentially reframing similarities and differences that emerge (Bagnoli and Megali 2011; Henry and Foss 2015).

Together with the contributors of the chapters, the editors have developed a framework of themes and subjects to be considered across all cases. This, in turn, has provided a basis for the analysis presented by Freiling and Harima (2018) in the concluding chapter of this book.

## 1.6 Organization of the Book and Chapter Details

Based on the chosen framework above, chapters have been organized into two main sections: “New” (10) and “Traditional” (6) (following Kunz 1973), named “Unknown” and “Recognizable”, weaving between stories of refugees who have fled from acute situations, with little or no preparation, and those who had some degree of anticipation for their departure (Table 1.2).

Cases presented in the “Unknown” (“new”) section of the book—Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11—feature entrepreneurs who have migrated from developing COOs to developed CORs, with the exception

**Table 1.2** Organization of the chapters according to the theoretical underpinning

Chapter number	Case	Author(s)	“New” versus “Traditional”	“Acute” versus “Anticipatory”
2	Muhannad	Harima, Freiling & Haimour	New	Anticipatory
3	Abdul	Hartmann & Schilling	New	Acute
4	Ellie	Kolb	New	Anticipatory
5	Jamshed	Plak & Lagarde	New	Acute
6	Hussam	Freudenberg	New	Anticipatory
7	Jonny	Heilbrunn & Rosenfeld	New	Acute
8	Kaficho	Yekoye Abebe & Moog	New	Anticipatory
9	Edouard	Ruparanganda, Ndjoku & Vermuri	New	Acute
10	Arash	Iannone	New	Anticipatory
11	Hamze	Maalaoui, Razgallah, Picard & Leloarne-Lemaire	New	Anticipatory
12	Ali Dede	Zamantili Nayir	Traditional	Anticipatory
13	Abdullah	Manzoor, Rashid, Cheung & Kwong	Traditional	Acute
14	Futan Ahmed	Palalić, Dana & Ramadani	Traditional	Anticipatory
15	Ahmed	de la Chaux	Traditional	Acute
16	Oliver	Tengeh	Traditional	Anticipatory
17	Hanifa	Alkhaled	Traditional	Anticipatory

of Jonny, who emigrated from Eritrea to Israel. Within the section entitled “Recognizable” (“traditional”)—Chaps. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17—our entrepreneurs have all moved from one developing nation to another developing COR, typically within the same continental region, as shown in Table 1.3 below.

The cases also exemplify the difficulties of discerning a pattern or trend in the type of entrepreneurship refugees engage in—their businesses are as varied as they are.

Chapter 2, written by Harima, Freiling and Haimour (2018), tells the story of Muhannad, a refugee from Syria who had spent some years in

**Table 1.3** Patterns of migration of 'new' versus 'traditional' refugees

Chapter number	Case	COO	COR	Level of development	Region
2	Muhannad	Syria	Germany	Developing → Developed	Western Asia → European Union
3	Abdul	Syria	Germany	Developing → Developed	Western Asia → European Union
4	Ellie	Malawi	Ireland	Developing → Developed	Southern Africa → European Union
5	Jamshed	Afghanistan	France	Developing → Developed	Southern Asia → European Union
6	Hussam	Syria	Germany	Developing → Developed	Western Asia → European Union
7	Jonny	Eritrea	Israel	Developing → Developing	Eastern Africa → Western Asia
8	Kaficho	Ethiopia	Germany	Developing → Developed	Eastern Africa → European Union
9	Edouard	Congo	Australia	Developing → Developed	Central Africa → Australia
10	Arash	Iran	Luxembourg	Developing → Developed	Southern Asia → European Union
11	Hamze	Iran	France	Developing → Developed	Southern Asia → European Union

*(continued)*

Table 1.3 (continued)

Chapter number	Case	COO	COR	Level of development	Region
12	Ali Dede	Syria	Turkey	Developing → Developing	Western Asia → Western Asia
13	Abdullah	Pakistan	Pakistan (elsewhere)	Developing → Developing	Southern Asia → Southern Asia
14	Futan Ahmed	Iraq	Sultanate of Oman	Developing → Developing	Western Asia → Western Asia
15	Ahmed	Somalia	Kenya	Developing → Developing	Eastern Africa → Eastern Africa
16	Oliver	Cameroon	South Africa	Developing → Developing	Central Africa → Southern Africa
17	Hanifa	Syria	Jordan	Developing → Developing	Western Asia → Western Asia

Saudi Arabia before entering Germany in 2015. Muhannad had long-standing experience as a lawyer and sales manager. In 2017, he opened a restaurant in the center of Bremen, selling freshly cooked meals with authentic Syrian flavors. His family and a few refugees support him in running the business.

Chapter 3, presented by Hartmann and Schilling (2018), is about Abdul Saymoa, a refugee from north-western Syria, who arrived in Germany in 2014. Abdul was called to the army, but managed to leave Syria before reporting for duty. In a hasty and unprepared journey, he fled to Egypt, where he stayed for a period of transition prior to immigrating to Germany. Together with German partners, he has successfully set up a cheese manufacturing company called Cham Saar—“Cham” being the ancient name of Damascus, and “Saar” being the federal state of Saarland.

Chapter 4 by Kolb (2018) is about Ellie Kisyombe, who was born in Malawi. Her family background exposed her to political activism and entrepreneurship from an early age. In 2010 Ellie left her COO, since the political environment had become increasingly oppressive. Together with an Irish artist, Ellie established a pop-up café called “Our Table Dublin”, which developed from an informal meeting point for asylum seekers into a registered company.

Chapter 5 by Plak and Lagarde (2018) reports the story of Jamshed, a teenaged Afghan refugee, who fled from intensified insecurity in the last period of the war in Afghanistan. As the eldest son of his family, he managed to flee through the coordination of smugglers who made him leave with very short notice. In France, he managed to obtain a business license and has opened a grocery store which he has financed with his own savings.

Chapter 6 by Freudenberg (2018) tells the story of Hussam am Zaher who fled from Syria to Germany. He left his COO with one suitcase via air to Turkey, where he stayed for around a year. Together with his elder brother, he arrived in Hamburg in October 2015. The idea of setting up a magazine for refugees emerged through interactions with German friends and social start-up programs for refugees in the city. In October 2016, the initiative of establishing the “Flüchtlingsmagazin” was launched, and the first edition was published in February 2017.

Chapter 7 by Heilbrunn and Rosenfeld (2018) is about Jonny, an Eritrean refugee in his 30s who lives with his wife and daughter in Tel Aviv, Israel. Jonny was forcefully recruited for the Eritrean army in 2007. On February 5 2009, when guarding the Ethiopian border at night, he crossed it and began walking away. Today, Jonny is the sole owner of a kindergarten and daycare center for children of the Eritrean community. The business also serves as a locale for community events and religious services. Thus, his entrepreneurship can be seen as both a traditional business and a social enterprise.

Chapter 8, presented by Yekoye Abebe and Moog (2018), tells the story of Kaficho, who is the youngest of three Ethiopians, from an outspoken family who encountered political clashes with the government. In his young adult years, he opened a small butcher shop, but business halted when he was jailed for political reasons. Upon his release, he again

opened a business—this time as an independent tour guide—and it was on one of his tours that he met his wife, who was visiting from Germany. His journey to refuge is unique in the sense that he undertook post-graduate studies in Germany, returning to Ethiopia with the intention of starting a family there with his wife. As his tourism company grew, when he returned to it in 2010, he entered into partnership. He also held a position at a university near Addis Ababa, but soon started to experience political pressure to join the ruling party officially or suffer the consequences. In 2013, this pressure led him to abandon the idea of staying in Ethiopia, and he fled the country, successfully immigrating into Germany. Not being able to find employment in Heidelberg, he established “Kaficho Trading” in early 2015, which is a transnational business-to-business, sole proprietorship, for small machinery and coffee.

The story of Edouard in Chap. 9 is presented by Rugaranganda, Ndjoku and Vemuri (2018). He is from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in his 50s and married with six children. Today, he lives in Darwin, Australia. Edouard is a graduate of mathematics and physics and also undertook architectural design studies in the DRC. Throughout his studies, he became engaged in a variety of entrepreneurial ventures with people in rural areas, in sales and also in social enterprise work. In addition, he had been the leader of a Christian group in his COO. Unfortunately, he became victimized when he started speaking out about injustices committed by the ruling government and he had to flee. He first went to the Republic of Angola, then Zambia (for nine months), then South Africa and later to Zimbabwe, where his wife and children (two at the time) joined him. In 2007, he moved to Australia, where he was granted refugee status. There, he managed to gain employment experience through a series of jobs, thereafter establishing “Blessing African Boutique” in 2013—a products and services business, catering to the Indigenous and West African communities of Darwin.

In Chap. 10, Iannone (2018) recounts the story of Arash Kamangir, a young Iranian refugee living in Luxembourg. Passionate about music and singing, his dreams were stifled in Iran, when censorship silenced freedom of expression. In his COO, he spent several years going down a traditional, and socially acceptable, route of engineering studies and marriage. However, following divorce, his desire to sing took hold of his life

once more. Unable to stay in Iran due to increased political oppression and insecurity, Arash fled to Luxembourg through Turkey and Belgium. Within the first two weeks of his arrival, he had become deeply involved in the Luxembourg music scene, connecting with both native and international artists. He began performing at events on a volunteer basis while seeking asylum, had the chance to collaborate with some prominent figures and was featured in media reports. Upon receiving his refugee status, Arash embarked on his official entrepreneurial journey and has, to date, collaborated with several groups on national and international musical projects.

Maalaoui, Razgallah, Picard and Leloarne-Lemaire (2018) present the story of Hamze in Chap. 11. Hamze is a 35-year-old man from Yazd, Iran, who has an educational background in electronic engineering and political science. After becoming politically outspoken in his COO, he was jailed, but managed to get out through bribery payments to the guards. Following this experience, he was advised to leave or risk years of imprisonment; and so the choice was clear. His journey started in 2010, on foot, through the mountains and through Kurdistan. He applied for visas to several countries, including France, the USA and Sweden and ultimately chose to immigrate to France. Following a series of jobs, and a trip to the USA that brought him confidence and some training in entrepreneurship, Hamze opened a consulting services company that helps small businesses establish themselves in France and in Iran. Today, he has a business partner in his COO and two employees.

Chapter 12, by Zamantili Nayir (2018), tells the story of Ali Dede, a 50-year-old Syrian refugee, who is a former architect, and who had to sell his home and business because of the outbreak of war. The circumstances of his flight to Turkey were both acute and anticipatory. Because of his familiarity with the Turkish language and since he had connections in his new COR, he has been able to help many of his friends who followed in his footsteps. His business is in the fabric and textile trade.

Chapter 13 is by Manzoor, Rashid, Cheung and Kwong (2018) and is about Abdullah, a 25-year-old electrician originally from Orakzai, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. He fled the armed conflict that ignited between Taliban insurgents and the military operations in his area. He could only take a few of his belongings with him and had



to leave in haste. He has since set up a small shop in Dheri Banda, selling and repairing solar panels, solar fans and similar goods.

In Chap. 14, Palalić, Dana and Ramadani (2018) present the story of Futan Ahmed from Iraq. Futan Ahmed fled with the intention of avoiding further devastations of the war that broke out in his COO. Fleeing to Syria, he stayed there with his family for three years, but later relocated to the Sultanate of Oman. Today, he runs a business in a 50/50 partnership with an Omani (as the law requires) that competes for government contracts. After nine years in Oman, the company has grown to employ 46 staff. He credits much of his success to trustworthiness, partnership and personal motivation.

Chapter 15, by de la Chaux (2018), tells the story of Ahmed, a Somali refugee in his early 20s who left his COO at the age of three with his mother and two older siblings. Since then, he has been living in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya. As the primary provider for the household, he repairs electronics in the camp through a sole proprietorship that he opened in 2013. Since business ownership in the refugee camp cannot be registered with Kenyan authorities, Ahmed's activities can be considered as part of the gray market. He often barter services for other services, meals and products, which he otherwise would be unable to source.

In Chap. 16, Tengeh (2018) presents the entrepreneurial story of Oliver Nkafo. Having elected to leave his home country of Cameroon due to the hostile political climate and poor socio-economic options for young, educated Cameroonians, he headed to South Africa, where he became a serial entrepreneur. He has created an internet café, worked in the taxi industry, *bakki* for hire and has created a restaurant, three bed and breakfasts (B&B) and three furniture shops. Today, the B&Bs and furniture shops employ close to 20 staff and over the years have employed family and extended family members, enabling them to acquire business skills and open their own businesses.

Alkhaled (2018) presents the story of Hanifa in Chap. 17. Fearing the travesties of war in her native home of Syria, Hanifa fled to Jordan in 2011, where extended family resided. There, she, her husband and five children stayed with her brother-in-law for a period before they gained independence and Hanifa started employment in a local charity. With an

increasing need to be home with her PTSD-affected daughter, Hanifa thought of starting a micro-business for herself. Still home-based today, Hanifa's catering business has successfully serviced many events and is supported by her son and daughters, who help with social media and promotions, in particular.

In all, these stories represent the incredible super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) that exists amongst refugees, as well as their businesses. They also form the basis of the first cross-case analysis undertaken on refugee entrepreneurship on this scale, developed by Freiling and Harima (2018) in Chap. 18.

## 1.7 Roots of the Book

The idea to launch this book project came about in preparatory discussions in which the three editors engaged prior to the “2nd International Conference on Migration and Diaspora Entrepreneurship (MDE2016)—Challenges and Potential Solutions”. The conference took place at the University of Bremen in Germany, in November 2016. Refugees have increasingly come to the center of public discourse, and news reports that highlight refugee entrepreneurs in local media in various parts of the world have contributed to this momentum. The timing of the conference coincided with this, and thus, a workshop session was held during the conference in order to discuss the potential of documenting a series of case studies. Interested potential contributors were invited to discuss and mutually develop a framework for case study development, and from there, examinations of refugee entrepreneurs in various CORs commenced. In July 2017, contributors were invited to join a one-day workshop (MDE Workshop on Refugee Entrepreneurship) in Bremen, dedicated to refugee entrepreneurship. Twenty-one cases were introduced and presented in a poster format, with vivid pictures of the entrepreneurs and their business activities. As a group, we further discussed the proposed framework for the case studies and readjusted it according to the contributors' suggestions. Final details of the book, including timeframes, consent to participate and other organizational issues, were discussed on November 30 and December 1, 2017 at the “3rd International Conference

on Migration and Diaspora Entrepreneurship Conference (MDE 2017)—Exploring Creative Solutions to Exploit the Migrants’ Entrepreneurial Capacity”. That is when concerted work on the project commenced.

## 1.8 On How to Read this Book

It is our hope that this book and the 16 stories told of the individual entrepreneurial journeys will serve to inspire future empirical work within the field, as well as greater scientific and theoretical consideration of the phenomenon. Each chapter’s focus is to bring to life the lived experience of our fellow neighbors and business owners—to lift the veil of misconception while exploring the complexities of refugee entrepreneurship.

In this light, however, the significance of the narratives can only be appraised if we extend our vision beyond livelihood measures and profit-making. Rather, as Swedberg (2006, 27–29) so poignantly argued, we must not treat entrepreneurship “in isolation from issues of community, the production of social values, sense making and life-orientations, participation in civil society, business principles guided by social responsibility, alleviation of social problems, and social change (Alvord et al. 2004) thereby pushing the economy [and society] into new directions”. As our cases illustrate, the motivators for entrepreneurship are incredibly varied. Yet, on an intrinsic level, the impetus to “do good”, to “be self-sustaining”, to “be useful”, to “help” and to “be free” accompany desires for social and economic inclusion. From many voices, these stories harmonize into a vibrant chorus that sings out resounding messages of diversity, resilience, creativity, development and triumph from all parts of the world.

Individually, each chapter offers unique lessons that can be taken into classrooms, which can spark wide discussions and help inform policy-makers in their future decisions regarding refugee issues. In a time of unprecedented numbers of refugees worldwide, encouraging dialogue and reflection on issues that are so often overshadowed or cast in a negative light, but which can have a positive impact on local and national levels of society, is imperative. Thus, let each of the following chapters, as

well as the cross-case analysis, serve to marshal new and informed stewardship.

## Notes

1. This book's chapters are excluded from this list of references.

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# 2

## Umayyad: A Syrian Refugee Business in Bremen, Germany

Aki Harima, Manal Haimour, and Jörg Freiling

### 2.1 Country-Specific Information and Data

The world is currently facing the biggest displacement of people on record with around 65.6 million displaced across the world. Around 22.5 million of those are refugees (UNHCR 2017a). Germany occupies the eighth place among countries receiving the most refugees, with 669,482 refugees by the end of 2016 (UNHCR 2017b). By September 2017, 168,306 asylum applications had been registered in Germany—with 92.6% of the applications from Syrian nationals. Bremen had received 1,879 refugees (BAMF 2017a).

An estimation of the costs of the refugee crisis specifies an amount of 21.7 and 21.3 billion EUR in Germany in 2016 and 2017, respectively (BAMF 2017b). The cost registered for Bremen in 2016 was 0.43 billion EUR (Die Welt 2017). Despite these high costs, Germany still welcomes

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refugees, following the motto “In Germany, helping refugees is a humanitarian matter of course” (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. 2015). Unexpectedly receiving a large number of people from different countries, host countries need to develop solutions urgently to facilitate economic and societal integration of newcomers. Entrepreneurship is a mode of economic integration through which refugees can create jobs and values on their own terms (Light et al. 1993). However, refugee entrepreneurship has been investigated by surprisingly few scholars in the past (Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). Little is known about characteristics of their entrepreneurial activities and what would be considered as enablers or constraints for refugee entrepreneurship.

Muhannad is a refugee entrepreneur who wanted to become independent of the governmental refugee financial aid in Germany by becoming an entrepreneur. Muhannad started a business called “Umayyad Restaurant” in the gastronomy sector. He shared his story with us, which helped us to shed a light on his reasons for leaving his home country and to understand what he endured to get to the host country. Moreover, the interview revealed concrete business information, as well as his individual, community and institutional enablers and constraints.

## 2.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving his Home Country

Muhannad is originally from Syria, and acquired his academic law degree there. After working as an attorney for a number of years, he decided to start working in Saudi Arabia as a sales manager at a domestic company. His children grew up mainly in Saudi Arabia. Being a manager in an established company and a pillar of his family, Muhannad had established a successful and stable life, both in his career and in his private life.

The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, however, was a defining moment in his life. The situation in Syria was getting worse day by day. Muhannad faced a dilemma when witnessing the devastating situation in his home country. He was thinking of changing his residence to Syria and decided to go back home to assess the situation. Things in Damascus

were much worse than he had expected. The war had already destroyed the country's economy and institutions so devastatingly so that it was not possible for someone living abroad to find a job. His nephew became one of the victims who died during a bomb explosion on the street while he was grocery shopping. The security conditions became disastrous. Safe places could no longer be found in the country—not even in houses, hospitals or schools.

Muhannad was confronted with tough choices. One option would be going back to his homeland at great risk to himself and his family. A second alternative would be staying in Saudi Arabia. A third option would be fleeing the region and becoming an asylum seeker. The first option was out of the question, as Muhannad made the security of his family top priority. Muhannad also did not pursue the second option because of his son's education. His son was about to finish high school and wanted to pursue an undergraduate degree. However, foreign residents in Saudi Arabia do not have a legal right to study at universities in the country, despite being born there. At that moment, other countries in the region started tightening their visa regulations for Syrian migrants due to their reluctance to get involved in the politically and socially complicated situation. As a father, Muhannad had seen the development of his eldest son, who had become an honors student because of his excellent record in school. It was not an option for him to give up on creating a way for his son to study at a university. Therefore, he decided to give up his career and successful life in Saudi Arabia to go to Europe as an asylum seeker.

## **2.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances around Getting to the Host Country**

After deciding to flee, Muhannad selected Sweden as his destination, since he believed that Sweden would offer the most favorable conditions for his son's education and the best social system for his family.

A number of asylum seekers have difficult experiences when fleeing. Muhannad's journey to Europe was also far from easy. Muhannad first went to Turkey and then attempted to get to Greece. First, he tried to go

to Greece via a land route, which turned out to be too dangerous. Thus, he decided to go to Greece by sea. After his arrival on an insecure rubber boat driven by an inexperienced broker, he reached a refugee camp. Yet, his situation in Greece became even worse. While crossing the border between Turkey and Greece, his hand was injured. He neither had his own medicine, nor received any medical supports in the camp. Muhannad begged camp staffs to take him to a doctor, showing them his hand bleeding. He ended up receiving a few painkillers, which only served as a temporary solution.

Shortly after his arrival in Greece, an unexpected thing occurred. One night, the staffs of the camp suddenly took Muhannad and some other asylum seekers to an island in the Turkish territory without any explanation. It was an illegal action of the camp staffs. Muhannad recalls the situation: “They did not see us as human beings. They threw us on the island. We couldn’t escape. It was so cold and freezing.” Muhannad and other people who were left on the island did everything they could to get off the island. They called the Turkish police, who could not identify their location. They made a fire, hoping that someone would notice them. After trying various solutions for a few days, the Turkish police finally identified their location and rescued them.

The Turkish police took them to Turkey, where Muhannad had to stay for one month. But he did not give up on fleeing to Europe for the sake of his family’s future; meanwhile they were still waiting for him in Saudi Arabia. Next, he took a dangerous route in a rubber boat driven by a broker without any sailing experience. It took them four hours to cross the border and reach a Greek island. Muhannad stayed in a camp there until he received a document that allowed him to stay in Greece as an asylum seeker.

The journeys to the subsequent countries were neither easy nor safe. Muhannad walked all the way from Greece to Macedonia, and from Macedonia to Serbia. On the way, Muhannad and other group members were caught several times by the police and sent back to Greece. Some people offered them help in exchange for money, which turned out to be a trick. Muhannad slept on the street. After a month of travel in difficult conditions, Muhannad and four other people reached Hungary, where he found a person to take them to Germany by car. During his flight, he had

many chances to talk to other asylum seekers and gather more information about the destination country. In Sweden, his original destination, the process to receive legal status as a refugee takes a long time. He heard that in Germany it was much faster, which was a decisive motivator to go there. Indeed, Muhannad received his official residency just a month after arrival in Germany.

## 2.4 Business Data and History of Establishing his Business

A year and a half after arriving in Germany, Muhannad opened a restaurant called “Umayyad” in the center of Bremen, in February 2017. Muhannad chose a Hanseatic city—the second largest one in Northern Germany in terms of population, with some 560,000 inhabitants. Umayyad offers freshly cooked food with authentic Syrian flavors for local customers. He has collaborated with a few refugees, and his family, who could come to Germany to follow him as refugees, supports his business as well.

In the beginning, becoming an entrepreneur was not his intention. Originally, he wanted to work as a lawyer in Germany, based on his degree in law. Muhannad found out, however, quite soon that becoming a lawyer with a foreign degree would not be easy, as his Syrian qualifications are not acknowledged in Germany. It would have been necessary to study again at a university for a several years, which he did not consider as a viable option. Since more than 20 years ago, Muhannad had been working full time as a lawyer and, afterwards, as a sales manager. Work has become an integral part of his identity, and he could not live without it. Therefore, he started to consider becoming an entrepreneur, as it seemed to be a quicker way to start working in Germany.

Being a refugee in a totally new institutional and cultural setting, Muhannad was confronted with a number of challenges. For instance, he could not speak German fluently at that time and did not know anyone outside of the camp. However, the biggest problem was the bureaucratic procedures that one needs to go through to acquire the permission to work as well as to register a firm legally.

With his honest and friendly personality, Muhannad made connections with some local people. He shared his passion and explained his business idea, gaining their support in overcoming institutional barriers.

Muhannad originally wanted to sell authentic Syrian food to other refugees and asylum seekers in Bremen in a food wagon, as he saw that there was considerably high demand among refugees for a taste of their homeland. Although there are a number of Arabic restaurants in the city, his Arabic friends and acquaintances perceived that their food had to be adapted to the preferences of German customers. Together with his German friends, Muhannad developed this business idea. However, after a few months, he gave up pursuing it, as food wagons were deemed too expensive to continuously generate profits.

Soon after, he heard that two entrepreneurs in Bremen were looking for people to open a stand in the market hall in the city center. They wanted to implement a new market concept, with 20 restaurant and food stands in a 1200-square-meter area where regional foods would be offered. Muhannad contacted them to ask if he could open a restaurant stand offering authentic Syrian cuisine. The two entrepreneurs instantly replied to him with an enthusiastic ‘yes’.

## 2.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

Muhannad had not been an entrepreneur in Syria and Saudi Arabia. He had many years of experience as a lawyer and sales manager in industry. Although this experience is not directly related to his current business, his previous vocational experience seems to have a positive impact on his entrepreneurial endeavors in Germany. Muhannad has faith in his own capacity, based on his experience: “I worked for 18 years as a sales manager. I have made many companies successful. So ... why can't I make my project successful?”

Another factor enabling Muhannad to start his business within a relatively short time was his entrepreneurial personality. Muhannad is a risk-taker who believes that one cannot be successful if he or she is not ready to take risks. If he were not a risk-taker, he would have not left Saudi Arabia to come all the way to Europe at the risk of his life. Fleeing meant

giving up his stable life and successful business career, yet he did not hesitate to pursue this option in order to secure his family's long-term happiness. He does not fear failure and criticism from others, as the most important thing for him is to make his family happy. Additionally, Muhannad has a strong personal drive to work and earn money by himself. After completing university, Muhannad had been consistently working in industry, making work an essential part of his identity. He could not stand not being able to work and receiving social welfare from the German government. He needed an immediate way to become economically independent, for the sake of his dignity. Furthermore, Muhannad was able to establish a network of connections and make use of social capital within a short time. After arriving in Germany, without knowing anyone, he managed to get to know local people who have supported his entrepreneurial career path.

In addition to his personality, Muhannad has a supportive family. His wife and his children decided to support his decision to become an entrepreneur, and do so both operationally and emotionally.

## 2.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

Muhannad has received considerable support from the local community in various ways. In fact, he has never experienced discrimination or xenophobia toward refugees or people from Arabic countries in Bremen. By contrast, he received significant support from German society. Without the support from his German friends, it would have been nearly impossible for him to start his business in Germany, due to language barriers and bureaucratic procedures.

He has three German friends who have played important roles in enabling him to start his business in Germany: Christina, Martin and Christian. First, let us tell the story of how Muhannad got to know the married couple, Christina and Martin. Actually, a cat connected him to these German friends. He had a cat which was brought by his relative from Lebanon. The cat was only 45 days old, and he could not take care of it when he arrived in Germany, as the camp did not allow asylum seekers to have pets. Muhannad and his family were at a loss, not knowing

how they could save the life of this little cat. So he decided to hang posters in the city of Bremen to look for someone that could look after it. Christina and Martin found one of Muhannad's posters in the city and instantly decided to contact him to say that they would be ready to adopt the cat, not knowing that Muhannad was a refugee. One day, Muhannad, along with all of his family members, brought the cat to them. This was the beginning of their friendship.

After getting to know each other, Muhannad started sharing his ambition of starting his own business in Germany with them. Luckily enough, Christina and Martin were both self-employed, and entrepreneurship was familiar to them. They were aware of all the bureaucratic processes related to self-employment in Germany, so they immediately understood the institutional barriers that Muhannad would be confronted with as a refugee. As friends and experienced entrepreneurs, they have been supporting Muhannad intensively by discussing business ideas, helping him to write a business plan in German, accompanying him to meetings with local authorities and communicating with local business partners. Their support was indispensable when coping with bureaucracy in Germany.

Christian was another supporter of Muhannad's business from the community. He worked for an NGO that supported the camp where Muhannad was staying in Bremen. The NGO facilitated the repairing of old bicycles so that refugees could use them. Christian helped him by building and purchasing materials and finding information on the Internet.

## 2.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Given that Muhannad was unable to work as a lawyer in Germany due to the number of requirements needed (i.e., language skills and attending university in Germany for 2–3 more years), he decided to become an entrepreneur.

Even though Muhannad has faced many difficulties during his entrepreneurial journey due to complicated bureaucratic procedures, he still receives support from several institutions.



Muhannad mentioned how important it was for him to have his family beside him. He is first and foremost a family man, a husband and a father. For this reason, he looked for support in reuniting with his family members. The German Embassy did not offer support to his family. However, the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO), a social organization in Germany caring for workers' welfare, which has a branch in Bremen, helped Muhannad to prepare the necessary documents to reunite with his family. Muhannad expressed how expensive it would have been for him to pay for all the airline tickets to bring his family to Germany, especially given that at that time, he only received the small amount of around 400 euros per month in pocket money from the job center. AWO offered Muhannad financial support to be able to buy his family's tickets.

Muhannad felt that the bureaucracy in Bremen was very difficult to deal with, involving submitting several forms, receiving many letters, having to send many letters with signatures and needing to store all bills and documents for several years, as well as having to attend appointments at various institutions both in person and sometimes accompanied by family members. Muhannad was surprised that none of these forms could have been submitted via e-mail or filled out electronically.

However, the job center has offered tremendous support for Muhannad's entrepreneurial endeavor. Even though this was accompanied with submitting a detailed business plan, which includes information that was sometimes difficult to estimate, this led to receiving financial support of 5,000 EUR, as well as the right to register Muhannad as a business owner. Muhannad will not have to pay the money back to the job center.

Another institution that offered Muhannad a financial loan is the Bremer Aufbau-Bank, the regional development bank in Bremen. The Bremer Aufbau-Bank approved Muhannad's loan after analyzing his business plan. The loan amount was 11,400 euros, with a repayment obligation of about two years. Muhannad's nationality or status did not influence his chance of getting the loan. However, his convincing business plan did.

Against this background, Muhannad was not only able to found his business, but to make it a viable endeavor as well.

## 2.8 Methodological Considerations

Conducting a case study with a refugee entrepreneur came with a few methodological difficulties. The big dilemma that we faced during the interview—and continue to face—was the term “refugee”. At many points it was easy to forget that Muhannad was an entrepreneur and to consider him only as a refugee. Using the term “refugee” had the effect of asking questions and receiving answers unrelated to entrepreneurship. However, we then found out that these questions and answers could be related to the entrepreneurial journey, given that refugees differ from other individuals (Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). One way in which they differ is the trauma that refugees experience after going through their journey to flee their country of origin (Wauters and Lambrecht 2008, Hauff and Vaglum 1993).

Muhannad faced many traumatic events during his flight. For example, when he arrived in Greece, the kind of treatment he faced shocked him. He described this experience: “it was a shock for me. When I went to Greece, I thought it is like Europe. Europe has rights, they deal with human situations in a different way. That was the first shock for me.” He also explained how unsafe the boat trip to Greece was. For almost the entire journey, he was afraid that the boat would sink. He kept himself calm during the boat ride and he continually reminded himself that he was a good swimmer, and that if the boat sank, he could then swim to safety and save a child that was in the boat, too. His wife and children also faced many challenges when trying to get their documents approved to reunite with their husband and father. They still talk to this day of “the bad stories” and how they had to travel from one country to another, and how nobody wanted to “accept them”. At one point, in the procedure of applying to come to Germany, Muhannad’s wife had given up and said that they did not want the visa anymore because she realized that some of requirements they had to fulfill were “not logic”. However, Muhannad mentioned that he does not have any nightmares or suffer from any post-traumatic stress disorder that would potentially affect his business.

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# 3

## Cham Saar: The First Syrian-German Cheese Manufacturer

Carina Hartmann and Katharina Schilling

*The case study interviews were captured on November 7 and 14 2017, respectively, at the farm Georgshof in Uchtelfangen, Germany. This is where the raw material for the Syrian cheese is being produced. Six of the most important people involved in the founding of Cham Saar GmbH were interviewed for 57 and 75 minutes. This includes Abdul Saymoa (25), a refugee from Northwestern Syria, Matthias and Christel Riehm, the senior farmers who have supported the business idea from its inception, as well as Anna Riehm (31) and Matthias Riehm Jr (32), the co-founders of Cham Saar GmbH. The case study further benefited from an expert interview with a start-up consultant from the migrant business accelerator who assisted the founders of Cham Saar GmbH at its early developmental stage. In addition, desktop research, mainly from public media coverage, the Cham Saar webpage and the founder's social media outlets, was considered as secondary data. Interviews were conducted in German, audiotaped and thereafter transcribed. The excerpts cited from the interviews were translated into English by the authors.*

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### 3.1 Forced Migration to Germany: Information and Data

Between 2013 and 2017 Germany registered 1,774,634 applications for asylum by immigrants fleeing from war and crises as well as individual persecution and threats to their lives. In 2014, the year of Abdul Saymoa's arrival in Germany, Syrian immigrants accounted already for the biggest subgroup of the total number of asylum seekers (39,332 initial asylum applications, or 22.7%). Syria has stayed at the top of the ranking in asylum applications ever since, due to the enduring civil war coupled with international involvement. The total numbers of asylum applications in Germany started to decrease when EU border controls were intensified in 2016. However, the share of immigrants with Syrian nationality in 2016 represented around 40% of asylum seekers, followed by those from Afghanistan (17.6%), Iraq (13.3%), Iran (3.7%), Eritrea (2.6%) and Albania (2.1%). In the following year, 2017, the proportion of Syrian initial asylum applications declined to 24.7% (BAMF 2018).

In 2017, around one-fifth of the asylum seekers received legal status as a refugee (20.5%). Subsidiary protection was granted in 16.3% of the decisions in comparison to 38.5% refusals. Unlike immigrants from Afghanistan, Syrians in Germany have generally good prospects when it comes to staying in the country. However, this does not necessarily result in unlimited residence permissions for asylum seekers. Since the beginning of 2017, more than half (57.0%) of the decisions in the Syrian asylum seekers' applications resulted in subsidiary protection, followed by acceptance as refugees (34.0%) (see Table 3.1).

The status of subsidiary protection means that residence permits are granted for one year, with unrestricted access to the labor market, but without privileged family reunification. After that two subsequent extensions for two years each can be considered. A settlement permit is possible after five years, if preconditions of having a secure livelihood and adequate knowledge of the German language are met (BAMF 2017). The status of subsidiary protection entails a lot of insecurity and instability for the persons affected. The denial of family reunification in particular is an enormous problem, according to the start-up consultant we interviewed.

**Table 3.1** Syrian asylum applications and decision (2017)

	Decisions in asylum procedures	Entitlement to asylum (Art. 16a GG) and family asylum	Refugee protection (§ 3 I AsylG)	Subsidiary protection (§ 4 I AsylG)	National ban on deportation (§ 60 V + VII AufenthG)	Rejection of asylum application	Other
Absolute numbers	99.527	739	34,141	55,697	534	133	8,283
Percentage	100%	0.7%	34.3%	56.0%	0.5%	0.1%	8.3%

Source: BAMF 2018, own calculations

### 3.2 Abdul Saymoa's Journey to Germany

How good is this [integration in Germany] for me—this is very good. Now, I am not down there. Underneath the bomb. [...] Yes, now my family is in Syria. Today, there was a big bomber in [name of his hometown]. There is a video, I watched it already, if you want to watch it. You cannot watch this in television, because it is directly deleted. Yes—at first I went to Egypt, but in Egypt is the same problem. Because of that it is not so good, too. Yes, but Germany... (AS, CS II: 41 ff.)<sup>1</sup>

When Abdul Saymoa arrived in Germany in 2014, all he had left of the 5000 dollars with which he had started his journey was 2.50 euros after the four-week journey from his transition country, Egypt, where he had lived and worked since 2011.

According to Saymoa, in Syria, after completing 12 years of education, there is a gap year in which military service generally takes place before one enters into further education or work. It was in his gap year when the crisis in Syria began. At this time, the unrest was limited to not much more than street protests against Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian dictator, that later developed into an armed civil war. Nevertheless, Saymoa's motivation to leave his home country can be classified as "acute" (Paludan 1981) as well as "event-related", and "majority identified" (Kunz 1981).

And then I don't have time. After 20 days, I have to go to the [...] military service. And then I said to my father: I have seen, perhaps there is a big problem in Syria and perhaps it endures. At first, people do not believe that it takes long, the people say: two, three, maybe four months and that's it. I said to my father: I have to go to Egypt, and when the problem goes away, then I come back. (AS, CS II: 379 ff.)

With the help of his father's friend, Saymoa was able to travel to Egypt by plane within the short 20-day period after his summons from the army. Due to the immediate need to flee, detailed preparation for the migration was not possible. The circumstances of his transition stay in Egypt, six years ago, do not seem very clear in his memory. However, as more and more Syrians came to Egypt to escape the civil war that broke out in their home country, Saymoa's idea

to start his own business was born. When he saw a market for his product he realized he wanted to open a Syrian cheese dairy: “In Egypt there also is another cheese compared to that of Syria. [...] Now there are many people, very many people from Syria who eat that cheese. That has to be every day. Not only me, but everybody from Syria has to eat this cheese for breakfast every morning.” (AS, CS II: 389 ff.).

The absence of financial instruments from banks or private credit loans inhibited Saymoa from implementing this idea on his own. Therefore, he shared his plans with another entrepreneur and proposed founding a cheese dairy as a team. The idea was well received; however, the plan did not succeed because he was betrayed by the other businessman. As a textile trader and wholesaler in an Egyptian region that is very popular with tourists, Saymoa earned enough money to accumulate some savings, but the substantial part of it was stolen. The change in the government, along with the consequently worsening income opportunities, further fueled his decision to leave Egypt in late summer 2014.

Saymoa clearly describes his subsequent migration and still keeps a picture of the boat that took him across the Mediterranean Sea on his smartphone. His wife and other members of her family accompanied him. After a two-week long boat ride with approximately 450 passengers, they set foot in Italy. Unlike the majority of Syrian refugees in his network, who attempt to migrate to northern European countries like Sweden or Norway, Saymoa chose Germany as his host country:

When I am in Germany in 2014, there are not many Arabic people that want to stay in Germany, I don't know why [...] I said: No, I want to go to Germany. Germany has ehm much work, many people. The people at first are afraid and say: the Germans don't love the Arabic refugees. But I said, if I am good, why wouldn't the people love me? I am good with these people, maybe at first they are afraid of me or so, but when the people see: I am good and I don't cause any problems, why shouldn't the people love me? (AS, CS I: 849 ff.)

After another two weeks of travel by land, Saymoa arrived in the southwestern German federal state of Saarland, where he registered as an asylum seeker and would soon establish Cham Saar GmbH.



### 3.3 Between Transnationalism and Localism: Cham Saar GmbH

The Cham Saar cheese manufacturer is a company of limited liability (GmbH), led by Abdul Saymoa and Anna Riehm as acting partners and Matthias Riehm Jr as a dormant board member. The company name represents the unification of two different origins in the founding team: *Cham* is the ancient name of the Syrian capital Damascus.<sup>2</sup> *Saar* represents the federal state of Saarland, where Saymoa and his wife concluded their forced migration in 2014.

Saymoa produces three different types of Arabic cheese and butter using milk from the Riehm's farm. The company was officially established in March 2017 and has been fairly successful ever since. One cheese (Sourki) has already won the national audience award from the association of craft dairy in organic farming (Verband für handwerkliche Milchverarbeitung) (Cham Saar 2017).

However, the idea to start a business emerged much earlier, when Saymoa frequently visited the Riehm family farm to purchase fresh milk in 2015. As he increased the frequency of his visits and the amount of milk that he bought, Abdul Saymoa told the senior farming couple Christel and Matthias Riehm that he produces Arabic cheese. Subsequently, they started thinking about the idea of founding the first Arabic cheese dairy in Germany. When the business plan became more concrete in 2016, Saymoa attended the workshops required by the dairy association in Wangen, Bavaria and the Institute for Studies and Examination of Dairy (Milchwirtschaftliche Lehr- und Untersuchungsanstalt) in Oranienburg, Brandenburg. Before further formalizing the start-up through the acquisition of external funding by financial institutions, the senior farming couple asked their son Matthias Riehm Jr and his wife Anna Riehm to join the new venture as well. This was justified by the digital proficiency of the younger generation. Whilst explaining the decision to include their children in the business, Christel Riehm compares her struggle with digitalization to that of a start-up consultant being forced to milk 200 cows on the Riehm's farm. Besides their existing jobs as a nurse (Anna Riehm) and forester, as well as a farmer (Matthias Riehm Jr), they took on the challenge of co-founding the busi-

ness. The next steps consisted of writing the business plan, preparing presentations and pitching them successfully in a business plan contest in front of business angels and other investors (Cham Saar 2017). Cham Saar currently does not have employees, but envisages recruiting them after the opening of the cheese dairy's new location, which is likely to occur in 2018. When asked whether the origin of the future staff was important to them, the interviewees emphasize that nationality would not be a factor, because they perceive themselves as a multicultural company and all that matters is the quality of the work. The entrepreneurs are proud of their products which are described as a "flagship" by one of the Arabic wholesalers to whom they sell their cheeses (MR, CS I: 571).

As Saymoa points out, at first, the Arabic cheese that Cham Saar produced was intended predominantly for his ethnic community. Consequently, the official opening of the cheese manufacturer was planned for Ramadan 2017, and the products were presented at a local oriental market. However, the cheese eventually gained more and more local fans who are not of Arabic descent. Word-of-mouth marketing was employed via the wider families and friends of the founders, which, along with their Facebook posts and their German webpage, contributed to the growing popularity of Cham Saar cheese. Promoting the Baladir cheese as a source of protein for athletes and Sourki as barbecue cheese for the "Saarländer Schwenk" (traditional barbecue) aligns with popular trends in the local cuisine.

The well-connected founding team wants to expand the market reach of Cham Saar. Saymoa manages sales to Arabic and Turkish wholesalers in Southern Germany and has a network of friends across Europe. They consider extending their sales network to France and Switzerland, too.

In addition, the entrepreneurs, are thinking big: "Maybe until next year, we have a very big cheese dairy and after that year we have other groceries", states Saymoa (AS, CS I: 798 f.). Ideas for this expansion range from homemade dishes, prepared with eggplants and peppers by Saymoa's wife, to completely new business ventures in the field of import/export. Anna Riehm shows a willingness to try a of the Cham Saar prod-

uct line: “We said we will start with the three types of cheese [...] and then we look what is going to happen, how big it grows. We are not persons of that kind to say: until here and that’s it, but rather we will have a look and see how it develops and whether we find someone who co-produces [...].” And Matthias Riehm Jr adds: “Well, we would like to expand someday.” (AR/MR, CS I: 820 ff.).

### 3.4 “I Want to Become a Millionaire”: Individual Enablers and Constraints

The founders of Cham Saar mention various motives for starting their venture. Abdul Saymoa has a strong will to provide for himself and be independent from welfare benefits: “I don’t need anything from anyone. I need ... I do that. Not that somebody does it for me. [...] I want to make money for me and my family. Not from someone that makes money for me.” (AS, CS II: 86 ff.). Additionally, he emphasizes several times how much he loves cheese and how happy he is that he can make a business out of his passion: “And the cheese is really good for me. Because I am so small—I love cheese so much. More than mice.” (AS, CS II: 350 f.). The Riehm family reveals further economic motives to start their own cheese manufacturer. For them, it is an opportunity to become more independent from dairy companies, who dictate the price of milk. Instead of providing their milk to dairy companies only, they are now selling their products directly to the end-customer and thereby vertically increase their stakes in the milk supply chain. According to Matthias Riehm Jr the price of milk was very low in recent years, and they were struggling to make a living, as “the financial situation in the milk industry was disastrous.” (MR, CS II: 148).

Saymoa has expertise in making Syrian cheese, which he acquired by working in the dairy industry in both Syria and Egypt. In Syria, no formal training is required for cheese manufacturing and knowledge about cheese production is mainly transmitted through on-the-job training. In Germany, Saymoa had to obtain a certificate of

competence before establishing Cham Saar. He regards this as an obstacle because of the language difficulties that forced him to repeat the training and examination, as he describes here: “There are many, big problems. First, the certificate of competence [...] that is so difficult for me. Because the year before I did it and at first, I am not so good with language. The language for me is also a very, very big problem.” (AS, CS I: 585 ff.).

All founding team members have business skills and previous experience in self-employment which translate into enabling factors. Abdul Saymoa has some work experience in sales and marketing which he acquired when helping out in the furnishing business of his uncle in Syria. When promoting their new venture, Anna and Matthias Riehm Jr make use of the knowledge and experience they acquired through running their first business, the Georgshof. This is shown when Matthias Riehm Jr talks about marketing strategies:

Well, I'd say we do PR and customer acquisition to some extent that is natural to a business. Yes, this is how we make our living, because the cheese manufacturer depends on the acquisition of customers for selling the cheese. [...] But you also have to be careful, and this is not to be underestimated: when you approach more people than you are able to sell cheese. This is also dangerous. (MR, CS I: 302 ff.)

The complementary individual skills lead to a distribution of roles within the founding team. Abdul Saymoa is responsible for the cheese production and takes advantage of his intercultural knowledge when dealing with Arabic or Syrian customers and wholesalers. Anna Riehm takes care of the business administration in German language. Matthias Riehm Jr is mainly responsible for the milk supply. Remarkably, all three stress how much they profit from each other and how they treasure their team's intercultural skills. The following conversation exemplifies this:

AS: I also learnt a lot from the Germans. The people who now want to make an Arabic cheese dairy they only do it with the Arabic system. But I now make my cheese not with the Arabic system. I also learnt from the

cheese dairy I did an internship and obtained the certificate of competence in Berlin. I learnt really a lot. And that makes a little bit the mix of the German and Arabic system.

MR: That's like many things. The mixture does it.

AS: That makes my cheese also really better. (AS/MR, CS II: 229 ff.)

A crucial aspect in founding Cham Saar was finding ways to access financial resources. Saymoa had no financial capital, as he had spent his savings on his migration and arrived in Germany with 2.50 euros in his pocket. Therefore, the financial risk of the cheese manufacturer is currently assumed completely by the Riehm family. The Georgshof can be considered a resource in itself, since the founders do not have to buy milk for cheese production, but instead use their own.

Next to these tangible and intangible resources, the interviews reveal another personality trait that is very important for owning a business: the entrepreneurial spirit. All three founders are men and women of action and they come across as very pragmatic and practically minded. Furthermore, they are very passionate about the quality and success of their product. This self-confidence is needed to withstand the uncertainties associated with being self-employed, which is tied into the ability and willingness to take risks. Of course, there are a few doubtful locals who wonder how the cultural differences in the founding team and Saymoa's limited residence permit will affect the business—a worry that has increased since the first Syrian families already have left the village. However, the founding team encounters this courageously with confidence, respect and openness. Matthias Riehm Jr illustrates this very well: "I'd say there also are a few people who are of course also sceptical: 'oh well if that works out?'. I'd say: either you have the guts or you don't." (MR, CS I: 375 f.).

When asked about his wishes for the future, Abdul Saymoa answers: "I want to become a millionaire." (AS, CS II: 860). He then emphasizes that this goal serves as a driver to push him to continue with his business and integration into German society. This can be interpreted as a symbol of an entrepreneurial spirit and a mindset to overcome obstacles as well as to move past his experience of fleeing a war zone.

At the time of the interview, Saymoa's residence permit was only valid until December 2017. This insecurity regarding residency acts as an individual constraint to him and his family, as well as to his business partners, as they are dependent on his cheese manufacturing skills.

### **3.5 Bread with Cheese or Cheese with Bread: Community Enablers and Constraints**

The local community and the corresponding social ties play a significant role in the formation of the firm. The first customers of the products of Cham Saar were local customers. In this context, the founders mention apparent similarities between the Syrian community and the social networks in Saarland: both are described as very close knit.

Besides the similarities, the entrepreneurs also point out some differences between the local and the Syrian refugee community regarding specific customer behaviour. Abdul Saymoa explains his own passion for cheese in context of the cultural importance of cheese in Syrian eating traditions: "Syrians eat cheese with bread and Germans eat bread with cheese." (AS, CS I: 436). Consequently, the dimensions of the preferred portions vary between German and Syrian customers. Aware of this issue, the founding team meets the different market needs by offering diverse product packaging sizes: bigger units for Syrian and smaller ones for German clients.

So far, their marketing strategy benefits from their regional focus on direct customer relationships and local supply chains as well as their desire to raise awareness in the community about the production of food. Anna Riehm explains:

This is what most or many of our customers simply say: Why should I buy the cheese from Aldi, that is produced anywhere in Buxtehude [German expression for at the back of beyond], if I can buy it one kilometer away on the farm and where it is fresh. Well, a friend, for example, also says: I have the cheese in front of my door, why should I buy the cheese from the Netherlands. (AR, CS I: 159 ff.)

The Rhiems' neighboring farmers also play a role in business expansion plans. With the expected growth in sales, the founders view their neighboring farms as potential milk suppliers for Cham Saar cheese production. This means that they are also interested in sharing the positive outcomes of the new vertical enlargement of the supply chain with colleagues in the region.

Generally, the local community is credited by Abdul Saymoa as an important vehicle for his linguistic integration: "I have learnt the [German] language not in school, but with the family here and with many people." (AS, CS II: 725). Saymoa expresses great gratitude, not only for help in learning German, but also for all the support he received from the Riehm family and the local administration. Without the enormous individual commitment of the senior farming couple in fighting against the setbacks in the initial stages of launching their business, Saymoa hardly would have achieved what he has now. Unfortunately, he required support in cases of language misunderstandings, xenophobia and discrimination in certain institutional contexts.

### 3.6 "Now I Know Why": Institutional Enablers and Constraints

"At first, I bought milk at the farm and I made cheese at home. [...] Because in Germany there is no Arabic cheese manufacturer. And here comes the question: Why is there still no Arabic cheese dairy in Germany? But now I know why... it is too difficult in Germany." (AS, CS I: 43 ff.). When asked about the biggest differences between Germany and Syria in doing business, Abdul Saymoa immediately references the formal institutional perspective: "In Syria when I want to make a cheese dairy, there is no food inspection. The people want to buy. That is the food inspection. If somebody gets sick, then they don't buy. [...] If I have a bad quality and cannot make good cheese, people do not buy from me, and then I close." (AS, CS I: 471 ff.).

Besides the differences in the regulation of food ventures between Germany and Syria, where authorities control prices, but neither quality nor hygiene, Saymoa struggled with the German craft regulations: “In Syria, if I want to make a cheese dairy, then I do not need a certificate of competency. [In Germany] I had to do it twice, because it was very difficult. You have to learn a lot during five days.” (AS, CS I: 480 ff.). Saymoa was only able to pass the examination that takes place after five days of seminar with personal tutoring from Matthias Riehm Sr, who accompanied him. The cheese manufacturer knows other refugees interested in setting up a cheese dairy. When he explains the institutional requirements to them, they often refrain from proceeding with establishing an official business.

Regarding legal, institutional aspects of his residency, Saymoa can count on good prospects for his subsidiary protection status to be extended because of the ongoing war in his home country. He also has the right to work as employed or self-employed for the duration of his residence permit. However, formal and informal institutional regulations and the practices of labor market and financial institutions lead to severe constraints and barriers for firm founders like him. His start-up consultant explains the difficulties for refugee entrepreneurs in accessing crucial external financial funding:

And for the start-up itself, it [perspective to stay/German: *Bleibeperspektive*] is from one point of view very meaningful or relevant, because the public business development bank of the federal state of Saarland does not grant one single Euro to anyone, if there is a time limitation in the residence permit. Regardless of how good the idea or well written the business plan is. And ehm Mr Saymoa in the Cham Saar GmbH was lucky to find the Germans. He himself would not have been granted the loans. (EI 4: 339 ff.)

In addition to the formal discrimination from financial institutions faced by refugee entrepreneurs, the incorrect and uncooperative advice from the local Jobcenter lead in Saymoa’s case to misunderstandings



with authorities, which he only overcame with the personal assistance of the wider founding team.<sup>3</sup>

Saymoa was dissuaded from becoming self-employed because of his ethnicity: “Once a woman in the Jobcenter said: because of me being Arabic, I must not become self-employed.” (AS, CS I: 706 ff.). It is also still not clear to him why some refugees receive financial aid for obtaining a driver’s license and why he did not, given the rural landscape he inhabits, that lacks regular public transport. To manage the commute between his home and his workplace, Saymoa hoped to rent the flat above the newly renovated cheese production facility in Uchtelfangen. He persuaded the landlord to lower the rent to match the social welfare housing allowance from the Jobcenter. Nevertheless, it took him three visits at the employment agency to formalize his change of the address.

Contrary to his bad luck with formal employment institutions, Saymoa was fortunate with the enormous support of the start-up consultant who managed to raise funding in a successful pitch in front of business angels, who were thoroughly convinced by the founding team. In addition, the entrepreneurs perceive the food inspection authorities to be very encouraging. Anna Riehm recalls: “They [veterinary inspection] were also quite excited about the idea. Then they said, that it is no problem at all.” (AR, CS I: 635).

This might be due to the fact that the proponents are dealing with the creative ideas of Cham Saar’s competent and hardworking entrepreneurs. Therefore, the case study authors are looking forward to following up on the future development of this inspiring founding team.

## Notes

1. The interviews are cited by referring to the speaker (AS = Abdul Saymoa, AR = Anna Riehm, MR = Matthias Riehm Jr), interview number (CS I, CS II and EI4) and line number in the transcription.
2. Cf. Cham Wings is the first Syrian private airline established in 2006.

3. The Jobcenter is the federal employment agency that is responsible for the financial aid and labor market integration of accepted refugees in Germany.

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# 4

## “Our Table”: Between Activism and Business in Dublin, Ireland

Joachim Kolb

### 4.1 Country-Specific Information and Data

In comparison with asylum seekers in other European countries, those in Ireland are in a particularly dire situation. Once they have formally applied for asylum, they enter a system known as Direct Provision (DP), in which they are not allowed to work, are given accommodation and food, but receive very little money (19.10 euros per week in the case of adults, raised to 21.60 euros in August 2017) and are generally forced to remain idle for the duration of the application period, which often lasts more than five years (Conlan 2014).

Since this system was put in place in November 1999 and came to be applied in April 2000, asylum seekers have been lodged in various locations across the country, most of which are privately owned and all of which are privately run (Conlan 2014, 14; Lentin 2012). Left with practically no responsibility for their domestic arrangements and little opportunity to influence these, by the end of 2015, 4696 asylum seekers were distributed across 35 accommodation centers across the Republic, each

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housing between 20 and 530 occupants (Reception and Integration Agency 2016, 25). In cramped conditions, several unrelated individuals, possibly of different cultural backgrounds, typically share a room.

Refugees in DP thus lose control of their lives and, in the absence of access to financial and social capital, find themselves excluded from social participation in the wider society. With very limited funds and no possibility to even prepare their own food, they are administered and stored in these often remote locations for years on end, without access to either education or another form of participation in the social life of Irish society at large. This takes a toll on those affected: After half a year in DP, it is normal for the refugee to have developed mental health problems (Nedeljkovic 2016; Conlan 2014).

Unlike most other EU countries, Ireland has not signed up to the Recast Reception Conditions Directive (RCD, Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013), which stipulates that asylum seekers are to be given access to the labor market no later than nine months after arrival (O'Madagáin 2016, 2). Together with Lithuania and Portugal, Ireland remains the only country in the EU to completely deny labor market access (*ibid.*, 5). The rationale for this stance is the concern that any access to legitimate employment would create an incentive for further migrants to travel to Ireland. In DP, volunteer work therefore provides the only legitimate avenue of engagement for those interned there.

Even after an application for asylum is approved and DP ends, integration into the labor market and the wider community is problematic.

After years of forced idleness, many refugees have experienced a deskilling process, or, in the case of younger asylum seekers, have not been able to make productive use of the time window that would normally be available for tertiary education or vocational training. Refugees therefore often start their lives in Ireland from a position of artificially fostered weakness (Healy et al. 2016, 212 f.).

All of this may change: On May 30, 2017, the Irish Supreme Court ruled that it is unlawful to prevent asylum seekers from working. However, this recent ruling, which has uncertain consequences, has had no impact on the events covered in this study.

## 4.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving One's Home Country

Ellie Kisyombe was born in Malawi, where her family was active in both politics and agro-business. Her father was an academic, and her mother ran an agricultural business that cooperated with multinationals and was part of international supply chains, providing her daughter with exposure to entrepreneurship at an early age. Several relatives held parliamentary and ministerial positions at various times.

Ellie was sent to study at Bristol University in the UK, but did not graduate, having interrupted her studies following the death of her father in the early 2000s, and returned to Malawi.

Back home, she became active in opposition politics, joining a group of activists that was affiliated with Rafiq Hajat, a prominent Malawian opposition figure. However, by late 2010, the political environment had gotten more repressive, and Hajat advised the activists that worked with him to leave the country, which she proceeded to do.<sup>1</sup>

## 4.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country

From Malawi, Ellie first went to Kenya, but found that she could not remain there. So after a brief return to Malawi, she relocated to Ireland in early 2011. This was not a straightforward decision.

Her destination of choice would normally have been the UK, which she knew from her studies. However, while it proved impossible for her to obtain a UK visa, Ireland was one of the few countries with visa-free travel for Malawians.

The easy access to the Republic of Ireland meant a rather smooth transition to the destination country, which was reached by plane. Ellie requested asylum upon arrival at Dublin International Airport and immediately entered the DP system.

In early 2017, the Irish national radio channel RTE 1 released a fictionalized audio drama, in which Ellie voices the part of an African woman leaving her country in exactly this way (Brew 2017).

Ellie originally travelled to Ireland on her own, but eventually her daughter and son joined her in Ireland.

#### 4.4 Business Data and History of Establishing Businesses

Ellie Kisiyombe is one of the founders of a pop-up café known as Our Table. From August 2016 to March 2017, it was registered as a company limited by guarantee under the name Our Table Dublin (OTD) and in November 2017, it was reregistered, with the same status, as Failte Our Table. Her path into entrepreneurship arose from her involvement in refugee activism and remains bound up with it.

Like many other asylum seekers entering the Republic, Ellie was unprepared for what awaited her and, in particular, for the strictures of the Direct Provision system. In this situation, activism ultimately provided a coping mechanism:

Once in Ireland, I applied for asylum and entered Direct Provision, which came as a shock for me, and for about a year, did not do very much, and was moved around several times. However, in late 2012, the Irish Refugee Council was looking for interns for a campaign, and they chose me and another refugee, Steven, to work there. We participated in the massive protest against Direct Provision in 2014, which ultimately failed, but it had gotten me involved in activism. After that, I just kept going, working with other asylum seekers to create several communal gardens, going to schools to talk about my experience in Direct Provision, and generally just turning up. (Interview with Ellie Kisiyombe, Dublin, May 5, 2017)

Faced with the same negative circumstances as numerous other asylum seekers in DP, Ellie nevertheless developed considerably more agency than most and became an avid and articulate campaigner against the DP system.

As a result of her activism and involvement with the non-profit startup that arose from it, she has become a media personality in Ireland and a household name within the refugee and activist communities.<sup>2</sup>

As a social enterprise with multiple stakeholders, OTD was the consequence of an encounter between Ellie Kisyombe and Michelle Darmody, an Irish artist, author and café owner, in 2015. Both women had a strong interest in food, cooking and refugee activism, and their activities developed rapidly from informal meetings with asylum seekers and their supporters, into a registered company.

Michelle Darmody, the Irish partner in the venture, had long been active in the hospitality business before learning about the situation of refugees in Ireland.

After returning to Ireland in the mid-2000s, she established first the Cake Café in South Dublin in 2006 and a second café in the north of the city in 2012 (Darmody 2016).

Starting in late 2015, Michelle Darmody and Ellie began to organize informal social meetings, at which asylum seekers, their friends and supporters cooked and ate together at what was occasionally referred to as the DP Café. Initially, this began to take place at a cultural center where Darmody had been able to secure a kitchen for the group.

In early 2016, these meetings developed into a pop-up café that was made accessible to the wider public when the opportunity presented itself. Without premises of their own, which were unaffordable in the expensive Dublin real estate market, the activities of the café have thus been constrained by the availability of suitable spaces.

In February 2016, a Facebook page appeared that announced the café’s first major pop-up, a two-day event at a cultural event space in Dublin, the Project Arts Center (PAC), where the café was open from 12 to 3 pm on two successive afternoons, April 5 and 6, 2016. Further engagements followed at the Streetfeast ([www.streetfeast.ie](http://www.streetfeast.ie)), on the premises of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, which is also a cultural institution, on June 12 2016 and at the Irish Museum of Modern Art on August 15 of that year.

Previously an informal forum, in September 2016, Our Table Dublin was registered at the Company Registration Office (CRO) as a company limited by guarantee (CLG), a nonprofit, in order to “raise public awareness of the injustices of the Direct Provision system currently in operation in Ireland and to gain political support to end Direct Provision and to process all applications for political asylum in a timely and humane

manner” (Our Table Dublin 2016), with a view to establishing a restaurant and training center for current and former asylum seekers to support their integration into working life. This restaurant was to become “self-supporting and self-sustaining after an initial set-up period” and would be “a warm, welcoming and inclusive restaurant offering international cuisine and a celebration of cooking to the general public which will generate revenue in order to create employment and sustain an information/training center” (ibid.). Michelle Darmody and Ellie Kisyombe were listed as directors of the company, with the PAC, a cultural venue in Dublin’s Temple Bar area, specified as its base of operations (Our Table Dublin 2016), and the Dublin address of its company secretary, Marie Redmond, as its seat.

The Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) is the preferred legal structure for diverse types of nonprofits, ranging from housing associations to large NGOs. While these typically have multiple members and hold an annual general meeting (AGM) that elects the board, Our Table Dublin made use of the option to have only a single member, Ellie Kisyombe, who, as an asylum seeker unable to work in Ireland, thus held ultimate control of the venture.

Incorporation had become necessary, as the prospect of a more enduring presence at the PAC made it necessary to engage in regular commercial transactions and to formally employ staff.

Funding for OTD was obtained through the FundIt crowdfunding platform, which raised 11,465 euros, or 114% of the funding target of 10,000 euros, from 179 funders (FundIt 2016). In addition, the café reportedly generated an additional 10,000 euros during its two months of operation at the PAC.

Between October and mid-December 2016, Our Table Dublin was open for business in Temple Bar, Dublin, garnering significant public interest. A website, [www.ourtable.ie](http://www.ourtable.ie), and a twitter account, @ourtabledublin, were set up as well. In addition to social media, mainstream media, including print, radio and TV stations, provided additional coverage.<sup>3</sup> For its activist funders and supporters, this was an important step in making the venture and the issue of Direct Provision better known to a wider public.



The day-to-day management of the café was split between two individuals, who held paid part-time positions: South African Lucky Khambule had just been recognized as a refugee after more than three years in Direct Provision and was thus in a position to manage the café without facing the restrictions on employment to which asylum seekers within the DP system are subject. Khambule shared this responsibility with Elena Moreo, a yoga teacher formerly employed as a researcher on migration at Trinity College, who had extensive gastronomic experience.

They managed a team of refugee employees, who were recruited from the refugee community. Although they were all recognized asylum seekers and thus had the right to work, many had not been in paid employment for extended periods. For a number of them, this constituted their first job interview in a long time and led to their first formal paid employment in Ireland.

There were two limiting factors for the PAC experience: The space for the café was only available before 5 pm, which meant that café activities had to come to an end by 4 pm, and it did not have a kitchen. This made it necessary to source foods from outside, which could otherwise have been prepared onsite, and limited the range of possible culinary offerings largely to salads, sweets and drinks. As a result of these factors, the venture was not profitable over the PAC pop-up period, in spite of significant sales volumes, and used up a significant share of the crowdfunding obtained during its period of activity.

In spite of its success with the general public and the media, the activities of the venture came to a preliminary end before Christmas 2016, when the café closed and an alternative venue could not be immediately found.

A personal outcome for Ellie was an invitation to attend a cooking course at a prestigious cooking school in Ballymaloe, County Cork, run by Darina Allen, whose courses are a recognized qualification for chefs in Ireland. While this further training could, in due course, be put to good use for the project, it also removed Kisyombe from Dublin for a four-month period starting in early 2017. After the successful two-month run at the PAC, there was little activity over the following months.

The willingness of the other board members to continue their role proved limited. On February 17, the directors of Our Table Dublin requested that the company be struck off the company register, since it had ceased trading. This step, driven by the Irish officers of the company, was realized one month later on March 17, 2017.

After returning to Dublin from Ballymaloe in May 2017, Ellie worked on the restoration of the company. In the summer of 2017, she was in the process of reregistering OTD, but this actually led to the establishment of a new company, Failte Our Table, in November 2017. In this intermediate period, small-scale popups occurred, but in the absence of a business license, food and beverage sales were not possible and only donations could be received.

The network on which it is based has, however, been significantly reconfigured. In reestablishing the company, Ellie relied on considerable logistical support from the Irish Refugee Council and help from the wider business community, which was provided on a pro-bono basis. Significantly, all the directors are now Africans who have gone through the DP system.

## 4.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

Ellie's early exposure to both entrepreneurship and politics in her family in Malawi may have contributed to the mindset that has allowed her to become an entrepreneur, as did her history of activism in her country of origin. In Ireland, this resulted in a high level of activist engagement in the face of adversity, and her strong links to the activist community put her in a position to make use of the opportunity that presented itself in mid-2016 to become one of the founders of the Our Table Dublin project.

A consummate networker, she has a knack for making and maintaining contacts, which has allowed her to make use of the skills and knowledge present in her network to fill gaps in her own abilities. In particular, she acts as a gatekeeper and an interface between asylum seekers in Ireland, the activist community and society at large.

In her activities, she can rely on consummate public relations (PR) skills, which manifest themselves both in her social media presence, particularly on Facebook, and in the wide-ranging media exposure that has made her the asylum seeker most present in the Irish public sphere. Radiating joy and confidence, Ellie is someone that people want to be around, and she manages to project that image in the media as well.

While she did not have previous experience as an entrepreneur, she did have an affinity for the food industry thanks to her mother's entrepreneurial experience as a food producer. Furthermore, in the course of her entrepreneurial journey with Our Table Dublin, she managed to acquire specific culinary skills, being admitted to one of the most prestigious cooking schools in the country.

At the same time, Ellie has only limited experience in formal business contexts in Ireland, and her status as an asylum seeker did not allow her to gather such skills shortly after arrival, with the only legitimate legal status she could occupy being that of a volunteer. She has, however, been able to compensate for this by relying on her networks, which have come to include professional services firms that agreed to do pro-bono work for a nonprofit such as Our Table. The requirement to have outside help for procedures, such as business registration, has, however, meant that some steps took a long time to accomplish, including the reregistration of Our Table in 2017.

## **4.6 Community Enablers and Constraints**

While many migrant entrepreneurs make use of ethnic and kinship networks in order to establish a market for their product, this has not been the case here: Specifically Malawian networks do not appear to have played a role in Ellie's business, nor have family members. Rather, her ability to coordinate commercial activity has largely been due to her ability to tap into a number of discrete networks for support and act as a gatekeeper between them. Some of these networks have been present constantly, while others have been reconfigured.

One network she did not choose, but was thrust into, is that of the asylum seekers in Ireland, whom she met when entering Direct Provision.

These asylum seekers and the newly recognized refugees who had graduated from this network formed most of the workforce in her project and, to the extent that they had left Direct Provision, were prime candidates for formal employment, while asylum seekers remaining in DP could participate as volunteers. Servers and cooks, for whom participation in the project provided a rare gateway into the world of work, were largely recruited from this pool.

The second network consisted of refugee activists, whom Ellie met over the years as she herself became a well-known activist. There was some overlap with the refugee network, in that some asylum seekers became also activists, but it also comprised members of the Irish public. From the interviews conducted and analysis of the media coverage, it emerged that there were as many as three significant Irish support networks that Ellie tapped into:

- The group of long-standing activists who were organized in NGOs such as the Irish Refugee Council, which had been a vehicle of Ellie's socialization into activism in Ireland from 2012 onward.
- A group of high-status, professional Irish women, who constituted a friendship network of their own and were strongly involved between late 2015 and early 2017. These women became involved after Ellie's meeting with Michelle Darmody in 2015 and contributed significant resources to the establishment of Our Table Dublin as a formal business in the summer of 2016. These businesswomen, academics and administrators had a strong sense that something needed to be done about the plight of asylum seekers in Ireland, but their involvement with this type of activism might be of lesser duration than that of the first group. As Ellie stated, they were brought in by Michelle Darmody and were primarily her friends. They supervised the venture and its finances between the summer of 2016 and the end of that year. After the deregistration of OTD in early 2017, in which they were the driving force, these individuals ceased to be active in the project, and they did not have a role in the reregistration of the venture as Failte Our Table in late 2017.

- There were then a number of individuals who contributed significantly, but did not have a long and sustained involvement with the project. This includes a significant number of journalists and media personalities who associated themselves with the project in late 2016, which led, among other things, to the production of two RTE1 radio programs involving Ellie and her colleagues. Similarly, Dareena Allen’s decision to accept Ellie to her cooking school in Ballymaloe on a pro-bono basis provided valuable training in gastronomy. However, while they impacted the development of the project, these individuals were only involved with it from time to time and did not have the sustained participation of the first two networks.

In addition, social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as well as a dedicated website, provided PR channels and created virtual communities, including many members of the three aforementioned groups. The crowdfunding effort for OTD, which raised more than 11,000 euros in 2016, is another example of such an ad-hoc online community.

As a networked enterprise, Ellie’s venture has thus depended on the participation of different communities to a significant degree. At the same time, this has required considerable stakeholder management skills on her part and appears to have led to occasional disruptions, in particular at the interface between the refugee network that provided most of the actual workforce and the dominant individual Irish partners during the 2016 pop-up at the PAC.

A business built on volunteer networks thus has significant potential to activate resources and involve individuals far beyond its core constituency. At the same time, it faces the constant challenge of maintaining momentum and retaining a pool of supporters and partners that allow it to remain sustainable.

## 4.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Among the institutional constraints, the most obvious is Ellie’s status as an asylum seeker without the right to work and subject to the constraints of the Direct Provision system. This means that most of the typical entrepre-

neurship formats, such as the for-profit limited company or a proprietorship, are not available to her, and the non-profit company limited by guarantee currently constitutes the only option for legal entrepreneurship.

Ellie has thus received no direct support from the Irish state for her project. She has, however, the constant support of the Irish Refugee Council, an NGO that receives part of its funding from the Irish state.

Support for Our Table has involved numerous established media outlets, including print, audio and audio-visual media, but this support has arisen as the result of individual, network-based contacts and is not based on an established institutional framework.

At the same time, the non-profit status of the enterprise has made it easier for OTD to receive contributions in kind, donations and the free PR that results from extensive and sympathetic media coverage. This has enabled it to thrive, but also subjected it to a certain instability, with numerous individuals floating in and out of its orbit, unfettered by the contractual constraints that normally bind individuals, corporate partners and other stakeholders to an enterprise.

## 4.8 Methodological Considerations

As a networked social enterprise without permanent premises, Our Table has not been an easy business to observe, particularly given that at the time this study was first undertaken, following on deregistration in early 2017, it had been dormant for a number of months, and Ellie herself was not in Dublin. It thus became necessary to reconstruct its history on the basis of multiple semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, who contributed different perspectives on the development of the company. While Ellie Kisyonbe herself was very generous with her time, other key individuals were only interviewed once. In spite of sustained efforts on the part of the author, an interview with Michelle Darmody could not be arranged, and the sub-network of which she was the focal point is under-represented in the pool of interviewees.

While the main event, the PAC popup, preceded the study period, some of the preparatory meetings concerning the reregistration of the company could be observed, as were some small-scale popups.

A constant theme in the research was the relationship between activism and entrepreneurship, with the commercial viability of Our Table having to be balanced constantly with the demands of activism, which was the dominant motivation for most of those involved in the project. This led to some decisions that might compromise viability, such as a strong reliance on an untested refugee workforce. While OTD was not commercially successful, spending most of its crowdfunded resources in less than three months of activity in late 2016, its significant PR impact and active integration of refugees made it a highly successful activist project that opened up further support from different quarters.

As the newly reregistered venture goes into its next iteration, Failte Our Table, as it is now called, is likely to retain a fluid, network-based structure for the immediate future. Watch this space—end Direct Provision!

## Notes

1. All information in this section is exclusively gained from interviews with Ellie Kisyombe.
2. Coverage in the Irish media included several articles in the Irish Times, as well as repeated coverage in the Irish Examiner. The RTE 1 radio channel produced a program with her, Brew (2016).
3. The official Irish radio station RTE Radio One produced two features with Ellie Kisyombe over the period. One, “In the Wings—Our Table”, is a feature portraying the project, with extensive input by both of its directors (Brew 2016). The other, “Flight Risk”, is a dramatized account of one refugee’s plane journey to Ireland and to safety, with Ellie Kisyombe voicing the part of the main female protagonist (Brew 2017). RTE also produced a report on the opening of the café in November (Madden 2016), as well as broadcasting an appeal for new premises on December 12, 2016.

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## **Interviews**

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Khambule, Lucky (refugee and activist): 19 June 2017.

Kisyombe, Ellie (asylum seeker from Malawi): 5 May 2017; 30 May 2017; Several problem-oriented meetings thereafter.

Moreo, Elena (yoga teacher and researcher): 3 July 2017.

Nedeljkovic, Vukasin (refugee and activist): 27 February 2017.

O'Neill, Rory (Housing and Employment Officer, Irish Refugee Council): 6 March 2017.



# 5

## The Story of an Adolescent Afghan Refugee Who Became an Entrepreneur in France

Crista Plak and Vincent Lagarde

### 5.1 Introduction

The continuing violence, war and political instability in Afghanistan have been creating waves of Afghan refugees for over 20 years (Tamang 2009). Unaccompanied minors in particular are now one of the largest subsections of Afghans arriving in Europe (OFRA 2016). Afghan refugees often leave their homes carrying few personal belongings, often little more than their clothes, having only just managed to survive the disaster (Tamang 2009). This applies particularly to unaccompanied Afghan minors, who embark on a dangerous journey to reach northern Europe with very little money and who are socially isolated and sometimes armed with incorrect information (Sanchez-Cao et al. 2013). This “acute refugee movement” in Afghanistan (Kunz 1973) increases the risk of traumatic events.

The aforementioned study shows that some people also leave their country after similar events for reasons related to their own sociological background (Connor 1987). In this case, for the Hazara ethnic group, to

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which Jamshed belongs, migration is their traditional way of life and does not seem to be dictated only by emergency situations, such as war (Tamang 2009). Moreover, Afghans are considered new refugees according to Paludan's criteria (Paludan 1974).

In this chapter, we report the case of an Afghan adolescent who became an entrepreneur at the young age of 18.

## 5.2 French Refugee Information and Data

France, like the majority of the European countries, is experiencing a massive increase in the influx of refugees and has received the third highest number of refugees after Germany and Sweden (Eurostat 2016).

According to the 2016 report by OFPRA (French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons), France achieved the highest number of acceptance of first-time applications (38% of 85,726 applications). The largest numbers of requests came from Sudan (5868), Afghanistan (5641), Haiti (4854), Albania (4599) and Syria (3562). The unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in France are from Afghanistan, DRC, Syria, Angola and Guinea (OFPRA 2015).

In addition to having numerous refugee asylum applications, France is one the gateway countries used by refugees and migrants trying to reach target countries, such as Great Britain and Germany. For this reason, thousands of refugees have settled in various camps in the north of France, such as those in the area around Calais (Babels 2017).

An application for asylum can be made from within France, either on arrival at the border or from an administrative detention center. Once the application has been evaluated, in the case of a "normal procedure", the local organization responsible for the process provides an asylum application certificate. If the applicant does not fall within the criteria of the 2003 Dublin Regulation, then the prefecture does not issue the certificate, but submits the application under the "accelerated procedure". OFPRA is the responsible body in the first instance, and it can decide to grant the applicant refugee status or subsidiary protection, or it can reject any such protection. The National Court of Asylum (CNDA) examines potential appeals against a negative decision from OFPRA or against an

OFPPRA decision granting subsidiary protection if the asylum seeker wishes to obtain refugee status.

### 5.3 Methodology

We first discovered Jamshed in an article in the local press, which portrayed his integration into French society and his dynamism in a very positive manner. The headline reads: “Afghan refugee in Correze at the age of 14, Jamshed opened a grocery in Brive five years later” (Moutte 2017). We were struck by the journalist’s report of Jamshed’s entrepreneurial spirit at such an early age and by his positive attitude, which stood in stark contrast to most readers’ comments on the newspaper’s website.

Collection of the data consisted of three successive interviews, which were not recorded, but during which notes were taken. The exchanges were held in basic, yet adequate, French. The first contact with Jamshed was made when the interviewer came to his shop as a customer and had an informal, one-hour discussion, during which the functioning of the shop was also observed. Jamshed was very relaxed and very talkative about his story, his motivations, the sacrifices he has made and the advice he could give about how to integrate successfully into rural France, just as described in the newspaper article. He gladly agreed to a more thorough study. We also sought out the opinions of other shop owners in the neighborhood, which overall was quite positive.

The second interview was a little more formal. It involved following an interview guide based on guidelines for contributors to this volume. This also took place in his grocery shop, between Jamshed operating the till, since he was too busy to schedule an exclusive appointment.

The aim of the third interview was to complete the information-gathering process and to address some uncertainties. For this last meeting, two interviewers were involved, and it was more difficult to obtain further information. The interview seemed to trouble Jamshed, who felt that our questions were too complicated. He did not understand why we were interested in the financial aspects of his business or his links with the local Afghan community. The meeting was therefore much less fruitful than the previous two because of his reluctance to respond to what he

considered to be overly detailed questions. It seems to us that Jamshed had expected a journalistic investigation intended to produce a promotional advertorial, something that he has mastered to perfection. Our questions, which pointed out some inconsistencies in his story and asked him to go into certain aspects in more detail, obviously disturbed him. He did, however, authorize us to publish this information without asking for a right of review.

## 5.4 Background

Jamshed's story is that of a brave boy. He and his family, who belong to the Hazara ethnic group, were living in Baghlan, in northern Afghanistan.

They decided to escape to Iran in order to safeguard themselves from the unsustainable political and economic pressure in Afghanistan. His father, a taxi driver, and his mother, a teacher, could no longer work because of the country's insecurity and instability, which was constantly worsening. He explains: "We could not survive any more in those conditions and we escaped to Iran. While my parents remained in Iran, I continued my journey, determined to arrive in France. Now my family is all back in Afghanistan because is getting a little better."

At the age of only 14, he found himself making a very difficult choice—one that required courage and determination—the choice to leave Iran. He started this dangerous journey with a small group of Afghans in June 2011. He commented thoughtfully: "We left suddenly because the smugglers are the ones whose decide when to leave and sometimes they put pressure on us to go in order to fill the number of the people in the cars. I was the oldest, so I had to make the decision to leave. Otherwise my father would have had to leave and it would be difficult for the whole family."

He left Iran with a bag full of dreams and hopes. The difficulties encountered on his journey were numerous, yet Jamshed, when describe his travels, had the ability to make the journey seem almost easy. He summarized it in such a way that it was almost impossible to glean any details. "We were going from one country to another and the smugglers avoided telling us where were we. It was quite difficult, but fortunately we made

it”, he claimed, almost as if he wanted to forget his experience. Despite the difficulties encountered during his eight-month journey, he was lucky enough to get in France in February 2012.

He said: “I didn’t have money any more, I didn’t know where the train was going and I discovered Limoges accidentally. I went to the police station and the police brought me to Tulle. They sent me to a group home, and then the children’s judge sent me to Treignac” (a Social Centre for children; editor’s note)”.

Jamshed was living in a community home that hosted unaccompanied foreign minors. The minors are then monitored by the Department of Social Services for Childhood. He lived there for two and a half years, from 2012 until June 2014. There were 65 people of different nationalities in the group home.

Jamshed learned French in a very short time and he began attending high school, followed by a two-year vocational course in cookery. “I always wanted to come in France. When I was studying geography, I was particularly attracted to the country”, he stated.

He is the only one of his family living abroad. He said that his brother wants to come to France, but he advised him against it because living abroad is too complicated. Even though he is proud of what he has accomplished, living outside his own country is still difficult.

## 5.5 Business Data and History

Once Jamshed had obtained his qualifications, he tried to find work in several restaurants, eager to gain some work experience and to become independent. Unfortunately, the only available work to him was washing dishes. Following this position, Jamshed started working at an Afghan grocery in Pau (south of France), where he was inspired by the business model. He said proudly “I did not want to adapt to this type of work after my diploma, but I wanted to have my own business”.

At the age of 18, Jamshed moved back to Correze, to the commune of Brive la Gaillarde, where he obtained a license to sell alcohol, as well as a food-handling certificate, and opened a grocery store, financed with his own savings. He has named the shop Alimentation Générale de Brive

(General Grocery of Brive), and it is located between the railway station and the center of town. On May 2, 2017, the first anniversary of the shop's inauguration, Jamshed appeared to be satisfied with how the business was performing. Having made many sacrifices, he set out on this entrepreneurial venture risking all the money that he had saved and investing around 15,000 euros.

The name "Alimentation General de Brive" seems to emphasize that the place has something to offer every type of client, making them all feel welcome. Indeed, different types of customers frequent the store. The grocery is open every day, from 10 am to 2 am, including weekends and holidays, which are the days that bring in the most revenue. Jamshed already has one part-time employee and he is planning to increase his working hours to 35 hours per week. We have observed that Afghan refugees tend to replicate this business model in other regions of France. The names of the shops are usually Alimentation Générale followed by the name of the local area or street.

Jamshed chose to open his shop in Brive because he knew the place well, because it is the main city of the Department and because there is very little competition from other groceries at night. His initial plan was to open the shop on the city's main street, but it was difficult to find a suitable commercial space. He said that he still plans to develop the business and move to the center of the city.

Like many typical local shops, the store sells various types of products (food, beverages, fresh produce, cleaning products, etc.). Other than Afghan rice, there is no stock of ethnic products. Indeed, the customers are multicultural and typically are local shoppers. The price seems to be relatively high compared to other shops. Jamshed stated: "The products are of good quality, especially the wine, and we offer night service too, so the prices are somewhat higher." He works with traditional wholesaler suppliers, like many other French store owners. A small part of the shop contains fresh fruit and vegetables. He confirms that he would love to have more space in order to offer a larger fresh produce department.

"I have a good relationship with the neighbours", he said, "I do not want to create problems. Our customers must not make noise on the street, we learned this during the training for the alcohol license." When we told him that he has a good reputation in the neighborhood, he

became irritated; it appears that he does not want to draw attention to himself.

In future he would like to have his own restaurant: “That was my first job” he said, “but for the moment I cannot do that”.

## 5.6 Enablers and Constraints

Jamshed’s success can be explained by the support he has received from institutions, the role of the community and the strength of his entrepreneurial profile.

### 5.6.1 Profile

Jamshed is an ambitious young man. He mentioned that one of the biggest motivations for his entrepreneurship was to be independent. The dream of finding independence and freedom is what repeatedly emerged from our discussions with him. This allows him to focus constantly on his goal. “If you want something, you have to plan it in advance”, he said with confidence.

He learned French in just five months, explaining: “Work at school, work in life and stay serious were the daily teachings of my parents. It is also thanks to my parents, who always taught me the important values, that I am here today; it is all in my heart.” Jamshed was determined to break down all ethnic and cultural barriers. He has done his duty and integrated well into French culture and institutions. “As refugees, we should not be connected only with our community, but we should put all our effort into integrating with the local community. Otherwise we will remain isolated because of cultural and language barriers”, he stated.

The dream of running his own business gave him the determination to make numerous sacrifices and give up many things in order to save money. He continued to work even though the jobs did not satisfy him, never having the luxury of being simply an adolescent. Jamshed, when starting his business, had no access to any outside funding or tax reductions. He also makes points to the high taxation rates of the French



government: “But I am happy, I am not remaining just a passive refugee, I am paying all my taxes. I think that as refugees we make a good contribution to the country.”

Jamshed loves to plan; it is one of the aspects of his character that enabled him to establish his business. He said determinedly: “It needs a good plan to do this. I was thinking about this project for a long time”. This helped put him in a position to start a business. He said happily, “I know what I am going to do in ten years’ time because I am already planning for it.”

### 5.6.2 Institution

Unaccompanied minors, as a particularly vulnerable subset of refugees, benefit from special assistance. Once they have entered France, they are usually entrusted to the Departmental Council through the Social Welfare Service (ASE). This allows single foreign minors to benefit from socio-educational and legal care and support until they reach 18 years of age (AIDA 2016).

According to Article 21 of the French Civil Code (law no. 93–933, July 22, 1993—art. 50 JORF), an isolated minor who has been cared for by the ASE for at least three years before the age of majority (i.e. under the age of 15 on arrival), can claim French nationality. Jamshed, therefore, having arrived at the age of 14, applied for French nationality at 17. He obtained French nationality on June 23, 2015, only 3 months after he was eligible. “The judge was surprised that I had learned French so soon and completed my professional schooling so quickly. I think this worked in my favour in getting French nationality just a few months after my application”, he commented.

Sometimes, due to the inefficiency of the structure and the lack of administrators, children are obliged to wait until they turn 18 to be able to lodge their asylum application with OFPRA. Fortunately, this was not the case for Jamshed.

Jamshed was also grateful that throughout the administrative process and the opening of the grocery he had always been well treated: “I think French people like it when refugees try to integrate into their culture. Especially when you are a hard worker; then they seem happier”.

### 5.6.3 Community

Jamshed admitted the fact that the members of the Fondation Claude Pompidou had helped him to build his future: “I have very good memories. Some of the educators come into my store; they are professionals who do their best to encourage young people to succeed in life.” Having extended our interviews to include a few of the neighboring shops, we observed that Jamshed had a very good reputation in the surrounding area.

Major encouragement for Jamshed came from his former employer, an Afghan who has been living in the south of France for many years. When Jamshed started working and living with him, he was able to save more money and he learned how to manage a grocery. He considers this man a big brother and a mentor, who offered him all the moral support he needed. “I was inspired and encouraged to run my own shop, which was my dream”, he affirmed enthusiastically.

## 5.7 Conclusion

Jamshed’s story is part of a widespread history of refugees, where strife and suffering are compensated by success. Most of the time refugees do not have a good public reputation, especially among adolescents; therefore, writing about Jamshed was a pleasant experience. Nevertheless, some holes appeared in his story during our interviews, which prevented us from capturing the whole panorama of his story. For example, on being asked whether he has good links with the local Afghan community, his replies were always laconic and skeptical: “Not so much”. However, it appears his shop is a meeting point for some of the Afghans living in Brive. They come to have a drink, to talk about their day and to exchange news, especially in the late afternoon. Similarly, difficulties arose when we asked questions about his financial status and his journey from Afghanistan to France. Most researchers encounter this problem, because refugees might be reluctant to answer due to the fact that they are afraid that their position in the community may be jeopardized. Therefore, as a survival strategy, a refugee might not be completely honest about their true opin-

ions, or they might wish to promote a particular version of their reality (Jacobsen 2003). Furthermore, Jamshed attracted us with his seriousness and kindness, and he was also very punctual in every meeting that we had. The passion that Jamshed has for his work gave us hope that he would advance farther in his career by being an example to his fellow adolescent citizens.

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# 6

## “FlüchtlingMagazin” (Refugee Magazine): A Syrian Social Business in Hamburg, Germany

Julia Freudenberg

### 6.1 Country-Specific Information and Data

In the discussion about the specific conditions of refugees in Germany, it is important to examine the 2015 and 2016 figures and in particular to differentiate between the registration of refugees and the number of asylum applications.

For both 2015 and 2016, the new arrivals were counted in the EASY-System (EASY = Erstverteilung von Asylbegehrenden—First allocation of asylum seekers). The EASY-System figures tend to be higher than actual numbers, as there are issues of double counting due to misuse and further movement of refugees. According to EASY figure for 2016 there were 321,371 new arrivals, reduced by the Foreign Office of Migration and Refugees (FOMR) to a realistic guess of about 280,000 refugees, and for 2015 some 1,091,894, which was adjusted down to about 890,000 refugees. In contrast to these “registration figures”, the number of asylum applications shows a different picture, as it takes months and sometimes

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years for a refugee to be interviewed and thus apply officially for asylum. In 2016, the number of applications for asylum reached an all-time high, with 745,545 applications (both first and subsequent), rising from the 2015 figure of 476,649 applications (Federal Center for Political Education 2017). In Hamburg, the FOMR counted 12,437 asylum applications in 2015 and 17,512 asylum applications in 2016, as seen in Table 6.1.

In 2015, 158,657 Syrians applied for asylum. In 2016, 266,250 applications were counted by the FOMR. The overall numbers of Syrians coming to Germany since the start of the civil war increased to more than 600,000 (Media Service Integration 2017; German Federal Parliament 2015). The size of the split between the number of arrivals and the number of asylum applications can be illustrated in the figures from 2016, when 89,161 Syrians came to Germany (Pro Asyl 2017), in comparison to the 266,250 applications counted by the FOMR (Table 6.2).

While 99.7% of all Syrians were granted full refugee protection in 2015, only 57.6% received the same protection in 2016. Some 42% were granted only subsidiary shelter, which has the disadvantages of only a one-year residence permit and the prohibition of “immediate” family unification (Pro Asyl 2017).

The legal framework of whether refugees will be granted a work permit varies greatly between countries. In Europe, it is common practice that the member states of the Council of Europe allow participation in their labor markets after a certain length of stay (Chope 2012). In Germany, migrants from countries outside the EU, the EEA and Switzerland) are only allowed to work in Germany, if this is explicitly noted in their residence permit (Federal Foreign Office 2015; Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2015b).

**Table 6.1** Registration and asylum application figures in Germany, 2015–2016

	2015	2016
EASY registration	1,091,894	321,371
Estimated registration	890,000	280,000
Asylum applications	476,649	745,545
Asylum applications in Hamburg	12,437	17,512

Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2015a, 2016a, b)

**Table 6.2** Registration and asylum application figures of Syrians in Germany from 2015–2016

	2015	2016
Registration Syrians (EASY)	428,468	89,161
Asylum application from Syrians	158,657	266,250

Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2015a, 2016a, b)

For refugees, one can differentiate between three main groups with different rights: asylum-seekers, tolerated persons (“Geduldete”, limited leave to stay and subject to review) and recognized refugees. Asylum-seekers have a right to stay for the duration of the process of granting the right of asylum. Tolerated persons do not have an official residence permit, but as long as they are not deported, they can stay in Germany. Recognized refugees (recognition with full refugee protection after Art. 16a GG [Grundgesetz] and § 3 AsylG [Asylum Law] or Subsidiarian Shelter after § 4 AsylG) get a (usually temporary) residence permit because of various specified reasons (Federal Ministry of the Interior August 2014, 2015). The extent of the permission to work varies according to the time already spent in Germany as well as the specific residence permit. Basically, there are three different possible options regarding labor market access: “Gainful employment prohibited”, which explicitly prohibits working; “With permission of Alien Department”, which provides subordinated labor market access; and “Employment permitted”, which gives full allowance to work. For refugees who stay in Germany for a period of less than three months, employment is generally prohibited. If they stay for more than three months and less than 15 months, a work permit can be granted “with permission of Alien Department”, which grants subordinated labor market access. In this case, work permission is only granted if the working conditions are good and if a theoretically a more privileged person is not available to take the job. The latter condition is posited in 133 of 156 districts of Labor Administration for three years from August 2016 (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2016). For a stay that lasts more than 15 months but less than four years, a work permit is required, but will be granted. For persons who have already stayed for more than four years, employment is allowed. In the case of a general work prohibition, of course, the timeline does not affect the given status.

## 6.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving One's Home Country

I first interviewed Hussam al Zaher (Fig. 6.1) at his office space in Hamburg on March 2 2017, during which we spoke for an hour about himself, his business and his future. We met again on September 15 for lunch to discuss his story in more detail and had vivid Whatsapp discussions (September 22), in addition to another call on September 27. We agreed to categorize Hussam as a new-anticipatory-self-alienated refugee (NEW) due to the following reasons.

Hussam came from Syria to Germany, which defines him as culturally and ethnically different from Germans, even though it is up for debate whether the term “radically different” should be used. The development level of Syria is debatable as well, as Syrian culture as such is significantly developed. Still, there are big differences between the populations, both visual and cultural, and therefore we decided to categorize Hussam as NEW.

In terms of the categorization, the nature of Hussam's flight—whether it was acute or anticipatory—is also a question of weight. The reasons he left Syria are twofold: He would have had to join the military and he had lived in the Yarmouk Camp in the south of Damascus, where the oppo-



**Fig. 6.1** Photograph of Hussam al Zaher



sition is really strong, and all people who visit or have contact with the region are suspected of being part of the opposition to the regime. Hussam returned to Damascus the end of 2014 from Yarmouk and stayed another eight months with his family in Damascus, as he had to take his university exam. He failed his first attempt and had to retake the exam in September, at which point, he left nearly immediately for Turkey. Even though this departure could be said to be acute, he had planned his departure beforehand, as he felt a sense of danger. He had a more or less orderly departure, even though he was only able to take one suitcase, filled with clothes, with him when he left Syria to travel to Turkey by plane. Based on this, we decided to categorize Hussam as ANTICIPATORY.

The reason for Hussam’s flight is both identified by the majority as well as self-alienated. The majority of Syrian men have to face the issue of being forced into military service, which has an extreme impact, especially on those families who do not agree with the regime. But the crucial factor in leaving Syria should be categorized as self-alienated. Hussam’s family had been living for a long time in the area of Yarmouk, a hotspot of rebels, but moved when it became too dangerous in that area. Unfortunately, Hussam learned that the apartment in Yarmouk, which his family still owned, was trespassed, and when he went there to check, he realized that the area had been closed off by the military for almost an entire year. Eventually, a cease-fire was negotiated, and the military allowed students and scholars to leave the area. Hussam returned to his family in February 2014, but from that time onwards, he feared every day that the military would pick him up to take him to prison. Only a month after that he passed his exam and received a bachelor’s degree in political science, he left Syria by plane and headed to Turkey, where he has some distant friends to offer support. For the latter part of his categorization, the sum of personal reasons and challenges he faced is weighted higher than the fear of military service, and therefore we decided to categorize Hussam as SELF-ALIENATED.

### **6.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country**

Hussam al Zaher arrived in Germany in October 2015. His first residence permit, which he received after 10 months of waiting, was only valid for one year, until July 2017. Eventually, the residence permit was extended by two more years, until June 2019.

When Hussam left Syria, his first target country was Turkey. He flew to Ankara, but for unknown reasons he missed the friend he was supposed to meet at the airport and he decided to take another flight to Istanbul to seek support from other friends. He lived in Istanbul for about a year. He was working 15 hours per day in a clothing factory, with just one and a half days of weekend every week. He had no chance to learn Turkish and was aware that he would never have a chance to make a living without improving his language skills. After one year, his elder brother arrived in September 2015 in Istanbul, as his life as a journalist in Syria had also become too dangerous. As there was no way to return to Syria, they decided after in October 2015 that they must go to Europe. His brother brought up the idea of going to Germany, as Germany has many opportunities for building a new life, finding a job and working in freedom. Hussam was soon persuaded by this idea, even though neither of them knew anybody in Germany at that time. Hussam took his suitcase but had to leave it behind when they boarded the boat. They set off from Istanbul and traveled to Izmir. They then arrived at a Greek Island, passed Athens, Macedonia, Ukraine, Slovakia and Austria, and finally arrived in Germany. In Germany, within six days the police sent them from Munich to Nuremberg, and afterwards they had to move to Horst, Schleswig. They were finally able to apply for asylum in Hamburg, where they settled.

### **6.4 Business Data and History of Setting up the Business**

When Hussam came to Hamburg in October 2015, he soon started to be active in different social networks, such as Facebook and “Start with a Friend”. He wanted to meet German people to start learning the lan-

guage and to learn about the German culture. He received some replies to his postings, which turned out to be very important.

One friend, Peer Fischer, whom he met after living for three months in Germany, agreed to be in contact and he found the Hussam’s ideas about intercultural exchange fascinating. This friend owned an agency that creates websites and content, and he offered to build Hussam a website.

Another friend, Babette Hnup, is a journalist herself and introduced him to the German way of writing articles. For many months, they only met once in a while, talking about cultural differences, communication and intercultural challenges. It is “a real friendship on level playing field” (Festring-Hashem Zadeh 2017).

Therefore, FlüchtlingMagazin was started in June 2016. At the beginning, it was simply the idea of supporting integration of refugees by telling Germans about who these refugees really are, in the sense of giving insights into their culture and informing them about Syria and Syrian customs. What started as a rough idea became more concrete when Hussam learned about the program “MoveON”, executed by the social startup “leetHub St. Pauli e.V.”, based in Hamburg. Hussam learned about the program via Facebook. As soon as he read about it he applied, and after a certain selection process, he was invited to join, based on his idea of an intercultural magazine from refugees for Germans. Work began in earnest on FlüchtlingMagazin in October 2016. After completing the program, the first edition of FlüchtlingMagazin launched on February 14 2017.

FlüchtlingMagazin is a social startup with no interest in turning a profit. All “colleagues” work as volunteers on a non-financial basis. As a social business it does not receive financial support, as the process to obtain public funding is long, complicated and, for a refugee with German on the B1/B2 level, simply not doable. Therefore, the magazine was started with low expectations. Hussam said: “I don’t know, if I will be able to earn money with FlüchtlingMagazin, not sure.”

The business idea of FlüchtlingMagazin started when Hussam was living in a refugee camp in Hamburg, where he noticed many misunderstandings between Germans and refugees. He thought that these misunderstandings mainly originated from the difference in cultures and conjectured that these misunderstandings could be solved by encouraging discussion about both cultures. He thought that he could create a

magazine about culture—both Syrian and German culture—to share, explain and discuss ideas, thoughts and values, in order to create a basis on which both cultures could live. In Hussam’s magazine, refugees from all over the world can tell their story. Furthermore, the magazine reports about different projects conducted for and by refugees. Another reason for establishing this magazine was that Hussam noticed that some Germans tended to be afraid of refugees, mainly, in his perception, because they had not yet had contact with any refugees. His idea is to establish an initial point of contact with these people through the magazine, to reach out, inform and speak about refugees, and he hopes that “maybe, by getting to know us, they won’t be afraid anymore”. In his opinion, there are too many stereotypes about refugees. “We are all different and have different personalities” (Festring-Hashem Zadeh 2017).

Creating a website was considered to be the most direct, easiest and cheapest way to communicate the ideas of FlüchtlingsMagazin. The owner of FlüchtlingsMagazin is Hussam al Zaher, and he receives support from a core team of five volunteers, plus some additional support from about five other volunteers, who support him on an occasional basis.

From Hussam’s family, the elder brother is the only one to have joined him in Hamburg. Due to language issues, his brother is only helpful in Arabic contexts. The rest of Hussam’s family is still in Damascus, Syria, or in other parts of Germany and Sudan, so they can only offer emotional support.

When investigating information sharing tools about Germans and refugees, Hussam found that there were many magazines and journals created by Germans for refugees, but not any publications aimed at Germans from the refugee community. FlüchtlingsMagazin directly targets Germans, seeking to offer information and help them understand about Syria, Syrians and the Syrian culture. As Syrians have now been in Germany for over two years, they have learned about Germany and German culture and wanted to return the favor. Therefore, FlüchtlingsMagazin is only published in German. There are three main target groups.

The first target group is the German volunteers, who have offered support and for (often Syrian) refugees, as they are interested in Syrians and Syrian culture. The second target group is elderly

people, as Hussam found that they tend to be scared of refugees. The third target group is right-wing voters. FlüchtlingMagazin tries to make contact with conservatives, as Hussam believes that these people only have issues with refugees because they have not yet had any contact with them.

The content of FlüchtlingMagazin is created by both Germans and refugees, and all work is done on a volunteer basis. The creation of the website was also conducted with voluntary support, as one of Hussam’s new friends offered to create a website for FlüchtlingMagazin free of charge. Earning money by integrating advertising has not yet been attempted.

Until now, FlüchtlingMagazin has not acquired business partners. As the business is still officially an informal initiative, it is complicated to agree on official business partnerships. Hussam intends to establish a relationship with a journalistic organization, such as the Zeit Stiftung, to hold presentations on a professional level.

To evaluate the success of FlüchtlingMagazin, Hussam refers to two different level of success. The first level of success is, of course, about using the magazine to earn money. Even though he has many ideas, he struggles with having enough time to execute them, as he is participating in an integrational project with the Hamburg Media School for vocational integration of refugees in media jobs. But even without these constraints on his time, Hussam perceives a need to invest money first so as to earn money later. This initial capital is very hard to obtain, as getting public or private funding in German requires a profound knowledge of the funding market, a lot of time and an extensive bureaucratic process. Progress on this front might be made from October onwards, even though Hussam has to complete a three-month, full time internship and will therefore again face timing issues. Regardless of circumstances, Hussam and his team will continue to work for FlüchtlingMagazin on a volunteer basis, to help it grow and to enlarge the awareness level. According to Hussam’s experience in Damascus, it takes six months to set up a journal and another full year to make it successful. This would include financial success that would enable him to live independently of the JobCenter, the German Labor Agency.

The other level of success is expanding the reach of *FlüchtlingMagazin*. The publication has 4100 followers on Facebook, but the target is 1 million followers by next year. These numbers can only be reached in one year if an enormous amount of time is invested. The media has started to show interest in Hussam and his magazine; Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR, Northern German Radio), Hamburg1 and SpezialInfo have already scheduled interviews within the first three months of *FlüchtlingMagazin*'s existence. Therefore, Hussam expects that it will take 1.5 years of work until he make a livelihood from *FlüchtlingMagazin*.

Even though Hussam aims to be independent from the JobCenter, as a journalist, his main aim is that “*FlüchtlingMagazin* shall work, with or without money”. He wants the cultural exchange to enable different cultures to live together, as this is the main aim of *FlüchtlingMagazin*.

## 6.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

Hussam's personal drive can be seen in many facets throughout his journey to his current situation. Even as early as the start of his journey, he chose to schedule his flight according to the examination dates of university so that he could leave with a degree. He began working directly after reaching Turkey, but recognized after one year that the conditions in Turkey were not conducive to a self-determined life. Reaching Hamburg, his first endeavor was to join and use social networks, especially Facebook, to get make contacts, meet people and find a way into the new society. He tried to contact newspapers for internships and to establish networks and contacts, and has already completed an internship at the *Zeit*. On Facebook, only three months after he arrived in Germany, he posted in a group of supporters: “Hi, I am Hussam, I am in Germany for three months, I would love to get in touch with Germans to learn German.” This personal drive brought him in contact with his new friends, as mentioned above.

During his first year in Hamburg, he lived with his brother in the crowded “First arrival Camp Schnackenburgallee”, where the brothers shared a one-room apartment. Last autumn, Hussam found a private apartment in Schanzenviertel, which he shares with his brother as well

(Festring-Hashem Zadeh 2017). Taking steps to leave the refugee camp so soon speaks volumes about Hussam’s personal drive. “Hussam is visionary and a thought leader”, says leetHub-CEO Julia von Weymarn (Festring-Hashem Zadeh 2017).

Hussam studied political science in Damascus and had worked already as journalist for different magazines and newspapers, for example, for the weekly newspaper “Aldabur”. When Hussam came to Germany, he immediately began to learn German, as he knew that his passion for writing, exchange and discussion could only be pursued on a vocational level if he had really good language skills. The motivation to seek these new language skills was driven by his existing skills journalistic skills.

The willingness to take risks can also to be found at different stages of Hussam’s journey. Being employed in a bad job in Turkey, even though it was secure, was not enough, so Hussam took the risk of traversing the Mediterranean Sea to look for a better life in Europe. Arriving in Germany, he took the risk of putting himself directly into society, not holding back and waiting. For his whole business case, he took the risk of starting his business, without waiting for the possibility of public funding. He still is not sure whether he will be able to earn money with his social startup, but nevertheless, he invests all the time he has to grow his magazine to hopefully be able to make a living with it one day.

So far, Hussam has no financial support or access to financial capital. As FlüchtlingMagazin has been established as a social business with only subordinated profit motivation, Hussam cannot get money from a bank. His family in Syria are not able to provide monetary support for the business. To get public funding, you “need to write a lot of paper”, as Hussam correctly says. For the acquisition of private money, such as crowdfunding, one needs a lot of time and language skills. As Hussam said: “You always need some money upfront, so you can start to earn money with your idea.” As this money is still lacking, Hussam and his team have already started work on a voluntary basis. This phenomenon is unique to the social context, where the profit motivation is subordinate to the higher goal.

Hussam himself sees his language skills as non-sufficient. In his opinion, his English is weak, and his German is stuck at a level close to B2. As

his product, *FlüchtlingMagazin*, is written in German, he suffers, as he is still not able to express his thoughts and feelings adequately to express himself. Although he knows that he will make his way, he is impatient about the slow progress he is making.

As already mentioned, the use of social networks is essential for Hussam. He uses Facebook and other social networks for his purposes.

As Hussam's family is not particularly wealthy, Hussam did not feel that his flight has robbed him of his assets. Of course, he left behind the family apartment, but due to bombing and robbery, it has been totally destroyed. He lost the support of his family, as his parents and elder siblings offered a lot of support when he was physically present in Syria. On top of that, he lost the journalist networks in Damascus and also experienced the "normal" losses of refugees: home, work, friends, family support and the personal feeling of security—in sum, their normal life (Gregorian 2017). According to Hussam, he and most of the refugees simply suffer from loneliness.

Hussam does not seem to be traumatized as much as some other refugees. But especially at times when insecurity rises above "the normal refugee level", he says he cannot sleep at night. This is not a phenomenon he faces every day, but for a few months he needed medication. Even though his journey went comparable well, there are still traumatic thoughts which are hard to endure at night.

"While you are a refugee, you cannot ever be secure", Hussam says. Even though the legal status of being a refugee in Germany is better compared with other countries, even European ones, just through challenges with language, vocational integration, or German culture, a refugee is always in a weaker position. The life of a refugee is totally unpredictable because it is affected by frequently changing regulations stemming from the complex bureaucracy and a certain arbitrariness of different directions and guidances between various cities. With only subsidiary protection, residence permits are limited to one year, and permit extensions could render it valid for two years. Having such a short time of residency puts a lot of pressure and insecurity on the individual.



## 6.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

Access to a (local) market is not too complicated for an online magazine. Through the friend that Hussam found on Facebook who offered to build him the website, Hussam was able to enter the market by writing and publishing his articles and the articles of his coauthors on Facebook page.

Hussam receives communal support mainly through his new friends. Babette helped him with German writing, editing and other journalistic skills. Peer Fischer, the website-creator from the Drama-Agency ([www.thedrama.de](http://www.thedrama.de)), supported Hussam by creating his website. Julia von Weymarn, CEO of leetHub St. Pauli e.V., was always willing to go the extra mile to help with specific issues. Additionally, Hussam has received countless feedback from his core team and other volunteers who support him and FlüchtlingMagazin.

Participation in the program MoveON was a key factor in the success of Hussam's magazine. The association who led the program, leetHub St. Pauli e.V., was originally funded by the agency leetBoys Ideenwerft Hamburg ([www.leetboys.de](http://www.leetboys.de)), who offered full support for one full year. The program design process, as well as the start of the first cohort of the program, went smoothly, until the agency went bankrupt. For the last two months of the first run of MoveON, the City of Hamburg had to step in to facilitate the successful completion of the course. To continue the second cohort of MoveON from October 2017 onwards, leetHub St. Pauli e.V. launched a crowdfunding campaign and fortunately won the first prize of the Schöplin foundation.

The idea of MoveON is to support highly qualified refugees with good ideas on their way to becoming an entrepreneur in Germany (leetHub St. Pauli e.V. 2017). The six-month program consists of coaching, feedback and support at different stages throughout the process of becoming self-employed and was hosted by two people from leetHub St. Pauli e.V., Julia von Weymarn and Sven Mangels, supported by an external entrepreneur trainer, Roland Becker.

For many refugees, it is fairly unlikely that they will join the labor market in Germany by finding a "normal" job, internship or an opportunity to study here, as many of the preconditions for these types of activi-

ties might not be fulfilled. As many refugees have certain experience in the field of entrepreneurship, the idea was born to create a program to support their first steps in this process, because the process of establishing a business is very complicated. During the six-month incubator program, the participants are granted a laptop, working space at leetHub, workshops and networking activities, including public relations (PR) training. The eligibility requirements have been increased to a B1 German language level and a residence permit that is valid for three years (leetHub St.Pauli e.V. 2017).

In Hussam's case, he is still able to use his working space in the leetHub office, even though he had finished the program by the end of April 2017.

Hussam received a lot of encouragement and guidance through his participation in the MoveON program. Julia von Weymar, as his direct coach, tried to support Hussam on different levels based on his specific needs. Even though she was, of course, not always available, she gave Hussam feedback, guidance and support, especially in networking activities. She was trying to help Hussam apply for support from Stadtkultur Hamburg, but they were unfortunately not successful. Now they are checking for other options, evaluating the ten best fitting offers for funding. Julia's support is very valuable for FlüchtlingsMagazin. The other two coaches, Sven Mangels and Roland Becker, offered support mainly through insights into Germans and Germany, as well as guidance about formal business establishment processes.

In Germany, according to Hussam, he does not feel physically threatened. Neither in Hamburg nor in Germany has he felt threatened in any instance. He feels some concern about hardcore right-wing extremism, but is not seriously concerned about xenophobia.

Even though Hussam has already received some xenophobic comments on his website and his post (e.g. "GO HOME, nobody asked you to come here!"), he describes them as only "small things". He talks about women, who are scared to offer guidance when asked for directions, or misunderstandings based on language skills and habits, for example, the use of the word "please". Furthermore, he has noticed that, as he says, "it needs a lot of time to earn their [Germans] trust."

## 6.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

So far, Hussam has received support from the JobCenter, as he has the right to receive social welfare. On top of that, there is no support from international or local agencies besides the emergency support of the MoveON program after leetBoys’ bankruptcy. The idea to seek out public money to support the social startup is still a “work in progress”.

Even with a residence permit that offers only subsidarian protection, Hussam has the right to work three months after arrival.

Hussam is working on founding an official association for FlüchtlingMagazin, but has not yet started the process. He is not sure whether he has the right to found a business yet. After consultation with Julia von Weymarn, he is now (with the additional two-year extension to his residence permit) allowed to found a business. In my opinion, it is symptomatic of German bureaucracy that refugees are not sure about their rights, especially in the field of business.

On a general level, the City of Hamburg supports many initiatives for and by refugees. In any case, Hussam only has access to these publicly offered opportunities and he does not have access to public services or money. The same can be said for access to private services, as Hussam is still at the very beginning of his fundraising journey.

Due to the need to have a business plan to show your potential income, Hussam does not have access to apply for a credit from a bank. The access to public funding is also difficult to tackle—as Hussam has already learned, one has to fill out a great deal of forms, which is currently out of his reach.

Hussam does not have any issues with proving his identity as he came here with all documents he needed.

Hussam complains that the level of bureaucracy involved in the process is essentially discrimination against foreigners. This is simply not doable for people who still have issues with the German language and bureaucracy as such. The authorities are mainly good people; as Hussam says, “there are nice people who try to help you, and there are really unfriendly people, who don’t.”

Even though Hussam still only has subsidarian protection and is insecure about what might be happening in two years' time, he does not fear detention or deportation. But he says that the permanent insecurity of not having his family here and having no planning reliability greatly complicates the process of integration.

## 6.8 Conclusion

Our experience with Hussam has shown us that, as a refugee and a social entrepreneur, you have to be able to face at least three challenges at one and the same time: the standard challenges of entrepreneurship (founding a new business), the challenge of being a refugee entrepreneur (founding a business in a foreign country without close networks and access to assets) and the challenge of social entrepreneurship (pursuing hybrid targets, such as creating social and economic value). Starting *FlüchtlingMagazin* as a volunteer social initiative while receiving ongoing support from the JobCenter and simultaneously creating a stable financial business model is challenging. Nevertheless, it is inspiring to see such determination and the will to succeed—and the capacity for resilience perhaps growing as a result of migration experiences, which in this case may have helped the process of starting a new life as a refugee social entrepreneur in Germany.

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# 7

## The Story of Jonny, an Eritrean Entrepreneur in Tel Aviv, Israel

Sibylle Heilbrunn and Anna Rosenfeld

### 7.1 Introduction

In the Israeli context, the phenomenon of refuge is embedded within the historical context of Jewish and Israeli history. Israel has articulated a moral obligation to provide a place of refuge for survivors of the Jewish Holocaust and for contemporary Jews, and it is in this light that the “basic laws”, which constitute the core of Israeli immigration policy, need to be understood (Yaron et al. 2013). Thus, the “Law of Return” (1950)—directed at Jewish people only—states that every Jew in the world has the right to come to Israel to settle and acquire citizenship, if at least one grandparent is Jewish. At the same time, the “Law of Entry” (1952), directed at non-Jewish people, regulates the right of non-nationals to enter and reside in Israel alongside the adoption of the so-called “Prevention of Infiltration Law” (1954). The latter defines the term

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“infiltrator” as people who have “entered Israel knowingly and unlawfully” and who have been “a national or citizen of Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Trans-Jordan, or Yemen”, or who have been a resident, visitor or citizen of Palestine, armed, and who have sought “to cause death or serious injury to a person”. Initially, “infiltrators” were nationals of an enemy country, subject to criminal law, tried by a military tribunal and could be imprisoned upon arrest for five years (Yaron et al. 2013).

Since 2006, the arrival of approximately 60,000 east Africans, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea (Sabar 2010), has caused officials and civil society to revisit the policies and approaches of the state towards non-Jewish arrivals, exposing a hitherto underdeveloped asylum system. Sudanese and Eritreans were given a “Conditional Release Visa”, offering them group protection, meaning they are protected from deportation, but not allowed to work or have access to welfare or medical services (Hotline for Refugees and Migrant Workers 2014). This “temporary prevention of exclusion” (temporary group protection) derives from Israel’s obligation to the UN’s petition regarding the status of refugees. The state of Israel chooses to define “asylum seekers”<sup>1</sup> as “infiltrators”—foreigners who have illegally entered Israel through the Egyptian border and have been captured upon crossing the border or arrested within the borders of Israel. Israel’s policy towards asylum seekers is aimed at deportation rather than integration, including retention along borders, so-called “hot return”, forced geographic allocation and supposed “voluntary” departure, which is, in actuality, coerced (Barak-Bianco and Raijman 2015). Overall, Israel’s policy definitively makes these people illegal.

Eritrea is an east African state with a population of about 6 million. The Eritrean regime is a single-party regime and has been known to be a repressive dictatorship, violating human rights in ways that can be regarded as crimes against humanity. The people of Eritrea are involuntarily and unlimitedly recruited to the army, where they experience torture and slavery-like conditions. There is no political freedom in Eritrea, nor is there freedom of speech, movement, press or religion. These are the main reasons for the mass escape of Eritrean civilians from their homeland. Following the “Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2014 (EASO 2015), in terms of numbers, Eritreans



composed the third-largest group of asylum seekers in Europe, after Western Balkan State nationals and Syrians.

In western European countries, 84% of Eritrean asylum seekers are recognized as refugees, and social and economic integration is encouraged. Contrastingly, in Israel, legal and political authorities are cooperating to prevent the affordance of refugee status to Eritreans, assuming that this policy will encourage their departure from Israel. Thus, Israel deprives asylum seekers of their potential social and political rights and turns them into a marginalized group with little or no chance to integrate into local society. The people live in a constant state of instability and limbo (Anteby-Yemini 2015).

Against this background, it is even more surprising to observe asylum seekers and refugees in Israel engaged in entrepreneurship. Figure 7.1 shows Jonny, an asylum seeker from Eritrea, who started a kindergarten for children from the Eritrean community, and this chapter presents his story.



Fig. 7.1 Jonny at his kindergarten in South Tel Aviv

## 7.2 Personal History and Reason for Leaving Eritrea to Travel to Israel

Jonny was forcefully recruited to the Eritrean army in 2007. He described his two years of service as extremely tough and dangerous, working in conditions of slavery and rarely getting home visits, while being paid an extremely low wage that would not even cover the purchase of one kilogram of sugar. When asked to recount the moment he understood he had to flee, he answered:

*When my parents and siblings left the village to search for food and I could not help them. I met an old man who had been guarding in the army for years. They literally stole his life. I saw this man and said to myself I have to run away. And I knew that I had to leave the country.*

On the February 5 2009, when standing guard at the Ethiopian border at night, he crossed it and began walking away. In Ethiopia, he arrived at a UN facility where he stayed for 40 days. He then continued his journey on foot at night and crossed the border to Sudan. There, he remained in another UN facility for about four months, until he was kidnapped by Bedouins:

*The three Bedouins took me in a Toyota to the Sudan border, where people who aimed for Israel stayed. We were then taken via the Sahara Desert to Cairo. The Bedouins tried to blackmail families or acquaintances; if you can't raise the money they torture or kill. Eventually I was brought to Sinai and managed to escape with the help of a Bedouin who took me to the border.*

Jonny described the moment he managed to cross over a fence into Israel as unforgettable: Israeli soldiers told him, "Welcome". He was then sent to the Saharonim prison for two and a half months. He described these times as extremely hard, physically and mentally, since he was suffering from the aftermath of his flight, kidnapping and escape. When he was released from prison, Jonny was put on a bus to the Levinsky garden in south Tel Aviv. This journey marks the end of the detention period and the beginning of the period of surviving and flourishing as an asylum seeker in Israel.

### 7.3 Business Data and History of Establishing the Business

Jonny started his new life in Tel Aviv in 2009 and, with the help of other asylum seekers, found a cleaning job within two weeks. As soon as he had made a little extra money, he began transferring small amounts to his family in Eritrea on a regular basis. Rather exceptionally, and early on, Jonny grasped his need to learn the local language and made an effort to learn Hebrew as quickly as possible: *“The asylum seeker community in south Tel Aviv is rather big. One get along fine with the native language and English—what we Eritreans speak to our brothers from South Sudan. But then how shall we make contact with the native locals? We are living within them, aren’t we?”* He also started making contact with and forging personal relationships with Israelis. He continued with this rhythm of life, taking on several temporary and low-skilled jobs for a couple of years, all the while planning something he could create for himself.

Jonny opened a kindergarten in 2015. *“I wanted to be my own boss and also do something for the community. I did not like to see so many kids who did not know their language, the religion and the culture”*. He decided to give up the financially safer option of working in restaurants and cleaning to open an independent business. For the kindergarten, he had chosen a place that had formally been used for a carpentry business and transformed it into his home and business.

The kindergarten and daycare center is for children of the Eritrean community in south Tel Aviv. Jonny is the sole owner, and his wife, whom he met in Israel, works with him. His clients are exclusively from the Eritrean community, but for his supplies, such as food, toys and equipment, Jonny collaborates with neighboring businesses in south Tel Aviv—an area that can be described as a marginalized multicultural community, comprised of many socially and economically deprived populations.

In 2017, Jonny expanded his business by renting a building across the road from his center. The space was originally intended for another kindergarten business, but the contractors went bankrupt in the setup process. Since demand for kindergartens had been on the rise (there are an estimated 12,000 children from the Eritrean community in south Tel

Aviv), Jonny seized the opportunity and finished renovations on the building himself. The new building is much “fancier” than the first one and is almost fully equipped, which is unique in the asylum seekers’ community. Usually, kindergartens are located in inadequate locations.

Thus, Jonny’s kindergarten currently operates in two buildings for different age groups, from nursery to elementary school children. Jonny provides the children with food, security and educational content. In addition to being a kindergarten, Jonny “rents” parts of the second building for church worship and community events, thereby adding some income: “*Well, I understood that I needed more money to pay the expenses of the growing business. Since we have community meetings and prayers on Sundays, I suggested having them in the kindergarten which is closed on Sundays. Renting out the place for events pays an essential part of the maintenance costs*”. This multiple use of resources was not planned beforehand, but emerged over time. Since he runs the business independently—without financial aid from the municipality—he has had to take loans from the Eritrean community’s members. He has also received donations with the help of Israeli NGOs and sometimes volunteers come to help out. When expanding the kindergarten, Jonny definitely took a considerable financial risk. Fortunately, he seems to have overcome the most difficult first phase.

## 7.4 Individual Enablers and Constraints

*“As soon as the entrance gate of the kindergarten opened, the kids ran towards us, (the authors of this chapter) hugged us and held our hands, enthusiastically demanding our attention”*. Outside the building, next to the entrance, there are photographs pinned to the wall depicting Eritrean culture: women performing a coffee ceremony, a child holding his father’s hand, wildlife and the Tigrinya alphabet. Jonny made his way towards us, between groups of kids. For a moment he stopped to separate a fight. He handled it with a calm, authoritative voice. The two kids who were fighting quickly thereafter kissed one another on the cheek. Jonny then bent over to talk to a little girl who was crying. She calmed down and then went back to play with her friends. Jonny smiled at us. Work never ends in the kindergarten.

Jonny is a handsome man in his 30s with a charming smile. He speaks Tigrinya, English and Hebrew. His wife works with him in the kindergarten, and their daughter, now two years old, joined the kindergarten not long ago. Jonny is an entrepreneur in character.

*“It’s important for me to be a business owner, because business and entrepreneurship are ways to convey a message, to make a positive impact. I keep working with Israelis so that they will know, respect and not be afraid of refugees. The kindergarten influences many children every day positively and therefore also their parents. As a leader, it gives me the possibility to make a difference.”* When following up on his statement about “making a difference”, he explained: *“Well, none of us imagined him or herself in Israel when fleeing our countries. But here we are, things are difficult, so we need to get some control over the situation, some planning ahead, some normality into our lives. I try to create some feeling of community and togetherness in the kindergarten for all people involved”*.

Jonny manages a system of personal connections that helps him maintain the kindergarten. He expands and invests in the growth of his business, but requires more professional business planning in order to make the business profitable. Jonny works to help the community. He sees himself as both a businessman and a social entrepreneur. He says that the business is important mainly because there is a need for it in the community and because it provides the children with some education at a high level of quality in terms of providing for the physical and intellectual needs of the children: *“You should see what goes on in other kindergartens of the refugee community; 25 kids in a small flat, no place to move, to play, or to do anything. Many of the children are in their beds all day”*.

Economically, the kindergarten provides a reasonable income for his family, and they manage to send money on a monthly basis to their family members who remained in Eritrea. Jonny insists, however, that it is not for the money that he works all day. Rather, he does it to take care of the children, feed them, love them and keep them happy and content. The kindergarten is open from 6:00 am until 8:00 pm, and some children go there every day for the entirety of opening hours because their parents work all day, every day. They need to make money to pay the rent, make a living and send some money back to Eritrea.

Jonny has invested a lot of effort in creating a solid relationship with the Eritrean community, and its members constitute his social network. He does not spend money on marketing, but spends time maintaining relationships with people and spreading the word about his business. There is a great demand for his kindergarten, and for this reason, he decided to expand. Parents pay between 600 and 800 NIS per month, depending on their income situation. The monthly net income is around 50,000 NIS, but then rent, taxes, salaries and supplies have to be paid. The children receive a hot lunch every day, which Jonny buys from an Israeli provider in the neighborhood. On Fridays, Eritrean food is served.

## 7.5 Community Enablers and Constraints

Jonny does not get any help from the municipality or the state. As mentioned above, he runs the business on his own, has to pay high sums for property taxes and rents and, at the same time, continues to repay loans he used to open the business. Education is the only welfare service provided unconditionally to the community of asylum seekers in Israel. Thus, there are various educational frameworks in Tel Aviv for children of refugees and migrant workers, and those for children three years of age and older are launched in cooperation with municipalities, following the Israeli compulsory education law. But Jonny's kindergarten for the Eritrean community is unique. There are no significant competitors to the business. Although there are around 100 refugee kindergartens in Israel, the vast majority of which are in south Tel Aviv, Jonny's business is unique. Only a few other kindergartens provide a standard level of quality and care, and only his makes the preservation of cultural heritage of Eritrea, the refugees' country of origin, a priority. Jonny explained his relationship with the community: "*The Eritrean community in Tel Aviv is in need for a solution for their children. Therefore I try to support parents also in guidance of how to raise their children. Everything is so much more difficult here than it was in Eritrea*". Jonny employs only members from the Eritrean community, paying them a decent—above minimum—salary and caring for their children in the kindergarten free of charge. He explained that many young women are single mothers who got pregnant

at a young age. They not only need his help to reduce their monthly expenses, but they also need educational advice. Jonny talks to the children's parents at monthly evening meetings, trying to encourage them to maintain their Eritrean culture at home, speak Tigrinya and maintain the Christian religion, while at the same time adapting to the rather hostile Israeli environment.

Jonny explains that the refugees' children find themselves in a deeply confusing situation in Israel: "*They grow up here, they speak Hebrew, Tel Aviv is their home, Tel Aviv is all they have ever known, and here they go to kindergarten and later to school. But they do realize from a young age that they are unwanted in this society. They realize that they will never be a legitimate part of it. They realize that Israel is not theirs like they wanted to believe, and that their parents are looked upon as 'infiltrators' by the authorities. It is tough growing up and feeling this way*". To further drive home this point, Jonny mentioned a newspaper article which was written about his kindergarten and said: "*I told the reporter—look around—there are no infiltrators here—only children, as all children*". In response to the precarious reality of the refugee community in Israel, Jonny insists on maintaining their Eritrean heritage, so as to ensure the children's ability to reintegrate in Eritrea in the future—which is a major dream shared by all Eritrean refugees, he explained.

## 7.6 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

As shown in the stories presented above, Israel does not provide institutional enablers for refugees undertaking entrepreneurship. Rather, the situation can be characterized as institutional voids. Mair and Marti (2009) define institutional voids as "situations where institutional arrangements that support markets are absent, weak or fail to accomplish the role expected of them" (ibid.: 409). Voids are environments in which present institutions are insufficient (Mair et al. 2012), and this is exactly the situation in Tel Aviv, where due to political policies, government and/or municipality agents do not provide paths towards economic integration for refugees. Furthermore, only very limited educational services are provided to refugee children prior to them entering elementary school. In

addition, once they enter elementary school, extension services are needed, since parents usually work an average of 12 hours per day. It is within this reality that Jonny (and other refugee entrepreneurs) operate. Their entrepreneurial motivation increases because the environment is scarce in resources and poses many social problems. In the absence of sufficient public services to meet the needs of the refugee population, a hybrid form of social/business entrepreneurship emerges, as is the case for Jonny's kindergarten (Dacin et al. 2010; Estrin et al. 2013; Stephan et al. 2015). While navigating the institutional void, Jonny has managed to avoid clashes with the authorities by keeping contact with key agents, such as fire department personnel and others at the health department, in order to obtain and maintain the permissions he requires: *"It's so important to work together with some people of the municipality, because then they see that I am serious and operate the business according to the rules"*.

## 7.7 Methodological Considerations

Gathering the data for this case study has not been easy, despite Jonny having been very cooperative. Since he had previously been interviewed by newspaper journalists, we were able to access some information from those sources, while trying to entice him to join us for an interview. In the end, we talked with him four times (one time via the phone, very late in the evening) and visited the kindergarten three times. All our interviews took place with the kindergarten's staff and children around; there was never a dull moment or a quiet minute. We talked to NGO personnel who are active in the community and drew from previous research regarding the asylum seekers' conditions in Tel Aviv. We contacted the municipality's education department, who informed us that they are aware of the kindergarten but that they do not have the ability or desire to provide it with funds, since there are other facilities available. A constant theme throughout our study was the relationship that exists between the community and the entrepreneurs—those making money for a living and providing for the needs of the community. This came up often in our interviews and in the secondary materials examined.



## 7.8 Concluding Remarks

Jonny is an entrepreneur and he is a bricoleur, possessing resourcefulness and adaptability within the context of the community of asylum seekers in south Tel Aviv, Israel. In line with theory, a bricoleur entrepreneur uses whatever resources he can acquire, through whatever strategy it takes, to promote his entrepreneurial goal (Di Domenico et al. 2010). Bricolage has been used in the entrepreneurship literature to analyze entrepreneurship in resource-poor environments (Baker and Nelson 2005; Garud and Karnøe 2003), with its main components being: “making do”, a refusal to be constrained by limitations imposed by the institutional environment and improvisation (Di Domenico et al. 2010). “Making do” includes the acquisition and combination of resources when taking on novel tasks by using diverse skills (Fisher 2012; Davidsson et al. 2017), when resisting environmental constraints and improvising in terms of creative problem solving. This is exactly what Jonny has been doing within the public sphere of south Tel Aviv. He has set up a kindergarten when faced with many constraints and provides for important needs he has been able to identify. Within this process, he has evolved as a community leader, convincing parents that it is important to foster Eritrean heritage and give children a sense of belonging—something that they will most likely not receive from the wider Israeli community at present. He initially realized his vision by setting up his first kindergarten and then later expanding it profoundly, for and with his community. He did so by combining whatever resources he could acquire. His refusal to accept resource limitations has led him to make use of his kindergarten facilities for weekend community events, thereby leveraging more income while forging connections between the wider community, parents and families to his kindergarten. In a way, he provides a public place—a space where asylum seekers from Eritrea can be themselves. Jonny’s story is a powerful one—about an asylum seeker in Tel Aviv—an entrepreneur and community leader, bricoleuring in an institutional void.

## Notes

1. A worldwide definition of an immigrant who seeks to be recognized as a refugee and be protected by the first safe state s/he enters after fleeing from her/his homeland. Being an asylum seeker puts one in an intermediate state in which an immigrant waits for an answer to a formal request to be recognized as a refugee.

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# 8

## A Case Study of an Ethiopian Refugee in Germany

Bamrot Yekoye Abebe and Petra Moog

### 8.1 Germany and Refugees

Germany is currently recognized as the leading European nation to welcome refugees.<sup>1</sup> The International Organization for Migration (IOM)<sup>2</sup> defines “refugee” as follows:

A person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. (Art. 1(A) (2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A (2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol)

The then-Organization for African Union (OAU) defined the status of a refugee at its 1969 convention as follows:

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“every person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” (OAU 1969)

The recent opening of Germany’s doors for refugees has exponentially increased the number of foreigners in the country, but Germany is no stranger to refugees and has been receiving them for decades. According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Destatis 2016<sup>3</sup>), there are about 10 million foreigners living in Germany, and among them, nearly one million received refugee benefits in the year 2016. The German government has since received at least another million refugees in the country (ibid.). Refugees came to Germany before the refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016 from a number of different countries in the 1950s and 1960s and later, due to the high demand for a work force as a result of strong industrial development and economic growth. This kind of “Gastarbeiter” policy was only intended to help overcome work force problems. However, today, Germany faces serious demographic challenges. The population aged between 20 and 65 will shrink by one-third while the population aged 80 or over will double by 2060 (Rinne and Constant 2013). The fertility rate in Germany does not offer much hope, either. The decline of the working force will largely be felt by the economy from 2020 onwards. Experts generally agree that the long-term solution for Germany’s declining work force problem is immigration (ibid). Table 8.1, which has extracted from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and

**Table 8.1** Key demographic factors

Population key indicators	Germany in 2013 (%)	EU (28 countries) in 2013 (%)
Working age population percentage	65.56	66.02
Young population percentage	13.17	15.61
Elderly population percentage	21.27	18.37
Fertility ratio	1.42	1.52

Source: OECD report, 2016

Development (OECD)<sup>4</sup> report, shows selective demographic factors of Germany in comparison to the European Union (EU) averages (Table 8.1).

However, integrating immigrants, especially refugees, necessitates effort, and reaping the benefit of a potential new work force does not materialize overnight. Scholars such as Berry (1997) believe that migrants pursue different routes while settling into their new society, and that the outcome also differs depending on the route they follow.

## 8.2 Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest independent nations. The east African country has a population of over 100 million in its nearly 1.2 million-square-kilometer area. The younger generation (<25 years of age) numbers 62,642,288 people, and that number is increasing. The human development index for the year 2016 (UNDP 2016)<sup>5</sup> shows Ethiopia as the 174th most developed among the 188 countries measured, putting the nation among the less developed. Studies show that the two major reasons that Ethiopians leave their country is poverty and lack of opportunities for development. The influx of Ethiopian migrants to mostly western countries started in the 1970s, when the military regime revolted against the traditional monarchy and took power.

Despite recent reports showing encouraging economic growth for the country, Ethiopian youth still face severe challenges, such as unemployment and the inability to fully exercise political freedom. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) described the government of Ethiopia as “repressive” in its annual report (Human Rights Watch 2017). According to the HRW, the regime has cracked down violently on opposing voices and suppressed freedom of expression. The World Bank overview<sup>6</sup> of the country states that the economy still enjoyed a growth of 8% in 2017 and the proportion of people living in extreme poverty is continually reducing. However, the report points out that unemployment and good governance are the two major challenges the country needs to address in order to sustain its economic growth and attain its development goals. The following table is generated from the NationMaster comparative report of Germany and Ethiopia in key economic factors (Table 8.2).

**Table 8.2** Comparison of Germany and Ethiopia in key economic factors

Items	Ethiopia	Germany
GDP	\$72.4 billion	\$3.46 trillion
GNI per capita (PPP)	\$1730	\$49,530
Population	102,403,196	82,667,685
Urban population (% of total)	19.9%	75.51%
Rural population (% of total)	80.1%	24.49%
Total fertility rate	5.31/woman	1.42/woman
Agricultural labor force	85%	2.4%
Industrial labor force	5%	29.7%
Service labor force	10%	67.8%
Unemployment (% of total)	5.73%	4.31%

Source: World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=ET-DE>. Accessed 14/10/2017) and NationMaster report compilation (<http://www.nationmaster.com/au>. Accessed 13/10/2017)

### 8.3 The Story of a Young Ethiopian Man

Kaficho is the youngest of three children and the only son in his family. His family is in the upper middle class of Addis Ababa, who enjoy the modern life style. His parents were well educated in Ethiopia and abroad, his family allows expression of opinion and political discussions were not forbidden, which is unusual for typical Ethiopian family culture. He sees his late father as an honest man who stood on what he believed, regardless of the consequences, and Kaficho believes that his father is his role model. As he grew up in the northern part of Addis Ababa, his involvement in political debates and forums resulted in the first attack from the Ethiopian government. When he was a freshman at Addis Ababa University, Kaficho found himself among the hundreds of students penalized for their political opinion. He dropped out of college and took his first step in entrepreneurship. He opened a small butcher shop with a friend right after dropping out of college. This endeavor was a success at the beginning and encouraged the young entrepreneurs to add another product line. The new product line was a famous Ethiopian delicacy: raw meat. This successful business came to its demise when the owners were charged with political accusations and thrown in jail. After his acquittal, Kaficho went to Gondar University to study tourism development.

During his studies, he again embarked upon an entrepreneurial venture as an independent tour guide in one of the country's top tourist destinations, the city of Gondar. It was on one of the tours he organized that he met his future wife, a German nurse, working on exchange program facilitated by Ethiopian and German universities.

He went to Germany as a graduate student and completed his master's degree in international business and tourism management. He returned to his home country in 2010 despite significant counsel against doing so from various different sources, who encouraged him to remain in Germany. His wife stayed behind to finish her studies, and he planned for her to come to Ethiopia and to live together in his home country. He used his network to attract German tourists to Ethiopia by developing different tour packages; he did not waste any time in opening his tour operator company with two partners in Addis Ababa.

He joined the faculty of one of the government-run universities near Addis Ababa and within a few months, he sensed the subtle messages directed towards him by the ruling party. He was encouraged to join the party or assume the risk of forfeiting his career and future business opportunities. These subtle suggestions were extended to him in almost every meeting he attended at the university, which disturbed him greatly. He rejected the offer and was aware of what happened to those who opposed the party. His past internment in prison because of his political views did not help the situation, either. He made a decision to abandon the plan of bringing his family to Ethiopia and settling there. He knew it was only a matter of time and he could not bring his family to such a problematic situation, so he discussed the situation in detail with his wife when he visited Germany for family vacation. Upon his return from his vacation, he immediately resigned and left the country.

Kaficho claimed his right for family reunion and returned to Germany permanently in 2013. He travels from time to time to Ethiopia for business reasons, but does not stay long and avoids becoming involved in the nation's politics at any cost. He resents the fact that he cannot live in his native land without being concerned for his safety.



## 8.4 Kaficho's Entrepreneurial Endeavor in Germany

Kaficho attempted to get an employment in Germany based on his German master's degree. The job search was discouraging; he even attended six months of project management training to increase his competitiveness in the job market. He states that the German job market is tough to penetrate as a foreigner, even if he has good German qualifications and speaks fluent German. Kaficho decided to look for jobs that require relatively low qualification levels, and he landed at REWE as a shop assistant. He saved some money and bought an old car for less than 2000 euros and sold it in Ethiopia, which earned him a profit of 1000 euros. He believed that he could bypass the challenging job market by creating his own business. He established Kaficho Trading in early 2015 in Heidelberg, Germany. The business is a sole proprietorship, with an annual transaction of around 500,000 euros. His sister, who is a chemist in Addis Ababa, sometimes supports him in establishing and maintaining contacts with his suppliers. His clients are German and Ethiopian firms. His German clients are small companies that distribute and sell the coffee that he imports from Ethiopia. His Ethiopian clients are small and medium-sized enterprises looking to buy machinery, generally used machinery, from Germany. Kaficho's suppliers are companies based in both countries, each looking to buy what the other produces best. Kaficho's network and knowledge helped him strategically to exploit the opportunities in both countries. Ethiopian farming businesses and his former partners from the tour operator company in Ethiopia are his strongest partners. Kaficho explains some of the challenges he has with some of his Ethiopian customers—they tend to approach him for establishing a network with suppliers and try to push him out of the business deal. Because of these problems, he has decided to keep his list of German suppliers confidential. He believes he can measure the success of his business by the income the business generates, the value of the transactions and the number of businesses involved as suppliers and customers in both countries.

He explains that the major push/pull factors for him to start a business. The major push was his unemployment. When he saw locals who were less qualified than he was receive the job for which he was applying, he became frustrated. This made him feel inadequate, but his family's support gave him the courage to keep fighting. The major pull factor was that he found out how he could utilize the unique network and knowledge that he has established. He has business experience and expertise, as well as command of the German language and a network he can use to run a business between Germany and Ethiopia.

## 8.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

Kaficho's previous experience in running a business has helped him to quickly establish a business network and start his business with limited financial resources. His biggest motivation comes from his determination to succeed in owning and running an international business. His exposure to the international community through his entrepreneurial activities and the different jobs he held in Ethiopia built his capacity to build personal networks easily. His fluency in German and familiarity with the German culture, which he acquired from having a German family as well as from his stay in Germany as a student and as a permanent resident, are effectively used in starting and running his business. However, he is frustrated by the complete lack of support from local banks, who rejected him when he approached them for financial capital. Kaficho believes the banks did not trust him and that the main reason why the banks feel this way is based on his foreign origin. He had to use his own money and borrow from his extended family members. This created a financial burden for him and hindered the growth capacity of his business. Since his immigration was planned, he had time to depart in an orderly fashion. He sold some shares from his car rental and tour operator company to his fellow business partners. His family owned a small building in which he owns a share and he transferred it to his mother and sister jointly. However, his financial status at the beginning was too poor to start his own business, and he had to save money working at REWE and wait for his share of the annual profit from a small car rental business he owns with three other

partners in Addis Ababa. Kaficho's father-in-law has supported his effort in establishing and running a business. His father-in-law helped to connect Kaficho to some potential clients and partners, who turned out to be his first German clients.

Despite successfully tackling the challenges of life as an immigrant, Kaficho still regrets being forced to leave his native country against his wishes. He misses friends and relatives, as well as Ethiopian food and cultural ceremonies. He said he watches YouTube videos of Ethiopian Orthodox church services to feel like he attends mass every Sunday. He also feels out of place and asks: "My fellow Ethiopians see me as Europeanized and the Germans see me as a foreigner, so who am I?"

## 8.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

Kaficho praises his in-laws for supporting his startup; his father-in-law encouraged him to start a business and introduced him to some helpful people and clients. Some of the first cars he sold in Ethiopia were bought from these people. He believes that Germany is a country where the rule of law prevails and human rights are respected. He feels safe and hopes to exercise his rights as a German citizen upon becoming one. He insists that Germans are good people, willing to learn new things and be respectful of other cultures. However, this enthusiasm is not replicated when he discusses the business community, including the chamber of commerce, which shows little interest in accommodating him. He recalls going to the local chamber of commerce to establish a trade link between the city and chambers of commerce in Addis Ababa. He was told to bring a proposal, which he soon developed, but it was declined without any explanation. According to him, access to the local market is a challenging task. He said getting an email response in and of itself is challenging, which he attributes to a suspicion among German business people of names that are not familiar, who then treat his e-mail as a spam. The only professional advice readily available to him was from his tax consultant. He never faced a direct, racially motivated attack. However, earning trust from German clients and suppliers is exasperatingly challenging for him.

Kaficho states that the majority of his German clients came to him because of the recommendations of other German clients who were satisfied with their business dealings with him. He is grateful to his German father-in-law, who brought him his first clients. He has no security fears, but sometimes feels like an unwelcome guest. He believes that it takes time to earn the trust of the German business community and is convinced that once he has earned that trust, the Germans will be loyal partners and clients.

## 8.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Kaficho was asked if he has received any kind of support from international or local agencies. He states that he has not received any direct assistance from the aforementioned agencies in starting and running his business. However, he mentioned that training programs, like the one he participated in about project management by GIZ, have proven helpful to him later on when he established his own business. Kaficho remains grateful for the rights that Germany granted him and the training opportunity he received from GIZ. He says that his rights to work, to be protected from harm and to register his business are respected throughout his stay in the country. Access to public and private services has not been a problem. However, he responds that he sometimes has to use his network of native German family members and friends to ease the hassle of accessing these services, as some service providers tend to be reluctant to provide them to a foreigner. He says he is asked for more documentary proof than fellow Germans are when attempting to access public services. His major disappointment concerning institutional support is the local chamber of commerce, because his repeated effort to engage himself in their programs did not yield any results. He suggests they have a separate office that deals with non-German business people in the area. Kaficho thinks things are better in big cities, as some of his friends living in cities like Frankfurt am Main tell him that the institutions are more vibrant and accommodate foreigners.

## 8.8 Conclusion

Kaficho's story represents a niche of refugees from developing nations that are better suited to surviving and succeeding in economically advanced parts of the world. Scholars (Kloosterman et al. 1999) who try to study migrants in their host country using the "mixed embeddedness" concept suggest giving due attention to the degree to which migrants are embedded in the socioeconomic and politico-institutional environment of the country of settlement. Kaficho suggests that institutions in Germany need to increase their ease of access for foreigners and try to minimize the stereotyping that negatively affects the business opportunity that foreigners can utilize. Germany is acquiring human resources that can be used to fill the labor shortage pressuring its industries. Kaficho believes that Germany needs to equip its institutions to integrate the refugees in order to make the best out of the inflowing human capital. Despite the popular belief that well educated people from developing nations will take any opportunity to stay in the developed world, he returned to his home country after finishing his higher education in Germany. He tried to contribute to the development of his home country, but the circumstances forbade him, so he decided to return to Germany. Kaficho believes that he faced a great challenge and wonders how hard it must be for refugees with fewer resources and networks at their disposal. His upbringing in a middle-class family in an urban area, his exposure to quality education and his entrepreneurial experience helped him to overcome the challenges. He remains grateful to his German wife and his in-laws for their love, understanding and support. Things could have turned out badly, he says, if it were not for them standing by his side.

## Notes

1. <http://www.infomigrants.net>. Accessed 14/02/2018.
2. <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#refugee>. Accessed 15/10/2017.
3. [https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/\\_CrossSection/Refugees/Refugees.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/_CrossSection/Refugees/Refugees.html). Accessed 25/09/2017.

4. OECD (2016).
5. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016\\_human\\_development\\_report.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf). Accessed 25/09/2017.
6. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview>. Accessed 14/10/2017.

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# 9

## The Blessing African Boutique and City Market Food: A Congolese Refugee Business in Darwin, Australia

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### 9.1 Country-Specific Information and Data

Refugees escape their countries of origin for several reasons, including war, persecution and natural and environmental disasters. It must also be recognized that the refugee phenomenon is not new. What is new is the recognition and acknowledgment of the fact that the extent of the contributions that refugees make to both their host country and to themselves and their families is by and large dependent upon the opportunities they are presented with. Not all refugees are the same. Therefore, they cannot be portrayed as homogenous by nature. The extent of their contributions is dependent upon many factors, including refugee policy in the host nations.

The national policy on refugees, where it exists, is a factor that affects the contributions of individual refugees. Individuals who are refugees, dependent on the national refugee policies, are either portrayed as a burden and a drain on a nation's economic resources or as making substantial

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individual contributions to the nation state. National policies can sometimes assist in unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit, as the amount of money refugees receive is not sufficient to achieve economic independence. “Work for the Dole activities will give you the chance to build the skills that employers want, like teamwork, communication and reliability; increase your confidence and show you are ready for work and meet new people and make contacts who can be a referee for you when you apply for jobs be involved in your local community” (<https://docs.jobs.gov.au/documents/work-dole-information-job-seekers>).

“Centrelink’s main role with Work for the Dole is enforcing sanctions when unemployed people don’t take part” (Karlsen et al. 2011).

Some of these refugees are no longer dependent on government subsidies. They have either gone into formal employment or embarked on entrepreneurship. Research has proven that “Humanitarian migrants were the most entrepreneurial while skilled migrants generated the most income in 2009–2010, according to figures released for the first time by the Australian Bureau of Statistics” (Collins 2016; ABS 4 September 2015). The term “humanitarian migrants” refers to refugees and asylum seekers.

The displacement levels are escalating, with a record of 65.6 million people worldwide who have been forced from their homeland. Of this number, nearly 22.5 million are refugees, with over half the population being under the age of 18 (UNHCR 2017). Australia has a small level of refugee recognition. In 2016, 6567 asylum seekers were recognized as refugees in Australia, as compared to Germany, who recognized 443,210 and Uganda, who recognized 532,735 as refugees during the same year (Fact Check 2017).

While “UNHCR recommends or refers people for resettlement, Australia’s Immigration Department has the ultimate decision on whether to grant a visa. The country has four offshore refugee category visas”:

1. Refugee (visa subclass 200): This visa is for people who are subject to persecution in their home country and are in need of resettlement. The majority of applicants who are considered under this category are identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and referred to the Australian Government for resettlement consideration.



2. In-Country Special Humanitarian (visa subclass 201): This visa offers resettlement to people who have suffered persecution in their country of nationality or usual residence and who have not been able to leave that country to seek refuge elsewhere. It is designed for those living in their home country and subject to persecution in their home country.
3. Emergency Rescue (visa subclass 203): This visa offers an accelerated processing arrangement for people who satisfy refugee criteria and whose lives or freedom depend on urgent resettlement. It is for those who are subject to persecution in their home country and assessed to be in a situation such that delays due to normal processing could put their lives or freedom in danger.
4. Woman at Risk (visa subclass 204): This visa is for female applicants and their dependents who are subject to persecution or are of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), are living outside their home country without the protection of a male relative and are in danger of victimization, harassment or serious abuse because of their gender. The majority of applicants who are considered under this category are identified and referred to the Australian Government by the UNHCR (Woman at Risk Visa (Subclass 204) (Karlsen et al. 2011)).

The Refugee Council of Australia records that as of September 30 2017, a total of 36,362 Bridging Visa E (BVEs) were granted to Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMA). Of these, 20,599 remain in the community. BVE (subclass 050–051) is a temporary visa. If your substantive visa has ended, it lets you stay in Australia lawfully while you make arrangements to leave, finalize your immigration matter or are waiting for an immigration decision. It does not let you reenter Australia if you leave (Illegal Maritime Arrivals on Bridging Visa E September 2017).

Australia is a country built on migration. Every year, Australia welcomes over 190,000 migrants. Australia also has a long history of successfully resettling refugees and is a world leader in refugee resettlement. Since federation, Australia has welcomed more than 850,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants who have enriched the nation enormously.

Newly arrived refugees and migrants can face extra challenges in seeking employment. A well-recognized and significant aspect of successful settlement is gaining stable, adequate remuneration and fulfilling employment. They benefit from the federal government's Work for the Dole scheme, which provides crucial exposure to, and experience of, Australian workplaces, according to a leading settlement agency (Refugee Council of Australia 2011).

Work for the Dole is part of the Australian Government's jobactive employment service. It is a work experience program designed to help job seekers gain new skills while they look for work. "It connects job seekers with employers and is delivered by a network of jobactive providers in over 1700 locations across Australia" (<https://www.jobs.gov.au/jobactive>). As a part of Work for the Dole, host organizations get access to extra sets of hands to undertake activities and projects that may not normally get done. This helps job seekers gain the skills, experience and confidence they need to move off of welfare and into a job.

Work for the Dole places cannot replace paid work positions or involve tasks that would normally be done by a paid employee. This includes casual and part-time employees and reductions in hours or customary overtime usually allocated to a paid worker. It also places job seekers in activities where they can gain skills and experience that give back to the community and can help them find a job.

Eligible job seekers registered with a job-active provider will need to participate in Work for the Dole or another approved activity for six months each year to keep receiving their income support if they have mutual obligation requirements.

According to Abbott, (2000), "Work for the Dole is organized in the local community, by the local community, for the local community". Job-active providers work with host organizations to identify suitable activities (Abbott 2000).

This is the unique life story of Edouard, who went through difficult situations and yet proved that when the spirit of success is prevalent in an individual, they will live to fulfil their dreams. One's background and surroundings do not determine one's destination. It is the personality of the individual that dominates the outcome, so long as an opportunity presents itself.

Originally, Edouard was a social entrepreneur in the DRC. In Australia, he became an economic entrepreneur for social purposes and uses his

social family network to grow his business. His personal attributes did not change from the DRC to Australia. The status of “refugee” did not hinder Edouard from achieving; instead, he came out of the “refugee” cocoon and proved his importance in the business community. Edouard is a proud owner of Blessing African Boutique and City Market Food, which started from humble beginnings as Blessing African Boutique in 2013.

Edouard was very open and willing to share his story of the journey from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to Darwin, Australia, which provides a clear vision to view the importance of one’s life from a different platform.

The determination to succeed and grow in business despite the constraints he has faced is a testimony to what refugees can achieve if they are presented with an opportunity. Edouard, as a social entrepreneur, has reached many communities and impacted the members of the community in which he lives, inspiring many to join the business sector.

## **9.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving One’s Home Country**

Edouard Ndjamba Ndjoku was born and raised in Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, also known as the DRC, approximately 50 years ago. He is married, and the couple has six children: three boys and three girls. Edouard and his family live in Darwin, Australia, where he is a sole trader.

Like everyone else, Edouard had hopes of spending all his life in the DRC. He was looking forward to contributing economically and politically to his nation. Little did he know, that he was destined to live in Australia.

While he was in the DRC, Edouard made a living by connecting sales people and potential customers and earning commission. Edouard studied for a National Diploma in mathematics and physics in the DRC. He also studied for an architectural degree in the DRC for three years, which he did not complete due to the situation in the DRC. Unfortunately, he could not take the same course in Darwin because of family commitments.

He was also a leader of a Christian group. Edouard used to assist rural people with transportation of their farm produce. He was a social entrepreneur. As an architectural student, Edouard used to assist people in starting small businesses, mainly in the construction industry.

Things started to go wrong when he denounced the actions of the Congolese government in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a human rights activist, he was victimized by the present government, and some members were victims of torture and stress and were traumatized because of his denunciation of the financial fraud and unlawful exploitation of Congolese resources overseas by international communities. He became a wanted man by the political police.

### **9.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country**

Edouard fled through Brazzaville (Republic of Congo) to the nearby Republic of Angola. Things did not work out well for him in Angola, so he went to Zambia–Lusaka, where he stayed for nine months as an asylum seeker. Life was not easy for Edouard in the refugee camp, so he moved to South Africa, where people were suffering from hunger and joblessness. Edouard's life was going in circles, hopping from nation to nation, faced with harsh conditions. Going back to the DRC was not an option because of the political situation. He then moved to Zimbabwe, where life was at least marginally better.

Edouard was yearning to connect with his family, especially his wife and children, yet he did not know how this would happen. When Edouard left Kinshasa, his wife moved with their children to her family in Katanga. There was no contact between them. He continued to seek a safe place to live, hoping for a miracle to unite him with his family.

Eventually, a pastor helped to reunite Edouard and his family. By that time Edouard, had two children with his wife, and their third child was born in Zimbabwe. This proved challenging; their child was refused citizenship despite being born in that nation.

Edouard had a spirit of entrepreneurship in him. Despite the hardships he faced, the spirit of entrepreneurship did not die. While in Zimbabwe, he managed to work as the manager of a band.

Edouard's refugee status was initially refused, only to be granted after he presented an inscription from a book (*Jeune Afrique Magazine/Youth Africa Magazine*) found in the Alliance Francaise library in Lusaka. The inscription was the only evidence he had, and it referred to his speech at one a press conference he had given in the DRC where he denounced the government.

Edouard travelled from his homeland through various countries seeking assistance until he was granted refugee status in Australia, where his status changed from refugee to entrepreneur. He has contributed economically to the nation of Australia through his business. He created new markets for domestic commodities. His products are valuable to the general development of the community. The community relies on these products. As an entrepreneur, Edouard invests in a diverse range of products and services that the people need. This ensures a better life for the people in the community because various types of goods and services are at their disposal. He also promotes international trade by importing some of his products from abroad. The increase of products and services through Edouard's business pushes the gross national product (GNP) to a higher level. This plays an important role in the growth of the national income, as well as raising individual per capita income.

## 9.4 Business Data and History of Establishing Business

Life in Australia was not easy for Edouard. He arrived in Australia in October 2007 and, together with his family, he was given transitional accommodation for three weeks, in exchange for a small rental payment, by Melaleuca Refugee. Melaleuca Refugee Centre (MRC) provides counselling and early settlement support services to refugees and facilitates community development programs in the areas of cultural transition, strengthening families and peace leadership.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Melaleuca takes an

integrated approach to supporting people from refugee backgrounds. MRC is the lead provider of services to people from refugee backgrounds in the Northern Territory (NT) and is the NT member of the National Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) (Melaluca Annual Report-2013\_2014).

Later, Edouard and his family were introduced to Centrelink, where they would be able to receive an allowance for survival in Australia. Centrelink is part of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and delivers a range of payments and services for people at times of major change. These include government benefits and payments to support new arrivals in Australia. Centrelink “provides a range of services to help support migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants settle into life in Australia” (<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/information-in-your-language>).

After three months, Edouard and his family moved to Melaleuca Accommodation, a private house rental, with the assistance of Melaleuca Refugee Centre. The allowances from Centrelink were not enough to cover the family’s needs. He moved from government assistance—Centrelink—into formal employment, until he was able to become an entrepreneur.

Edouard looked for a job to enable him look after his immediate family in Australia and his extended family in the DRC. He was referred to Palmerston Schools Service Providers, who assessed his qualifications. The policy of this service provider was to provide assessment of the qualifications held by individuals. The results would sort the candidate into different streams, with one option being a stream where individuals are able to look for employment without assistance. This is the stream into which Edouard was placed.

The Congolese network is very small in Darwin, but they managed to connect Edouard to a cleaning job. The focus of the network and the client base expanded to encompass the wider west African network. This network eventually connected Edouard to a factory job through a Sudanese colleague. Then, a Nigerian colleague connected him to a support worker job, based on his credentials. Edouard worked for Carpentaria Disability. He had a second job as a taxi driver, which he later stopped because it was too stressful. He later found another job through the

Internet as a youth worker with Lifestyle Solutions, where he worked for six years. During this time, Edouard realized that he could establish a business and make money and he therefore started his own business. The business offers products and services, such as hair styling products and other African items, mainly to the west African community and indigenous customers.

Edouard did his best to live an independent life until he was able to overcome all the challenges he had experienced and join the business community. He encouraged himself to pursue his dream of entrepreneurship, which was realized when he established his first business, Blessing African Boutique in 2013. While other refugees, some of whom were former business people in their home nations, might have failed to pursue their business goals, Edouard did not give up. The spirit of entrepreneurship prevailed.

## 9.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

Edouard refused to be limited by his circumstances.

Blessing African Boutique and City Market Food is a one-stop-shop for all, providing the community with a variety of goods and services which include African food, clothing and hair products, to name just a few.

Edouard saw an opportunity to venture into business, and this kept him positive even when he did not have the financial resources to pursue his goal. He had no collateral to secure funds from any financial institution. He had no credit history, nor was he creditworthy enough to be considered for any type of loan in Australia. Some refugees have since resorted to microfinance to start their dream businesses in Australia (ABC news 2017).

Venturing into business was not an easy task for Edouard, and it was made more difficult based on his circumstances and challenging personal history. In the DRC, starting a business is very easy, unlike in Australia, where the processes involve registration, insurance and Australian Business Number (ABN).

Edouard's business is a sole proprietorship, but he receives assistance from his wife, who manages the businesses. Being a sole trader allows

him, as the owner, to be in control. His wife contributes greatly to the business. While he is busy with other things, his wife takes control and is very familiar with the business environment. In fact, she is the only person running and working in the salon, since Edouard cannot do it. The older children have their commitments elsewhere, while the younger ones are in school.

## 9.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

As a small business owner, Edouard relied on family loans as a source of finance (Romano et al. 2001). His status did not allow him to access a loan from financial institutions. Edouard is in a group of 30 people and they have what they call *likenemba roustine*. Each member contributes a stated amount of 500 dollars fortnightly, and the money is given to the first member in line. The order is chosen through a ballot. Each member picks up a number which determines their position in the group. This is how Edouard raised the capital to start his business. This has encouraged many people within this community, and many lives have been transformed and many now own their own houses.

Community engagement is one of the major enablers of effective businesses (Cavaye 2004). Edouard is a very hardworking individual, both at home and in the community. He is engaged in many community activities, which includes being the president of the DRC community in Darwin. He has compassion for his people, which is one of the main reasons that he decided to establish a business that provides native food and clothing to the community. His influential position in the community makes it easier for Edouard to encourage peace among families. In return, Edouard has gained respect from the community, and the community—as his main customer base—contributes to his business.

The community contributes to his business by influencing the various types of products they expect Edouard to supply. They support these choices by purchasing those products. Suggestions and feedback have helped the growth of this business as it has led to high customer satisfaction.



However, there are some constraints due to transportation of goods, which leads to high pricing. This is something beyond Edouard's control, considering that is the trend in the NT because of distance.

Edouard's business clients are from all walks of life, though the African community members are his primary customer base. Indigenous people are also clients of Edouard's business. The business is open to everyone, and it is very easy to access.

Edouard's business has various suppliers. The products come mainly from China, Thailand, South Africa, Nigeria and the DRC. Sometimes, Edouard travels to other states, such as Melbourne and Perth, to source products from other African businesses. Though Edouard can live and do business in these states, which would be a cheaper option, the compassion he has for the community in Darwin anchors him to that region.

## 9.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Edouard faced challenges in starting his business, which included failure to raise capital due to his lack of credit history, assets or collateral. Furthermore, his qualifications were not recognized in Australia.

Despite having gone through hardships in his life, Edouard maintained a strong will of entrepreneurship. Being a refugee in a foreign land was not a threat to Edouard. Instead, it was an opportunity pursue his dream on entrepreneurship. It was the right time start a business, a goal he had nurtured for a long time. This was the right time and place for a breakthrough in Edouard's life. His compassion for others still continues in Edouard's business and is fulfilled every day.

Every business has its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as well as enablers and inhibitors. As a sole trader, Edouard understands the importance of certain processes which affect the business both positively and negatively. Decision making is a very major aspect of business (Venkatesh et al. 2002). The individual spirit of entrepreneurship and personal drive to source scarce products to suit the community's needs was one of the main reasons that made Edouard to go into business.

The business is achieving its stated objectives as planned. It has grown from having a few things on its shelves to filling the shop. This includes

connecting the community to their home countries by introducing Lycamobile international SIM cards. His business performance has improved since 2013. In comparison to similar African businesses, his business is performing very well. It has developed customer relations with indigenous people as well as other customers from different nationalities.

Certain constraints, such as import policies and security, deterred him from accessing products from some nations since he had no knowledge of how to do so. Edouard's experience as a social entrepreneur in the DRC enabled him to understand the government processes.

## 9.8 Methodological Considerations

The main methodological tool we used was first to define "refugee" and "entrepreneur". The Guardian, in an article dated September 4 2015, described refugees as "migrants who arrived as refugees" or "Humanitarian migrants", who generated income through entrepreneurship (Jacobsen 2002). An entrepreneur is defined as "An entrepreneur is a person who organizes and manages a business undertaking assuming the risk for the sake of profit. An entrepreneur sees an opportunity, makes a plan, starts a business, manages the business and receives the profits" (SBDC).

Understanding these two terms made it easier for us to conduct this case study. The other issue that helped with the success of this study was the availability and willingness of Edouard to provide information in a timely manner. He had all the information we required at his fingertips.

Though Edouard and his family are now settled in a safe country, anxiety and at times panic persisted, specifically due to worry about his family members that still remain in Africa. The psychological challenges of separation are numerous and complex, as is the uncertainty of their safety and the strength of parental affection, which contributed significantly to his anxiety. He misses that closeness with his extended family. He cannot go back to the DRC because of the cruelty, atrocities and calamities. There are no indication of changes happening in the DRC; instead, things were getting worse.

Some refugees might encounter traumatic situations and also experience family separation. This could hinder their progression into business,

even though the entrepreneurship spirit might still be embedded within them. Edouard has overcome this phase.

Not all refugees are entrepreneurs or in business: only those who bear the seed of entrepreneurship. As a result, the methodology we used in analyzing this case was to incorporate a view that we as outsiders will never be able to grasp the complexities faced by refugee entrepreneurs. Hence, Edouard also contributed to this case analysis as a coauthor to bring an insider's perspective to the discussion.

It is the methodology of inquiry that liberates or constrains the minds of those who consider refugee policy. It is hoped that the methodology used here has provided a *raison d'être* for refugee policy to be reexamined from the perspective of the refugee entrepreneur.

## Notes

1. "Peace leadership is the mobilization of action for just change. When people are motivated to act individually and function collectively for the benefit of humanity and the planet, peace leadership is present" (Miller and Green 2015).

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# 10

## Refuge to Centre Stage: The Story of Arash

Rosa Lisa Iannone

### 10.1 Introduction

Luxembourg is one of the tiniest, yet most important, strongholds of European conflict mediation and justice. A landlocked central European nation, it is bordered by Belgium, France and Germany. Its distinct geography and conciliatory diplomatic resolve have influenced its role in broaching peace between warring nations and also accounts for its rich intercultural makeup and its three official languages: German, French and Luxembourgish. Its capital city is also one of the European Union's (EU) capitals, where the European Court of Justice, among other European institutions, sits. Ranking second in the world for gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (IMF 2017; World Bank 2017b), it is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, despite its small population of just over 600,000 (STATEC 2018a). Almost 48% of the total residential

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population comprises foreign nationals, mostly from Portugal and other western European countries (STATEC 2018b).

From an outsider's perspective, this little nugget of a country appears to be a beacon of hope—a place where war and suppression seem impossible (Halman et al. 2012). In comparison with other EU states, Luxembourg remains relatively neglected as a destination for asylum seekers (Hawkins 2018). However, for those who have crossed its borders and have been granted refugee status, such as Arash, the promise of stability, calm and peace are generally fulfilled.

In the following sections, we will peer into Arash's journey in Luxembourg in order to shed light on the processes, system and actors that shape the experience of refugees who also become entrepreneurs. Consideration in regard to some of the enablers and constraints on his process will also ensue, also leading to a cross-case analysis presented by Freiling and Harima in Chap. 18.

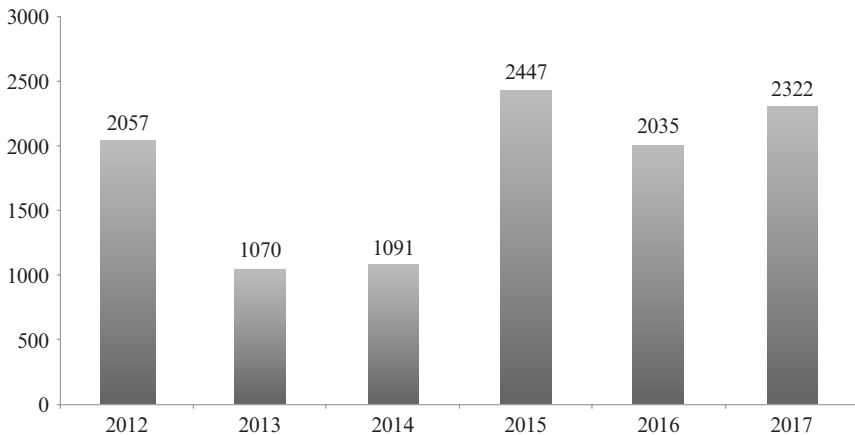
## 10.2 Seeking Asylum in Luxembourg

The country's asylum system is headed by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, who, as the administrative authority, ultimately adjudicates on applications. Under the Ministry of Family and Integration and the Greater Region, the social support entity for asylum seekers is the Luxembourg Reception and Integration Agency (Office Luxembourgeois d'Accueil et de l'Intégration, OLAI). OLAI regularly coordinates administratively with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and meets with international protection applicants on a one-to-one basis. Social workers from OLAI welcome and help orient newcomers. It informs them of their rights and of the rules they must abide by throughout their stay in Luxembourg. It also initiates asylum seekers' setup and integration within the country, providing ongoing social supervision throughout refugee application processes.<sup>1</sup> Assistance in the forms of help with medical services, housing, transportation, filling out forms and other socio-educational activities can be procured through OLAI.<sup>2</sup> As part of its mission, OLAI also publishes reports on migration flows in and out of the country and manages welcome and accommodation centers. This

same body offers support services to all foreigners, including EU citizens and third-country nationals.

At a glance, the number of asylum applicants in Luxembourg has fluctuated over the years, peaking at 2447 in 2015 over the last six years (Fig. 10.1):

Although these figures are dwarfed by other host nations, they represent, per capita, one of the highest average intakes in Europe (Turner 2015). The five largest groups of nationals seeking asylum in the first three months of 2018 have been Syrians (10.5%), followed by Georgians (9.3%), Moroccans (9.3%), Algerians (7.2%) and Serbians (7.2%) (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes 2018). Embedded in the figures are decisions that have resulted in the transfer of asylum seekers between EU countries—both sent out of Luxembourg and received—as a consequence of the Dublin Regulation (European Parliament 2013), which states that countries are to assess asylum applications on the first point of irregular entry of an applicant. For Luxembourg's, this has led to uncertainty for those entering: “It seems likely that this year, the numbers of asylum seekers to be sent away from Luxembourg [...] will double that of 2016. From January to June 2017, the number has almost reached the total for the whole year of 2016” (Huberty 2017).



**Fig. 10.1** Number of asylum applicants in Luxembourg 2012–2017. Source: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes (2017, 2018)

On the national level, the high influx of refugees that have been crossing its borders, most especially since 2015, has led to a constricting effect on resources as well as response efficiency in terms not only of legal decisions, but also in terms of policies, economic support and social services. The country has had to open new accommodation centers, which has taken some time to coordinate. In April, 2016, Luxembourg already had 80 centers, with a capacity of 4300 (Fick 2016). However, since then, additional centers have been erected by repurposing buildings or constructing new ones to fill the persistent gaps. Not far from the capital, Sanem has newly built housing structures with a capacity of 66 (Brucker 2016; Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région & Ministère du Développement durable des Infrastructures 2016), and two centers have opened their doors in Luxembourg City and Strassen specifically for unaccompanied minors (2016, *Le Quotidien*). Lily Uden in Limpertsberg—flanking one of the University of Luxembourg's campuses—with a capacity of 120 residents, is the emergency reception centre that welcomes those requiring assistance after hours (Croix-Rouge 2017a, b).

On the whole, however, Luxembourg remains in a state of response to the extensive influx of refugees. Systems are backlogged and application processing times can extend beyond the six-month target (Ministère de la Famille, de l'Intégration et à la Grande Région 2018). Currently, it is more common that decisions take place around the two-year mark. And, although asylum seekers are offered access to language courses and social integration workshops throughout their waiting periods, their livelihoods and future plans remain in a suspended state of animation. In turn, this affects their employment and self-employment strategies, as well as the whole of their lives. For some, such as Arash, they turn such periods into productive preparation phases.

### 10.3 Refugee Entrepreneurship in Luxembourg?

Refugees who undertake self-employment and entrepreneurship in Luxembourg present something of a new phenomenon and one that is gaining attention. Statistical figures on the propensity to create employ-



ment versus becoming employed are missing; however, there is a clear propensity towards business creation in Luxembourg—culturally and politically—which has consequently raised awareness around in supporting refugees who wish to pursue their own businesses.

In March 2016, for instance, an initiative entitled “The Connections”, in coordination with ASTI, launched training sessions and internships that are aimed at the professional integration of refugees, including specialized orientation for entrepreneurship hopefuls, many of which are “highly skilled” (JB 2016). The common experience of refugees in Luxembourg is that “It is not easy to find a job as skills and diplomas required at the employment market are incompatible with the ones in home countries” (Abo Zarifa 2016, 46). Furthermore, being self-employed in Luxembourg may require a lot of new certification. Regulations are relatively complex, and the system is hard to navigate even for nationals, ranking 63rd in the world for “Ease of Doing Business” (World Bank 2017a) and 70th for “Starting a Business” (World Bank 2017b, 2018). Arguments in favor of allaying the entrepreneurial process are the classic ones that refer to the reduction of costs to hosting states, enabling refugees to generate revenue, pay taxes and socially and economically integrate, as well as potentially create jobs. In this light, momentum for new refugee entrepreneurship is on the rise.

Sleeves Up, the first Luxembourgish program that specifically targets refugees who wish to explore business ownership, launched in August 2016. It organizes a series of training workshops in business creation, as well as mentorship events, internships and networking activities that connect participants with key actors in the business sector, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Trades, accountants, lawyers, marketing specialists, funding agencies and banks, along with a myriad of others. The program will run for at least two years and is funded by the Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte, a Grand Duchy of Luxembourg charity.

Especially groundbreaking in this project is the fact that participants can be of any legal status in Luxembourg, meaning that they can be applicants or beneficiaries of international protection: asylum seekers or refugee residents. Engaging early with newcomers kick starts the entrepreneurial process, rather than delaying it for those awaiting deci-

sions on their status. As applications for immigration take time and employment is not permitted for asylum seekers, Sleeves Up also contributes to their sense of integration and purpose and facilitates all the preparations for entrepreneurship, so that when a legal status is obtained, for instance, the entrepreneur can be ready to start doing business in the “next hour”. There is a fee, refunded when participants attend a minimum requirement of five (out of six) workshop sessions (Sleeves Up 2017). Some of the topics covered include creating a business plan, devising a budget and detailing start-up costs, taxation policies and VAT (Value Added Tax), as well as market research and marketing. The sessions are held in English with small group sizes. For example, 10 participants completed the course (9 Syrians and 1 Iraqi) in the September 2017 workshop series.

Beyond these two initiatives, entrepreneurship hopefuls may take courses and participate in workshops that are open to the public throughout the country. Several are offered by Luxembourg’s employment agency, ADEM (Agence pour le Développement de l’Emploi), the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Trades, Nyuko (a public-private partnership non-profit) and the University of Luxembourg, among others. Refugees and asylum seekers are welcome, however, many of the courses are offered in French and may require validated educational and skills histories as well as fees, posing social and economic barriers to participation. On a case-by-case basis, refugees may undertake further education and training, for example at the university’s Masters of Entrepreneurship and Innovation course; however, entry requirements may be strict and funding is limited.

## 10.4 Arash’s Journey to Refuge in Luxembourg

Arash is a newly settled Iranian refugee in Luxembourg in his late 20s. He entered the country in October 2012 with one objective: to seize every opportunity for creative freedom of expression through music. Born in Tehran to a religious Muslim family, he is the youngest of three. He describes his family as loving and supportive, and his home state’s policies

have been on the progressive since former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's successor Hassan Rouhani came to office in 2013.

Arash grew up in a period when Iran was increasingly closing its borders and instituting policies of restrictions within the country. By July 2011, "the government announced it would not cooperate with, or allow access to, the United Nations special rapporteur on Iran, appointed in March 2011 in response to the worsening rights situation" (Human Rights Watch 2012, 1). No longer were citizens free to assemble or demonstrate, and almost all civil and social organizations saw their independence restricted or stifled altogether. News agencies, journalists, bloggers and social media sites and other social outlets were shut down or banned (*ibid.*, 2–3), while government opposition politicians suffered imprisonment or worse. The death penalty was exacted as a punishment, in what many democratic societies would deem a systematic shutting down of any freedom of expression, which extended to freedom of religion. Minorities, including Muslim minorities such as Sunnis and Sufis, became targets of government-sanctioned discrimination and violations (*ibid.*, 4; ACCORD 2015; Global Security 2011). Essentially, Iran had entered a state of oblivion, prompting sanctions from the European Union and other international bodies.

It was throughout this period that Arash came to the realization that a future in his country would be practically impossible, given his passion for music and singing. He explains: "Without music, my molecules cannot survive". Music entered Arash's life at an early age. He describes how he started talking "late" in his infancy, but once he did, he pronounced phrases rather than single words. The first musical performances he remembers fondly are those from his kindergarten days. By then, performance had already enchanted him. Growing up alongside his cousin, who had a guitar, made him interested in the instrument, despite it being frowned upon by family. Playing in secret, Arash largely self-taught on a guitar he acquired at the age of 15. Rehearsing religious songs he grew up with, the melodies as well as the lyrics shaped and toned his voice. After about three years of practice, he had the opportunity to perform at a large festival<sup>3</sup> in Tehran, in front of a crowd that several hundred strong. The feedback was very positive, and this strengthened his passion for music. From that point, Arash had decided he would try to

enter the professional music field. However, at that time, his family strictly opposed such pursuits. Determined, yet completely naïve, Arash rented a studio, financing his first recording with his own funds: “It took me four hours to record this one song”. Enthusiastically, he sought to have it aired. This meant he would have to gain approval from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance—known as the “Censorship Bureau”.<sup>4</sup> As the watchdogs of all publications, officers who worked for the Censorship Bureau had the power to accept, reject or heavily edit any public production material. Statements of romantic love, for example, even if made indirectly—such as in Arash’s song—were not permitted. After several unsuccessful attempts at disseminating his music, which Arash contends resulted from him having submitted applications on his own without “inside-help”, as well as family and societal pressures to “conform” away from his musical aspirations, Arash desisted for some time. He was encouraged to go to university.

Educated as an industrial engineer, aiming to play semi-professional football and married as a young adult, Arash then fulfilled the expected duties of his family and of the state. The professional trajectory that was laid out before him in his early 20s was a fairly secure path that would ensure a respectable life in Iran. Yet the persistent restrictions and human rights violations he witnessed around him—to family and friends—shook him to his core. And, “music was always beside me”.

In 2012, Arash’s life shifted dramatically: He had graduated as an engineer and had gone through a divorce. New choices were on the horizon for him and since he had no dependents, his idea to pursue music reignited. Between the ages of 23 and 25, Arash produced music and music videos from Iran. He had not actually planned on leaving Iran. However, with increasing political tension, restrictions on expression and the arts and increasing numbers of government assaults affecting his loved ones, Arash was desperate for a solution that would give him artistic and personal freedom. He was presented with the idea of leaving Iran by a friend of the family: “Would you like to take this chance, or do you want to stay, for all your life, with family, and forget your dream?”. That was the question posed to him. One month later, he left.

His journey out of the country was delicate. Banned from traveling, like the vast majority of Iranians, he was forced to acquire some sort of

foreign documentation. Thereafter, he arranged for a flight out of Iran. He then flew from Turkey and to Brussels, where he stayed for two or three days. In Brussels, he found the streets crowded, the atmosphere busy and the city quite large. Yet in his passing, he “heard there was this small [neighbouring] country with no Iranian embassy”. Those two key elements thrust him onto the next train to Luxembourg’s central station. With no money left in his pockets, he began his new life.

Instinctively, Arash looked to present himself to the police upon arrival. To his surprise—and awkward delight—he could not find any police presence around the main train station. It took him more than an hour to find someone in uniform: “It was nothing like in Iran. I thought to myself, ‘I’m lucky I’m in a calm country’”. Yet, he was conditioned to fear authority, “I was really afraid as to how they might treat me, that I might go to prison”. Instead, as he explained his reasons for being in Luxembourg to the two officers he encountered, one of them warmly exclaimed: “Welcome”. It was relatively straightforward for him to then register his arrival. He presented himself to the Red Cross and almost straightaway, he was placed into one of the country’s camps, in Limpertsberg. There, housed beside one of the University of Luxembourg’s campuses, he began dreaming and strategizing for his future—“Here [the camp] is where I will live and there [the university] is where I will study”.

However, life in the camp was made easy: “If I knew that [ahead of time], I might not have made the decision to leave Iran”. Arash grew up in a family where his needs were tended to and where violent hardships—although they were reality in Iran—were kept at bay. In the camps, what he found were traumatized individuals who were reliving their traumas and, ironically, transposing some of the oppression inherited from their home countries to others in the camp. Arash found this particularly difficult. Also, the Internet was not provided, and the allowance he received amounted to only 25 euros per month.<sup>5</sup> Although the “papier rose”<sup>6</sup> he kept in his wallet proved his permission to be in the country, he was unable to travel outside of Luxembourg while awaiting a decision on his application for the status of refugee. Life during his two years at the camp was trying, yet a recurring mantra kept him focused on his future: “Passion over nation”. He set out, from his first week of arrival at the camp, to pursue every possibility of achieving his entrepreneurial goal and artistic dreams.

## 10.5 Arash's Entrepreneurial Journey: Emancipation Through Entrepreneurship

According to Rindova and colleagues (2009), exploring “entrepreneur-ing” (emphasizing the dynamic actions of entrepreneurship) as an emancipatory process widens our views onto the purposes, accomplishments, meanings and impacts of self-employment. An entrepreneur is thus enacting individual agency and thereby drives “wishes for autonomy, expression[s] of personal values, and making a difference in the world” (ibid., 478). By sensitizing ourselves to such emancipatory aspects we may become better able to appraise the “factors that cause individuals to seek to disrupt the status quo and change their position in the social order in which they are embedded—and, on occasion, the social order itself” (ibid.), effectively unveiling the richness of entrepreneurship beyond economic and market opportunity valuation (Steyaert and Hjort 2007). As presented through the varied stories in the accompanying chapters of this book, refugee entrepreneurs often find themselves facing disadvantages, which may also include discrimination and, in extreme cases, total illegitimacy (Ayadurai 2011; Fong et al. 2007; Lyon et al. 2007; Wauters and Lambrecht 2006, 2007, 2008) with institutional voids that further complicate circumstances (Heilbrunn forthcoming; Khoury and Prasad 2016).

In the case presented here, Arash's deeply seated passion for music urged him to leave his home country at a time when power structures overwhelmed freedom of expression. According to the the typology framework guiding the cases in this book (presented in Chap. 1 by Heilbrunn and Iannone), based on Miriam George's (2010) categorization, inspired by Kunz (1973, 1981) and Paludan (1974), Arash can be characterized as a refugee who anticipated his need for international protection and thus self-alienated before his personal situation became acute. He also fled to a “new” or culturally and ethnically “unknown” host country, one that he had not even heard of prior to his journey for asylum. Notable advantages that strengthened his initial integration and experiences include a risky but successful departure, circumvention of devastatingly traumatic (Silove 1999) events and his ability to communi-

cate in English—which is not a national language in Luxembourg, but is nevertheless widely spoken. Instinctively, Arash demonstrated that he understood the value and power of building his social capital through networks. He almost immediately went about forging new relationships—forming “weak ties”—in his new setting, especially with nationals, and continually invested in strengthening these ties over time (Davidsson and Honig 2003; Putnam 2000; Granovetter 1973).

From within his first week of settlement in Luxembourg, lacking any personal relations within the country, Arash endeavored to orient his way towards the music scene. He started asking staff he had contact with from the Red Cross and other supportive agencies about Luxembourgish music and performers and he located recording studios, met with musicians wherever he found them playing and started to develop a network. His first important contact came through a referral he received through the Red Cross. One of the managers introduced him to a veteran Luxembourgish singer, suggesting Arash be an extra in one of his music videos. While on a five-minute break from the shoot, Arash seized his opportunity to meet the star. He walked up to him with the Iranian song he had recorded in his home country, ready to play from his phone, and said:

Hello, my name is ‘Arash’. I’m a singer. I would like for you to listen to my song, please. I put the headphones on him and had him listen to 30–40 seconds of my song, from Iran. He was just looking at me, like what am I doing? After the song finished, he said ‘Ya, good. Okay, how can I help you?’ I didn’t know what to ask. [... I thought, well,] I live in a country where Luxembourgish is the language. Out of respect I’d like to include some sentences in Luxembourgish [in the song]. Can you help me with some phrases? From that day, we started writing each other to find things we had in common. We did a music video together....

As part of the trust building and bonding process, the singer even visited Arash at his refugee camp. Their friendship sparked Arash’s first international collaborative music production, linking the two different cultures through positive messaging. The song they wrote was inspired by the silent protests taking place in Istanbul in that year (2012). From the

music, came a video. From the video, came publicity. Little by little, Arash started to perform with his Luxembourgish star in all sorts of national venues—including the country’s philharmonic concert hall! He was also interviewed by major news channels and paper outlets, commended for his talent and his positive message. His dream had achieved meteoric heights within the first few months of his arrival.

Following a two-year wait for a decision on his legal case, Arash received his residency permit. Until that point, and hopeful of a positive outcome, he undertook French and Luxembourgish classes in order to strengthen his cultural and social integration. Prior to receiving legitimate refugee status in the country, Arash’s professional work was on a volunteer basis, with no financial benefit. His activities were driven by passion and also by the messages of peace he sought to transmit through his lyrics and international collaborations. With ongoing exposure, he gained prominence in Luxembourg. He also attributes his quick rise to success to his humility, respect of others, such as being timely, being diligent with his hosts and regularly eliciting feedback from both non-natives and natives, so as to strengthen a Luxembourgish and multicultural connection to his music, to learn about the likes and dislikes of the culture. Since then, he has recorded many more songs and has also produced music videos. He is now a performer who is in demand and who has been referred to, even at the national level, as a success story for refugees in Luxembourg. His motto has been: “It depends on you. I [they will] show you the way. But it depends on you, how you want to get there.” Looking onto the near future, Arash has formed a small partnership that aims to create a social entrepreneurship that focuses on music and young artists.

## 10.6 Enablers and Constraints to Refugee Entrepreneurship

At the individual level, Arash’s personal drive and motivation to become an independent performer rival that of many natives and immigrants. One of the reasons for his ability is the fact that he did not escape from a personally acute or traumatic (Silove 1999) situation. The traumas from his home country have existed and have clearly marked him in as much



as they have stifled freedom of expression, sometimes directly impacting those closest to him, and eventually prompted him to leave. Although he had no financial capital to invest, his entrepreneurship, a sole proprietorship, required a little startup funding. He managed to raise the necessary amount by taking up unskilled jobs in the formal sector as well as some in the informal sector, for example, as a carpet cleaner and a sorter of recyclable materials from waste, among others. Also, the fact that he spent his asylum seeking period building up his network and reputation through volunteer performances strengthened his ability to earn money upon receiving his refugee status. In parallel, his home country's government politics shifted towards a more positive stance, and this gave him renewed hope and purpose for his music. The typical constraints that are related to an acute loss of all or most assets has eluded Arash, as upon leaving Iran, he had just undergone two life changing events: a divorce and graduation from university. He had no dependents and was resigned to pursuing a life abroad to further his music career. His passion and commitment to a clearly defined vision of his goal—the strongest antecedent to his entrepreneurship—enabled him to recover rapidly from the setbacks he encountered throughout his journey and immigration processes. Although he admits that deep friendships in Luxembourg have been hard for him to come by, he has been very much supported by his family, who remain in Iran.

On a community level, his ability to speak English and his early adoption of the French and Luxembourgish languages, on a conversational level, enabled him to build the professional network he sought and to do so quickly. The social capital he built, which in such a small country extended to the national level in short order, was instrumental (Bizri 2017; Mamgain and Collins 2003; Miyares 1998; Omeje and Mwangi 2014; Sandberg et al. 2019). This enabled him to set up a variety of collaborative projects while strengthening his trustworthiness (Putnam 2000; Granovetter 1973), social inclusion (Miyares 1998; Tömöry 2008) and social legitimacy. In terms of the community enablers, Arash capitalized upon the first relations he built with refugee support staff. He exudes a strong sense of self-efficacy (Bandura 1986, 1997) and exemplified it by becoming highly active and engaged in the cultural landscape. He has worked on multicultural projects in a variety of communes within

Luxembourg, with Africans from central Africa and the Maghreb, for instance, and with others from Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as artists from the Middle East. Arash gratefully acknowledges receiving a lot of guidance and encouragement from the media, the wider community and Luxembourg's citizens, which helped him propel his entrepreneurship quickly and effectively. Considering the values of Luxembourg, its population reports that they are "very" happy (Halman et al. 2012, 126) and with that, they enjoy a strong sense of control over their lives and security. In turn, this affects newcomers, who are able to embrace and synchronize with those values.

Institutionally, though in an ongoing state of reform and buttressing, Luxembourg's refugee community does not suffer from gaping institutional voids (Heilbrunn *forthcoming*; Khoury and Prasad 2016). There are a number of programs and benefits that target refugees as well as aspiring entrepreneurship, specifically. And, as evidenced from Arash's network building experience, institutional staff were open to recommending him to other personal and professional contacts, in spite of the cultural contrast that clearly divide Arash's home country and his host country. How such divides came to be bridged so smoothly for Arash is a multilayered process. Any discrimination he faced was situational, and thus, Luxembourg and its actors generally afforded him the liberty and respect afforded to all. In his experience, the constraints and disablers mostly came from his asylum seeking counterparts in the camps as well as within the wider community. He found little solidarity with them. Perhaps due to the multicultural composition of Luxembourg's population and workforce (about 48%, STATEC 2018b), Arash became more engaged with Luxembourgers and established immigrants, especially multicultural groups, rather than enclave groups. As reported in a 2012 survey, the country appreciates newcomers' efforts to integrate and assimilate (Halman et al. 2012, 112) and generally welcome them (*ibid.*, 109). Ultimately, Arash's goal is to acquire citizenship, which is one of the motivating factors for his and other refugee entrepreneurs' integration (Basok 1989, 1993; Gold 1992a, b). This desire and effort may be perceived by the wider community and institutional actors, thus further facilitating his endeavors.

The most difficult challenge Arash faced in his entrepreneurship has been to secure funding. He has been able to self-finance some of his larger projects, such as music video production, through personal investments secured from the networks he has built in Luxembourg and neighboring countries. However, financing other large parts of his musical career has been arduous. Without a strong employment track record, bank loans are almost impossible. Furthermore, legal constraints forbade Arash to work in his first two years within the country. However, he turned this into an opportunity—to plan, widen and strengthen his networks and prepare for his legal launch. Upon receiving his residency, he earned the right to charge fees for his performances and since his entrepreneurship, has already been active (non-fee paying) for almost two years. Arash therefore had already a good indication of whether he would be able to generate enough income to live in his new, and expensive, country of residence. Still, he has had to supplement his musical career with a variety of temporarily shift work and manual labor jobs.

Arash has never hidden the fact that he sought refuge in Luxembourg, yet has also never used it as an excuse to stall his progress or to obtain forms of dispensation. Arash has always managed to borrow equipment or collaborate in performances where equipment was readily available, which has further enabled his entrepreneurial activities. Today, he has his own band and is working towards establishing a social entrepreneurial partnership. His journey has been an empowering one where he has benefited from a livelihood he created for himself that align with his sense of purpose, as similarly reported by other refugee entrepreneurs (Fong et al. 2007; Heilbrunn and Iannone [forthcoming](#); Sabar and Posner 2013).

## 10.7 Methodological Considerations

The methodology employed for this chapter is a case study approach (Yin 2003), in line with the framework jointly adopted by the book's contributors. Four interviews were conducted between the months of August 2017 and March 2018, including life history interviews (Mandelbaum 1982). Participant observations have also been undertaken in this time-frame, and the study has followed a strict confidentiality protocol.

## Notes

1. Details on the process of applying for asylum and requesting refugee status in Luxembourg can be obtained from ASTI (Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés, Association for the Support of Migrant Workers) in a 23-page document it has published, entitled “Information brochure intended for applicants for international protection”.
2. Once an asylum seeker has been granted refugee status, the Red Cross’ LISKO (Lëtzeburger Integratiouns-a Sozialkohäsiounscenter), Luxembourg Centre for Integration and Cohesion, inaugurated in June 2016, under the Ministry of Family and Integration, takes the lead in supporting integration activities. It acts as a link between social services, various associations and refugees in support of orientation and empowerment (Croix-Rouge 2016).
3. A yearly festival celebrating the revolution in Iran—restricted and controlled by the government.
4. For an examination of Iranian cultural censorship, see Khalaji et al. 2011, especially pp. 63–76 for the censorship of music.
5. The monthly allowance is currently 26.27 euros, granted to individual asylum seekers in Luxembourg. This amount is provided for in the form of bonds that may only be exchanged for products in participating stores and not cash (Ministère de la Famille, de l’Intégration et à la Grande Région 2018, 9).
6. “Pink paper”—this is a document provided by the state, attesting to the fact that the holder is an asylum seeker with permission to sojourn in the country while awaiting a decision on her/his application (Ministère de la Famille, de l’Intégration et à la Grande Région 2018, 6).

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# 11

## From Hell To ... An Entrepreneurial Life: An Iranian Refugee in France

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### 11.1 Country-Specific Information and Data

The migratory crisis has become increasingly important in the political and public debate in Europe. In 2015, more than 1 million refugees arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. In 2016, approximately 5 million Syrian refugees left their country and applied for asylum in

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Turkey (2.7 million) and Germany (362,800). In 2015, France was the third-most requested country by refugees in the European Union (EU). In France (EUROSTAT-le monde), although 80,075 applications for international protections were made, only 10,000 applications were accepted. According to the UN Refugee Agency, Syrian refugees represented 26% of the total refugees in Europe. This massive influx of refugees leads to several problems related to accommodation and social and professional integration. This was highlighted in the EU report of June 10 2016, which addressed the refugees' social and professional integration.

This report underscored the fact that despite some linguistic, educational and institutional problems, discrimination is considered the major obstacle for the social and professional integration of refugees and migrants.

The majority of refugees find themselves in a difficult situation. They leave their home countries in search of better living conditions, or because their lives and those of their families are in danger. In their host country, however, they are not well received and face numerous problems. The first obstacle is related to culture and language. In addition, the refugees are generally ignorant of their rights in their host country.

Refugees also face social integration problems because they are not able to express themselves and speak about their motivations and skills. This discomfort and subsequent inability to express themselves properly automatically excludes them from professional life. Their diplomas and work experience are frequently not recognized by the host country. In addition, they face other, more unusual problems, such as a lack of financial resources, difficulties in finding decent housing and feeding difficulties. They also have to contend with racism, because residents perceive the newcomers as a potential labor force that could compete with native residents in an already difficult labor market. These accumulated problems accelerate the refugees' social exclusion. The best solution to these issues is for refugees to start their own businesses through entrepreneurial activity.

Job creation by refugees helps the refugees with their social and economic integration. Social inclusion via entrepreneurship ensures equality between individuals, facilitates access to employment and also helps the

refugees accept their situation in a new and unfamiliar host country. These entrepreneurial refugees could be the new creators of economic and social value in France.

The distinctive skills and new perspectives of these individuals enable them to detect new business opportunities that may not be recognized by established residents. Entrepreneurship represents a real escape, a new beginning and a challenge for the refugees. Starting a business is an accomplishment because it will help them regain the dignity they left behind in their home country.

However, refugees feel powerless and helpless because of complex administrative and legal procedures related to the creation of enterprises in France. In addition, entrepreneurship is not the refugees' highest priority; they must first ensure their physiological needs such as food, rest and a decent quality of life. Therefore, to encourage refugees to start businesses, it would be useful to approach them through organizations such as NGOs that frequently help and work with them.

## 11.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving One's Home Country

Hamze is 35 years old. He is from Yazd, a city in Iran. He holds an electronic engineering degree from Yazd and was a political activist. After receiving his electronic engineering degree, he studied political sciences at a university in Tehran. At the age of 25, he was appointed executive manager of a think tank in Iran. Hamze left his home country because of political problems. He was arrested in Tehran while taking part in resistance activities against the existing political system and imprisoned for two months. After paying some money, Hamze got out of prison; however, things did not change for the better. The same political issues persisted, and the situation was growing increasingly worse. For this reason, Hamze's lawyer suggested that it would be better if Hamze left Iran once and for all. If he stayed, he would spend at least 10 years in prison. Hamze therefore had two options: leaving his country or staying and living in secret in Iran. He was young—26 years old—and did not want to spend his youth in prison. As he said:

When you're in prison and you're 26, it's a lot!

In addition, at that time, he did not have any constraints regarding his personal life. He was neither married, nor engaged.

"I was quiet!" he said.

He decided that the best solution was to leave Iran, which was much better than staying in prison. Therefore, due to these political reasons, he decided to leave his home country.

Hamze's escape story was an adventure: Everything was planned and well organized. Hamze was asked to follow someone he did not know and then left his home country at night on foot through the mountains. Due to a large number of military checkpoints, he used a fake identity to go to Kurdistan. A journalist helped him cross the border from Iran to Kurdistan; indeed, Hamze was well supported by Reporters without Borders. The organization helped him by providing him fake identification documents and by negotiating with certain people to let him cross the borders safely. Thus, in 2010, Hamze fled Iran.

### **11.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country**

To increase his chances of obtaining a visa, Hamze requested visas from several countries including France, the USA and Sweden. He quickly received his first visa agreements from France and the USA. However, the US Embassy asked him to come to Bagdad in Iraq, which was considered a dangerous option.

USA asked me to come to Bagdad ... we cannot move like this ... and in Bagdad (laugh)!

At that time, French visa procedures were less complicated and swifter than American procedures. In addition, the minister of foreign affairs in France asked French consulates all over the world to help people of the Green Movement, including Hamze. The Green Movement

is an Iranian political movement. Hamze preferred an English-speaking country like the USA because he was far more comfortable speaking English than French; he was largely unable to speak French. However, he chose the fastest alternative. Therefore, despite the language barrier, Hamze decided to go to France. While France was not his target country, it was the best option for him due to time constraints. Once he arrived in France, Hamze was welcomed by Iranian friends at the Paris airport. He settled in Paris and began studying at Paris 8 University. Hamze felt lucky because he had a large political network that helped him with administrative procedures and with finding housing and a job. However, Hamze still experienced certain difficulties with integration. He felt that there was discrimination in France. He believed that as a refugee, he was considered an ignorant and miserable person. Hamze has a strong personality, as well as pride; therefore, he felt uncomfortable and did not accept feelings caused by discrimination. Consequently, he left the course on which he had studied at Paris 8 University.

There are barriers to restart things in France, they had this belief of ... we are miserable and we don't understand anything, they treat us like little children.

Therefore, in addition to the language barrier, Hamze also faced problems of discrimination. His lack of fluency in French made him uncomfortable and posed a significant problem, as language difficulties fostered more and more discrimination. Administrative procedures to receive legal refugee status were also complicated. However, Hamze considers the bad impression that the majority of French citizens have about refugees to be a greater difficulty than administrative procedures.

... The major barrier was not about administrative procedures, which is also complicated, especially when you are not familiar with their system, but the most critical barrier, despite language, is the refugee image.

Psychological difficulties like the feelings caused by discrimination had much more influence on Hamze than difficulties related to formal

administrative procedures. He found it difficult to cope with discrimination and he felt that it was destroying his self-confidence and self-esteem. Moreover, in addition to the language barriers, the fact of being alone in France, without family support, made Hamze increasingly sensitive to this type of difficulties. He had the time and space to worry about discrimination problems.

Indeed, Hamze was automatically considered incompetent once native French citizens found out that he was refugee. For that reason, he wanted to hide his refugee status to avoid discrimination. Consequently, he never mentioned it, especially in professional meetings. Hamze's friends helped him to find housing and jobs, such as selling newspapers. Eventually, thanks to his friends, he found another job with a permanent contract in a gas station. Hamze always found positions via his personal network; he never submitted a spontaneous job application. Despite being unable to speak or understand French, Hamze understood what his boss was requesting. He tried to adapt. In the beginning, during the two first years, he thought that being in France and working this way was just a temporary situation for him, which was why he tried to persevere. He convinced himself that it was a good experience for him, just a temporary situation, and one day he would finally leave. Hamze always tried to find a way to return his home country. However, there was always the risk of spending about five years in prison. Eventually, Hamze received an invitation to a workshop in Boston.

He travelled to the USA and stayed there for six months. In the USA, he felt more fulfilled and confident than in France; he was treated nicely and was considered an important person. In the USA, he felt that he was no longer a refugee.

...In the USA, I feel that I'm no more refugee, in US, people ask you: how do you do??? In France they ask: where are you from?

After spending six months in the USA, Hamze returned to France, but he was in a difficult financial situation: He had no more money and a great deal of debt. At that point, Hamze had to find a solution to survive. Therefore, he started thinking about business and entrepreneurship.

## 11.4 Business Data and History of Establishing the Business

Hamze started reading about entrepreneurship and taking massive open online courses (MOOC) in English. Entrepreneurship reminded Hamze of his political life in Iran, a connection which made him increasingly appreciate this sort of business pursuit. Entrepreneurship is about finding solutions for a problem, which is a common goal of politics in Iran. This similarity was exciting for Hamze. When arriving in France, he had no intention of starting a business; it just happened by chance.

In 2015, Hamze launched a consulting business. He had never started a business before; it was a new adventure for him. He offered consulting services and gave advice to European enterprises intending to start businesses in Iran and to Iranian enterprises aiming to start businesses in Europe. As an international business developer with experience in intercultural management, negotiation and communication, Hamze demonstrated to interested companies the best way to conduct business in the Iranian market. Indeed, Hamze was developing an expertise in business and politics in the emerging countries.

He has a business partner in Iran and two employees. The Iranian business partner is Hamze's friend, who had first proposed that they work together and launch a business as partners. Hamze manages his business by himself in France, with his two employees. His clients and suppliers are European and Iranian enterprises, and he is developing business-to-business strategies. However, because he is alone in France, Hamze does not receive family support.

Hamze believes that he has been successful. He perceives entrepreneurial success as gaining experience and continuing to learn and try.

Succeed means for me: when I start a project, it may or may not work.

Hamze perceives success on a personal level. For instance, he argues that for him, acquiring experience is a kind of success. He associates his personal success with the company's success. In addition, being considered an entrepreneur and not a refugee is another kind of success for him. Through business, Hamze gains power, and being powerful enables him to bring about change.



## 11.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

The French language was the major individual constraint for Hamze. He was motivated to start a business in order to acquire a higher profile, to prove that he was successful and could start a new life as a “normal citizen” and not a “refugee”. Given that he experienced significant discrimination in France, he was increasingly motivated to prove that he could realize great things.

Moreover, Hamze was willing to take risks. This quality helped him to embark on adventures, take risks and forge ahead. This risk taking state of mind also helped him to start a business despite constraints related to language and discrimination. Hamze experienced obstacles more severe than discrimination, such as complex administrative procedures and difficulties speaking French. This experience has greatly increased his willingness to take risks, because he had nothing to lose.

I say that I can take risks, for example, I know that administrative procedures are so complicated, for tax system, accounting, I don't care!!! I have nothing to lose. If it doesn't work, and I will have new debts, I'm already in a tricky situation and I will just be in the same situation!! (laugh), I have nothing to lose... .

In contrast, being Iranian and having the Arabic first name “Hamze” was considered an obstacle, at the beginning, in starting his business.

I feel that, yes, for example, I know that when I say Hamza, an Arabic first name, things will change.

On the other hand, being Iranian was, in a certain way, an advantage for Hamze. Given that his enterprise offers consulting services for French companies wanting to do business in Iran, his nationality was considered an advantage because he looks Iranian. Therefore, clients are confident that he will provide them good advice about business in Iran.

...He is stranger, and my work consists on facilitating things in relation with Iran, so they say: ah he is really Iranian!

## 11.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

Hamze did not receive support from his community because he did not have a large network in the business world. All his Iranian friends were political activists and had nothing to do with business and entrepreneurship. Consequently, he decided to build his own business network. To do so, he went to several business meetings and trade shows.

Furthermore, he had the opportunity to be a member of SINGA France, which is a French association specializing in social innovation. SINGA's main purpose is to help refugees by providing them with innovative solutions and trying to integrate them into their host countries. This experience helped Hamze to develop his personal network. He has had a great deal of support from SINGA.

Moreover, he was also a member of another organization called INTEGRATE. In this association, Hamze was well supported by a mentor, who motivated him and even encouraged him to attend a graduate business school. Thanks to that mentor's support, Hamze gradually regained confidence in himself. He has also kept in touch with his mentors over a long period of time.

I had there, a mentor, if we can call him a mentor. What he has done was really great, he inspired me, he said: why did you give up on your political dream; he said: you can do that, you can do that... .

Consequently, Hamze met some supportive people who helped him regain confidence and self-esteem after being subject to discrimination.

## 11.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Hamze faced difficulties with administrative procedures. Indeed, language barriers made Hamze uncomfortable, given that in France, all procedures and formal documents must be written in French. He was smart enough to understand business strategies; by contrast, however, even though administrative procedures in France were easier than in Iran, he was unable to deal with complicated administrative tasks due to language

constraints. Hamze had the right to work and to register his business, but he experienced other types of obstacles beyond just the language barrier. For instance, he faced difficulties opening a bank account because he is Iranian.

It was problematic, because I'm from Iran.

Hamze received support from SINGA and INTEGRATE. He had a rewarding experience with SINGA and developed his personal network thanks to these organizations. He was also well coached by mentors in SINGA and INTEGRATE. This experience was a positive turning point for him. Hamze also believes that there were significant social support and facilities in France for entrepreneurs, claiming that “being an entrepreneur is easier than finding a job”. He even advised his friends to start businesses. According to him, such an undertaking is better than searching for a job.

## 11.8 Some Methodological Considerations

In the context of entrepreneurship, case studies are not well utilized. For this reason, Henry Foss (2015) “argues for greater acceptance of the use of case method amongst the academic community, alongside greater confidence in its application”. Baxter and Jack (2008) claim that the “case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts”. The case study “increases the relevance and meaning” (Csiernik and Birnbaum 2017) of stories. Therefore, we adopted a qualitative method in order to report Hamze’s story.

During the interview, we faced difficulties with Hamze when we asked him questions about his family and the story of leaving his home country. Moreover, we felt Hamze’s emotional pain when we talked about his inability to return to his home country of Iran and about the integration difficulties that he faced. It was not easy for him to integrate into a new world. While Hamze wanted very much to integrate, his fear of the new host country, administrative and legal constraints and financial difficulties were hard to endure.

Moreover, Hamze did not appreciate the use of the term “refugee”, because he considers it a discriminative word and he asked us to avoid this pejorative term during our interview. He wanted to be considered a normal citizen in France and not a refugee.

Ultimately, Hamze has overcome all these difficulties. He has been engaged in several projects related to problems facing refugees. He is now honorary president of SINGA France, which is an NGO that seeks to help entrepreneurial refugees by integrating them and coaching them in order to build their enterprises.

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# 12

## From Refugee to Trader: In the Footsteps of Marco Polo

Dilek Zamantılı Nayır

### 12.1 Introduction

Migrant mobility has been on the rise in recent years. According to Faist (2000) and Collyer (2005), macro-level factors, such as the political, economic and legal context of a country, and meso-level factors, such as social relations, explain this phenomenon. Migrant mobility from Syria to Turkey (as in many other countries in the region and around the world) was fueled by exactly these factors. The first Syrian refugees began to cross into Turkey in April 2011. Turkey's expectation was that the Assad regime would not last long ([www.ntv.com](http://www.ntv.com), August 24, 2012) and that it was appropriate to extend to the newcomers a legal framework known as “temporary protection”. As the Syrian civil war raged on, a massive humanitarian and refugee crisis arose. Since the beginning of the war, over 9 million Syrians have been uprooted, with nearly 5 million fleeing to countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq (Smith 2016). Recipient countries were forced to shoulder considerable financial burdens and

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political shocks (Lazarev and Sharma 2017), and the Syrian refugee crisis was called “the most challenging in a generation-bigger than the Rwandan genocide and laden with the sectarianism of the Balkan wars” (Onishi 2013). In the meantime, Syrians have become the largest refugee population in the world (4.7 million), ahead of Afghans, Rwandans and Iraqis. In addition, more than 7 million internally displaced people have repeatedly been forced to flee the fighting, precariousness and destruction in their home countries (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2017).

High-intensity conflicts usually occur in low and lower middle-income countries, which are often surrounded by other non-high-income countries.<sup>1</sup> Turkey was one of the neighboring middle-income countries that were affected by the refugee crisis and soon became one of the largest asylum recipients in the world. Receiving refugees was not a new phenomenon for Turkey, however. From the 1920s into the mid-1990s, the Turkish republic received many Muslim refugees, such as Albanians and Tatars from the Balkans (Kirisci 1996). In 1989, more than 300,000 Pomaks and Turks fled Communist regime in Bulgaria and sought refuge in Turkey. The government, in line with a law from 1934, considered them to be of “Turkish descent and culture” and opened its door to them and granted them the possibility of acquiring Turkish citizenship. In 1991, Turkey saw yet another mass influx of refugees, as close to half a million people fled Saddam Hussein’s violence against Kurds and other minorities in northern Iraq (Kaynak 1992; Ihlamur-Öner 2013). Especially from the 1990s onwards, Turkey became increasingly known as a migration hub on the route to Europe (Lyngstad 2015; Danis 2006), making irregular migration a major issue of discussion between Turkish and European authorities.

Moreover, during the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, the Turkish government and pro-government media outlets made their case to support Syrian refugees by appealing to national pride and religious solidarity (Lazarev and Sharma 2017). Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s prime minister at the time, said that, “For our Syrian brothers who are asking when God’s help will come, I want to say: God’s help is near.” He also proclaimed, “You are now in the land of your brothers, so you are in your own home” (<http://english.sabah.com.tr/National/2012/05/07/pm-erdoganaddresses-syrians-in-refugee-camp>). Whereas a large part of the population sympathized with the misery of the Syrian population at the

beginning, the persistence of the conflict and the growing number of refugees created tough challenges for Turkey. For example, it became clear that refugees were not about to return home anytime soon and that the government had to start thinking about urgent issues such as education, employment, health, shelter and other needs of Syrian refugees.

Although it is generally expected that immigrant refugees constitute a financial and social burden (Tumen 2016) on the host nation, Bizri (2017) suggests that entrepreneurship is often an alternative for refugees. Not all refugees who settle into a new host country seek employment, and while profit is the main motivation behind entrepreneurship for economic immigrants, for refugees, the goal is also about integration into their host communities. In other cases, refugees that are burdened by administrative red tape, or those who cannot find decent jobs in their host countries, resort to entrepreneurship to support themselves. Forced displacement often puts refugees into environments they are entirely unfamiliar with and unprepared for. This is why they seek to fulfil two overriding concerns: blending in with their new environment and making ends meet. Here, entrepreneurship offers an alternative (Sak et al. 2017). Although research which focuses on refugee entrepreneurship is insightful, it is rather scarce (Turcotte and Silka 2007; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). There is a significant shortage of policies and mechanisms to facilitate refugee entrepreneurship in most middle-income host countries (Sak et al. 2017). In their study, Wauters and Lambrecht (2008) point out that refugees may have entrepreneurial characteristics distinct from those of other immigrants. Identifying and studying those characteristics at this point in time is particularly important (Bizri 2017).

In this chapter, the particular story of Ali Dede is told. Ali Dede is a 50-year-old Syrian refugee, who used to be an architect in Syria, but had to shut down and sell his home and business due to the outbreak of war. He sought refuge in Turkey. Ali Dede's reason to leave the country was both acute and anticipatory. On the one hand, he began to sense the danger, because he was seeing the developments in the country and prepared himself for the worst case scenario by accumulating resources. But when he was put in jail, his situation became acute. Through his connections in Turkey and knowledge of the language, he was the first point of

contact for many of his friends. The interview for this chapter was held in July 2017, and Ali Dede told us about his life in Syria, the reasons for his flight, and his experiences in Turkey (Fig. 12.1).

The interview was held at a small café in July 2017. Ali Dede came with his brother, who is a medical doctor and was visiting from Qatar, but he left during the interview. Below are two photos of Ali Dede's son and daughter.

The contribution of this study lies in explaining how social capital can influence the success and survival of entrepreneurial startups established by refugees (Collins 2016; Sandberg et al. 2017), identifying the dynamics in this process. This offers a valuable extension to theory and an avenue



Fig. 12.1 Photograph of Ali Dede



for future research. Since inductive methods can effectively address “grand challenges” and develop insightful theory (Eisenhardt et al. 2016), this study employs a qualitative interpretive case analysis as a means of qualitative research into the phenomenon we are examining. As qualitative case study analysis is considered a preferred approach when answering “why” and “how” questions (Yin 2014), the author tried to delve deeper into the motives and behavior of a refugee entrepreneur to discern any distinct characteristics that distinguish entrepreneurial ventures of refugee entrepreneurs from other types of entrepreneurship.

## 12.2 Country-Specific Information and Data

Modern Turkey was founded in 1923 from the remnants of the defeated Ottoman Empire by national hero Mustafa Kemal, who was later honored with the title Ataturk or “Father of the Turks”. Under his leadership, the country adopted radical social, legal and political reforms. After a period of single-party rule, an experiment with multi-party politics led to the 1950 election victory of the opposition Democrat party and the peaceful transfer of power. Since then, Turkish political parties have multiplied, but democracy has been fractured by periods of instability and military coups (1960, 1971 and 1980), which in each case eventually resulted in a return of formal political power to civilians. From 2015 and continuing through 2016, Turkey witnessed an uptick in terrorist violence, including major attacks in Ankara, Istanbul and throughout the predominantly Kurdish southeastern region of Turkey. On July 15, 2016, elements of the Turkish armed forces attempted a coup that ultimately failed following widespread popular resistance. Following the failed coup, the Turkish government instituted a state of emergency in July 2016 that has been extended to July 2017. The Turkish government conducted a referendum on April 16, 2017 that will, when implemented, change Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential system.

Turkey has a long history of being a country of asylum and was among the original drafters of and signatories to the 1951 Geneva Convention. Recently, with the arrival of Syrians, Turkey has become the sixth-largest recipient of refugees in the world (UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2013). However, beyond the mass influx of Syrian refugees, Turkey has also seen

a significant increase in the number of individual asylum applications. According to the UNHCR, with almost 45,000 applications in 2013, Turkey became the fifth-largest recipient of individual asylum seekers among 44 industrialized countries, up from the 15th position in 2010 (UNHCR Asylum Trends 2013). Turkey has received refugees in the past, too. From the 1920s into the mid-1990s, the Turkish republic received more than one and a half million Muslim refugees, ranging from Albanians to Tatars from the Balkans (Kirisçi 1996).

### 12.3 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving Syria and Traveling to Turkey



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's prime minister at the time of our study, called Syrian refugees "our brothers", a term that implicitly emphasized the common religion between Turks and Syrians (Karaveli 2013). Ali Dede, the entrepreneur studied in this paper, took his word literally and chose Turkey as a country instead of Europe, because he originally was from Turkey, or from the Ottoman Empire, to be precise. His fam-

ily emigrated to Syria 270 years ago. Actually, “it is in our family to immigrate”, he said humorously, from Turkey to Syria, and back to Turkey again. Ali Dede’s great-great-great grandfather was Grand Vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa, who lived in the time of the Ottoman Empire in the late seventeenth–early eighteenth century. Ali Paşa was born in Istanbul in 1689 as the son of Dr. Nuh Efendi, who was the personal medical advisor of the Ottoman Sultan. His father originally came from Venice and had been educated at the University of Padua in Italy. According to stories told within the family, Ali Dede told us, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa’s father met a Turkish girl and fell in love with her. He followed her to Istanbul and converted to Islam to be able to marry her. His son, and Ali Dede’s great-great-great grandfather Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa, held important military and diplomatic positions within the Ottoman palace and eventually married Safiye Hanim, who was an influential woman in the Sultan’s palace. He served in different regions of the empire on various levels, from Cyprus to Syria and from Rhodes to the Balkans. So when Ali Dede came to Turkey, he was actually not a complete stranger to Turkey, but rather, he was returning to a land which he was familiar with.

## 12.4 Business Data and History of Setting up Business

The Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity report stated that immigrants were twice as likely as non-immigrants to start a new venture (Fairlie 2015). This is not surprising, as when refugees flee, they usually have to do something different from what they did in their homeland and only rarely have the opportunity to do the same job in their new country. Chiswick and colleagues (2005) pointed out that international migration, including refugee flows, tended to involve occupational changes due to the lack of the perfect transferability of language, job-related skills, labor market information and credentials, particularly in the short term. This was true for Ali Dede as well, though only partially. Ali Dede was an architect in Syria, but he was a tradesman as well. Ali Dede studied architecture in Aleppo and was involved in construction activities in Syria before the outbreak of the

war. In addition to the construction of factories and office buildings, he also was dealing with production and trade of textile products. He owned a fabric factory (which he had built himself) and was selling his textile products to nearby countries. But he lost his assets during the war. Now, in Turkey, he buys fabric and textile products from Bursa (a town in Turkey famous for its silk, since the city is along the famous Silk Road and the first silk cocoons were brought here with caravans).

When refugee entrepreneurs are displaced, it is not only their profession that they often have to leave at home—they also have difficulties transferring their (monetary) capital from one country to another. However, what they do carry with them is their web of relations, a culture of doing business and sector-specific expertise. With the help of these relations, refugee entrepreneurship has the potential to facilitate private sector development, not only through employment generation, but also through diversification of the existing production and trade capabilities (Sak et al. 2017). Ali Dede also brought his network connections with him. His customer base was built on that which he had already known from Syria. But it was not easy to reestablish relationships with these customers. The Syrian war not only meant that he had to leave the country and start his business from scratch, but that his former customers initially went in different directions, too. Ali Dede lost contact with his customers when he was arrested:

I was put in jail for 2 years. ... one of the telephone conversations I had with a Syrian friend was obviously recorded. I had a friend who had escaped to Turkey. He called me and asked “Where are you, I am in Turkey!” ... and asked for help. I was in Syria at the time. On the phone, I gave him the names of some friends who could help him. Later I found out that this call had been recorded... so they put me in jail ... You see, I have many many Turkish friends, BY is one of them. He was working for the Human Rights Association When he came to Syria and asked for me, they told him I was under arrest. He interfered immediately, he came to Damascus to free me. There was swap—for two Syrians, two Turks were let free ... this is how I left prison.

But of course my customers did not wait for me ... When I was exporting my products out of Syria, I had a good business ... my markets were in Libya, Algeria, Iran, Tunisia, Yemen, Iraq, Saudi Arabia ... then the war

break out and I lost contact with my customers, I lost their contact details, their addresses, their telephone numbers when I was in prison ... But later I found out, that my customers in the meantime took my products and went to Chinese suppliers, and had them produced in China much cheaper ...

After his arrival, Ali Dede was able to further develop his social and business network, as he was culturally and ethnically close to Turkey; in fact, he had Turkish origins. What's more, Ali Dede and his ancestors belong to the spiritual (Islamic) Mevlevi Order, which was established in Turkey (former Seldschuk/Ottoman Empire). This order is known to advocate "a life based on 'adab and erkan'" (discipline and rules of conduct). In their conduct, members of the Mevlevi Order are kind, graceful, discreet and never go to extremes in behavior or in speech. This form of presenting oneself was noticeable during our interview with Ali Dede, who placed his right hand on his heart and inclined his head slightly, implying "you are in my heart" – as the members of this order do during salutation. Mevlevi individuals even have a particular handshake. They seize and kiss the back of each other's hands, indicating mutual respect and equality. This is a greeting from "soul to soul" and denotes equality. Every part of the Mevlevi system of behavior bears a symbolical meaning, such as taking soft steps or showing respect to their daily appliances, and they participate as whirling dervishes in "Sema" rituals, which are considered an extension of their daily lives.<sup>2</sup> Ali Dede frequently mentioned he was proud of his spiritual ancestry. During our interview, Ali Dede mentioned his connections and the fraternity bonds he had with the members of the Mevlevi order, both in Syria and Turkey. It was very apparent that these connections helped him adjust to his new environment. He mentioned that a Turkish television network had come to his home (in Syria) and produced documentaries about "The Mevlevi Heritage in Aleppo". During the conversation, Ali Dede often directed the conversation to his dervish (Mevlevi) ancestors, his proud heritage and the lifestyle which was connected to the spiritual principles of the founder of the order, Mevlana Rumi. During the interview, he occasionally recited phrases from Rumi's poems to explain that he was open to friendship, connection and tolerance. When explaining the approach he

practices in his relationships, he mentioned some of the seven counsels of Mevlana Rumi, “In generosity and helping others be like a river; in compassion and grace be like the sun; in concealing others’ faults be like the night, in anger and fury be like the dead; in modesty and humility be like the earth; in tolerance be like a sea... either look as you are or be as you look”.

### 12.4.1 Individual Enablers and Constraints

Quite often, refugees were self-employed in their homeland prior to the escalation of strife and, upon immigration, want to restart their businesses as a means of making a living in their host countries. Frequently, those ventures are very successful and even proliferate into other product/service markets (Bizri 2017), largely due to the social capital that those entrepreneurs are able to construct (Casson and Giusta 2007; Lans et al. 2015), both individually and as a family (Bizri 2017). According to Samers (2009, p. 35), social networks are “webs of interpersonal connections, often made out of relatives, friends or other associations, forged through social and economic activities that act as conduits through which information, influence and resources flow”. Granovetter (1973) characterizes family and friends as the “strong ties” within a network. More distant connections are referred to as “weak ties”. According to Granovetter (1973), strong ties tend to stay in close contact with each other, which means that information is shared within the group, but new information is rarely taken into the network. “Weak ties”, on the other hand, are more important in a network, as they are loosely connected and also connected with different networks, which results in new information inflow (Borgatti et al. 2009; Granovetter 1973). When attempting to connect the concept of social capital with weak and strong ties, Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bridging and bonding capital. Bridging capital is created by social networks enhancing communication with the wider society, whereas bonding capital is the main source of bonding and solidarity between migrants. Bridging capital illustrates Granovetter’s (1973) argument on the strength of weak ties, whereas bonding capital illustrates the strength of strong ties.

Ali Dede is successful because of his networks and social contacts. When listening to his story, we noticed that he mentioned his friends, customers and other business connections more than family and relatives. This shows that Ali Dede is making use of the “strength of weak ties”. For Ali Dede, the reasons for his success are not related to the classical entrepreneurship characteristics that are pointed out in the literature, such as willingness to take risks or achievement orientation. Ali Dede frequently mentioned that his relationships, his connections and his networks helped him establish and grow his business. This emphasis is typical for many emerging countries, where economic institutions are not as developed as in the West and where collectivistic cultures prevail and network connections are necessary to conduct one’s business.

### 12.4.2 Community Enablers and Constraints

Although there are reported crimes involving Syrians on a weekly basis, the Turkish public is not as sensitive as other European countries to the origins of the refugees. There are no political movements such as the far right “Alternative für Deutschland” (Alternative for Germany – AfD), for example, that base their platforms on anti-immigration policies. Turkey seems to have an easier time absorbing Muslim refugees due to a shared history (Koru and Kadkoy 2017) and because the Turkish government, as well as the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD), have repeatedly expressed their openness to receiving refugees irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. There are still occasional reports highlighting discrimination as well as a sense of insecurity among members of minority refugee communities (The Inexistent: Syrian refugees outside camps, 2013). There is an unhappiness that grows as prices rise—especially rental prices in towns along the Syrian border—and wages fall, as more and more refugees enter the informal labor market (Limits of Hospitality 2013, p. 27.). Also, in larger cities like Istanbul, studies show that immigrant entrepreneurs potentially face discrimination in employment, capital markets and even in consumer markets (Borjas and Bronars 1989; Coate and Tennyson 1992; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008). Not only are there cultural and language barriers, as well as excessive regulations and compliance requirements, but there are also stringent policies governing the financing of their startups (Dana and Morris 2007).

Studies confirm the negative role that ethnic discrimination plays in excluding immigrant entrepreneurs from certain sectors of the economy (Jones et al. 2014), leading immigrant refugees to consider self-employment as a way out of poverty (Bizri 2017). Ali Dede has no clear opinion on this issue. He thinks that some people do treat him well in Turkey, but some others do not. He does not have feelings of danger or insecurity in the country as such, and although he himself did not face any particular problems, he said that some Syrian friends had reported bad experiences. Ali Dede points out that in Turkey there are good and bad people, just like everywhere. He says that he was lucky and did not meet any harmful people. Ali Dede got citizenship through his acquaintance and because of his Turkish origins and his religious fraternity bonds, but not everybody is this lucky.

First they give you a house, they rent you a flat, and after a year they increase the rent although there is nothing like that in the contract. Either accept this, or go ... this is what they say.... Everybody thinks, that the Syrians got citizenship immediately, the moment they enter the border ... but this is simply not true. I got citizenship, yes, because I am a Turk originally anyway... before the war, my friend, the MP had promised me to grant me Turkish citizenship. My ancestors, my great great fathers were grand viziers. So I told the MP ... you promised me citizenship, be an honourable man and keep your word...

Sutter (2012) found that initially migrants, and especially refugees, help each other out. It is not uncommon for immigrant refugees to cluster together, forming networks of interconnected individuals who find ways to complement one another (Bizri 2017). According to Docquier and Rapoport (2012), these networks are formed for the generation and exchange of entrepreneurial ideas (Bizri 2017). During this process, social networks are considered valuable assets which provide access to power, information, knowledge and capital, in addition to access to other networks (Elfring and Hulsink 2003), leading to stronger business relationships and increased trade (Bizri 2017). This is further supported by previous research that emphasizes the importance of networks and the networking process (Jack et al. 2008), thus contributing to the success of



a new venture (OECD 2010). Ali Dede sees himself in an advantageous position because he speaks the local language and knows the country better than most. He says that he helps everybody who needs help, especially young people who have only recently arrived in Turkey.

Ali Dede says that he is happy in Turkey with his family, but that he wants to return to Syria when the war is over. His factory burnt down in Aleppo, and he lost everything he had, but still he says “we cry every day because we miss our country”. He says that during his visits to Central Asia, he thinks frequently of Aleppo; in particular, he is reminded of Syria in Buhara in Uzbekistan, and “his heart aches”.

### 12.4.3 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Today, lower- and upper middle-income countries host 65% of the world’s refugees. In terms of the labor market integration of refugees in such countries, the largest obstacle is the lack of availability of formal employment opportunities, both for domestic populations and for refugees. The most important barrier for formal employment is the lack of policy frameworks to offer work permits to refugees (Sak et al. 2017). The Syrian refugees are no exception. The AFAD survey (2013) found that three-quarters of responding non-camp Syrians at some point looked for a job (Syrian Refugees in Turkey, 2013 Field Survey Results, p. 10), but that current Turkish labor laws made it very difficult for Syrian refugees to obtain work permits and seek employment in the formal economy. They would need to have a valid passport, as well as a residence permit, and the employer would need to show that a Turkish national could not be found for the position. According to Sak et al. (2017), only 13,000 Syrians refugees received work permits in Turkey out of a total of 2.8 million registered refugees (Sak et al. 2017). As a consequence, the inability to work legally has created an underground labor force for adult and child workers in industries such as construction, textile manufacturing and heavy industry, as well as in the agricultural sector. There are reports of Syrian refugees travelling all the way from provinces along the Syrian border to the Black Sea region to work as seasonal agricultural workers (ORSAM Report 2014).

In contrast to growing reports in the Turkish media about the number of Syrians that seek employment in the informal sector and thereby risk serious exploitation, many refugees have managed to bypass this problem by establishing their own business. Observers of neighborhoods populated by Syrian refugees in Istanbul, Gaziantep or elsewhere will notice the bustling economic activity resulting from bakeries, businesses, travel agencies and restaurants run by Syrians. Syrian entrepreneurs even export to neighboring countries, again making use of their extensive networks in and outside the country. A new Turkish-Arab economic space is taking shape that is relatively independent of Turkey's traditional industrial hub. Before the war, Istanbul (the largest and most western city in Turkey) was the export leader to Syria, with 616 million dollars in 2011. Now, Gaziantep is the leader, with 426 million dollars in 2016, while Hatay exports 214 million dollars. Both of these cities border Syria. Part of this development could be due to Syrian businessmen who resettle in these provinces and bring with them the knowledge of and familiarity with their home market. This allows for a more integrated economy across the border. There is currently no data to establish this causal link, but anecdotal evidence gathered throughout the region suggests that this might well be the case (Koru and Kadkoy 2017).

Ali Dede is a typical example of a refugee who had to give up his profession because his diploma was not accepted in Turkey, leading him to self-employment. In his case, entrepreneurship is, of course, not entirely new to him. Ali Dede studied Architecture at the prestigious Aleppo University, and he complains that his diploma is not accepted in Turkey.

Unfortunately I cannot work as an architect in Turkey. They don't allow it. There is no Turkish Consulate in Damascus (where I would have to bring my diploma to apply for equivalence). Since Syria and Turkey are foes at the moment, they won't provide information to each other and refuse each other's academic achievements. Wherever I go, they say "sorry, there is no such system!

He says the reason why everything went well for him is his connection with a member of parliament, who he is connected to in the Mevlevi sect. Ali Dede says that ideally he would like his brother to

settle in Turkey, as well. But the process seems more difficult than it was for Ali Dede. His brother lives in Qatar and earns 5000 dollars a month, but he loves Turkey and wants to immigrate, because it is a modern, Islamic country. But nowadays, it is almost impossible to get a visa. In fact, Ali Dede has many friends who want to immigrate—engineers, doctors and other professionals—but the consulate is no longer granting visas. Ali Dede believes that this is because Europe does not want refugees any longer. Ali Dede's firm has been registered with various trade chambers, and he says that he was able to do so because he spoke the language. When they came to Turkey, some fellow Syrians went into the textile trade as well, and some of them even opened factories, but, because of the high taxes and factory rents in Turkey, had to close them shortly thereafter and move to Egypt. In spite of all the difficulties encountered, and the inadequate institutional frameworks in Turkey, Ali Dede feels close to his new country.

... Europe is a cold place ... cold in every sense. Here it is no problem whether you are Muslim, or Arab or Syrian ... well, sometimes they say, go where you came from, go back home, go to Syria ... but in Europe, there is racism, they are afraid of Muslims. ... some of my relatives are in Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and Greece. They live under completely different conditions there. They got a flat, they don't have to pay rent, they got furniture. So they are comfortable there ... but they want work. They get tired of sitting at home the whole day. Especially the men want to work, but they don't get an occupation. Here it is opposite. Everybody can work, there are opportunities everywhere, but you have to pay for everything.... And on top of it comes ... here the streets are full, it is lively... but Europe is not.

## 12.5 Conclusion

Ali Dede was selected as an exemplary entrepreneur because of his ability to tell his story in a way that reveals, with transparency, the various peculiarities of his entrepreneurial behavior. His openness and willingness to tell his story encouraged the author to probe deep into the “why” and “how” of the process and thus “illuminate and extend relationships

among constructs or develop a deeper understanding of processes” (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). The selected refugee entrepreneur, Ali Dede, was generous and transparent with information, not only telling his “story”, but also offering possible explanations as to why things happened the way they did.

For our analysis, the case study methodology was used. Evidently, a single case study creates numerous concerns about the limited generalizability of results, the lack of credibility of the researcher’s procedures and the nature of qualitative data, which does not permit robust analytical measures (Yin 2014). Such limitations of single case study research have turned researchers away from single case studies due to lack of rigor. However, case studies help to explore significant phenomena under extreme circumstances. According to De Massis and Kotlar (2014), a “single holistic case study typically exploits opportunities to explore a significant phenomenon under rare, unique or extreme circumstances”. This description rings true with our experience, in which it was not easy to locate a successful enterprise started by a refugee entrepreneur who was endowed with unique social capital (Bizri 2017). Case studies are especially relevant here because they enhance “understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt 1989), particularly when settings, human and physical, are enduring (Bizri 2017).

Although Ali Dede had been living in Syria, leading a good life with family and friends, circumstances forced him to flee to Turkey; in his own words, “he was swept through the air like a leaf in the autumn wind”. When coming out of prison in Syria, he fled over the border between Syria and Turkey with his family. Thinking back to his ancestors, collecting all his past connections, he called upon his old friends, customers and brothers from the spiritual Mevlevi order to establish a new network, and in doing so, connected the old and the new. His great-great grandfather came from Istanbul to the east, and the whole family settled in Aleppo, Syria. Now, the war has forced Ali Dede and his family to move westwards again, but his business again leads him further east, to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and even China. Ali Dede is a lone trader in the footsteps of Marco Polo, going west and going east, exchanging not only goods, but also culture, art, religion, language and every other element of civilization.

## Notes

1. For the 2017 fiscal year, according to the World Bank categorization, low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita of \$1025 or less in 2015; lower middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$1026 and \$4035; upper middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$4036 and \$12,475; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,476 or more.
2. [http://www.mevlana.net/mevlevi\\_order.html](http://www.mevlana.net/mevlevi_order.html). Seen on November 2nd, 2017.

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# 13

## Internally Displaced Entrepreneurs in Pakistan: The Case of Abdullah

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### 13.1 Country-Specific Information and Data

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is a semiautonomous tribal region consisting of seven tribal agencies, namely Bajaur Agency, Mohmand Agency, Orakzai Agency, Kurram Agency, North Waziristan

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Agency and South Waziristan Agency, all located in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan and under the direct control of the federal government. Orakzai Agency belongs to a Pashtun tribe known as “Orakzai” that spreads over an area of 1,538 square kilometers. It is bounded by Kurram Agency in the west, Khyber Agency in the north, Kohat district in the south and Peshawar district in the east. Orakzai Agency does not have a direct border with Afghanistan, but it borders with Kurram Agency, which does border Afghanistan.

The Talibanization and the counterinsurgency operations in FATA have resulted in large-scale displacement of people, creating one of the greatest humanitarian crises in a country that is already hosting Afghan refugees. According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) report on global trends of 2016, Pakistan had the second-largest refugee population, after Turkey, of around 1.4 million.<sup>1</sup> The movement of IDPs (internally displaced persons) further added to the burden on the resources of this third world country. As of July 2015, there were more than 1.8 million people displaced by insurgency, counter-insurgency and other related violence in Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> The UNHCR global report (2013) shows that an estimated 747,500 IDPs were living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province—5% of which resided in three IDP camps, and 95% of which lived with host communities.<sup>3</sup> The main host communities are primarily settled in Dera Ismail Khan, Hangu, Kohat, Peshawar, Tank, Nowshera, FR Peshawar and Kurram Agency, either with extended family members or in rented accommodation. The IDP population is expected to be much higher, as reported by several governmental and aid organizations, since there are several unregistered IDPs, and it has not been possible to ascertain the exact number of IDPs in the region. However, the figures do show that the displacement has been massive and has affected the lives of several families.

### **13.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leave One’s Home Country and Traveling to the Specific Host Country**

Abdullah is a 25-year-old electrician displaced from Orakzai Agency—an agency located in the FATA of Pakistan—due to the armed conflict between the Taliban insurgents and the military operations in his area.

Abdullah led a peaceful life in his village, although he was poor and had to bear all the expenses of supporting his family by himself. He began school but had to leave and start working to feed his family. His father had died a long time ago. His brother got married at a young age but has been ill for several years due to mental health problems. His exact illness is undiagnosed, since his family could not afford to pay for his health care. His brother has three daughters and three sons. Abdullah had the responsibility of caring for his brother's family, too, since he was the sole male member of the family. He always wanted to be an electrician, so he started working in a friend's shop, where he learned how to fix electrical products. He could not study in a proper institution to become an electrician due to finances and because there were no such educational institutions in his area. The usual practice has been that people learn various skills from their elders, who are already running their businesses. A small, fertile plot of land, as well as cattle, were an additional source of income, albeit meagre, for Abdullah's family. In 2007, Abdullah managed to start a business of selling small electrical items and solar panels in his village. His business progressed gradually, and he was very content with his life.

However, there were some developments in his village and the nearby areas. The Taliban had entered the tribal areas. Initially, they were welcomed by the tribal elders and the local people. No one knew about their real motives. They intermingled with the local people and manipulated them to gain their support by establishing Shari'ah law.<sup>4</sup> People were happy with this law, since it made them feel secure. Theft was no longer a problem, even valuables were left unattended, and several historical disputes among families and tribes were resolved. People were not fighting or killing each other any longer. Mainly, poor people were happy, since their lives and rights were protected. People started to go to the *masjids* to pray. No one felt oppressed due to fair treatment of the rich and the poor, but this did not last for much longer. The Taliban were increasing in numbers, and soon they started to dictate and impose strange laws on the local people that did not make sense. People were confused, surprised and shocked about what was happening. They began to get offended and feel suppressed. The Pakistani military had already started military operations in the tribal areas. In 2009, they turned their attention towards Orakzai Agency and asked

all the inhabitants to vacate the area. The Taliban began to harass and threaten the local people for money to purchase weapons to fight against the Pakistani armed forces, saying that they were not being allowed to retain Shari'ah law in the region. The situation was becoming dangerous for local people like Abdullah. The Taliban were becoming cruel. They had started to torture and kill people who refused to support them financially or to fight with them against the government. They had made their own prisons, and many people were sent into these prisons. The positive feelings towards the Taliban had turned into hatred, and the atmosphere of peace and happiness had turned into nervousness and panic. Some of the people had already left, but the large-scale movement started during and after the counter-insurgency operation led by Pakistan's armed forces. People still had false hope that their homes would not be attacked. They waited until the last minute for circumstances to improve, but eventually they had no other choice than to run for their lives.

### **13.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country**

The war had begun to shatter Abdullah's hopes and dreams. Forced to leave in haste, he could not carry all his valuables and belongings. He could not afford to hire trucks or taxis, since the drivers and transporters were taking unnecessary advantage of the situation. They had raised the fare charges to Rs. 5,000 per person instead of Rs. 500 per person, which of course Abdullah could not afford for his entire family. Taxi drivers were scared, too, since it was not safe for them to drive in the midst of fighting and explosions. The Taliban had hideouts along the shortest route, which is hardly an hour's drive, and there were heavy military operations in that area. Also, the Taliban were firing on local people who were leaving. Therefore, they had to consider the safer and longer route and had to walk for at least six hours to come to a place near a city where taxis and public transport were charging normal rates. The circumstances were no different for Abdullah. The path that he took to reach Kohat was long and difficult.

Abdullah and his family could not carry much. The cattle had to be left behind. They had no time to pack their belongings and no transport facility. People could not help each other. They had their own wives and families to take care of. Those who were richer and had resources had already left. Everyone was nervous, scared and panicking. Abdullah recalls, "it was like a day of judgement for us. There was chaos everywhere. Nobody had time for each other. We all were running to save our lives". Abdullah and his family carried whatever they could and walked through the rough paths of the hills and mountains. Abdullah felt himself losing his strength. His mother was already ill and too feeble to walk. The children had fallen ill as they walked for miles. On his way, Abdullah noticed several empty houses, except for one house where a man was offering food and shelter to the people on the move. After walking for hours, they reached a place where taxis were charging normal rates. Abdullah complains that the government was not supportive and that they were left to take care of themselves.

At first, Abdullah could not decide whether to go to a camp established by the government and UN aid agencies, or to rent a house somewhere else in a safer location. His friends informed him of the miserable situation in camps. It was unsuitable for women and younger girls due to 'Purdah',<sup>5</sup> which, according to Abdullah, is taken seriously in Pakhtun culture. The camps were too small to accommodate his large family and they had insufficient basic facilities, such as, clean drinking water. Hence, most of the IDPs avoided moving to camps, except for those who could not find shelter elsewhere. There was a large-scale preference for taking shelter among host communities. Thus, moving to a camp was the last resort for Abdullah. Abdullah and his family reached Kohat, where other IDPs had already taken refuge. The local community included people from similar tribes who were already settled and helped the IDPs by giving them rental accommodation. Abdullah had a distant relative in this area, but he could not help him much in this regard. He had a small house that he had already rented to two families. Other people took advantage of the desperation of IDPs as an opportunity to raise their rents. Abdullah's relatives eventually helped him to find a house.

## 13.4 History of Establishing Business

Initially, Abdullah had to work on daily wages to pay for their rent. Unfortunately, the food “rations” that the government and UN aid agencies tried to provide were not being distributed fairly, since people with more resources and networks bribed them. Most of the needy people, like Abdullah, were left empty handed. Others could not understand the process of getting a ration card, and there was no one to help them to understand how to go about it. The staff distributing ration cards told Abdullah: “your work cannot be done because you have double addresses on Identity Cards and I saw most of the people who had the same double addresses as myself, but they got it by giving bribe”. The income from his daily wages was not enough to feed his family, so he had to ask for financial help from his friends to start his own business. This was risky, because he was starting from scratch and was not sure if he would succeed. He did not know much about the local market, although he used to occasionally visit Kohat to buy goods for his shop in the village. He felt that he was a stranger and did not know much about his surroundings. The constant worry of not being able to repay his loan bothered him, but his precarious circumstances pushed him to take the risk. Furthermore, he was moving house, which made it very difficult for him to concentrate on starting his own business.

As time went on, Abdullah began to settle down. He started to think about various options of starting a business. Over time, he managed to save Rs. 25,000 through his daily wages, but it was not enough, so he had to borrow Rs. 150,000 from a relative. He was also getting some “zakat” (charity that Muslims pay every year to the needy as an obligation) from his relatives that helped him and his family to survive. It took him three years to start his own business in Kohat. Abdullah learned very late in the process that he could borrow money from the bank, but they required various documents and collateral to ensure that he could repay the load. He felt bewildered and hesitant to take a loan from a bank due to religious reasons. He says, “interest is forbidden in Islam and I prefer to borrow from someone and then repay in time rather than indulging into something which is not halal”.

Now, Abdullah has a small shop selling solar electrical devices in Dheri Banda at the main Dhoda Road in Kohat, where he sells mainly solar panels, as well as solar fans and coolers, and where he also repairs devices. His main suppliers are based in the Karkhano Market in Peshawar, but he also seeks out more options in the wholesale market and tries to find the most economical product. His main customers are the people living in the village and his friends who often purchase from his shop. The rent for a shopfront in the main city was very high, so he started his business in the small community where he settled. He wanted to learn more and further develop his skills of fixing electrical items, but he had no extra time, so he started with what he had already learned. Abdullah believes that his previous experience has proved to be very beneficial for him when starting his business in Kohat. Also, he is interested in doing electrical work, like fitting electricity in homes and repairing different electrical devices, such as, fans, iron and other items. He can also install solar panels for tube wells and for homes and is eager to learn more to enhance his expertise. He is still planning to expand his business and wants to move to the main city, but he is unable to pay high rents at the moment. However, he is determined and has faith in God and himself that he will be able to move his business to the main city. He believes that his business would expand and flourish even better in the central city in Kohat. The current major constraint is the lack of adequate financial resources. Getting communal support and help has not been easy. Everyone is busy and has problems to take care of. He says that you could hardly find fewer people who would be willing to help you. Back in village, they used to help each other. They used to share their happiness and sorrows. For instance, the entire village used to come together for funerals and cooked for the bereaved family for days. In weddings, they used to share tasks and make all the wedding arrangements for others.

With pride, he says “Pashtun show love and unity towards each other and we always welcome our guest very warmly and we are very hospitable. We are also very “Ghairati”. He explains that “Ghairat” means that “we never asked helped from anyone and we take care of our women and their purdah”. Now, he feels depressed that he is losing his identity as a “Pashtun”.

## 13.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints

The troubles and setbacks were enough to shake his courage and confidence. His friends were a good source of moral support for him. They could not help him financially but helped him to regain his confidence. Abdullah feels lonely, but he has friends who are financially weak but are nevertheless there to support him through their words of encouragement. They encouraged him, emphasizing that he had the relevant skills and that he could do it. He appreciates his friends' kind words: "you cannot make your business successful until the one day for which you should be patient and it will take some time". They also tell me that personal business is very good and I should not go for partnership. Unfortunately, all of his friends are in a similar plight—suffering from the poor economic situation and unable to help him financially—which is why they just encourage and help him with words of appreciation, which actually gives him energy and keeps him going. Abdullah recalls, "In business, I just got guidance from my friends not local community here. No one told me that I will take less rent from and no one told me to come and work with me and no give me money to run business. I asked from people to give me loan but they were not even ready to give me money on loan".

Abdullah believes that he has to take risks, and one such risk was borrowing money from a relative, but he is confident that he will pay it back in time. He believes that hard work is always fruitful and that we should have faith in ourselves and God. He has been able to build networks and is using social media to advertise his products and services. This helps him to gain access to new customers. In Orakzai Agency, Abdullah had a range of customers. People used to come from other surrounding small villages to buy electrical and solar items or to seek his services for repair. He was well known for his skills and expertise. He thinks that good customer skills, dealing with people kindly and offering reasonable prices can help to make one's business successful.



## 13.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

The cultural shock that he experienced over time was discouraging, too. Abdullah discovered that Kohat was different from his village. Even though people spoke the same language, the accent and meaning of words differed. He had never previously thought that of himself as unfamiliar with this place, since he used to visit Kohat sometimes before his displacement to buy electrical goods for his shop. He knew a few people around from similar tribes who used to do business in his village. After he moved to Kohat, he realized that things are completely different from his village. He experienced a culture shock. The people had different lifestyles, and the women commonly go out to the markets not fully covered, unlike those in his village. He was not used to seeing women going out of their homes that frequently and without a male member of their family. Another difficulty that he faced was being alone and being more individualistic. He recalls that people in his village had lived more collectively and shared their happiness, sorrows and grief with each other, but this was not the case in Kohat. Everyone was busy in their lives and no one had time for each other. The way Abdullah dressed was different from the people in Kohat. His Pashto accent and walking style is different from the people around. He feels uncomfortable when people stare at him as if he is some kind of an alien. Over time, he is learning to adapt. Abdullah, along with other people from similar tribes and regions, have been trying to sustain their cultural practices. They still discourage their women from going out alone or without a male member of the family.

To add further misery, the security personnel who were supposed to look after the IDPs were harassing them by asking them for money. They threatened to make false allegations of terrorism against them and frequently took them to the police station to harass them. This was very frightening for people like Abdullah and their families, since they were deeply frightened about being falsely labeled as terrorists. Their houses were raided and searched several times due to the fear of them being terrorists. Later, he registered with the police, too, so that they would know that he is an IDP. He used to feel like an alien because of the way he and his family were treated by the police and the local community. However,

over time, things have improved, and now he believes that he is being treated well, since people know that he and his family are innocent and that they migrated for safety.

## 13.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

Abdullah strongly feels that the government should help people like him who had to migrate and who lost everything. He suggests that helping to start new businesses would create less of a burden on the government and would improve the economy. Fortunately, Abdullah does not have to register his business at the moment, and it is legal for him to work. The size and the nature of his business does not require it to be registered. However, he will have to register and pay taxes when he expands his business and shifts from retail to wholesale.

## 13.8 Concluding Remarks

Abdullah also wants to improve his qualifications and is preparing for his intermediate exams. He cannot afford to attend the college, so he will take exams as a private student. Although he does not have children at the moment, if he does he would want them to be educated. He advises that people should be patient. Calamities arise, because everything is uncertain and unpredictable. Just as he kept up his courage when he was reliant on his daily wages, which was very tough, so he urges other people never to lose courage. He says: “you should always work hard and never lose faith and hope”. He also says that one should try to deal with stress and cope with one’s situation. He also believes that we should help other people who are in need. Humanity is like a family, and people should console each other. Bad things happen, but they should be handled with patience and courage.

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## Notes

1. UNHCR. 2016. "Global Trends—forced displacement in 2016". <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>. Accessed on 14 September 2017.
2. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. 2015. <http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/pakistan/figures-analysis>. Accessed on 10 October 2017.
3. UNHCR. 2013. "Global Report". <http://www.unhcr.org/539809fbb.html>. Accessed on 4 April 2017.
4. Religious law in Islam.
5. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Purdah, also spelled Pardah, Hindi Parda ("screen," or "veil"), is a practice that was begun by Muslims and later adopted by various Hindus, especially in India, and that involves the seclusion of women from public observation by means of concealing clothing (including the veil) and by the use of high-walled enclosures, screens and curtains within the home.



# 14

## Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Case Study from the Sultanate of Oman

Ramo Palalić, Léo-Paul Dana, and Veland Ramadani

### 14.1 Project Construction Company—An Iraqi Refugee Business in Salalah, Oman

An unequalled number of migrants entered neighboring countries in the Middle East as refugees when serious turbulence and wars broke out there. Millions of people settled in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq,

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and the waves of migrants kept coming for a long time. Most European countries supported the decision to allow refugees to cross their borders and settle in their communities (Bizri 2017), though not without reservations. Focused on the socioeconomic aspect (Aiyar et al. 2016), the debate on the pros and cons of refugee settlement in neighboring countries and in Europe reasonably addressed issues of unpredicted increases in unemployment, government expenditure and inflation, as well as increased crime rates in their societies (Bizri 2017; Carpio and Wagner 2015).

Migration of people has always been subject to various sources of business (Heilbrunn et al. 2016). Generally speaking, moving from one place to another is difficult for migrants. Some of them are at the edge of survival; some of them, however, see migration as an opportunity to start a new life that could secure the future for them and their families. Refugees often have post-traumatic stress that is reflected in their ways of thinking and their actions. Such trauma is usually an obstacle to moving forward. Conversely, some of them, in spite of their trauma, are motivated to continue towards a brighter future.

Some theories based on refugee issues are derived from this context. Kunz (1973) developed a model which was based on “tradition”, where people who migrate are very similar to those in host countries in terms of cultural values, and the development of both countries is quite similar. On the other side, a new theory finds that people who immigrate are extremely different in terms of culture, and their socioeconomic development is significantly less than the host country.

Paludan (1974) explains that the refugee theory is twofold. First, it can be “acute”, in which people are forced to leave their homes without any previous notice. This is the case when people are unwillingly forced from their homeland. They bring nothing but themselves and they do not have any resources to start a new life in a new place. The second aspect of this theory is the notion of “anticipatory” flight. This is opposite to acute flight. People somehow foresee the development of a crisis, and they migrate before the disaster happens. They even bring some resources with them on which they can rely for their futures.

Following Paludan’s theory (1974), a new theoretical view on refugees was introduced by Kunz (1981). This theory was developed as a result of new trends in a globalized world. This new theory is split into three types.

The first type is known as the “majority-identified”, which is an outcome of sociopolitical disputes in a person’s home country. The second one is “event-related”, in which people are forced to leave their homelands due to “discriminating” policies of their country. They belong to a group (ethnic, cultural, social, etc.) whose values are unwelcomed, and, as a result, the only alternative is immigration. The third type is the so called “self-alienated” type. This theory argues that due to diversity, different “personal” reasons might provoke people to leave their home countries. Here, the reason to leave does not resemble any of the previous ones; it is just the desire to change their place of residence without any external enforcement.

The recent war in the Middle East led to widespread migration, whose repercussions are felt in almost every part of the world. Some of these people are still fighting for survival, whereas others decided to build a new life in countries in which they settled. Among the European countries, Germany has hosted the largest number of immigrant refugees from this part of the world. Some of the refugees settled in neighboring countries, and some of them made a home in the Gulf countries, such as Oman.

This story is about a businessman who had a very successful and a very positive experience of refugee life. The following section describes some of the aspects of the aforementioned theories (Kunz 1973, 1981; Paludan 1974). After discussion, we will draw a parallel with these theories, backed with some new insights in the field of refugee entrepreneurship.

## 14.2 Country-Specific Information and Data

Oman is a coastal country, known for its frankincense trees. It is located in the southeast Arabian Peninsula, with Muscat as its capital city. It borders Saudi Arabia in the north, the United Arab Emirates in the northeast, the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen in the southwest and Pakistan on the Gulf shore. The population of Oman in September 2017 was estimated at above 4.4 million (World Bank 2017). Although there are no specific numbers in recent years about the number of Iraqis settled here,

this number has increased. In the period from 2000 to 2011, the number of Iraqi refugees was around 600 (source: interviewee).

### **14.2.1 Interviewee's View of the Country**

Generally speaking, refugees in the Sultanate of Oman were welcomed. Refugees did not have any problems with settling temporarily in this country. Moreover, local people accepted them, were kind and helpful, and the refugees did not face any kind of settling problems with their hosts. The Sultanate of Oman has an administrative procedure for receiving a visa, as does each country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. However, this process is not lengthy, and people were able to get their visa and local identification documents within a reasonable time and with no restrictions.

## **14.3 Personal History of the Reasons for Leaving One's Home Country**

As Iraq was in crisis in the new millennium, the people of Iraq faced an exodus from their homes. Some of them stayed in their homelands until the last possible moments, while others left earlier. In the case of the interviewee, he and his family left their homeland before the war erupted. Although he says that he could have stayed longer, he tells us that they had decided to leave, together with his immediate and extended family. He says that he had anticipated the situation and intentionally left in order to save his and his family's lives and resources. According to Paludan (1974), some people leave their homeland at the last possible moment (without prior negotiation or announcement—"acute"), while others do this in an "anticipatory" manner, as is the case with this interviewee.

His plan, when leaving his homeland, was not to reach the Sultanate of Oman, but rather, Syria. He thought that his would be a suitable temporary station where he would protect himself and his family until the war ended. They spent three years in Syria. The moment he stepped into

Syria, he considered how to do something that would provide him with the chance to feed his family. His entrepreneurial mindset was already engaged, and he started a small business there.

## **14.4 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country**

The interviewee stated that:

When it comes to settlement in the GCC countries, the Sultanate of Oman was not my first target. Moreover, I did not know anything about this country before. I wanted to stay a few months and go back to my home country. I had an opportunity to go to United States, but I refused. I was given a very decent offer, but I was not into it. My first destination when leaving home was Syria. I settled there and even built up my own small business that could provide the sustainability of my family members. Due to the later happenings in Syria, I went to Oman. I was quite successful, and Syrians used to appreciate that fact, because it is rarely a case when a foreigner in Syria has success in business. So, I was kind of an appreciated person in my area.

## **14.5 Business Data and History of Setting Up Business**

“The business I currently run in Oman is based on projects initiated by the Government. The company name is Project Construction Company (Government Project Contracting). When the Government announces a tender, we submit our qualitative applications and try our best to get the job. My partner is always with me and helps me get and run a project. The company exists for eight years now and it counts 46 employees.

“The business is based on partnership, divided equally 50%–50%. Omani legislation does not allow foreigners to own their business. In our case, the business is under the Omani. The business is run on “trust”, which is for some people unbelievable, but true”.



“When it comes to the involvement of my family, I can say that I am the only one to be fully engaged. However, my son will graduate soon and in the future, he will inherit my part of ownership. It is something very usual and normal when the family business is inherited, regardless of the competence of the successor” (Interviewee).

“We do not have many clients; in fact we have only one—the Omani Government. Regarding the suppliers, they are usually private companies with whom we sign contracts. There are no business partners involved in our business. Instead, we have subcontractors; some of them are official, and some of them informal. They are used for backup services like painting, cleaning and similar stuff.”

“Regarding the evaluation of the business, I can say that we have been doing a great job for years now. There are no complaints neither from the clients, nor from the subcontractors. Since its inception, the growth of the business was gradual and quite stable. However, last year, the Government cancelled many projects in which we were supposed to engage. This happened due to the decrease in oil prices at global markets. Hopefully, it will get much better!” (Interviewee).

## 14.6 Individual Enablers and Constraints

When it comes to my personal drive and motivation, I can say the following:

My personal confidence derives from the technical skills I possess. In addition, my Omani partner is a trustworthy and energetic person who deals with all the necessary things towards the Government policies. He serves as a member of the Omani Tender Board. Also, my partner deals with the bank guarantee issues, like letters of credit (LC). Although the LC is a tool of getting things done, though, it can be also destructive for the business, because it keeps money blocked and we cannot use it. (Interviewee)

Regarding my existing skills, I can say the following:

I am a professional contractor for a long time (27 years), which means my competences are these like *Project Management*: a huge experience put me through different situations and outcomes in leading projects; *Negotiation skills*: in an international environment: I have no barriers to deal with contracts at international and local level. My negotiation skills are backed with a valuable working experience in this area; *Analytical skills*: every project manager has these; however, having an experience in multinational cultures is an advantage, because different cultures bring different contract constraints; *Leadership skills*: my leadership style is very flexible and I am able to adjust to different positions and situations in which my business goes through. I am always trying to be fair and just towards my peers, so that they can count on me, and vice-versa.

When it comes to motivation to seek new skills, well, I am very self-confident. I think that, at this stage of my life, I do not need any new skills. The confidence that I have enable me to go in any part of the world and do business (Interviewee).

In business, there is always a risk. In that sense, I can tell you that risk follows me since I left my country. This risk is reflected in my business, too. I am confident in certain actions. I am a risk taker!

A business requires financing, and I do have access to financial capital. However, I did not use it because I did not need it.

In terms of communication process with others, I do not have any problems to communicate with locals, as well as internationals, because I speak Arabic, English and French.

It should be noted that the community where I operate has a variety of local languages which cannot be understood even by an Arabic native speaker. These languages evolved since ancient time and are still used nowadays.

My social networks or ties are all my friends who are businessmen. Majority of them are Iraqi, but there are of other nations as well.

Every business has a risk which we have talked about, and there is always a probability of losing the whole business. I myself lost it twice! First, it was a cafeteria business, and in the second time it was about the contracting business that we are talking now. The reason in both cases was the same—no experience in dealing with people.

Although I had a hard time in my life, which was not easy at all, I can say that I did not have any trauma. Otherwise, I would not have been able to take care of myself and my family, too. I see that life goes on, we should not come back to think about what happened. Instead, I must look at the future.

Officially, there are no problems when it comes to some precarious and temporary legal statuses. But, when it comes to official papers to be signed, they must be signed by me. However, as a property, it is under the name of my Omani partner. This is the Law! Business benefits are shared equally. I must also mention this—I never ever took any kind of “commission” which would bring benefit only to me. And, I am very proud of this! Other benefits which were in favour of our company, yes, I did. I think that exploiting the society for your own benefits is not good at all!

## 14.7 Community Enablers and Constraints

Considering the local market access, it used to be very easy, but nowadays it is very difficult. Many foreigners and refugees who came here try to be professional contractors.

Regarding the communal support from others, yes, there is support! People in this community are supportive, in general. It may be due to our Arab roots.

Community-led initiatives are not at the right level right now. I can see that some people have good skills, but they will not take any initiative. They try to make an easy business. The Government wants to develop these initiatives across the whole country. Those who take initiatives are very strong and competitive in the market.

Personally speaking, I am encouraged by partner in what I do. I am guided by myself and him, too.

Regarding the local or national insecurity, I can say that this environment is secure! I never felt such things, nor thought about these. I never felt discrimination or xenophobia at any time here. Among the three countries I lived in; I find this place the best place to live in so far.

## 14.8 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

I have not thought about the aid from international and local agencies, but hopefully we will have it in the future. Regarding the physical security provided by the state, yes! The state provided it immediately and it lasts for the past 10 years that I am here.

The right to work for refugees is implemented. They can work. However, when it comes to register a business, no! The law allows only locals to own or register a business under their names.

Any access to public and private services is available. For instance, I have access! No problems! Access to finances and banking is even possible. I have not experienced any discrimination from the authorities. I recall a case when there was a deportation, but it was the fault of the refugee.

Full documentation of our business is available. We do it properly, smoothly and timely. We do not lack any necessary document.

There was no official community from Iraq at the time when I arrived, but we always contacted each-other informally. After my arrival here, this continued (Interviewee).

## 14.9 Final Words of an Interviewee

(Eufurat Ahmedd Abdul Kereem Al Hashimi, May 2017)

Lastly that I would like to say, as my life story in Oman and overall in few sentences is the following:

Based on my experience in Oman, after 9 years working in this country and working in my company (Sabaa International Co.), I can say that this is a great period of my life. After all sacrifices and hard time, people should count positively and on life-release. Which means, after all troubles and difficulties there must come a great time. Just we need to be patient. It is for any kind of business and for the life in general.

I think, I succeeded in my work and it was the right decision to stay and work here.” Sometimes, it is very difficult in this globalized world, especially for migrants and refugees, to determine what the best place for

settlement is? Besides our wishes, we must work hard and appreciate that opportunity regardless in which environment or region we work and live.

“A great part of success is finding a right partner, and the trust between us is another key of success”.

A trustworthy man is always a winner! In business the trust is the most important pillar in development and growth of a business. Partnership based on trust will be successful for sure. A business partnership is like marriage, based on trust, respect and dignity where each partner contributes to its success.

## 14.10 Methodological Considerations

This chapter is based on a qualitative research method. It uses the interview as a tool to obtain necessary insights into the research question. This method is appropriate if a researcher needs facts from real life and facts about the phenomena under study (Creswell 1998). Moreover, qualitative inspection of the study brings insights that could be treated as a new concept in this field (Sanders 1982). Sometimes, it is necessary to undertake interviews to check for “hidden meanings” about research phenomena (Palalić 2017). On the other hand, we needed the flexibility in terms of flow and procedures that the qualitative methods offer (Coyne 1997).

We started a search for a refugee in Oman in early May 2017. The first week was spent in communication with local businessmen to find the appropriate person for this study. One week later, we secured the contact details of a businessman who migrated from Iraq to Oman. In the middle of May, we contacted the businessman to introduce our study as well as our research team. After the first conversation via telephone, we agreed on a date to meet face to face. At the end of May 2017, we met this gentleman, who runs a service business in Oman. At first, we just wanted to meet him and talk in detail about his research. However, he convinced us that it would be fine with him to start the interview, regardless of how long it might take. This businessman, a gentleman with a lot of savvy, offered us local coffee before we started our core discussion. With the nice introductory words and the delicious smell of the coffee, we started

the interview, which lasted two and a half hours. The following text is about the core topics about which the businessman spoke.

## 14.11 Final Thoughts

Immigrant entrepreneurship has been discussed at length in the literature (Dana and Morris 2007). Migration itself brings pros and cons to a host country, in both the short and long term. The cons are usually seen in the disruption of socioeconomic flow, and this typically happens soon after the migration period. In the longer term, once migrants adapt to the new cultural environment, society starts to benefit from them. From this point of view, a fresh social capital is being created, which is one of the important benefits of migrants in a host country. Development of such social capital can depend on different types of “country specific factors” (Palalic et al. 2017). This is reflected in the entrepreneurial mindset of migrants. Their existing entrepreneurial mindset is modified by the host country’s circumstances. Such environmental circumstances are based on “culturally based behaviour and compensatory response behaviour”, as discussed earlier by Dana (1997). Some immigrants can face financial or procedural restrictions when starting or financing a business. These restrictions can be ethnic- or nation-based (Ramadani et al. 2014).

However, in the case discussed, migrants from Iraq are welcomed in this part of the world, which is justified because of the similarities in religion and the common cultural values that are present in both countries.

This case study offers insights into a good example of entrepreneurial leadership and positive motivation, and our interviewee has shown that no constraints of time and place can demotivate such entrepreneurs. A business vision backed up by hard work produces success. Positive communication and networking in the host society develops a business reputation in the long term. Trust and mutual respect in a business are additional pillars upon which a successful business is built. A government should see migration as an opportunity for social and economic development, as migrants see this as an opportunity to start a business and be successful. Entrepreneurs should bear in mind that business failure is just a step forward to success.

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# 15

## Entrepreneurship in Extreme Environments: Businesses in the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya

Marlen de la Chaux

### 15.1 Introduction

People do business in the most unlikely places. The Dadaab refugee camp, in a remote desert region of Kenya, is one such place. Although refugees in Kenya are required to live in temporary dwellings in designated camps and are in practice unable to obtain permits to own or run businesses, the Dadaab refugee camp boasts a lively informal economy with an estimated annual turnover of over \$25 million (Okoth 2012). This chapter takes a closer look at the businesses of the Dadaab refugee camp through a case study of an electronics repair shop run by Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, a young refugee from Somalia. On the basis of Ahmed's experience in Dadaab, this chapter reflects more broadly on how refugees do business given the constraints of the refugee camp. Emphasizing that refugees are, above all, individuals with distinctive abilities and backgrounds

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who find themselves in exceptional circumstances, this chapter offers an inside perspective into the resilience and creativity required to start and maintain a business in a refugee camp.

## 15.2 Refugees in Kenya

Kenya hosts nearly 500,000 forcibly displaced, making it one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the largest refugee populations. The majority of refugees come from Somalia (60%) and South Sudan (22%) (UNHCR 2017). The country is struggling with economic downturn and high unemployment, an increasingly volatile political situation and deteriorating public safety, as evidenced most prominently in the terrorist attacks in Nairobi and Garissa in 2013 and 2015. In this context, the Kenyan government has tightened restrictions regarding refugees' rights and freedoms.

Since the Refugee Act 2006, all refugees are hosted in camps, the majority of which are in the Dadaab refugee camp (hosting roughly 230,000 refugees, mostly Somali) and the Kakuma refugee camp (hosting roughly 180,000 refugees, mostly from South Sudan and Somalia). Many urban refugees—many of whom had spent several years and even decades in Nairobi and Mombasa—have also been relocated to a camp. Refugees in Kenya are barred from leaving the camps at their leisure. Fences, road blocks and permanent police checks on the roads near the camps ensure that the restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement are enforced. The Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps have existed for decades, hosting many second- or third-generation refugees. Children who were born in a refugee camp now have camp-born children of their own. Despite this protracted situation, refugees are not eligible for Kenyan citizenship or permanent residency. Instead, the Refugee Affairs Secretariat grants refugee status, meaning that refugees are entitled to temporary protection and assistance until return to their country of origin is again safe. Although refugees may de jure obtain a work or business permit, de facto they are required to remain in the camp and are thus unable to apply for such permits, which would require their presence in the permit office in Nairobi (Library of Congress 2016).

The Kenyan government emphasizes the timely return of all refugees to their countries of origin, owing to the limited absorption capacities of the Kenyan economy and labor market, as well as a growing anti-refugee sentiment in the Kenyan population. Such developments regularly culminate in threats to close the refugee camps, most recently the Dadaab refugee camp, which prompted the return of roughly 40,000 refugees to their native Somalia (Maina 2017).

The Dadaab refugee camp, in which Ahmed lives, is located in a remote, sparsely populated region of Kenya near the border with Somalia. Deprived of resources and infrastructure, the host communities are often as desperate for humanitarian assistance as the refugees. Although the roads outside of Dadaab village are blocked by police to prevent refugees' free movement, refugees and members of the host community are allowed to move freely between Dadaab camp and Dadaab village. The camp has existed for 25 years and, given the ease of movement between camp and village, it boasts a lively exchange and integration between refugees and members of the host community.

Refugees in the Dadaab refugee camp usually leave their home country, Somalia, for two reasons: the ongoing civil war and subsequent lack of personal safety, and/or famine as a result of drought. Ahmed arrived in the Dadaab refugee camp at the age of three with his mother and his two older siblings. Although he has spent the majority of his life in Dadaab and barely remembers his home country of Somalia, he refers to the latter as home: "Somalia, is very hard to go back for me. Because you know I grew up here. I don't know another place. I have never seen it so it is difficult for me to go back to Somalia".

At the time of the interview, Ahmed was in his early twenties and had completed primary and secondary education in one of the camp's schools. He lives in a compound with his mother and is the primary provider for the household. For Ahmed and his family, the Dadaab refugee camp was intended to be a temporary refuge until the situation in Somalia had stabilized and return would again be safe. The intention was not to settle in Kenya and start a new life there. However, the family has been in "temporary" exile in Dadaab for over two decades.

### 15.3 Ahmed's Electronics Repair Shop

Ahmed runs a small business in the camp that repairs electronics. He is the sole proprietor of this business, which he opened in 2013. However, it is difficult to speak of “ownership”, since the business is not officially registered anywhere. Getting a business permit would require travel to Nairobi—outside the camp—which he explains he cannot do since he cannot afford the bribes that would be required to pass the numerous police checkpoints on the road to Nairobi. Like most businesses in Dadaab camp, Ahmed's business is thus not protected by ownership or property rights.

The repair shop is located on one of the main market streets in Dagahaley, one of the five sub-camps that form the Dadaab refugee camp. Ahmed constructed a small shop from abandoned wood planks and the waterproof plastic tarp bags used by the World Food Programme to distribute food to the refugees. The shop is small, just large enough for Ahmed to stand behind a counter, from which he serves his clients. The shelves that line the back wall hold wires, chargers, small bolts and other hardware components that he uses to repair the broken phones, radios, and sometimes even lap tops that his customers bring him. In addition, Ahmed temporarily rents out two used laptops which were donated to him by an NGO who no longer needed them. His clients for the laptops are mostly young refugees who buy laptop “time” to play computer games and pass the time. Since his shop has no electricity, he purchases “battery time” for the laptops at a shop across the street that offers battery recharging in exchange for a fee.

Ahmed estimates that he receives three to four customers a day. If he is unable to complete a request on his own, he visits a friend and colleague further down the street, who runs a similar business. Together, they try to conduct the repair and then split the profits. There are no fixed prices for Ahmed's services, rather, he knows most of his customers personally and determines the price by the nature of personal relationship, for example, based on family or clan ties. Payment is largely done in-kind, meaning that clients offer him free-of-charge services from their businesses (e.g., a meal, vegetables from a food stand, clothing) in return for his services,

and sometimes also pay through the mobile money transfer service MPESA. New customers might also pay in coveted cash.

The business is Ahmed's primary source of income and sustains him and his mother. He explains, "the food distribution is not enough. For example, I have a family of two—me and my mother. It is just 6kg of millet and 6kg of maize. And one liter of oil, for one month. Imagine. So that is not enough, I have to look for another way to support myself and my family". Yet Ahmed also sees limitations in the potential of his business, as detailed in the next section, and thus his plans for the future involve pursuing a degree in computer science at the University of Nairobi before eventually either settling in Kenya or returning to Somalia.

Ahmed's primary motivation to run his repair shop is that he deems the in-kind aid offered by the humanitarian agencies in the camp insufficient and thus requires a way to supplement additional income. Moreover, Ahmed also explains that there is little else to do in the camp. As a young adult, high school structured his day. Since graduation, he finds, "there is nothing for me to do" and his business "gives [him] a reason to get out of bed every morning". In addition to income generation, his economic endeavors thus also serve to create meaning and a sense of purpose in his life.

However, rather than endeavor to grow and improve his business, Ahmed dreams of pursuing a computer science degree in Nairobi. Ultimately, he hopes to work as a software engineer in Kenya or his native Somalia. However, given that Ahmed's refugee status prevents him from leaving the camp, living in Nairobi and taking up employment in Kenya, his dreams seem out of reach, even to him: "I have lived all of my life in Kenya and I have not even been to Garissa [town closest to Dadaab]. What can I do? I can hope for the future". Whereas Ahmed's motivation to support his family and curb boredom thus leads him to run a sustainable repair shop, his vision for his future prevents him from investing in growing and improving his business.

In addition to his personal motivations, Ahmed's business is further driven by his information technology (IT) skills. After completing high school in the Dadaab camp, he pursued a certificate in IT from the University of Nairobi through correspondence and also taught himself extensive technological skills, thereby enabling him to run his business.

In addition, he worked as a teacher in one of the camp's schools, through which he built an extensive personal network of young refugees—all potential customers—and accumulated an initial capital stock from his monthly salary that enabled him to open the business.

## 15.4 Doing Business in Dadaab

Ahmed's business is the rule rather than the exception. The Dadaab refugee camp boasts hundreds of small informal businesses along market roads, making it one of the most economically productive regions of Kenya. As such, Ahmed can rely on an existing market structure that helps him navigate the numerous barriers to economic activity that characterize the Dadaab refugee camp.

Overall, Ahmed refers to the situation in Dadaab as “harsh” for businesses, but he also remembers that the situation was even more difficult growing up in the camp. Over time, extensive networks and markets have grown, meaning that new businesses—although they face stiff competition—are automatically integrated into a more established business community and network. The key components of this informal market structure are three-fold: informal agreements for property and business protection in the absence of formal regulations; contacts with supplier networks outside the camp; and baseline support through aid.

First, as outlined above, refugees are *de facto* unable to legally engage in business activity, as the required permit can only be obtained by appearing at the relevant agency in Nairobi in person, which is nearly impossible given the strictly enforced refugee encampment policy. As a result, Ahmed runs his repair shop informally, paying no taxes or registration fees. However, his business is therefore also not formally protected through regulations, such as, for example, property rights. In the context of this institutional vacuum, an informal business property market has emerged in the camp, where refugees rent out tents and plots in central locations to fellow refugees who wish to run a business. Ahmed pays monthly “rent” for his stall to another refugee, who “owns” several plots on the coveted market street and makes a living by renting them out. Additionally, local police officers regularly visit the camp to

collect “informal taxes” (i.e. bribes) in exchange for turning a blind eye to refugees’ unregistered, informal businesses. The charges are irregular and the amounts vary, as Ahmed explains: “They will just come to the market and they will say, for the land, you pay Ksh 1000. for the goods, you pay Ksh 3000. Then they estimate how much taxes you have to pay. It can be a lot, you can never be sure. Because the refugees have no rights, there is nobody who is protecting them”. Although the illegal property and tax systems that have emerged in the absence of formal regulations leave Ahmed and his business vulnerable to exploitation, they also provide a minimum structure through which Ahmed is able to establish a repair shop and run his business with a minimal level of security.

Second, longstanding networks among members of the host community facilitate Ahmed’s access to spare parts and electronics. Since he is unable to travel to nearby cities himself, he regularly solicits a member of the host community—his “supplier”—to purchase goods on his behalf. As Ahmed explains, this service is costly: “If you want to do business, or buy something in Garissa which is 90 km away I cannot go. I can only call people there and ask them to get me something. I can even ask the price but they can trick me. If it is Ksh 1000 they can say it is Ksh 1500. They are also doing business on top of me”. Nonetheless, the longstanding economic exchange between Dadaab’s refugees and the host community has established a network of trust that allows Ahmed to rely on his contacts to procure the exact resources he needs, albeit at a premium. Moreover, given the market size within the camp, Ahmed is also able to purchase components from other refugee-run repair shops in Dadaab, especially when he requires a particular spare part on short notice. Ahmed and his fellow refugee entrepreneurs have thus created arrangements that circumvent the restrictions on their freedom of movement. Yet the costs of their business activity are artificially created by the premium on resource procurement, thus making it difficult to compete with similar businesses outside the refugee camp and impeding the growth of refugee-run businesses.

Third, Ahmed is able to manage the precarious situation of his repair shop as a result of the continued humanitarian assistance he and his mother receive. Ahmed and his family have a ration card that entitles

them to food packages once a month. Furthermore, the family benefits from the health care provided by the camp's hospitals and the free-of-charge schools in Dadaab, through which Ahmed and his siblings have obtained secondary education. Taken together, the humanitarian assistance provided in the camp thus facilitates Ahmed's daily life, have enabled him to acquire the skills necessary to run the repair shop and creates a safety net to fall back on in case of downturns in business activity.

## 15.5 Outlook

Ahmed's technology repair shop is exemplary for businesses in the Dadaab refugee camp. Caught in the permanent transience of an indefinitely protracted refugee situation, Ahmed and his fellow entrepreneurs build businesses to achieve relative self-sufficiency and a sense of purpose in their life. However, constrained by the limitations of the camp context, many refugee entrepreneurs dream not of growing their business, but of one day leaving camp life behind to return home or permanently resettle elsewhere.

The situation in the Dadaab refugee camp has recently grown increasingly volatile, increasing Ahmed's concerns for his future. The government of Kenya announced in mid-2016 that the camp was to be closed and all 400,000 refugees returned to Somalia by the end of the year (BBC 2017). Although the Kenyan high court blocked the plan, many refugees feel that it is only a matter of time before they may be forced to return to Somalia. Ahmed shares such concerns and reports increasing harassment by local police authorities in the camp, as well as a general sense of fear about his more immediate future. Such worries have meant that Ahmed is hesitant to plan too far into the future or make further investments into his business. Instead, his current strategy is to run operations as they are, but begin to explore alternatives, such as return to Somalia. A major barrier for return is that he sees himself unable to transfer his business activity to Somalia, meaning that a return home would jeopardize his livelihood. He has also repeatedly applied for permanent resettlement to Europe and North America, on which his primary hope for his future



rests. However, the coveted resettlement offers are made to only a handful of refugees in Dadaab.

A sense of permanent transience thus permeates the Dadaab refugee camp. Refugees have, on the one hand, spent decades in the camp, and many were born in Dadaab. On the other, the camp is treated as a protracted emergency with continual humanitarian aid and restrictions on refugees' freedoms, limiting their independence and creating a temporary exile for refugees. Recent developments in Kenyan refugee policy further create a sense of insecurity regarding the future, leading refugees to adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude that stifles entrepreneurship and innovation—and thus business activity—in the Dadaab refugee camp.

## Notes

1. Name altered to protect anonymity.

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# 16

## From Cameroon to South Africa: From Refugee to Successful Businessman

Robertson K. Tengeh

### 16.1 Country-Specific Data

Of the 43.3 million people worldwide recorded as having been forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution in 2009, 15.2 million were refugees, 27.1 million were internally displaced persons (IDPs) and close to 1 million were asylum seekers (UNHCR 2009).

Although it is not uncommon for people to use the terms “asylum seeker” and “refugee” interchangeably, the difference is very clear. On the one hand, an asylum seeker is anyone who has unwillingly fled his or her country of origin and has applied for protection as a refugee in the Republic of South Africa. As such, the applicant may have to leave the country voluntarily or risk being deported if the application is rejected. On the other hand, a refugee is a person who has been granted asylum status and protection in terms of section 24 of Refugee Act No 130 of

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1998 (DHA, 2018). In line with the 1951 United Nations Convention, one should be able to establish that one is fleeing persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or a membership in a particular social group.

There is general inconsistency in the reporting of the number of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa, even by the organization that documents them. While the liberals put the number of asylum seekers at around 1.1 million in 2015 (Collin 2017), the conservatives report a much leaner number. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHRC) 2016 report noted a significant drop of nearly 900,000 people in 2016. To this effect, the UNHRC believed that there were 218,300 asylum seekers in 2016. This contradicts South Africa's documentation of the number of asylum seekers. In fact, Thabo Mokgola, spokesman for the Department of Home Affairs, noted that the UNHRC report failed to account for those, who for reasons unknown, opted to contravene the condition of their permits by not renewing them.

Turning to Cameroon, it is not clear how many Cameroonians are seeking asylum in South Africa or have acquired the status of a refugee. Until now, Cameroon has not been considered a refugee-producing country. Nonetheless, this is bound to change significantly soon owing to the current hostile political climate and, particularly, the current political crisis that started in late 2016. This notwithstanding, the available cross-sectional studies seem to suggest that the number of Cameroonians seeking asylum in South Africa has grown steadily. Cameroonians seeking asylum in South Africa tend to be well educated and young. The following reasons may account for the growing pressure on the Cameroonian youth to emigrate:

- The country has been struggling to mitigate the effects of the socioeconomic crisis that began in the early 1990s that led to the many structural adjustment policies, including currency devaluations and salary reductions.
- The country has a relatively large youth population with a bleak future as far as employment and educational prospects are concerned.
- The country is shaken by the political instability that began in late 2016.

## 16.2 Personal History of Reasons for Leaving One's Home Country

Economic reasons precipitated Oliver's need to emigrate to South Africa. The refugee theory, as defined and backed by the UN charter, did not hold true in the case of Oliver. The expanded definition considers those fleeing other forms of threats, such as drought, natural disasters, starvation and so forth. In view of this, Oliver would be classified as an economic refugee in South Africa. He displayed his refugee status documents for me to see, but was quick to note that he considered himself to be an economic refugee. In Oliver's words (Fig. 16.1):

I looked forward, backward and there was no hope for me or my family, even though I have spent years studying towards a qualification that I could not put to use. Can you imagine the number of university graduates that were jobless? I am even lucky that I had learned how to trade, and I knew that would surely help me in my host country.

## 16.3 Personal Reasons for and Circumstances of Traveling to the Specific Host Country

Oliver gathered much information before deciding to immigrate to South Africa. He was motivated by the fact that he knew an unemployed graduate who flew to South Africa and gained employment as a lecturer at a university in Cape Town only a few years after graduating. All the same Oliver found out some years later that his friend was a tutor not a lecturer at the university while studying towards a masters' degree. Another revelation for him was when he learned from his uncle that the apples sold in Cameroon are imported from South Africa instead of France, as most people were told. Equipped with all this and much more information, he was convinced that he would succeed in South Africa. As such, he had no intention of sojourning to another country. When asked why he chose South Africa, Oliver replied as follows:



**Fig. 16.1** Photograph of Oliver

I had Germany and South Africa in mind when the idea of emigrating was considered. Upon evaluation and in addition to what I have already told you, I realized that South Africa was the cheaper option in terms of all the cost involved such as flight ticket, other logistics and more so, I had a friend who was ready to receive and host me.

## 16.4 Business Data and History of Establishing the Business

Oliver has been involved in numerous businesses during the course of his occupational and social adaptation in South Africa. Some of the businesses he has attempted to establish, from his humble beginning as a street trader, include an Internet café, a metered taxi, *bakki* for hire, a restaurant and bed and breakfast (B&B) and his current furniture business. Today, Oliver employs close to 20 people in the three B&Bs and three furniture shops that he owns. Although he has partnered with others in the past, he is the sole owner of the current businesses. Although he claims that partnership is a better way of getting started, he cautions that the terms of the partnerships should be clear to avoid future problems.

The first thing Oliver did as soon as he could afford it was to ensure that his fiancé joined him in South Africa. The couple married in South Africa, and his wife was very involved in and contributed a lot to the development of the various business ideas he had, as well as to the ones they actually transformed into ongoing firms. After his current business activities expanded and stabilized and their income improved, Oliver made sure that started or ventured into other lines of businesses as means of diversification. When his businesses continued to develop and his income improved, all his siblings joined him and worked for him. After this “family apprenticeship”, when Oliver was sure that they were equipped with the necessary skills to run their own business, he encouraged them to become independent of him. Needless to say, Oliver overlooked their business undertakings, sometimes guiding them into the same line of business. Coming from a large family, Oliver thought he had a responsibility to take care of members of the family. Owing to that, he integrated his family members into the business not just for their financial security and that of the business, but also as a means of apprenticeship.

The clientele of the businesses varied over the past years. Whereas the clients of the restaurant and Internet café are mostly ethnic foreigners from Cameroon or other African countries, the customers for the B&B and furniture business are predominantly South Africans. Hence, the clientele that a business attracts depends on its product orientation, which

tend to vary over time. Additionally, the characteristics of the recruited employees also change over the life cycle of the business.

Given the orientation of the furniture business, its suppliers are mostly from China and South Africa. Considering his path of migration and economic development, Oliver is a remarkable example for successful entrepreneurship.

## **16.5 Individual Enablers and Constraints**

### **16.5.1 Enablers**

The most striking enabler in the case of Oliver was his determination to improve his living conditions and those of his family. This drive is what pushed him through school and university in the first place. He had to be entrepreneurial to find a way to finance his education. He hit the streets in his home country as a trader. As he recalls, in his last days in his home country, Cameroon, he was a barber after school and during university. Even when education could not give him the life that he thought it would, he continued this trade until he could save enough money to sponsor his journey to South Africa. It is clear that risk-taking was an inherent entrepreneurial attribute that Oliver possessed, and this is evident in his entrepreneurial trajectory. He was eager to learn, manifested in the fact that he completed an honors degree alongside his entrepreneurial initiatives in South Africa. His success today can be mostly attributed to the education he insisted he must acquire by any means. Although he believes that business success can be achieved with little or no education, he maintains that education is an important asset to develop, grow and sustain a success business. Another essential facilitator was the social network he established in his host country, South Africa. For instance, the friend whom Oliver had in Cape Town was one of the primary reasons why he preferred that city over the other cities in South Africa. Oliver benefited in so many dimensions from the established

ethnic networks that he engaged within Cape Town. For example, it was relatively easy to get financial and social support from these networks. He stressed the critical role that the informal financial associations (which was a central component of the ethnic network) play as far as making capital available for business and growth. Access to available resources, however, is not enough, he maintains—one has to have a critical eye for opportunity, and one has to know when to quit or move on to the next business. These are central abilities for successful entrepreneurship.

### 16.5.2 Constraints

One of the most important constraints on refugee entrepreneurship is possessing the legal documents to live and operate a business in South Africa. The second constraint concerns the necessity to receive the “acceptable” documentation to operate a business. Quite often people feel trapped in the refugee permits system, especially now that migration from one status to another is prohibited.

After just a few years in South Africa, Oliver secured a refugee status that enabled him to work and study. The downside of the refugee status is that it limits his ability to grow his business. For instance, most banks and businesses do not recognize the document. Hence, most immigrants move on to other types of immigration documents as soon as the opportunity arises. However, the opportunity to migrate from one form of immigrant permit to another has been withdrawn in recent years. An additional notable constraint is the difficulty in raising finance to start the business. Given most of the initial startup capital had to be raised from personal savings, the progression from one category of business to another took as long as growing the business.

Although the social and ethnic networks provide essential support, there were times that the same network was counterproductive towards the entrepreneur. Oliver said he could not remember how many times they told him “the venture or idea will not succeed” because no foreigner or Cameroonian had done it before.



## 16.6 Community Enablers and Constraints

### 16.6.1 Community Enablers

Oliver notes that he would not have entered the furniture business if not for the guidelines and support of friends and members of his ethnic network. He intimately recalls: My boss as I called him, introduced me to the furniture line of business, and although I am now also called “boss” by those that I have guided or settled in the same line of business, I still give him all the respect that he earned. Today, it is interesting to note that I and my boss discuss and brainstorm business ideas just as colleagues would do.

Being a refugee from an African country sometimes pays off in that they can better relate with black South Africans. However, this same relationship has deteriorated into jealousy and hatred over the success of African immigrants in entrepreneurial activities. In fact, Crush and colleagues (2017) consider South Africa to be one of the most xenophobic countries in the world, and migrants are generally not welcome. To these black South Africans, their foreign counterparts deprive them of jobs and business opportunities. Hence, immigrants, particularly of African origin, and their businesses have been targets of crime and xenophobic attacks in recent years. Oliver is quick to point out that the hatred and xenophobia prompted him to relocate his businesses from typical black settlements to mixed urban areas. “This notwithstanding, our goods and delivery trucks have been hijacked a number of items as we made deliveries in the black dominated areas”, Oliver continued.

## 16.7 Institutional Enablers and Constraints

### 16.7.1 Institutional Enablers

South Africa offers a great opportunity for those refugees seeking to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Unlike in some countries, where asylum seekers are confined to camps, they are allowed to work while their

status is processed. This is probably because post-apartheid South Africa adopted a “self-settlement” approach to refugees (Handmaker et al. 2011; Crush et al. 2017). Unlike the pattern of confining refugees to camps in Europe and elsewhere, the South African model guarantees refugees’ freedom of movement (Crush et al. 2017). Hence, today, South Africa allows refugees the freedom to move, settle and conduct business in any geographical location of their choice.

Oliver engaged in entrepreneurial activities in the very first week that he entered South Africa. “Gone are the good old days when processing your first asylum seekers permit was much easier and the permit issued for a reasonable period”, he says. Today, a newcomer has to travel to a border town to get a permit, and this may take a week or even longer depending upon the workload of the officials. Those who have “connections” may get the papers quicker. The duration for a permit ranges between one and six months.

The positive side of being a refugee in South Africa is that the process of starting a business is quite easy. There is provision for anyone who aspires to get into business, even if it is only at the informal level, and this is something that is particularly challenging to refugees in many host countries around the world. However, there is a limit to what you can do business-wise with a refugee permit. Reasonable access to excellent hospitals and roads are some of the additional benefits enjoyed by asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa.

## 16.7.2 Institutional Constraints

The non-restriction of refugees to camps presupposes that they tend to have direct interaction with South Africans, with the potential for conflict (Crush et al. 2017). While the government allows refugees to start businesses, it preaches and enacts policies that prohibit banks and the business community from fully accepting the refugee status that an applicant possesses.

Although crime is a general problem that affects most businesses in South Africa, immigrants have increasingly become the target of crime, depending on the location of their business (Tengeh 2016). The

government does not fully denounce or punish perpetrators of crime and xenophobia, which has been an acute issue for refugee entrepreneurship in the recent past. This has resulted in serious loss of property, businesses and lives. “I am fortunate not have been directly affected by xenophobia”, said Oliver. “However, crime is something that we live and deal with every day as we engage in business. For instance, even when one of my workers (my cousin) was shot in one of my shops a couple of years, I did not close down the shop but took that as part of the daily risks that are associated with operating a business in those parts South African cities”.

The fact that the South African government continues to downplay the existence of the negative impact of crime and xenophobia, and is not prepared to do anything about it, makes South African cities a hazardous place for refugee entrepreneurs (Crush et al. 2017).

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# 17

## The Resilience of a Syrian Woman and Her Family Through Refugee Entrepreneurship in Jordan

Sophie Alkhaled

### 17.1 Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Context of Crisis

As the Arab Spring enters its 8th year, the political and economic outlook remains tumultuous for the people of Syria. Indeed, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) figures in April 2018, there are currently over 5.6 million Syrian refugees who have fled to neighboring countries Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. Syrians have also fled to Europe in large numbers, making approximately 884,461 asylum claims since April 2011. Hundreds of thousands more live in Gulf countries that are not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, and thus are not recorded as refugees. It is also estimated that another 6.3 million people have been internally displaced within Syria.

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The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an Arab country bordered to the north by Syria, and thus, it has received hundreds of thousands of refugees since the crisis in 2011. However, as the strain on national resources was too great, Jordan opted to close its borders to all Syrians in May 2014, leaving 659,063 Syrian refugees living in Jordan today (UNHCR 2018). In an attempt to protect the native population from economic instability and a rise in unemployment, the Ministry of Labor made it almost impossible for refugees to obtain work permits, leaving them tied up with a complex bureaucracy in their attempts to obtain a permit. Today therefore, less than 1% of refugees have access to legal work permits, and it is estimated that over 200,000 Syrians are working illegally and are exploited without any of the legal protection offered by labor laws. Leaving most refugees with very limited options for employment in these countries has naturally increased their dependence on humanitarian assistance for survival, with a corresponding decline in living standards, with around 86% of refugees living outside refugee camps in Jordan and surviving below the poverty line of 3.2 dollars per day.

It has been specifically highlighted in reports by UN Women (2013) and Save the Children (2014) that women have been hit the hardest by these circumstances, leaving them to face gender-based violence, and many widowed women with no “choice” but to force their daughters into child marriage to “protect their honor”. On the other hand, it has been reported that women are the sole providers for one in four Syrian refugee families and thus, have resiliently maximized their limited resources and innovatively responded to these harsh conditions by setting up micro, home-based businesses in typically feminized indigenous skills, such as cooking and traditional craftwork (UNHCR 2014).

## 17.2 Syrian Women as Refugee Entrepreneurs

Whilst media exposure and academic research has proactively analyzed the political and economic developments within the region, little attention has been paid to the gendered implications of this revolutionary process (Al-Ali 2012). It has been argued that an institutional perspective

to researching women's entrepreneurship could provide an integrated lens for appreciating the formal and informal institutions which shape the sociocultural, political and economic entrepreneurial environments in developing and transition countries (Mair and Marti's 2009; Welter and Smallbone 2008). Other studies adopt similar perspectives, focusing on the context of (gender and) entrepreneurship (Welter 2011) in terms of theories of "necessity" and "opportunity" recognition (Galloway et al. 2016) and understanding entrepreneurship as socially constructed and embedded within a place, context and social network which influence entrepreneurial practices and outcomes (McKeever et al. 2015; Jack and Anderson 2002; Zahra 2007). Whilst a substantial amount of distinct approaches to researching women's entrepreneurship have emerged that embrace the intersectionality and the embeddedness of women entrepreneurs within their context (Mirchindani 1999), the core of theoretical conceptualizations seems to focus on women in developed countries as either nationals who have been "pushed" into entrepreneurship because of the "glass ceiling" in employment (Hughes 2003) or "pulled" through seeking autonomy and self-fulfillment (Orhan and Scott 2001); Alternatively, scholarship has focused on ethnic minorities or migrants facing discrimination and/or cultural conflicts of employment between their traditional homes and western society (Essers and Benschop 2009).

Research on women's entrepreneurship in developing countries, especially those in poverty in rural areas (Mair and Marti 2009), has viewed them as "barefoot" or "bootstrap" entrepreneurs (Imas et al. 2012). Their entrepreneurial experiences have been illustrated as an alleviator of socio-economic constraints and poverty (Scott et al. 2012) and thus, as a vehicle for women's emancipation (Rindova et al. 2009; Goss et al. 2011) and empowerment, both domestically and within their community (Al-Dajani and Carter 2010; Datta and Gailey 2012; Al-Dajani and Marlow 2013), while—crucially—critiquing the "dark sides" of this phenomenon. However, in the case of a female entrepreneur in exile, it is unclear how they will survive without the support of capital or preexisting networks and socially embedded ties, such as family, friends and close personal contacts, especially in a classic patriarchal context. Therefore, while these arguments clearly describe how the women's entrepreneurial context influences their motivations and practices, research examining refugee

entrepreneurship in a context where work permits, social welfare or international aid are inconsistent is scarce.

As an academic of Syrian and British heritage, whose research focus had been centered on exploring and questioning women's empowerment through entrepreneurship in the context of the Middle East, researching this phenomenon was not a choice, but rather, a necessity—on both a personal and professional level. I have been conducting data collection on fieldtrips to Jordan since 2015 and will continue to do so until current funding expires in 2018. The longitudinal study following women entrepreneurs and their families' endeavors to survive has been challenging, given their precarious state and economic instability. This chapter explores refugee entrepreneurship in Amman, Jordan, through the heroic story of one of these formidable Syrian women entrepreneurs, whose resilience and perseverance against all odds alleviated her family from poverty, in a socio-political and economically restrictive context loaded with heartbreak, pain and a yearning to go home.

### **17.3 Hanifa's Story (2011– Until 2018)**

Haifa is a woman in her early 40s from Homs, Syria. She married her husband when she was in her early 20s and has five children: a 22-year-old son, three teenage daughters and a 9-year-old daughter. Hanifa's husband was a carpenter and held a stable job in Homs. She had completed her college education in graphic design before she married, but did not engage in full time work and focused on the home and her family. She did, however, support the household with extra income by occasionally sewing made-to-order curtains for friends and family.

As the Arab Spring began to ripple across Syria, Hanifa and her family were amongst those filled with the optimism that had gushed down the streets of Homs, believing that democracy would be soon knocking on their doors. However, their hope soon turned into horror, as their district in Homs fell under siege for seven consecutive days. Hanifa and her family were willing to wait it out, until news broke in her neighborhood that the military and militia had been breaking into houses, taking young men and forcing them to join the army. Furthermore, they were

committing unbearable acts on women and young girls, leaving no family safe from terror. Fearing their son would be taken and daughters harmed, they decided to flee Syria and enter Jordan in September 2011. They chose Jordan because they had family members residing there from her husband's side, who offered them support.

Upon arrival, they lived with her brother-in-law and his family for a few weeks. Her husband's brother (who had lived there since the 1980s) used his local networks to get her husband into work, which was neither stable nor sustainable given the institutional constraints imposed by the Jordanian government on work permits for refugees. Being crammed in a tiny apartment with little money pushed Hanifa out of her comfort zone of being a protected housewife. She explains:

I looked at my family all crammed in one room, my children weren't going to school, my husband couldn't find stable work and suddenly for the first time in my marriage I felt responsible. I had to step up and take responsibility of my family. Not all Syrian housewives feel that but I did. Even though I had never really worked in Homs and did not have the confidence in myself, I felt my God I have to work! I need to feed my family. I cannot just sit and depend on his brother. I need to go out. I need to work.

The first task she gave herself was to find an apartment. Struggling with the change in the gender relations and responsibilities in the family, Hanifa says:

I went to find an apartment alone! Can you imagine? Alone! My husband worked 8am–6pm for six days a week. He was exhausted. So I started knocking on the neighbours' doors, I went from building to building asking if they had any apartments for rent. Eventually, I found one. Next task was getting furniture. So I started getting lists of charities and going to them to see if they have furniture that I could buy second hand sofas as well as all other stuff a house needs.

Once they had settled in their home, Hanifa decided she wanted to start looking for work. She had studied graphic design in college, but was aware her knowledge was outdated. She decided to look through advertisements and phonebooks of engineering companies, reading last



names of small business owners—hoping to find a Syrian last name, as she believed a Syrian would be most supportive of training her. Some opportunities came through, where she went to business offices and trained on new software, but she realized she would never be able to make money through this route, as no one would employ her without a permit. Therefore, she decided to give up on her quest to train herself as a graphic designer and decided to turn to the local charities for support:

Whilst my heart wanted me to maximize my degree, my head knew this would not work. So I needed a new work place. Then one day through the mercy of God I was walking down the street after dropping off my daughter at school, and this woman pulled over in her car and she came up to me and asked “are you Syrian?” she was Jordanian, I was shocked she guessed it, I suppose you can tell from the way we Syrians wear our scarves on our heads, so I said “yes”, she said “great, I have been looking for Syrian women and today God sent you to me, do you want to work?”, I said, “yes”, she said “well we are a charity building a network for Syrian women seamstresses to train a our charity. Come to our group and meet others. We will train you. I could not believe it. We hugged in the street and she looked into my eyes with such love and empathy. It was overwhelming. I felt such a strong connection to her. We have so much in common with the Jordanians. They feel out pain”.

Hanifa believed this was a great gift from God and joined the charity, which was run by a group of local Jordanian women as well as Jordanian women of Syrian origin (who gained citizenship through heritage or marriage to a Jordanian man). She woke up every morning and after sending her children to school, she would head to the charity and train with the other women. Whilst she used to make curtains, training to sew clothes was a new skill she was developing. In addition, the sense of hope and support in the group was enriching for Hanifa, infusing her with the self-confidence she had been seeking. After training, orders were coming in, and the women were working hard and, in return, they were generating an income to support their families for the first time since arriving in Jordan. Whilst her husband was earning enough to pay rent and bills and the UNHCR was providing a fuel allowance and food coupons for the

children, Hanifa was now supporting her family with what she called “essential extras beyond survival”. That is, she was helping her son to buy equipment for his university degree in photography and filmmaking. She was paying for her eldest daughter’s books for her university degree and most importantly, was able to pay for her youngest daughter to have counselling for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (UNHCR 2013), from which she had been suffering for months.

Whilst things seemed to sail for a few months, a double tragedy hit Hanifa’s household. Funding for the charity had dwindled, and thus, so did the work for the Syrian women. Furthermore, charity bazaars had lessened, and when they ran, they were saturated with the same homemade textiles, crafts, jewelry and clothing made not only by the recent Syrian refugee women, but also Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. Parallel to this, Hanifa’s youngest daughter had completely broken down due to PTSD. She was now unable to sleep and lived in constant fear of her family being taken away. She refused to go to school and begged to stay at home with her mother. Hanifa could not leave her, as her daughter needed her now more than ever. Indeed, even though a year had passed since fleeing Syria, the events of the evening they escaped had haunted her daughter and led to her breakdown. She explains:

So here I was, sat at home on this sofa hugging my daughter and comforting her for two weeks, whilst knowing that with every day I did not work I was putting my family in more danger. That is when I decided that I needed to work from home. I have always been a great cook, and us Syrians are known for our homemade cooking. But where is my network? Where are my people my support? Where do I start with the dream? Then, I spoke to my sisters who live in the Gulf and they agreed to give me some startup capital for my home cooking business. With it I bought pots, pans and the equipment I needed. I was ready to start fighting again.

Through her sisters’ small start-up capital, Hanifa had the equipment to set up her home cooking business. She then began marketing herself and searching for customers. The first step was approaching her daughter’s schoolteachers and suggesting catering for an afterschool dinner for

them, where they would taste her food and provide feedback on the dishes. She also hoped that if satisfied, they would spread the word amongst their friends and family and put in orders. The teachers accepted, and Hanifa catered for 30 teachers:

It was a huge order and the first time I ever make that amount of food, but it was a team effort in our small kitchen. My husband bought the food, my daughters and I peeled and chopped the fruit and vegetables and my son borrowed his friend's van for the afternoon and delivered the food to the school. It was a great success and I got many orders after it and this was the beginning of home.cooking13.

Since the initial event, Hanifa's business has grown. Indeed, three years on, and with the help of her son, a photographer, and her daughter, who is social media savvy, Hanifa has an online presence through her Facebook and Instagram pages.<sup>1</sup> Hanifa has catered for events such as gym openings and food bazaars, as well as small family events. She was also asked to cater for more school events for up to 60 teachers and staff and to cater for weddings. Her biggest honor was when she was asked to cater an event for the Kuwaiti ambassador. She also joined various online communities, which had been set up by locals to support Syrian women's home cooking businesses.

Whilst Hanifa has relentlessly strived for this success, she does not claim to be the hero:

I am not a businesswoman. This is not my business. We are a team, this is a family business. Even if my husband does not contribute directly, his support is enough. My son is the social media and marketing officer. My eldest daughter is also monitoring social media and makes leaflets and posters and my two little girls help me in the kitchen with all the preparation and cleaning thereafter. I have also taught myself accounting and finance, I mean, I had to learn about pricing!

Whilst Hanifa was trying to be positive about the current state of her business, her situation remains tumultuous. As refugees, Hanifa and her family continue to be constrained in their attempts to earn a decent living in a sustainable manner. On an individual level she has been enabled

by her strong sense of responsibility and resilience for the sake of her children, especially her daughters, yet she feels alone without the strong network that empowered her in Homs while running her casual curtain making, home-based business. On a community level, she believed the Jordanian neighbors have been friendly and supportive, yet she feels growing tensions and frustrations within the society in recent months, given the length of time the Syrians have resided in an overcrowded city like Amman. The individual and community constraints, combined with the restrictions she encounters as an entrepreneur on an institutional level, ultimately create a deadlock for growth. For example, as a Syrian refugee she is unable to obtain a driving license and thus, has to depend on her son's friend to drive his van with the food to the venues. There are occasions where she has taken taxis, but these are expensive and too small to carry big orders and boxes to store the food safely. Furthermore, while orders are growing, Hanifa's capacity as a "one woman band" is limited. Her frustration when she turns down orders is deflating. She is losing business and patrons to the many other refugee women competing in the same market, especially as a micro home-based business that is dependent on word of mouth. Indeed, while her business is arguably thriving, there are no possibilities for achieving funding or investment in supporting or growing the business or hiring employees to support her. Hanifa wishes she could grow her business, rent a bigger kitchen, employ other women and hire a delivery van to help with the logistics of the business, but there is no infrastructure available to do so. On the other hand, she has been given offers to cook for restaurants, which she would gladly take, yet fears of employing a Syrian without a work permit prevail both for herself and the local restaurant owner.

Perhaps the biggest constraint that was clear from her interviews is the emotional toll the everyday stresses of uncertainty cause. The precarious state of refugees—not knowing how long they will remain in Jordan, whether they will be able to return to Syria, whether the UNHCR will cut their funding at any moment and whether even stricter policies on work and entrepreneurship will be enforced—is probably the largest obstacle they face. Sometimes, Hanifa reflects on this, but for the majority of the time, she cannot face it and decides to keep working and moving forward for the sake of her family.

I never expected that one day I would wake up, leave my entire life in Syria and move to Jordan. I never imagined I would run my own business. You just never know what God has planned for you. So when things happen we take responsibility and make it work. I will never sit at home and wallow... And whilst we are now surviving, I look at my life and think how much longer can we do this for?

## 17.4 The Crisis Continues...

As the war continues in Syria and refugees continue to flee to neighbouring countries, joint efforts between the host governments, international committees and research institutes to integrate Syrians into the local labour market is crucial to enable refugees to improve their situation, and for host countries, to reap more of the potential economic benefits from the demographic boost (Errighi and Griesse, 2016). Indeed, in March 2016, the Jordanian authorities announced that, as a part of a new deal with the EU and response to Aid agencies like the International Rescue Committee (IRC), they would allow a limited number of permits to Syrians to work legally. However, as noted earlier, women refugees are hit the hardest, and so whether these measures will include women remains to be seen, as only 7% of Syrian women in Jordan work, including the informal economy (Errighi and Griesse, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Whilst media exposure and academic research has shed a positive light on women's empowerment and poverty alleviation through entrepreneurship in various developing and transitional contexts (Welter 2011; Scott et al. 2012), it could be seen that this was indeed the case for Hanifa. Historically, feminized industries have been illustrated as a vehicle for women's empowerment and an alleviator of socioeconomic constraints, both domestically and within their community in the Arab region. However, reflecting on the literature, which emphasizes the "darker sides" of women's entrepreneurship in contexts of inferiority (Essers and Benschop 2009; Verduijn and Essers 2013), it becomes evident that Hanifa is caught in an entrepreneurial ecosystem that may offer survival, but is not sustainable in the current climate. We have yet to witness the

long-term damage and effects these may cause to the sense of self-worth and belonging of a group of people who are already suffering physically and mentally.

## Notes

1. <https://www.instagram.com/home.cooking13/>; <https://www.facebook.com/home.cooking13/>.

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# 18

## Refugee Entrepreneurship: Learning from Case Evidence

Jörg Freiling and Aki Harima

### 18.1 Introduction

Although refuge is not a new phenomenon, refugee entrepreneurship is—apart from some door-opening contributions (e.g. Light et al. 1993; Wauters and Lambrecht 2008 and the overview in Heilbrunn and Iannone, 2018 in the introduction of this book), analysis is still in its early stages. Neither quantitative research nor comprehensive cross-case studies have been conducted to date. This book, however, allows us to take our first steps toward learning from case evidence, as all the chapters have followed a corresponding structure and reveal comparable information from the cases examined.

The 16 cases outlined form the ground for a case comparison that starts out by identifying core topics. These topics are condensed both from the structure of the book's chapters and the content provided by the authors. Having intensively reviewed the material, the following questions

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stand at the fore and help to develop the cross-case narrative that structures this concluding chapter:

1. Are there any typical settings (e.g. industries, market structures, migration paths) that refugees as entrepreneurs act upon?
2. Do home countries play any decisive role for refugees after their refuge—in terms of being on their mind or prompting them to maintain a static state of waiting to return?
3. How do refugees develop their perspectives, and what happens throughout their flight?
4. How do refugees perceive their countries of residence and how or why do they journey there?
5. What kind of businesses do refugee entrepreneurs develop, and what motivates these choices (considering entrepreneurial opportunity and entrepreneurial intention)?
6. What are, and have been, the critical resources for founding the companies and running the businesses, and what are the enablers and constraints?
7. What are the psychological factors that made the refugee entrepreneurs pursue their business projects (with a focus on the important construct of hope, cf. Freiling and Vemuri 2017)?
8. What is the (preliminary) outcome of the entrepreneurship endeavor and the business endeavors of refugee entrepreneurs (with some focus on the question of whether trauma occurred and could be overcome)?

The following sections mirror and condense the findings, one by one, following the above set of questions. Lastly, a final section will provide an overview and outlook.

## 18.2 Typical Settings of Refugee Entrepreneurs and Refugee Entrepreneurship

In the face of considerable heterogeneity, it is useful to structure the situations that refugee entrepreneurs typically occupy. However, the question arises of what kind of factors ought to be considered. In this respect, one

cannot abstract from the root causes of a refugee's flight. Moreover, the personal situation of refugee entrepreneurs often makes a difference in terms of what they do, what they can achieve and how they behave. Furthermore, their socioeconomic background matters, as well. Refugee entrepreneurship seems to depend on what refugees do in relation to their previous activities.

### 18.2.1 Root Causes of Refuge

The reasons for leaving a home country or home region may be considerably different from one case to another. However, the case evidence suggests that it makes a difference if people flee due to: (1) personal reasons like political persecution (like Hamze, cf. Maalaoui 2018) or sometimes economic pressures, like in the case of Oliver (Tengeh 2018), which is already closely located to the interface of migration entrepreneurship; (2) reasons that relate to social group discrimination (like in case of the human right activist Edouard, cf. Ruparanganda et al. 2018); or (3) an overall social disaster like war—one of the most significant factors of the cases presented in this book (e.g. Futan Ahmed, cf. Palalic et al. 2018 or Hanifa, according to Alkhaled 2018). This corresponds to the constellations of refugees introduced by Kunz (1981): majority-identified refugees, event-related refugees and self-alienated refugees, as portrayed in the introduction of this book (Heilbrunn and Iannone 2018).

### 18.2.2 Socioeconomic Constellations of Refugee Entrepreneurs

As for their personal situations, several things are significant in profiling refugee entrepreneurs' endeavors. The first relates to a refugee entrepreneur's age—namely, the person's age when the flight takes place and their age when founding a company. The time difference between refuge and company foundation is also a feature to profile entrepreneurial endeavors of refugees in host countries. Sometimes refugees have to leave their home in their childhood or adolescence (e.g. Jamshed, cf. Plak and Lagarde 2018). In these cases, their mind is not so much influenced by

their home country (setting). These particular phases of life are rather sensitive, as non-adults often need a stable background for smooth development. Any break in security, for instance, can cause emotional pain that is often neither an evident nor a conscious factor and, thus, operates very much in the background. Adults, instead, are often fully socialized in their home countries. By virtue of their experiences, they are typically more prepared to cope with the new their circumstances in their host country. However, their openness to a new environment depends, to a large extent, on a home country's imprint—an imprint that may stem from the years they lived in a home country, as well as from cultural or ethnic factors. The case evidence tells the story of younger entrepreneurs, like Abdul (25 years—cf. Hertmann et al. 2018), and adults, like Muhannad (Harima et al. 2018), who are very open-minded and flexible. Muhannad and Ali Dede (Zamantili Nayir 2018) are of the same age, but differ in terms of their home country's imprint remarkably. When a home country's imprint plays an important role, we can expect an impact on recognition of entrepreneurial opportunity and the kind of entrepreneurial intention (Baron 2004; Krueger et al. 2000), as heavily “imprinted” people will narrow down their business corridor based on these factors.

### 18.2.3 Type of Business and Prior Career Steps

Refugee entrepreneurs are, to a large extent, opportunity seekers and need to be so in order to support themselves and their families. The range of businesses of refugee entrepreneurs varies considerably and depends on local opportunities. However, before running a business on their own, the refugee entrepreneurs portrayed in this book predominantly first looked out for other jobs. As it turned out, employment options did not really exist, and thus, the respective number of entrepreneurs considered self-employment as a fallback option—and took that chance. This also reveals that refugee entrepreneurship is often necessity-driven. Refugees find themselves in precarious positions in new countries of residence and strive to overcome this state by doing something rather than complaining or bemoaning their situations—like in Muhannad's case (Harima et al. 2018). Necessity entrepreneurship often implies that entrepreneurs stand

with their “backs against the wall”. This picture holds true for refugees in particular. Nevertheless, self-employment gives them at least the hope to bolster their development and to get back on a more prosperous path. As hope may play such a prominent role in refugee entrepreneurship, we come back to this issue later on in a separate section.

We can find evidence for many solo-entrepreneurship endeavors. Only in a few cases did the refugees found a business in teams or quasi-team structures (like Abdul or Futan Ahmed, cf. Hartmann et al. 2018; Palalic et al. 2018). Almost all the ventures presented herein belong to the micro-, small- and mid-sized businesses. Oliver’s business perhaps (Tengeh 2018) has some growth potential, but does not currently look like a truly growth-oriented startup. Whether refugees have skills accumulated in their prior careers they can build on as refugee entrepreneurs is sometimes a matter of interpretation. Generally, transversal skills, developed earlier in life, are useful, at least indirectly. However, in some cases, the entrepreneurs directly capitalized on their skills (like Futan Ahmed, Hussam, Kaficho and Oliver, cf. Freudenberg 2018; Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018; Palalic et al. 2018; Tengeh 2018). Thus, they managed to mitigate their entrepreneurial challenges slightly. At a glance, their flight caused breaks not only in the lives of refugee entrepreneurs, but also in their careers. In most cases, these breaks are literally “disruptive” and in some cases they are minor in nature, but still evident. This brings us closer to the refuge itself, commencing with the home country situation.

### 18.3 Mental Home Country Imprint and Home-Sickness

Prior to a deeper analysis of both home country and host country settings, Table 18.1 provides a brief overview of the migration routes of the refugee entrepreneurs portrayed in this book.

Notably, points of departure from home countries imply that in most cases, refugees’ minds are still deeply influenced by their home countries. Aside from Ahmed (de la Chaux 2018), who left his home at the age of

Table 18.1 Refugee paths

Chapter number	Case	Home country	Host country	Whistle step(s)
2	Muhannad	Syria	Germany	Turkey, then Greece
3	Abdul	Syria	Germany	Egypt
4	Ellie	Malawi	Ireland	Kenya
5	Jamshed	Afghanistan	France	Iran
6	Hussam	Syria	Germany	Turkey
7	Jonny	Eritrea	Israel	Sudan
8	Kaficho	Ethiopia	Germany	Turned back to Ethiopia, but returned to Germany
9	Edouard	Congo	Australia	Angola, Zambia, South Africa, then Zimbabwe
10	Arash	Iran	Luxembourg	Belgium
11	Hamze	Iran	France	None
12	Abdullah	Pakistan	Pakistan (elsewhere)	None
13	Ali Dede	Syria	Turkey	None
14	Ahmed	Somalia	Kenya	None
15	Futan Ahmed	Iraq	Sultanate of Oman	Syria
16	Oliver	Cameroon	South Africa	None
17	Hanifa	Syria	Jordan	None

three, there is usually a considerable “home country imprint”. At a minimum level, countries of origin imprint refugee entrepreneurs with country-specific values, customs, attitudes, worldviews and typical ways of conducting business or interacting with people. This influence becomes apparent when refugee entrepreneurs set up their business. A much deeper impact is revealed when refugees purposefully transfer their country-specific lifestyles or similar aspects of their previous lives and develop a new business that explicitly builds on these ethnic features. This is already an indicator of strong home country sentiments. A more advanced state is when refugee entrepreneurs found a business for the sake of livelihood, but with the background intention of returning to their home countries, in the future. At the very least, this is proof of a state of home-sickness. If we consider these three intensity modes through real case evidence, we can observe that the first two modes seem to

dominate. None of the entrepreneurs portrayed are totally independent of any home country imprint, but the intensity of that imprint does not seem to far exceed intermediate levels. One explanation for this resides in the fact that many refugees tried almost every possible means available to try to stay in their home countries before making the decision to flee. However, once the decision was made, the people believe there is no easy way back, and with every passing year in the host country, possibilities of returning seem more and more unlikely. Kaficho is one refugee who tried to go back to his home country, but learned that this was not doable (Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018). However, his experience obviously crystallized his belief that he had to find a way to build a life in his host country. All in all, sentiments play a crucial role and cast a shadow on what refugee entrepreneurs do. However, they are not so strong that they make engender a major struggle. One reason for this may be that entrepreneurs are often fully occupied and need to concentrate on their businesses. In other words, they have only limited time to think about their home countries. Sentiments are at present, but more so in the background. They play an important role, but entrepreneurs often learn to cope with that.

## 18.4 On the Run—The Sequence of Events and Its Consequences

Journeys to refuge vary widely, and Paludan (1974) provided us with an important range of refugees settings: acute constellations tell us that people are forced to leave their home countries all of a sudden (see also Heilbrunn and Iannone 2018). Contrasting this, a flight situation is anticipatory if refugees foresee an upcoming disaster and leave their homes prior to things getting completely out of control. Case evidence reveals huge ranges between the two categorizations of refuge, but in most, the realities of circumstances reside somewhat in between the two extremes (e.g. Freudenberg 2018), with a tendency towards more acute settings (like the case of Hanifa, cf. Alkhaled 2018). The different stories portrayed in this book also show the dramatic peaks in the development of refugees.

A crucial follow up question is whether refugees gain control over their flight. Sometimes the situation is so dramatic that refugees can only escape through the help of others who temporarily gain complete control over the lives. This means that the final destination, as well as the escape path, are not clear from the refugees' viewpoints. In this respect, it is by no means an exception that a getaway involves stays in different countries, sometimes for longer periods of time, as Table 18.1 illuminates. What refugees obviously need in such odyssey-like situations is patience—accompanied by high levels of courage to withstand the precarious situations they find themselves in. From the set of cases presented in this book, Abdul, Ali Dede, Arash, Edouard, Ellie, Futan Ahmed, Hussam, Jamshed and Muhannad (Freudenberg 2018; Harima et al. 2018; Hartmann et al. 2018; Iannone 2018; Kolb 2018; Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018; Palalic et al. 2018; Plak and Lagarde 2018; Zamantili Nayir 2018) had to make various shorter stops before reaching their “final” host country.

There are cases where refugees had a clear target destination (e.g. Ali Dede, cf. Zamantili Nayir 2018), with a clear ambition and/or an opportunity for certain pre-flight preparations (like Abdullah and Hussam, cf. Manzoor et al. 2018; Freudenberg 2018). Contrary to these examples, refugees like Arash or Muhannad (Harima et al. 2018; Iannone 2018) started their flight without an ultimate target destination, but with an approximate orientation of where to go and what to avoid. As for later integration and establishment, there are no striking differences when comparing the cases.

An important question remains: what happens during the flight? The situation in the home country is already one psychological factor that causes pain and desperation. The refuge as such is another source of potential trauma. In a small number of cases, significantly traumatic things happened to the refugees we studied. Jamshed is one of the few (Plak and Lagarde 2018). He got in touch with smugglers and thus found himself in a tricky situation because of his resulting dependence on others. Similarly, Muhannad (Harima et al. 2018) temporarily found himself in life-threatening situations. However, the shocks caused by the refuge obviously do not compete with the desperate states of home countries, which people have been facing for prolonged periods of time. Nevertheless,



it is possible that these refugee-related events also play a role in the subconscious awareness of refugees, which crops up at later points in time.

## 18.5 The Country of Residence: New Home or Waiting Room?

When people escape their homes, they are mostly not well-prepared for this unforeseeable step—and break—in their lives. However, their gut feeling often informs them about what a preferred country to stay in, at least for a while, would be. In fact, in many of the cases, the refugee entrepreneurs had no real flight plan, despite having a preferred country in mind. Additionally, most of the refugees portrayed in this book have been fully aware of the fact that they ought to have different destination countries in mind, as it is highly uncertain to get a residence permit in any desired country. They have something like an “ideal set” of countries under consideration.

Case evidence suggests that in many cases, feasibility issues outweigh top preferences in terms of host countries. Indeed, refugee entrepreneurs sometimes do not have a chance to stay in their preferred country, such as was the case for Abdul, whose first stay before Germany was Egypt (Hartmann et al. 2018). Sometimes, however, they get formal permission to stay in a particular country, but under dangerous or unacceptable conditions—like the permission granted by the USA in Hamze’s case (Maalaoui et al. 2018), who instead opted to immigrate into France. Furthermore, sometimes additional information changes preferences, like in the case of Muhannad (Harima et al. 2018), whose preference switched from Sweden to Germany.

Legal, administrative and socioeconomic factors play a role when it comes to finding a first country of residence. Despite some recent change initiatives, the Irish case of Ellie (Kolb 2018) reveals that receiving countries also install governance solutions that make longer stays in the country more or less unfavorable and tend to allow only voluntary initiatives in the realm of social entrepreneurship. This same case is a good example of how (refugee) entrepreneurship responds to these opportunities by taking chances

and filling socioeconomic gaps. Depending on the situation in the host country, the setting is often quite different from one place to another. In many countries, refugee camps receive larger numbers of incoming refugees and asylum seekers. Some of the cases that reveal these distinctions are, for example, that of Ahmed (de la Chaux 2018), who stayed in a camp (due to Kenya's 2006 Refugee Act), and that of Oliver (Tengeh 2018), who talked about camps in South Africa where refugees may go without any obligation in terms of binding requirements or expectations of the host country.

However, is that stay temporary or more or less permanent? Aside from some settings where legal systems foresee refugees' return to their home countries (e.g. in the Kenyan case, cf. de la Chaux, 2018 with the strange situation that Ahmed has virtually no memories of his home country, having fled at the age of three), this question is still unanswered after reviewing the cases presented in this book. There are some indications that refugees wait for the right time to go back to their home country—such as Ali Dede (Zamantili Nayir 2018). Others, instead, do not really take so much notice of their home countries anymore, as they have found a new place—just like in case of Abdul (Hartmann et al. 2018) or with regard to Oliver's development in South Africa (Tengeh 2018). Other cases are much more ambiguous. Whether circumstances will lead to a prolonged residency or a return depends on a larger set of factors, with family ties and integration or assimilation factoring in to their decisions. If positive ties, that allow for the building of capital, strengthen, as is the case for Abdul, who became the member of a bigger venture team (Hartmann et al. 2018), then staying in a host country for a longer period of time or permanently becomes more likely. The same holds true if countries are generally open to refugees. We can learn from the case of Hamze (Maalaoui 2018) that such an attitude is common for the USA, while in France, the situation is different: "In the USA, I feel that I'm no more refugee, (...) people ask you: how do you do? In France they ask: where are you from?" (Maalaoui 2018). The (perceived) difference cannot simply be explained by migration experiences, as both countries have strong immigration records. Culture and national self-concept seem to matter, as well.

What is often a decisive question is the level of command of the local language in the new location. Low levels of command impede communication and, thus, hamper integration. However, even high levels of

language skills do not always lead to employment opportunities. In the case of Ali Dede (Zamantili Nayir 2018), it was the dialect that prohibited his unconditional acceptance by people from the same country. However, heading from Syria to Turkey, the language was not an obstacle. Abdullah, instead, fled within Pakistan (Manzoor et al. 2018), but faced problems based on differences in dialects that hampered his acceptance and integration. Kaficho (Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018) accumulated considerable language skills. This, however, was not the decisive door-opener for him. The case of Hanifa is different, as well (Alkhaled 2018). She spoke the language in the host country, and, in addition to other factors, this helped her socialize in her new setting.

## 18.6 Business as (Un-)Usual—What Did Refugee Entrepreneurs Do?

There are numerous approaches to drawing out important features of the refugee businesses presented in this book. Comparing all the cases, the question of commercial versus social entrepreneurship (Baron 2007) appears to be a meaningful avenue of research. In reality, it is hard to distinguish between commercial and social entrepreneurship, as some ventures are somewhat in between the two categories. They directly or indirectly address social issues and do so with limited or no support from municipalities or NGOs. Nevertheless, when identifying social entrepreneurship, the social mission stands at the fore, distinguishing it from profit-driven ventures. Examples of commercial entrepreneurship are to be found in the cases of Oliver, Futan Ahmed, Jamshed and Muhannad (Harima et al. 2018; Palalic et al. 2018; Plak and Lagarde 2018, Tengeh 2018). The most impressive example of commercial entrepreneurship, however, is the case of Oliver (Tengeh 2018), who developed a mid-sized business with remarkable growth, although his refugee status prevented him from achieving higher growth rates. Moreover, Oliver is one of the few refugees who fled due to economic reasons. He managed to develop a qualification profile that predisposed him for such a career. The following ventures of Ellie and Hussam (Kolb 2018; Freudenberg 2018) explicitly address social issues and, thus, belong to the social entrepreneurship

category. The cases of Edouard (Ruparanganda et al. 2018) and Jonny (Heilbrunn and Rosenfeld 2018) are intermediate forms.

To respond to the huge variety of refugee entrepreneurs is not an easy endeavor. What plays a significant role is the official registration of the business. As refugees or asylum seekers are not always in a position to plan their future, they are sometimes not supposed to officially register their business, as is the case for Ahmed in Kenya, who has been living “temporarily” in a refugee camp for over 20 years and does not have official permission to run a business (de la Chaux 2018). As a consequence, he has worked in the “gray” business areas, providing repair service onsite in the refugee camp. This vacuum of the gray market that is related to the debate on institutional voids (Mair and Martí 2009) does not allow businesses to benefit from any legal protection (like granting property rights) and causes a state of permanent vulnerability. Consequently, informal coordination, such as in the payment of bribes to (semi-)officials, generates some sort of quasi-protection. Another observed mode of establishing a business in a refugee setting is partnering with locals to circumvent legal restrictions. Futan Ahmed used this recourse (Palalic et al. 2018) and worked in a much better and more secure setting than Ahmed in the Kenyan refugee camp.

Finally, it is evident that many ventures presented in this book belong to the tertiary sector as they provide services (of a wide variety) to clients or they center around trading. This focus is rather sensible, as both the first and the second sectors often require huge investments in terms of financial capital that typically cannot be provided by refugee entrepreneurs. In the case of trade and services, however, entrepreneurs may circumvent such challenges by providing labor and/or knowledge as focused input to the value-added process.

## 18.7 Resources—On Enablers and Constraints

Referring back to the individual chapter subsections on enablers and constraints, the debate about resources—whether they are available or lacking—helps to condense these findings. In this vein, whenever the debate in management and entrepreneurship studies considers the resources required for a business to be successful, literature points to rather evident

asset categories such as financial resources, business skills, famous brands and so on, common in terms of approaches such as the resource-based or competence-based view (Grant 1991; Freiling 2004) or the dynamic capabilities perspective (Teece 2007). In fact, case evidence from refugee entrepreneurship suggests that the basic categories of critical resources and capabilities are salient in this setting as well. However, the relevance of these categories is actually different from what is commonly accepted. Moreover, resource (non-)availability is a pivotal issue in cases of refugee entrepreneurship. When trying to structure the resources critical to the success of refugee entrepreneurship initiatives, the concept of capital—as introduced by Austrian Capital Theory—is a crucial factor (Lachmann 1978; Taghizadegan 2009; Freiling and Baron 2017). It allows for identifying the following “core capitals”: (1) human capital; (2) social capital; (3) financial capital; and (4) support capital provided by the infrastructure in the host country.

### 18.7.1 Human Capital

Among the profiling elements of refugee entrepreneurs, the cases reveal that the risk taking propensity of refugee entrepreneurs considerably exceeds typical levels. Hamze, the Iranian entrepreneur who started a consulting business in France, simply stated that he had nothing to lose in his particular situation and explicitly mentioned his willingness to take extreme business risks (Maalaoui 2018). This is a prototypical situation for other refugee entrepreneurs as well, as failure in their business would not really worsen a situation that is already dire. This state of mind is atypical for other entrepreneurs. Not every refugee has a previous entrepreneurship agenda. However, where refugees have already been entrepreneurs (like Edouard, cf. Ruparanganda et al. 2018), the venture runs often more smoothly. Among the factors constituting human capital, resilience stands at the fore as well. In many cases, the host country is not very open to a larger number of refugees, and sometimes xenophobia and social exclusion directly challenge refugees. The cases of Oliver (Tengeh 2018), Hamze (Maalaoui 2018) and Ellie (Kolb 2018) provide evidence for this argument. Considering their flight and the complicated state of

mind refugees find themselves in, this is another crucial burden, and it takes a lot of mental strength not to give up. A superordinate motivation to sustain oneself or to improve one's personal situation reveals the passion many refugees, as entrepreneurs, demonstrate. In this regard, Arash (Iannone 2018) is only one example among many.

### 18.7.2 Social Capital

Reviewing the entire scope of cases in this book, networks, relationships and building social capital appear to be critical aspects of success. Although these factors are relevant to any kind of entrepreneurship, they are of pivotal relevance to the success of almost any refugee entrepreneurship endeavor—at least with respect to the cases in this book. However, there are some important differences depending on the kind of relationships that are used. Granovetter (1973), in his seminal publication, pointed to the “strengths of weak ties”. There is tremendous case evidence that weaker ties are very useful to connect one's own venture with relevant parts of society (e.g. in Muhannad's case, cf. Harima et al. 2018). Putnam (2000), in a similar fashion, referred to the usefulness of bridging capital, which metaphorically highlights connectedness. At the same time, he pointed to bonding capital. In doing so, he emphasized the potential usefulness of stronger ties, as well. In fact, many of the refugee entrepreneurs portrayed in this book built these kind of ties and critically depended on them to provide basic strength to their ventures (e.g. in the case of Hanifa, cf. Alkhaled 2018; Kaficho, cf. Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018; and Futan Ahmed, cf. Palalic et al. 2018). However, as is evident from the wide range of cases, it makes a difference whether bonded partners are locals (e.g. Abdul, cf. Hartmann et al. 2018; Ellie cf. Kolb 2018; and Kaficho, cf. Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018) or people of the same ethnicity.

### 18.7.3 Financial Capital

Refugee entrepreneurs often fall short of financial resources. It may be true that all kinds of entrepreneur face problems of access to venture capital in early stages of venture development. However, in case of refugee

entrepreneurs, the situation is even worse (as the cases of Kaficho and Hussam and to some extent Oliver reveal—cf. Freudenberg 2018; Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018; Tengeh 2018). It is hard to specify the reasons for this phenomenon on a general level. There may be problems that refugee entrepreneurs experience in relation to socializing in the host country. In these cases, many are simply not aware of the peculiarities of how to approach local venture capitalists. On the other hand, venture capitalists are aware of coping with considerable risks when financing new ventures. However, with respect to refugee entrepreneurs, venture capitalists are not necessarily enough aware of the people and their particular circumstances. Refugees also choose other options for financial support. In the case of Jonny (Heilbrunn and Rosenfeld 2018), for example, his ethnic community provided some financial support (loans), and the host country's NGOs helped him through donations.

#### 18.7.4 Support Capital

As refugees often find themselves in precarious situations in many regards (lack of economic resources, social isolations, trauma, etc.), there are some reasons why they need support—public and/or private—when they found a business, most fundamentally, the simple need that refugees have for a place to stay. Refugee camps (like in Ahmed's case, cf. de la Chaux 2018— or in a rather different settings, such as for Arash, cf. Iannone 2018) represent one type of response, offering baseline support to larger numbers of refugees. Aside from this, refugees need advice on practicalities as to living in a new country and founding a business therein— support which is sometimes provided, particularly in highly developed countries (such as for Hussam in Germany, cf. Freudenberg 2018). It is not a given that such support is (easily) available in every country, as revealed by Jonny's case (Heilbrunn and Rosenfeld 2018). However, in the case of existing support infrastructure, the modes of granting support are diverse and range from venturing infrastructure, like incubators over public subsidies, to giving advice. It is reasonable to expect that this kind of support would be accepted by most refugee entrepreneurs. For some, this definitely holds true (e.g. Ellie, cf. Kolb 2018). However, the cases also reveal a different impression. Sometimes refugee entrepreneurs are simply not aware that

support infrastructures exist. In other instances, refugee entrepreneurs do not ask for such support, as they want to “make it on their own” or do not want to burden the host country more than required (like Futan Ahmed, cf. Palalic et al. 2018; or Jonny, cf. Heilbrunn and Rosenfeld 2018).

## 18.8 Mental Energizers—What About Hope?

Facing the enormous mental pressure on refugees before, during and after flight, the question arises of what may stimulate them and what may provide them with hope. The role of hope is still under-researched and less understood in business and entrepreneurship literature. However, in refugee entrepreneurship, hope is of pivotal relevance and is decisive for people who have lost many important things in their lives and who then consider the risky venture of founding a company. Firstly, it is necessary to define hope. Following Stotland (1969), hope is not necessarily the conviction that something will come to a good end, but the perception that goals can be met and the subjective certainty that things make sense (Snyder and Feldman 2000). When it comes to refugee entrepreneurship, it is possible to conceptualize hope, according to Freiling and Vemuri (2017), as the availability of both way power (pathways) and will power (motivation). Way power refers to how individuals formulate strategies for reaching a goal, for example, by developing business concepts, strategies and gaining support. Will power is about individual capacities of coping with adversity, as well as initiating, sustaining and renewing motivation (Snyder and Feldman 2000). At any point in time, these dimensions interact with one another for the sake of goal achievement (e.g. livelihood, cf. Freiling and Vemuri 2017).

The cases featured in this book are quite unanimous in revealing that hope, both in terms of way power and will power, is strong leverage for starting a venture and establishing a business. Both components of hope play a crucial role in every venture examined. Table 18.2 provides an overview of the cornerstones that demonstrate hope in the respective cases of refugee entrepreneurship, detailed by case.

Whereas way power and will power are never lacking, the sources of hope are to some extent different. Nevertheless, Table 18.2 portrays



**Table 18.2** Hope in refugee entrepreneurship

Chapter number	Case	Way power	Will power
2	Muhannad	Fast access to infrastructure in countries of residence (COR), support from private institutions	Family, connections, belief in his own skills
3	Abdul	Experience, team and team skills, networks, entrepreneurial spirit and intention	Trust (in fairness of other people), striving for independence, growth in ambitions ('wanna be a millionaire')
4	Ellie	A special legal environment to make Ellie a de-facto entrepreneur, support by crowdfunding, strong network, skill development	Sense of justice, personal ambition, public interest
5	Jamshed	Prior experience, ideas as to real options	"Left Iran with a bag full of dreams", strong entrepreneurial intention, ambition
6	Hussam	Supporters and proven business relations, thought leadership	Low ambition, vision
7	Jonny	Alternatives to run a business or to gain employment, social relationships, risk taking propensity	Motivation, striving for independence
8	Kaficho	Entrepreneurial skills gathered in home country, sound business contacts	Family support
9	Edouard	Clear vision, networks	Entrepreneurial spirit, spirit of success, dreams, resilience
10	Arash	Partners, promotion support, skills development	Passion for music, self-expression and business
11	Hamze	Selected relations, relevant experience	Previous success and belief in strengths
12	Abdullah	Previous experience, support from others	Faith (religious)

*(continued)*

Table 18.2 (continued)

Chapter number	Case	Way power	Will power
13	Ali Dede	Acceptance and integration, relations	Chance to work (some say they "...get tired of sitting at home the whole day"), COR similar to home
14	Ahmed	Bricoleur-like attitude and actions, weak ties, informal alignments onsite and in the camp	Family support, plans for the future, dreams
15	Futan Ahmed	Reliable partners, skills, Leadership, plans	Motivation to care for family
16	Oliver	Leadership, education, skills, entrepreneurial orientation	Drive to improve living conditions, mentality of being "eager to learn", resilience
17	Hanifa	Resilience, inner strength	Responsibility to care for the family

commonalities that emerge from the case studies. In terms of the way power profile, personal experience, as well as business relationships, help in forming pathways. With regard to will power, the sources diverge a bit more, but reveal that resilience is a constitutive element.

Over and above this, the cases give rise to the impression that a certain balance of way power and will power are fundamental to providing enough hope to start and run a venture. A delicate facet to consider is how an unbalanced situation of the two elements could question livelihood potentials, by hope-related problems. Insofar, will power is not enough if business opportunities are much too vague or uncertain. The other way around, sound business opportunities may provide way power but take also strong motivation to achieve livelihood in the host country. However, the available case evidence does not reveal insights into this aspect.

## 18.9 The Outcome—Psychological, Social and Business Angles

The debate on hope already provides insights into the psychological sphere and addresses a construct of positive psychology. As for the downside, the question as to how far trauma hampers the ventures of

refugee entrepreneurs remains unanswered. The picture is to some extent ambiguous. There are cases where trauma and severe problems of sadness definitely featured heavily. Edouard, Muhannad, Jamshed, Ali Dede and Kaficho belong to this category (Harima et al. 2018; Moog and Yekoye Abebe 2018; Plak and Lagarde 2018; Rugaranganda et al. 2018; Zamantili Nayir 2018). On the contrary, trauma and similar kinds of pain obviously do not play an evident role in the cases of Abdul, Futan Ahmed and Oliver (Hartmann et al. 2018; Palalic et al. 2018; Tengeh 2018).

As for social effects, the question of integration (and to some extent also assimilation), stands at the fore of our discussion. When we turn our analysis to integration, some cases reveal considerable difficulties experienced by refugee entrepreneurs trying to find a niche in their new societies. The case of Abdullah (Manzoor et al. 2018) exemplifies this. However, cases also suggest that integration problems may be mitigated by launching and establishing a business (Maalaoui et al. 2018). This may be related to business relationships that often impact the social sphere, as well.

New ventures are commonly understood as the source of economic (and sometimes even social) renewal and the generation of new jobs. It is evident that solo-entrepreneurship is quite different from high tech startups. Case evidence from this book reveals that real startup activity has not so far played any significant role in refugee entrepreneurship—but can be a playground later on for more experienced refugee entrepreneurs who get settled in a new business context. The reality of refugee entrepreneurship looks different. We see many micro businesses, a few small businesses and, at best, one mid-sized business (Oliver, cf. Tengeh 2018) from our refugees. At first glance, this does not seem to bear a huge economic potential. Digging deeper, however, reveals a certain “hockey-stick logic” of refugee entrepreneurship. When refugees enter a host country, the most pressing need is to gain their footing and, thus, stabilize their often precarious situation (this is the small downturn as the first part of the hockey-stick effect). However, having achieved this and having managed to get settled in and established to some extent, there is some potential to move up (the upturn of the hockey-stick effect) socially and economically. This is something policy makers also may keep in mind when thinking about the long term prospects of refugee entrepreneurs.

## 18.10 Overview and Outlook

This part of the book is in itself more of an overview than an in-depth treatment of focused topics of refugee entrepreneurship. However, while the latter is far from attempted, the former requires accentuation of the core messages. Although all cases of refugee entrepreneurship are unique in nature, there are, in fact, some core insights we can condense in order to compare refugee entrepreneurship to other modes of entrepreneurship, such as transnational entrepreneurship (Drori et al. 2009). Evidence of the cases that make up this book suggests that refugee entrepreneurs are different from other entrepreneurs and, to some extent, distinct in terms of the following characteristics:

- high levels of *resilience*—not only in business terms, as is common for entrepreneurs, but also in terms of social and cultural issues;
- a superordinate level of the *risk taking propensity*—although this capacity is typical for almost all kinds of entrepreneurs, the propensity of refugee entrepreneurs is often much more extreme as they feel they have “nothing to lose”;
- a strong focus in ventures that are *necessity* rather than opportunity driven;
- an *ambition* driven tension with the conviction that “doing something is much better than doing nothing”;
- a mentality to start business with humble means, regarding almost everything as a potential resource and an attitude of “making do”—just like bricoleurs do (Levy-Strauss 1966; Baker and Nelson 2005; Heilbrunn and Rosenfeld 2018); and
- a sometimes extreme *dependence on social capital*, with often both strong and weak ties, as also reported by Bizri (2017).

Aside from the evident peculiarities of refugee entrepreneurship, there are still some aspects that seem closely related to typical entrepreneurship settings. One of these is the low percentage of women founding companies. Among the refugee cases presented in this book, Ellie and Hanifa (Alkhaled 2018; Kolb 2018) represent women refugee entrepreneurs.

Among 15 cases, the female entrepreneurship percentage is, beyond any claim of representativeness, about 13%—which is typical to the entire entrepreneurship context. It would be interesting to ascertain whether these statistics are comparable—although refugee entrepreneurship is unique, because women are sometimes heavily involved in the refuge. Is it simply that male members are the first to move when families are escaping from their homes, meaning that they also take a lead in founding companies? Is it a question of risk taking attitudes and preferences? Are there any other factors that prevent female refugees from starting a business or becoming part of a venture team? Alkhaled (2018) stated that women refugees are hit the hardest. If so, there is a lot of opportunity to search for the root causes and consequences of this phenomenon in order to better understand the circumstances and the sequences of events.

Another area ripe for examination is to examine the real needs of refugee entrepreneurs, as well as the possible and adequate responses of host country societies to those needs. What is of indispensable value in support programs when refugee entrepreneurs are targeted? How must we connect refugee entrepreneurs to other actors in urban startup ecosystems in order to tap into the potential of renewal by diversity? How can the maturation process of refugee entrepreneurs be accelerated, for example, by designing business incubators?

## Notes

1. This book's chapters are excluded from this list of references.

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# Index<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

## A

Abdul, 14, 39, 40, 42–43, 46, 47,  
50, 258, 259, 262–264, 268,  
273  
Abdullah, 17, 195–204, 262, 265, 273  
Activism, 15, 55–67  
Afghanistan, 15, 40, 71, 72, 74, 79,  
196  
Ahmed, 18, 221, 223–228, 259,  
264, 266, 269  
Ali Dede, 17, 177, 178, 180–183,  
185–190, 258, 262, 264, 265,  
273  
Angola, 16, 72, 132  
Arash, 17, 141–155, 262, 268, 269  
Asylum seekers, 2–4, 15, 29–33,  
40, 43, 55, 56, 58–65, 73,  
83, 85, 102–106, 108, 110,

111, 112n1, 128, 132,  
142–146, 156n2, 156n5,  
156n6, 180, 231, 232, 238,  
239, 264, 266

Australia, viii, xxv, 16, 127–139

## B

Barriers to entrepreneurship, 34  
Belgium, 17, 141, 154, 189  
Bricolage entrepreneur, 111  
Business, vii, 5, 27–36, 39, 55–67,  
73, 83–98, 105–106, 118,  
127–139, 145, 164, 169, 177,  
197, 200–201, 207–209,  
221–229, 235–236, 242, 256,  
265–266  
Business constraints, 131, 170, 221



C

Cameroon, 18, 231–240  
 Case studies, viii, ix, 4, 5, 8–11, 19, 36, 39, 52, 110, 115–124, 138, 155, 172, 179, 190, 207–217, 221, 272  
 Community, 2, 7, 9, 15, 16, 20, 28, 33–34, 45, 49–50, 56, 58, 61–65, 73, 75, 77, 79, 90, 95–96, 103, 105–111, 121–123, 129–133, 135–138, 153, 154, 171, 172, 177, 185–187, 196, 199, 201–204, 208, 213–215, 223, 226, 227, 238, 239, 243, 248–250, 269  
 Congo, 16, 72, 130–138  
 Constraints, ix, 7, 28, 91, 111, 166, 167, 172, 201, 217, 239–240, 243, 245, 249, 250

E

Edouard, 7, 16, 130–139, 257, 262, 266, 267, 273  
 Egypt, 14, 42, 43, 46, 102, 189, 263  
 Ellie, 7, 15, 57–66, 67n1, 67n3, 262, 263, 265, 267–269, 274  
 Emancipation, 150–152, 243  
 Enablers and constrains, 28, 32–35, 46–52, 62–66, 77–79, 92–98, 106–110, 121–123, 135–138, 142, 152–155, 170–172, 184–189, 202–204, 212–215, 236–240, 256, 266–270  
 Entrepreneurship, v–ix, 4–8, 10–12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 28, 34, 36, 57, 58, 62, 65–67, 77, 96, 98, 103, 107, 109–111, 118, 128,

133, 135, 137–139, 144–146, 150–155, 164, 165, 168, 169, 171, 172, 177, 179, 182, 185, 188, 207–217, 221–229, 236, 237, 240–251, 255–275  
 Eritrea, 12, 40, 102–105, 107–109, 111  
 Ethiopia, 16, 104, 117–122  
 Ethnic and local markets, 95, 122, 200, 214

F

Family ties, 264  
 Financing barriers, 51, 185  
 Founding team, 44, 47–49, 52  
 France, viii, 15, 17, 45, 71–80, 141, 154, 163–173, 233, 263, 264, 267  
 Futan Ahmed, 18, 257, 259, 262, 265, 266, 268, 270, 273

G

Germany, v, viii, 14–16, 19, 27–36, 40, 42–46, 48, 50, 51, 53n3, 72, 83–98, 115–124, 128, 141, 154, 164, 185, 189, 209, 234, 263, 269  
 Government, 2, 15, 16, 18, 33, 43, 78, 109, 116–118, 128, 130, 132–134, 138, 147, 148, 153, 156n3, 176, 177, 179, 185, 196, 198–200, 204, 208, 211, 212, 214, 217, 222, 223, 228, 239, 240, 245, 250  
 Greece, 29, 30, 36, 189

## H

- Hamze, 17, 165–173, 257, 263,  
264, 267  
Hanifa, 18, 19, 244–250, 257, 261,  
265, 268, 274  
High-skilled refugees, 145  
Hussam, 15, 86–98, 259, 262, 265,  
269

## I

- Incubator, 96, 269, 275  
Informal entrepreneurship, 243  
Institutional constraints, 7, 65,  
239–240, 245  
Institutional void, 7, 109–111, 150,  
154, 266  
Intercultural exchange, 89  
Internally displaced persons (IDPs),  
2, 196, 199, 203, 231  
Iran, 13, 16, 17, 40, 74, 147–149,  
151, 153, 156n3, 165, 166,  
169–172, 182, 260, 271  
Iraq, 14, 18, 40, 166, 175, 176,  
182, 207, 210, 215–217, 241,  
260  
Ireland, viii, 13, 55–67, 260  
Israel, viii, 9, 12, 13, 15, 101–111, 260

## J

- Jamshed, 12, 13, 15, 72–80, 257,  
260, 262, 265, 271, 273  
Jonny, 7, 12, 13, 15, 101–111, 260,  
266, 269–271  
Jordan, viii, 14, 18, 207, 241–251,  
260

## K

- Kaficho, 12, 13, 15, 16, 118–124,  
259–261, 265, 268, 269, 271,  
273  
Kenya, 14, 18, 57, 221–229, 260,  
264, 266

## L

- Local support, 33, 50, 121, 123,  
197, 246, 248  
Luxembourg, 13, 16, 17,  
141–146, 151–155, 156n1,  
156n5, 260

## M

- Malawi, 13, 15, 57, 62, 260  
Migration, vii, xxv, 1, 2, 4–6, 13–14,  
40, 42–44, 48, 61, 72, 98,  
129, 142, 176, 181, 208, 209,  
217, 236, 237, 256, 257, 259,  
264  
Muhannad, Oliver, 12–14, 28–36,  
258, 260, 262, 263, 265, 268,  
271, 273

## N

- Networks, viii, 9, 33, 43, 45,  
62–65, 92, 94, 96, 98,  
119–121, 123, 124, 131, 134,  
145, 151, 153–155, 167, 168,  
171, 172, 182–186, 188, 190,  
200, 202, 217, 226, 227, 237,  
238, 243, 245–247, 249, 268,  
271

P

- Pakistan, viii, 14, 195–204, 209, 260, 265
- Partnership, 16, 18, 91, 146, 152, 155, 202, 211, 216, 235
- Passion, 32, 46, 49, 80, 93, 147, 149, 150, 152, 153, 268, 271
- Psychological factor, 256, 262

R

- Refugee camps, 18, 30, 89, 93, 132, 151, 221–229, 242, 264, 266, 269
- Refugee entrepreneurship, ix, 5–8, 10, 11, 19, 20, 28, 144–146, 152–155, 177, 182, 207–217, 237, 240, 244, 255–275
- Refugees, v, 4, 27–36, 56, 71–80, 83–98, 103, 115–124, 127–139, 142, 163–173, 175–190, 196, 208, 221, 231–251
- Refugee theory, viii, 208, 233
- Resilience, 20, 98, 222, 241–251, 267, 271, 272, 274
- Resource deficiency, 10, 164, 201, 268, 269

S

- Social and economic integration, 5, 103, 164
- Social capital, 6, 7, 33, 56, 151, 153, 178, 184, 190, 217, 267, 268, 274
- Social entrepreneurship, 98, 152, 263, 265
- Social networks, 6, 49, 88, 92, 94, 108, 184, 186, 213, 236, 243

- Socio-economic factors, 263
- Somalia, 14, 221–223, 225, 228, 260
- South Africa, 14, 16, 18, 132, 137, 231–240, 260, 264
- Success, 18, 48, 61, 77, 79, 91, 92, 95, 118, 120, 130, 138, 152, 169, 178, 185, 186, 211, 216, 217, 236, 238, 248, 267, 268, 271
- Sudan, 72, 90, 102, 104, 105, 222, 260
- Sultanate of Oman, 14, 18, 207–217, 260
- Syria, 12–15, 18, 28, 32, 39–43, 46, 47, 50, 51, 72, 86–90, 93, 94, 175, 177, 178, 180–183, 187–190, 210, 211, 241, 242, 244, 245, 247, 249, 250, 260, 265

T

- Turkey, 14, 15, 17, 29, 30, 87, 88, 92, 93, 149, 164, 175–183, 185–190, 196, 207, 241, 260, 265

V

- Volunteer social initiative, 98

W

- Women's entrepreneurship, 243, 250

Z

- Zambia, 16, 260
- Zimbabwe, 16, 132, 133, 260