



In and beyond the camp: The rise of resilience in refugee governance

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Abstract

This paper analyzes recent changes in the policies and practices through which displaced populations are governed by humanitarian and state actors. In particular, we examine how the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is increasingly operationalizing its protection mandate by linking the more longstanding logic of self-reliance with the newer idea of resilience, itself composed of both micro (individual) and macro (societal and particularly urban) strands. Using Uganda as a site of analysis, we suggest that the linking of the more entrenched concept of self-reliance with resilience is another step forward in the entwining of UNHCR's traditional humanitarian mandate with the developmental goals promoted by other global aid organizations. Resilience emerges in this context as a policy ideal that brings together disparate strands of operational aspirations into one multifaceted objective to govern refugees both within and beyond the camp/settlement structure.

Key words

Resilience; refugee governance; neoliberalism; UNHCR

Resumen

El artículo analiza los cambios recientes en políticas y prácticas según las cuales poblaciones desplazadas quedan bajo el gobierno de actores humanitarios y estatales. Concretamente, examinamos cómo la Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados (ACNUR)

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está llevando a la práctica su mandato de protección al vincular la lógica tradicional de la autosuficiencia con la idea más nueva de resiliencia, compuesta por ejes micro (individuo) y macro (sociedad y, especialmente, lo urbano). Utilizando el caso de Uganda, damos a entender que el vínculo del concepto más arraigado de autosuficiencia con el de resiliencia es un paso adelante en la combinación del mandato humanitario de ACNUR con los objetivos de desarrollo promovidos por otras organizaciones de ayuda globales. La resiliencia surge, en este contexto, como un ideal político que congrega varias corrientes de aspiraciones operativas en un único objetivo polifacético de gobernar a los refugiados tanto dentro como más allá de la estructura del campo o asentamiento.

Palabras clave

Resiliencia; gobernanza de refugiados; neoliberalismo; ACNUR

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1. Introduction

Literature on the management of refugees over the last two decades has understandably focused on the formation and proliferation of refugee camps as spatial technologies for managing internationally and internally displaced persons. A popular avenue of inquiry in this now vast literature draws on Agamben's theorization of "the camp" as the biopolitical paradigm of governmental rule and highlights how refugees subjected to spatial containment typify the reduction of political subjects to bare life found in Agamben's work (see Diken and Laustsen 2006). While the proliferation of refugee camps in recent decades – and the material conditions within these camps – clearly invite such an analysis, it is equally possible to overstate the value of Agamben's diagnosis of contemporary biopolitical power via the camp (Owens 2009, Ramadan 2013). As Newhouse (2015) maintains, while refugees are often excluded from the rights accorded by host countries to citizens, they remain subjects of international laws that insist that their lives are protected and sustained, not merely abandoned to "let die." More recent work has thus sought to shed light on the complex of rationalities, laws, techniques, and "embodied micropolitical activities" (Newhouse 2015, 2295) that produce camp spaces as a lived liminality that blurs a ready distinction between inside and outside the political order that is at the crux of Agamben's biopolitics.

In this article we examine emerging directions in the logics and practices of international refugee protection and management, with a particular emphasis on the policies of the United Nations Refugee Agency (hereafter UNHCR) and their implementation in Uganda (currently the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa and the third largest globally; see United Nations Development Programme – UNDP – 2017). We do so by tracing recent changes in the rationalities through which displaced populations are governed by humanitarian and state actors. Rationalities in this context are understood as a "broad family of ways of thinking about and seeking to enact government" (Rose *et al.* 2006, 98). Rationalities of governing, as Rose and collaborators maintain, are not fixed ways of thinking about government but are "constantly undergoing modification in the face of some newly identified problem or solution, while retaining certain styles of thought and technological preferences" (Rose *et al.* 2006, 98). In this line of thinking we trace how the UNHCR is increasingly operationalizing its protection mandate by governing refugees through the logics of self-reliance and resilience. We do not suggest that a sudden or epochal shift has occurred in which resilience is now a master logic. Instead, we suggest in this case that the embrace of resilience alongside the more entrenched concept of self-reliance is another step forward in the entwining of the UNHCR's traditional humanitarian mandate with the developmental goals promoted by other global aid organizations (such as the World Bank and Food and Agricultural Organization). Humanitarian refugee crises are now no longer approached by the UNHCR as problems to be apprehended solely in terms of human rights to be protected and basic needs to be met but opportunities to catalyze economic and social development in areas affected by protracted refugee crises both within and beyond the refugee camp. Consequently, the work of UNHCR today no longer has to do solely with meeting the survival needs of refugees but with ensuring an optimal social and economic environment through multi-stakeholder development initiatives in host countries in which refugees can meet their own needs while awaiting durable solutions to their displacement, however remote those solutions may be. Resilience emerges in this

context as a policy ideal that brings together these disparate strands of operational practices into one multifaceted objective to govern refugees both within and beyond the camp/settlement structure.

In what follows, we provide a historical overview of the shifting policy landscape and discourses of UNHCR's approach towards refugee assistance and protection, with particular attention focused on the rise of "self-reliance" and "resilience" in the policy arena of UNHCR. Next, we critically examine both the discourse and challenges of UNHCR's self-reliance orientation for refugees, with particular attention on Uganda's Self-Reliance Strategy and the recent emergence of a related, albeit expanded, resilience-focused approach to refugee management supported by both UNHCR and the Ugandan government. In closing, we identify resilience as the newest formulation of a humanitarian-development programmatic initiative that requires more analytical and empirical investigations of the multiple and even contradictory political imperatives of resilience thinking and practices in particular, situated refugee contexts. Our analysis is based on international and national refugee policy documents and evaluative reports, as well as scholarly and empirical research that examines the implementation and impacts of these policies on the lives and wellbeing of refugees both living within and beyond Uganda's local settlement structure.

2. The UNHCR: Refugee protection through self-reliance

The UNHCR is the lead international organization attending to the protection and rights of refugees through policy formation, aid allocation, and camp organization and management. UNHCR's mandate – to provide international protection for refugees and to seek a permanent solution to refugees' plight – derives from the 1951 Refugee Convention, which obliges member states to uphold the dignity and human rights to which all refugees are entitled (such as non-refoulement, whereby refugees have a right not to be returned to a country where they risk persecution and threats to life). While the global governance of refugees entails an elaborate network of actors and inter-state agreements and practices, the 1951 Convention explicitly identifies and tasks UNHCR with the responsibility to oversee its implementation and to govern the global refugee regime. Changing world politics and state interests have led UNHCR to expand its mandate and scope of the global refugee regime. For instance, during the early years of the Cold War, the UNHCR worked extensively with US-allied countries to host refugees originating from communist countries as well as those displaced by proxy wars between the US and Soviet Union with the aim of facilitating their entry into recipient countries in the west (Hammerstad 2000). Beginning in the 1960s, the scope of humanitarian crises to which the UNHCR was responsible as well as the geographical extent of its operations broadened. The drastic increase in displacement throughout the global South, the growing recognition of long-term exile (now termed "protracted refugee situations"), an expanded definition of "persons of concern" to UNHCR's mandate (including stateless and internally displaced persons), and the growing reluctance of Western governments to accept refugees and those seeking asylum led to a situation of prolonged encampment for millions of refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, South-East Asia, and South Asia and the Middle East (see Barnett 2002, Loescher and Milner 2011, Milner 2014). Moreover, while forward entry of refugees into recipient countries or integration of refugees into the country of first refuge remained part of the "durable solutions"

promoted by UNHCR, these options came to be increasingly blocked by restrictive national laws, leaving repatriation as the preferred solution in most instances. In this context, the spatial and racialized technology of the modern refugee camp emerged as a means for ensuring that the immediate humanitarian needs of displaced persons could be met while awaiting return to their country of origin.

Given the changing dynamics and expanding crisis of forced migration and the wide-ranging issues that influence states' interests and responses to refugees (see Loescher and Milner 2011, Milner 2014), UNHCR's protection mandate has come to be bound to what some scholars describe as "refugee warehousing" (Hyndman and Giles 2011, 362): the practice of keeping refugees close to home (and thus away from Western states) in situations of restricted mobility and confinement to camps or segregated settlements for years on end (until repatriation is feasible) (Hammerstad 2000, Chimni 2009, Agier 2012, Johnson 2014, Ilcan and Rygiel 2015). This approach, however, has widely been problematized for not only being financially inefficient, unsustainable and burdensome for developing host countries and international actors, but also for depriving refugees of basic human dignity and rights, particularly for those living in protracted situations lasting longer than five years (Crisp 2003a, Hovil 2007, International Refugee Rights Initiative –hereinafter, IIRI – 2014). Moreover, the "care and maintenance" model employed by UNHCR within the camps in which refugees were provided a minimum level of resources to survive has come to be regarded as fostering a "dependency syndrome" amongst refugees that hinders their motivation in the present and creates barriers to their eventual reintegration and success in the future. In this context the humanitarian aims of UNHCR were increasingly linked up with development-oriented activities in refugee populated areas, which sought to benefit refugees and local communities alike. The turn to a development approach thus signals a shift in the philosophy of refugee assistance, which views refugees not as beneficiaries of humanitarian aid but rather as "economic actors in charge of their own destiny" (UNHCR and World Bank Group 2016, 51). Elements of this approach are detectable in the UNHCR's refugee aid and development strategy of the 1980s, the returnee aid and development strategy of the 1990s, development assistance for refugees of the early 2000s, and, as we discuss below, in the recent emergence of resilience-building frameworks of today (see Gorman 1986, Crisp 2003b, Meyer 2006, Krause 2016, UNHCR 2017b, Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). What these approaches share is an underlying commitment to achieving self-reliance for refugees while simultaneously addressing the "burden" of refugees on host countries and the international community, which has garnered a new degree of attention in the early 2000s and onwards in UNHCR's approach to refugee assistance and protection.

2.1. UNHCR's self-reliance strategy

UNHCR has played a critical role in formulating and promoting self-reliance policies, strategies, and practices to manage the lives of refugees and the spaces in which they reside. While UNHCR's practice of promoting self-reliance is not new – political and humanitarian actors have been designing interventions to promote refugees' self-reliance for decades – a renewed and more explicit emphasis on fostering individual self-reliance for refugees arose in the early 2000s with the UNHCR's Framework for Durable

Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern (UNHCR 2003).¹ Within this framework, self-reliance is the “basic criterion” of good programming in all stages of operations, but especially in situations of protracted displacement (*Ibid.*). An essential component of this framework is Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), which envisions additional development assistance to improve burden sharing with the host country, contribute to the development of the host country/community, and improve the quality of life of refugees through self-reliance (*Ibid.*, 10). As a policy concept, the UNHCR’s *Handbook for Self-Reliance* (2005) defines “self-reliance” as:

the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity. Self-reliance, as a programme approach, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern, and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian/external assistance. (UNHCR 2015, 1).

Self-reliance has become “a critical component” of the UNHCR’s livelihood programming (UNHCR 2014b, 8), which calls for “the reduction of dependency through economic empowerment and the promotion of self-reliance” as central to its protection mandate (UNHCR 2012, 6).

In a global context that is marked by lengthy and persistent protracted refugee situations and inadequate and unpredictable humanitarian aid for large-scale refugee crises, the UNHCR’s advancement of self-reliance seeks to reduce the costs of international refugee assistance in host countries while also containing displacement within the first country of asylum, away from Western countries (IRRI 2018, 9), and, as such, it appeals to a range of interests for donors, host governments, and international agencies (see UNHCR 2005, Meyer 2006, Slaughter and Crisp 2009). But, as Ilcan and collaborators (2017) argue, it is also more than this: self-reliance is appealing within the broader context of global neoliberalism, as it aligns with the principles of the market and enterprise, active individualism and individual responsibility, and privatization and self-sufficiency (see also UNHCR 2014a, Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). Against this backdrop, the UNHCR’s self-reliance approach aims to create responsible and adaptive refugees who are to take care of their own welfare and that of their family with minimal reliance on humanitarian assistance and state support. Literature highlighting the consequences of neoliberal self-reliance policies on refugees’ lived realities on the ground reveal that, depending on existing national refugee policies and local socio-political contexts, UNHCR’s self-reliance strategies can serve to (re)produce (rather than address or challenge) the precarious and unequal conditions that underpin refugees’ experiences of isolation, poverty, conflict, resentment, xenophobia, and inadequate access to needed social support – such as restrictions placed on refugees’ mobility and right to work, limited access to or exclusion from formal labour markets and livelihood options, and lack of food security and rights and educational opportunities (e.g., Hyndman 2000, Crisp 2003a, Meyer 2006, O Ensor 2010, Omata 2013, Ilcan *et al.* 2015, 2017, Easton-Calabria 2016, Zetter and Ruaudel 2016, Oliver and Ilcan 2018). Below we examine the

¹ The Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern entails three components: Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4Rs) and Development through Local Integration (DLI).

deployment of one such self-reliance initiative in Uganda – the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) – a flagship initiative of UNHCR and the Ugandan government that has garnered much international attention and praise for providing a progressive approach to refugee management for other countries in Africa and around the world.

2.2. The limits of self-reliance: Context, power, and Uganda's refugee response

While Uganda has a long history of both receiving and generating refugees (see RLP 2009, Sharpe and Namusobya 2012, IRRI 2018), its current situation is striking as the country now hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa and the highest number in the country's history.² With the onset of civil war in South Sudan in 2013, over one million South Sudanese refugees have fled to Uganda and sought refuge in northern Uganda's refugee settlements. In the western part of the country, settlements host refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, and elsewhere. At the policy level, Uganda's approach to refugees is widely hailed as "progressive, human rights and protection oriented" (RLP 2009, 3; see also Betts *et al.* 2014, UNDP 2017) and is routinely showcased by international actors as a model for other refugee-hosting countries in Africa and elsewhere. In addition to Uganda's Refugees Act (2006) and Refugees Regulations (2010) – which on paper reflect international and regional conventions concerning refugee protection and rights and contain refugee definitions and status determination clauses – Uganda's *Self-Reliance Strategy* (SRS) has been internationally celebrated as a global model for self-reliance efforts in governing protracted refugee situations.

In 1999, UNHCR and the government of Uganda jointly designed and began implementing the SRS to manage the Sudanese refugee situation in the West Nile districts of Arua, Adjumani and Moyo (UNHCR and OPM 1999). Although launched in 1999, the SRS did not gain traction until 2002 (UNHCR 2004) and since then has been rolled out nationwide as part of the country's national refugee policy and UNHCR's broader global strategy of Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR). The core objectives of the SRS were twofold: to "empower refugees and nationals in the area to the extent that they will be able to support themselves; and to establish mechanisms that will ensure integration of services for refugees with those of nationals" (Government of Uganda and UNHCR 2004, 3). Although designed to benefit both refugees and host communities, research has shown that the implementation of this policy has been deeply problematic for both refugees and host communities and has done little to address, and often works against, refugees' wellbeing and protection needs (Meyer 2006, RLP 2007, Hovil 2007, Bernstein and Okello 2007, Hunter 2009, Ilcan *et al.* 2015, IRRI 2015, 2018, Krause 2016). This is largely because current self-reliance efforts are operationalized within broader structural conditions that impede refugees' rights and undermine refugees' agentic capacities to rebuild their lives and relationships in self-determining and sustainable ways.

² There is an estimated 1.4 million refugees and asylum seekers residing in twelve refugee-hosting districts in Uganda with 30 refugee settlements (UNHCR 2018). While the vast majority of refugees reside in rural settlements across the country, it is estimated that roughly 7 per cent of refugees have opted out of the formal settlement structure and chosen to settle in and around the urban district of Kampala, despite having limited access to protection and humanitarian assistance from the government and UNHCR (UNHCR 2018).

Of particular note is the country's overarching local settlement policy, which has long required refugees to live in designated and enclosed settlements, often for protracted periods of time without immediate prospects for a "durable solution" to their exile. The location of these settlements in remote and rural regions of the country ensures that refugees remain detached from mainstream economic and political activities. Despite Uganda's international reputation for having progressive refugee legislation, refugees wishing to live outside of the settlement or relocate to another settlement must secure permission from the settlement commissioner (Refugees Act, 2006, section 44, see also Refugees Regulations, 2010, section 47), a process that has been described as overly bureaucratic and with little predictability and transparency (Ilcan *et al.* 2015, IRRI 2015). In addition to restricting refugees' freedom of movement through bureaucratic and discretionary means, the vast majority of refugees residing outside of the settlement structure in urban or peri-urban areas do not qualify for material assistance through UNHCR or its implementing partners (see Bernstein and Okello 2007). Rather, refugees are expected to be self-reliant through economic livelihood activities in either the formal or informal sector. Yet, as other researchers note, local laws, discriminatory practices, and lack of access to markets and capital often obstruct refugees' right to work and, it follows, present significant barriers to self-reliance (see Meyer 2006, O Ensor 2010, Buscher 2011). For instance, in 2011 the Kampala City Council Authority passed a law that required a business license or petty trading permit to sell goods in public spaces. As Easton-Calabria (2016) demonstrates, this law has had drastic consequences for both refugee and national entrepreneurs, as enforcement officials increasingly stop street sellers, confiscate their goods, impose fines, or undertake actions that lead to arrest and imprisonment.

Within Uganda's overarching local settlement structure, the UNHCR and the Ugandan government aim to facilitate refugee self-reliance through subsistence agricultural and small-scale market activities. Upon arrival to the settlement, refugees are allocated a small plot of land for residential and agricultural purposes, which they are expected to cultivate for personal consumption and, if surpluses exist, sell to traders or in the local market. A report by the Refugee Law Project (RLP) raises serious concerns about the country's self-reliance strategy, particularly "the strategy's narrow focus on subsistence agriculture and inadequate provision for freedom of movement for encamped refugees [which] leaves them impoverished and dependent" (RLP 2007, 1; see also IRRI 2015). While it is possible for some refugees to engage in small business enterprises or cultivate crops to supplement their food needs in some settlements (see Betts *et al.* 2014, Ahimbisibwe 2014), it is not the case that returns on agriculture-based labour are predictable and regular nor is it the case that all refugee households have access to (adequate and quality) land, the skills and knowledge required of subsistence farming, or access to capital, (fair or competitive) markets or trade networks (Hunter 2009, Ahimbisibwe 2014, Krause 2016, Kigozi 2017). For example, research by the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) on the situation of South Sudanese refugees living in Adjumani District in Northern Uganda documents that the size of land that refugees are allocated in the settlements are inadequate to cultivate the amount of food needed to supplement the already inadequate food rations (IRRI 2015). As forced displacement from neighbouring countries continues to rise, the number of people residing in settlements increases, which further reduces access to fertile land required for cultivation

and increases competition with local communities over scarce services and natural resources (Ilcan *et al.* 2015, Summers 2017, IRRI 2018). Moreover, the very possibility of refugees attaining self-reliance is further undermined by insufficient donor support for alternative (non-agricultural) livelihood programming, which contributes to refugees feeling excluded from UNHCR-supported livelihood activities, restricts organizational training to mostly the informal sector that rarely leads to employment or viable incomes, and maintains the need for humanitarian assistance in an environment of aid reduction and neo-liberal policy approaches (Ahimbisibwe 2014, Ilcan *et al.* 2015, 2017, Easton-Calabria 2016, Government of Uganda 2018, 32). Yet, the expectation that refugees will attain self-reliance through small-scale agricultural and/or small-scale enterprise livelihood activities informs a key justification for reducing food rations and other humanitarian assistance for refugees who have lived in a settlement for five years or more.

Throughout Uganda, refugees routinely experience declining food rations provided by the World Food Programme, in large part due to the chronic underfunding of the global refugee response and the onset of “new emergencies”, which stretches already limited amounts of donor funding and renders protracted refugee situations less urgent and therefore less likely to receive funding. The practice of withdrawing food rations within the current restrictions of the settlement structure (for example, restrictions on freedom of movement, work, and access to UNHCR assistance for refugees living in urban areas) not only contributes to the highly strenuous conditions that refugees face but also works against the very possibility of refugees reaching or maintaining self-reliance. For instance, as argued elsewhere in the context of Nakivale Refugee Settlement (Ilcan *et al.* 2015, 2017, Oliver and Ilcan 2018), this is because the monthly quantity and quality of food rations are inadequate for refugees to sustain themselves and their families, which often leads many refugees to engage in various survival strategies that perpetuate a cycle of impoverishment, hunger and reliance on humanitarian aid. For example, some refugee women opt to have more children to secure additional food rations for their family or, in other instances, residents sell their already insufficient food supply at local markets to purchase other essential household needs (e.g., soap, sugar, salt, medicines, plastic sheeting for roofs, or children’s school fees and supplies) [see also Hunter 2009, Omata and Kaplan 2013, IRRI 2015 for similar findings in different settlements throughout the country].

In stressing the responsibility of refugees to care for and support themselves in national contexts that are shaped by trans/national and local structures of power and inequalities, UNHCR’s self-reliance approach largely works against and impedes refugees’ self-reliance and contributes to the difficult life conditions and vulnerabilities that refugees face both in and beyond camp/settlement structures. Accompanying the concept and practice of self-reliance are also representational discourses that too often position refugees as dependent, lacking initiative or possessing poor attitudes (see also Hunter 2009, Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018) – representations that are also often racialized and feminized (see Johnson 2011). Viewing refugees in such terms, as people who “don’t want to work” or who “wait for handouts,” locates one’s success or failures in attaining self-reliance solely within one’s character, thereby obscuring the role of institutionalized structures and norms, such as Uganda’s local settlement structure or global neoliberalism, in undermining self-reliance efforts. Situated within Uganda’s

existing national refugee policy and sociopolitical environment, self-reliance strategies encourage refugees to refashion themselves as entrepreneurial, adaptive, and productive subjects (see Hyndman 2000, Buscher 2013, Ramadan 2013, Ilcan *et al.* 2015), even when such a refashioning entails participating in inviable informal and unregulated market activities and abject conditions where they face isolation, poverty, conflict, xenophobia and inadequate access to much needed social and economic support for years on end.

3. Linking self-reliance and resilience

Despite the overwhelmingly weak track record that self-reliance has had for refugees' welfare and protection, and the ongoing structural barriers that impede its success (see e.g. Meyer 2006, RLP 2007, Hovil 2007, Hunter 2009, Buscher 2011, Ilcan *et al.* 2015, Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018), UNHCR continues to design programmatic frameworks and policies that promote self-reliance for refugees, especially in protracted situations. In the last number of years, self-reliance has been promoted in new ways by articulating it in relation to the concept of resilience. Resilience is generally understood as the capacity of a system, organism, individual, or collective to withstand or adapt to sudden shocks or stresses. From its origins in the 1970s in systems ecology, resilience has since become a "pervasive idiom of global governance" (Walker and Cooper 2011, 144) and "quasi-universal answer" (Aradau 2014, 73) to all manner of challenges across fields as diverse as emergency management, international development, climate change, food security, and financial markets (see Methmann and Oels 2015, O'Connor *et al.* 2017, Haldrup and Rosén 2017). In the context of refugee management, the UNHCR defines resilience as "the ability of individuals, households, communities, national institutions and systems to prevent, absorb and recover from shocks, while continuing to function and adapt in a way that supports long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, and the attainment of human rights" (UNHCR 2017b, 3).

The embrace of resilience in the governance of refugees has occurred in the context of two recent policy shifts impacting how the UNHCR envisions its operations. In July 2014, UNHCR released its *Policy on Alternatives to Camps*, which signals a newfound commitment to exploring alternatives to camps so that "refugees have the possibility to live with greater dignity, independence and normality as members of the community." The report is striking for acknowledging the flawed assumptions underpinning the camp model, highlighting the wide range of problems that refugee camps themselves create:

UNHCR's experience has been that camps can have significant negative impacts over the longer term for all concerned. Living in camps can engender dependency and weaken the ability of refugees to manage their own lives, which perpetuates the trauma of displacement and creates barriers to solutions, whatever form they take. Camps can also distort local economies and development planning, while also causing negative environmental impacts in the surrounding area. In some contexts, camps may increase critical protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child protection concerns and human trafficking. Camps may not either contribute to security, where they become venue for the forced recruitment or indoctrination of refugees. (UNHCR 2014c, 4)

Given the problems and indignities of encampment itself, the *Alternatives to Camps* policy seeks to make camps “the normative exception to the rule of refugee settlement” (UNHCR 2014c, 3) by establishing new operational principles to guide refugee settlement outside of designated camps where allowed by national law. It does so by revitalizing and extending the principles, objectives and strategies of the UNHCR’s already-existing urban refugee policy (UNHCR 2009), which recognized that almost half of the world’s refugees elect to self-settle in cities and towns rather than in authorized UNHCR camps (UNHCR 2009, 2). Recognizing that the vast majority of urban refugees were excluded from its support and programming, the UNHCR formulated the urban refugee policy with the intent to “preserve and expand the amount of protection space available to them and to the humanitarian organizations that are providing such refugees with access to protection, solutions and assistance” (*Ibid.*, 4). Specifically, the UNHCR would operate within national frameworks to prevent “eviction, arbitrary detention, deportation, harassment or extortion by the security services and other actors”, promote the ability of refugees to “enjoy freedom of movement and association and expression, and protection of their family unity”, help ensure refugees have “access to livelihoods and the labour market and are protected from exploitative treatment by employers, landlords and traders”, and “have access to public and private services such as healthcare and education” amongst other aims (*Ibid.*). Though largely peripheral to the UNHCR’s preference for encampment until 2014, the *Alternatives to Camps* policy seeks to extend these principles to “all operational contexts” (UNHCR 2014c, 6) with the goal of phasing out camps at the earliest possible stage or, where this is not possible or practical, transforming them into sustainable settlements that removes restrictions on refugees’ rights, enables self-reliance and resilience, and builds linkages with host communities and local economies (UNHCR 2014c, 5–6).

Despite the evidence that local integration of refugees with the host population offers enormous possibilities for providing both temporary and long-term solutions to forced displacement (see Hovil 2014), local integration has long been widely neglected by political elites at both international and national levels. While the UNHCR has long advocated for refugees to be integrated in national social services such as schooling and healthcare in order to avoid duplicate service programs, it nevertheless preferred to have refugees physically situated in camps, settlements, or refugee districts under its purview rather than “self-settle” amongst the host population. The longstanding justification for camps was two-fold: not only is it logistically easier for the UNHCR to administer its services to a concentrated population, camps were also seen as an extension of its protective mandate by distancing refugees from risks associated with living amongst the host population and beyond UNHCR services. Moreover, host countries typically see refugees as posing a security threat and a burden on local communities and economies and require refugees to settle in UNHCR-operated settlements (Kibreab 2007). However, as refugee crises have become more protracted and donor support has diminished, funding camps has become increasingly difficult, often resulting in cuts to programmes and basic services, such as secondary education and food rations. At the same time, advocates have long argued that the strategy of containment transgresses basic human rights, such as of the freedom of movement, and hinders the progress sought through UNHCR’s various livelihood initiatives, including Uganda’s SRS outlined above. As Dryden-Peterson and Hovil point out, “even with the implementation of the SRS, which

is supposed to encourage refugees to take more responsibility for their own lives, the limitations on their freedom of movement continually conspire against commercial enterprise” (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil 2004, 33). They consequently argue that the integration of refugees into host populations should be seen as a “positive step in securing long-term stability for both refugees and host communities” (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil 2004, 35; see also Jacobsen 2002, Dryden-Peterson and Hovil 2003, Hovil 2007, IRRI 2018).

The shift in UNHCR policy toward creating alternatives to encampment is re-articulated in the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (A/RES/71/1, 2016), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2016 following a series of summits characterized by heightened political attention on the global refugee crisis and its containment outside of Europe (IRRI 2018). In addition to states reaffirming their commitments to international principles and law – such as protecting the human rights of all refugees and migrants – the *New York Declaration* recognizes that “refugee camps should be the exception and, to the extent possible, a temporary measure in response to an emergency” (UNHCR 2017a, s. 73). Yet, this progressive move to find alternatives to encampment is tempered throughout the document by the recognition of different national contexts, policies, and priorities (often concerned with State sovereignty and security) and the need to take these into account in designing and implementing responses to large movements of refugees and migrants. Moreover, while the Declaration espouses a commitment to promoting durable solutions, particularly in protracted refugee situations, it tends to privilege repatriation and resettlement in third countries – even though neither are often possible in the near term – at the expense of a meaningful commitment to the local integration of refugees within host communities (*New York Declaration*, s. 75–78, see Hansen 2018) or access to citizenship. Rather, the *New York Declaration* recognizes that “any decision regarding permanent settlement in any form, including possible naturalization, rests with the host country” and calls on host States (in partnership with UN agencies and other partners) to “expand opportunities for refugees to access, as appropriate, education, health care and services, livelihood opportunities and labour markets,” and “invest in building human capital, self-reliance and transferable skills as an essential step towards enabling long-term solutions” (*New York Declaration*, 2016, 19).

Perhaps most significantly, the Declaration takes seriously the extensive impacts that large and especially protracted displacements of people can have on countries of first refuge and calls for greater international cooperation and “a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees”, a stronger connection between humanitarian and development actors to build self-reliance and resilience, as well as increased financial support from a broader range of donors, including international financial institutions (such as the World Bank) and the private sector (for instance see s. 7, 11, 37–38, 68, 85–86). To this end, and with the aim of supporting the commitments outlined in the Declaration, the UNHCR is tasked with developing and initiating Comprehensive Refugee Response Frameworks (CRRF) in relevant countries with the involvement of various stakeholders, with the aim of “easing pressures on countries that host large numbers of refugees, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding third-country solutions, and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity” (*New York Declaration*, 2016, 20). Several countries,

including Uganda, have implemented a CRRF, and although each framework is, in theory, adaptable to the circumstances of each country, the overarching approach is to pair UNHCR's refugee-oriented activities (such as reception and admission procedures, legal aid, provision of essential social services, livelihood training, etc.) with development support to "strengthen host countries' and communities' resilience" and providing "adequate resources (...) for national and local authorities and other service providers in view of the increased needs and pressures on social services" that "should benefit refugees and the host country and communities" together (*New York Declaration*, 2016, 15–22).

While the concept "resilience" is scattered throughout the *Alternatives to Camps* or *New York Declaration* frameworks, neither make reference to the concept in any substantial way. Nor do they introduce entirely new approaches to the problem of protracted mass displacement. Bringing together humanitarian and developmental goals is an idea that can be traced back to the 1960s (Krause 2016, Harild 2016), and advocates and scholars have long argued for the local integration of refugees and social services with host communities since at least the 1980s. Instead, the intersection of these policies creates the current context wherein resilience is emerging as a core policy principle in refugee management; one that brings together disparate stakeholders and strands of operational practice into one multifaceted objective as the UNHCR seeks to find alternative and sustainable ways of responding to protracted refugee crises. Resilience is not, in this context, simply a replacement or renaming of the individualized idea of self-reliance. Instead, resilience is described in UNHCR material as a "linked concept" that presupposes and extends self-reliance. A UNHCR Executive Committee's Report states,

Self-reliance can lead to resilience, while resilience is necessary to ensure that progress towards self-reliance is not eroded or reversed in the face of sudden-onset shocks and longer-term trends, such as climate change. (UNHCR 2017b, 3)

In this we see a re-envisioning of the refugee subject in UNHCR in which self-reliance is no longer enough to survive while awaiting whatever durable solution may eventually be available in the future. This is a view that sees self-reliance as a capacity that is brittle and can be undone, thus requiring the cultivation of system, community, and individual-level capacities to withstand setbacks arising from adverse, changing, and unexpected circumstances alongside the skills of self-reliance. This articulation of resilience is more or less in line with prevailing articulations of resilience in international humanitarian and development policy in which individuals are encouraged to be adaptive and resourceful in the face of adversity and radical uncertainty (Welsh 2014, Evans and Reid 2014, Ilcan and Rygiel 2015). At the conceptual level of the individual, then, there appears to be little that differentiates the UNHCR's approach to refugees beyond the standard rhetoric of resilience as individual adaptive capacity. That is, the livelihood initiatives and their implicit emphasis on individual and community responsibility remain in place largely unmodified from the idealized form promoted through the preceding self-reliance strategy.

What is somewhat novel is that UNHCR now connects these idealized neoliberal subjects with a more aggressive agenda for developmental interventions at the local, urban, and national scale so that host countries are better prepared to absorb and adapt to sudden influxes of displaced persons in urban environments as it attempts, in theory,

to minimize the use of camps. This is not the “classical” articulation of resilience in which individualized subjects “bounce back” to a pre-existing or bettered state in uncertain circumstances due to their inner capacities but a post-classical version in which the subject and the environment are linked in an “interactive process of relational adaptation” (Chandler 2014, 7) that is envisioned to be a mutually-conditioning and upward-spiraling process of individual and local improvement. Recognizing that sudden or protracted refugee situations can put strain on host countries, particularly if settling in urban areas, the Executive Committee report cited above also notes, “states will require support to strengthen and adjust national and local institutions [primarily education and health care] to maintain levels of support and services” (UNHCR 2017b, 4). In line with the *New York Declaration*, such assistance is to be coordinated with existing regional development programs so as to serve host communities and displaced populations alike but “designed to leave in place stronger services once the displaced find a durable solution” (UNHCR 2017b, 5). In addition to social services the Executive Committee identifies energy production and distribution, emergency preparedness, transportation, and crime control as suitable sectors for comparable investments that will enable host countries “to better address current needs and to create resilience to future shocks for both host and displaced populations” (UNHCR 2017b, 6). Together these investments are touted as crucial for building the resilience of host communities, which in turn will “contribute to the development of markets, lead to better services in remote areas, and support social cohesion” (UNHCR 2017b, 4).

Uganda once again appears to be serving as a showcase for UNHCR’s most recent policy direction and approach. In 2017, in response to the mass influx of South Sudanese refugees and the persistent challenges of the protracted refugee situation in the country, the UNHCR and Government of Uganda (GoU) launched the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Strategy (ReHoPE), which is described as a key component in the “practical application” (GoU 2017, 3) of the CRRF called for in the *New York Declaration* (2016), particularly in implementing the resilience and self-reliance objective of the Ugandan CRRF model (Pillar 3).³ ReHoPE supports the integration of refugees into the country’s national development plan (NDPII 2015/16 – 2019/20) through the Settlement Transformative Agenda, signaling the first time that refugee-hosting districts are formally recognized as “vulnerable” sites and assigned priority for development interventions in the country’s development agenda (GoU 2017). To enhance resilience and self-reliance among refugees and host communities, ReHoPE focuses on four strategic areas: strengthening local government and community institutions; improving social service delivery (access, quality, and efficiency), expanding sustainable livelihood training, and addressing environmental degradation in refugee-hosting areas (GoU 2017, 6). In line with the merging of developmental and humanitarian agendas, ReHoPE aims to “bridge the gap between humanitarian and developmental programming” (*Ibid.*, 1) in the form of a multi-sectoral partnership between national agencies, international humanitarian (UNHCR) and development agencies (primarily the World Bank) and

³ In March 2017, the government of Uganda and UNHCR officially launched the CRRF, translating the principles and objectives of the *New York Declaration* to the Ugandan context. The CRRF addresses five mutually-reinforcing pillars: 1) Admission and rights, 2) Emergency response and ongoing needs; 3) Resilience and self-reliance; 4) Expansion of third country solutions; and 5) Voluntary repatriation. ReHoPE is one of the core national frameworks addressing the resilience and self-reliance pillar of the CRRF.

private sector donors through which it plans to spend \$350 million USD over the next five years (to 2022). As noted in Uganda's CRRF road map (2018-2020), bilateral donors and development agencies are showing "major ambition to scale up support for both refugees and host communities to enable them to increase their resilience and self-reliance" (GoU 2018, 9).

While Uganda's CRRF and ReHoPE policy exemplify many of the global objectives of UNHCR (e.g., the inclusion of refugees in national and local development plans, see UNHCR 2017b) and the comprehensive refugee response framework endorsed by the international community, Uganda's framework also highlights the extent to which UNHCR's aspirations are tempered by the national frameworks in which new CRRFs are assembled. While the investments described above are intended to enhance the capacities of refugees and host communities to be self-reliant and resilient and improve the delivery of social services to host populations and refugees alike, Uganda's approach to refugee management is at odds with the progressive potential of UNHCR's policy vision of creating alternatives to encampment; rather, Uganda's CRRF further entrenches the country's existing settlement model even as it seeks to "transform" these sites by further incorporating them into Uganda's broader development agenda (IRRI 2018, see also GoU 2018). In turn, the local integration of refugees (and not just services) appears to once again be abandoned as a formal government solution for refugees living in protracted conditions, with "voluntary" repatriation and expanded opportunities for third country settlement remaining the most desirable options.

4. Conclusion

While much of our analysis has referred to developments in Uganda's refugee management approach and the material effects that such policies have on refugees living in protracted conditions, the broader aim of this paper has been to analyze the shifting policy landscape of UNHCR and what this means for how refugees are governed. In theory, the refugee policies of UNHCR and other recent initiatives by the international community appear to include some significant changes that may improve refugees' wellbeing and access to rights and protection and catalyze economic and social development for both refugees and host communities. Perhaps most significantly they stress the urgency of finding alternatives to encampment and of increased resources and international cooperation and responsibility sharing among states in the context of hosting refugees and, to this end, are designing strategies to further strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and development agendas.

However, as Lucy Hovil cautions in her analysis of refugee policy in Uganda, there is a danger in presenting "new policy frameworks (such as the ones now pursued under the CRRF in Uganda) as transformative [or progressive] solutions to existing problems," when in reality they do little to change the "existing situation [in refugee-hosting districts] but that just like the older refugee policies they are supposed to improve or "transform, they are underlined by problematic objectives that in practice curtail refugees' access to protection, rights and durable solutions" (IRRI 2018, 12–13). Moreover, Hovil notes that the government of Uganda has benefited both politically and economically from being showcased as a global model of progressive refugee policy (resulting in greater access to international aid and political support) and has been able to use its international standing to attain "considerable leverage in deciding how to

implement these policies and what to focus on” – often – at times at the expense of refugee’s priorities and rights (IRRI 2018, 3, 9–10). While it is too early to detect how Uganda’s ReHoPE policy experiment will unfold and what it will mean for refugees and host populations in the long term, it must be stressed that Uganda has long favoured a development-based approach to refugee assistance, all the while maintaining a local settlement policy that has been widely criticized for curtailing refugees’ rights, undermining refugees’ capacities for self-reliance, denying protections for urban refugees, and creating tensions with host communities. There are thus serious political and ethical implications if ReHoPE is to be internationally promoted as a new approach for governing refugees stripped of these contextual factors, most notably for places with much more restrictive national frameworks and if it is used to justify further reductions in traditional relief operations for the most vulnerable refugees or in countries without adequate legal protections for refugees both within and outside of camps. It is not possible to be “self-reliant” nor “resilient” if basic medical issues are not addressed, if one is not free to move, if one does not have access to capital or the labour market, or if one is continually at risk of violence or state persecution for being displaced. Moreover, resilience cannot be assumed to always lead to positive or transformative outcomes (such as challenging current systems and power structures) or that everyone in the community will benefit the same way, nor can it be used to displace more elemental humanitarian and legal protections without radically increasing human vulnerability and suffering (cf. Béné *et al.* 2014).

In our view the increasing embrace of resilience by the UNHCR signals the formalization of a longstanding convergence between humanitarian and developmental agendas. For the UNHCR, humanitarian crises are now also seen as development opportunities that have “evident value” (UNHCR 2017b, 4) to be leveraged for the benefit of refugees and countries of refuge alike. Resilience arises in this context as a useful concept to bring humanitarian and developmental goals and stakeholders together under a single conceptual umbrella that bridges investments in local social infrastructure with expanded forms of training and services for entrepreneurial subjects who are to be governed *in situ* the local – and often urban – milieu. On the face of it, then, there seems to be considerable promise in this approach for addressing the challenges associated with protracted refugee crises *and* localized (under)development in countries of first refuge that would no doubt encounter messy issues of funding, delivery, and implementation to be critically assessed. At the same time, however, we feel there are deeper questions at stake in the difference that resilience makes beyond those concerning a shared policy narrative or approach to implementation. A strong theme of critique regarding the politics of resilience has centred on the depoliticizing effects of the discourse of resilience on individual subjects. In these critiques the resilience subject is seen as one that must disavow the capacity to act as an agent of change and instead accept radically uncertainty as the primarily and inevitable condition of life itself. Evans and Reid (2014) are particularly forceful in their critique in this respect, arguing that “resilience means sacrificing any political vision of a world in which we might be able to live better lives freer from dangers, looking instead at the future as an endemic terrain of catastrophe that is dangerous and insecure by design” (Evans and Reid 2014, 95). In this view resilience is antithetical to the notion of resistance; resilient subjects do not question or seek to change the conditions of uncertainty, they embrace the “permanent

exposure to endemic dangers” (Evans and Reid 2014, 95) as a font of creativity in order to thrive. In this way the resilient subject is one that is continually reemerging from endemic conditions of crisis rather than political subject that can act upon those conditions in order to be free of the sources of harm or violence they present. This a form of reasoning, of course, that naturalizes and extends the neoliberal model of economic relations by promoting radical self-responsibility, entrepreneurialism, and the embrace of risk as a personal virtue.

While we are entirely sympathetic to these critiques, it must also be said that these critiques deal with only one form of resilience and that there may be other articulations of resilience that offer considerable emancipatory potential. The resilience that is the subject of critique amongst analysts of global governance from critical political science, geography, and international relations perspectives is one that descends from Western interventions in “underdeveloped” and “developing” countries of the global south (see Duffield 2012). In this view resilience is understood as a new name for longstanding colonial practices intended to reengineer recipient societies in a Western neoliberal image, albeit in a way that retreats from the grand planning and direct intervention that characterized international development to the 1980s (Joseph 2013, Haldrup and Rosén 2017). In contrast, newer literature on resilience has sought to be sensitive to these critiques while also remain alive to the positive potential of resilience as the means through which individuals and communities can and are “envisioning and experimenting with alternative environmental, economic, and political and social futures” (Larner and Moreton 2016, 35). While diverse, what these inquiries point to is a “way of doing” resilience that is participatory and grounded in local needs, and take advantage of local expertise rather than the deterritorialized and top-down knowledge of experts governing from a distance. In this understanding, resilience does not preclude resistance, rather, it provides an ontological basis for engaging in resistance, and particularly for resisting forms of governance that are imposed from above and afar. It is, of course, too simplistic to posit a binary between positive and negative faces of resilience; “rather there is a continuum between positive and negative and an ongoing interplay between projects that reflect both potential models of resilience” (Rogers 2015, 66). It may be too early to detect the ways in which the embrace of resilience will unfold in the current refugee governance climate, but we are hopeful that – with greater international resources and responsibility sharing, more meaningful consultations with local refugee and host communities, and more serious international and national discussions about alternative solutions – bottom-up and relational styles of resilience are able to (and will continue to) emerge in ways that empower both refugee and local populations to produce alternative futures for themselves and their communities.

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