SYRIAN REFUGEES REARRANGING THEIR DISRUPTED LIVES IN-BETWEEN OBSCURITIES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL, OPACITIES OF INTEGRATION AND AMBIGUITIES OF DISPLACEMENT

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ABSTRACT. This study explores the coexistence of multiple and radically distinctive, yet rhythmic worlds, that Syrian refugees resettling in the Scotland found themselves within during the pandemic. This study applies rhythm analysis as a critical phenomenological perspective within which being a refugee during the pandemic is not just a legal status or a social condition, but a 'mode of being in the world' that is radically different from any of their past experiences. The participants were asked (using iPods) to visually capture or audially reflect on their day-to-day, spatial and nonspatial, encounters to show the realities of everyday life. The data entries show the state of being, contemplation on expectations, searching but not seeing, convalescing the broken rhythms of everyday life during the pandemic. Findings shows that all participants were actively involved in recreation of everyday rhythms – however the realities of Covid-19 lockdown and social experiences of post Covid-19 resulted in a continuous cycle of formation, deformation, reformation of Syrian Refugees. From visual point there is an overarching theme of 'emptiness', where the time and space has merged into the notion of nostalgia of what once was and horror of what now is search for belonging and notion of home.

1. Introduction

The first Syrian refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) arrived in Scotland in 2015. The VPRS differs from the UK government's dispersal scheme in that it adopts a more collaborative approach, with local authorities having some, usually indirect, involvement in selection processes and opportunities to engage in local planning. All of Scotland's local authorities volunteered to support resettlement of refugees from the Syrian conflict, albeit in different ways. Resettlement governance 'dispersed' responsibility for the programme onto local authorities, shielding the Home Office from political backlash and negative media coverage, which concentrates on the localised context of resettlement rather than centralised UK state-level coercive immigration policy. By exercising the powers devolved to Scotland to encourage and facilitate integration as soon as asylum seekers arrive the Scottish Government have taken a symbolically different approach to refugee integration

from the UK state, although the process in the devolved nations is underdetermined by the coercive deterrence apparatus and ideology of UK immigration policy (Mulvey et al., 2023). Supporting the needs of refugees in Scotland has been guided since 2014 by the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy, which aims to foster a two-way relationship between host communities and refugees reclassified as 'New Scots' (Scottish Government, 2018). However, policies affecting refugees cannot be categorised as wholly reserved or wholly devolved: devolved powers over housing, education and health of refugees in Scotland operate within the restrictive UK context of the rigidities and coercive immigration process as a matter reserved to the central state apparatus (Isaacs et al., 2022).

Refugee settlement and integration processes in Scotland therefore mediate the tensions between the reserved powers over migration at the level of the UK state and the devolved powers of the Scottish Government, primarily over social policy and, to a lesser extent, economic development. Policy divergence also operates in a context of contrasting ideological national discourses. A discourse of civic nationalism in Scotland routinely mobilises normative codes of post-imperial tolerance, fairness, egalitarianism and welfare in ideological opposition to the normative codes of British state-centric nationalism that fosters belligerent ethnocentric codes demanding assimilation and acquiescence of outsiders to largely mythical British values. Although there have been negative experiences of racism and xenophobia the public discourse around refugees in Scotland is largely uncontested by the nativist rhetoric of the Home Office's 'hostile environment' for migrants and broadly accepts the humanitarian need for sanctuary and to integrate refugees (Strang, et al, 2018).

Localities, cities and regions bear much of the responsibility for implementing VPRS policies and fostering integration. Civil society organisations in Scotland mobilise to mediate the tension between coercive state policies and universal human rights in defence of refugees. Within the interstices between developed and reserved powers the efficacy of integration measures can appear quite arbitrary and ad hoc, dependent on subjective measures and judgements of intermediaries and street-level bureaucracy. Contradictory demands are made between, for example, over whether refugees ought to be housed in close proximity to existing migrant communities to take advantage of bonding forms of social capital or that this becomes an obstacle for developing bridging forms of social capital with the wider society of immigration. (Peace and Meer, 2019). In particular, the UK model of dispersal accommodation in often the most deprived urban areas has been widely and critically studied as a barrier to integration (Meer et al., 2019a). Language acquisition services, a vital lubricant for securing employment and services, is more comprehensively available in the devolved jurisdictions of in Scotland and Wales than in England, alongside informal social learning opportunities as a mode of orientation for cultural and economic exchange for both recent migrants and long established communities. Social media also functions as an essential conduit for what has been called the 'digital humanitarianism' of a technologically literate civil society (Rothe et al., 2021).

Studies tend report the mainly positive experiences of Syrian refugees arrived in Scotland under the VPRS scheme in terms of basic needs, cultural support, welfare services, and local integration (Weir et al., 2018). Integration and resettlement as modes of ontological security are typically an indirect consequence of routine activities such as work, employment, education, leisure and so on, and far less a consequence of deliberate social engineering. A large body of research on employment and labour markets tends to be concerned with the

displacement of or wage squeeze for established labour by 'outsider' migrant labour. Refugees need access to the labour market at the earliest point of arrival since employment can increase motivation to learn and practice new language skills with native speakers (Martzoukou and Burnett, 2018). Unlike much of Europe, in the case of the UK only after refugee status is officially granted are they permitted to work. Until than asylum seekers are prevented from working. This locks out displaced migrants from contributing to the economy and operates as a drag factor on the process of integration (Bouttell, 2023). Language competency, pre-migration qualifications and occupations, and time in the UK are the most important factors for accessing work. Typically, victims of traumatic experiences, refugees may also lack language proficiency or formal qualifications, or possess ones that are not recognised (Meer et al., 2019b). A study of employment prospects for professionals, doctors and teachers in London and Glasgow, found that refugees respond to the barriers they encounter by either engaging in re-qualification and re-education, compromising between professional aspirations and realistic prospects, become ambivalent about future career paths, or withdraw from the market (Piętka-Nykaza, 2015).

2. Social capital: A necessary but insufficient condition for integration

Social capital is often identified as an important feature of labour market integration. An absence of social networks has a detrimental effect on access to work (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). As Peace and Meer (2019: 12) argue, 'Vertical bridging social capital is a valuable source for securing adequate employment, whereas horizontal bonding social capital may more often lead to low-skilled work or underemployment'. On the other side of the equation, employers may be discouraged from hiring refugee labour because of the additional administrative burden and fears about the divisive political uncertainty of their status. Relatively low skilled jobs such as porters, cleaners, transport drivers and warehouse personnel have lower barriers to entry while the service sector offer opportunities for niche products and services. Studies of Syrians in the UK and Germany stress 'resilience' and 'adaptability' as important characteristics for employability and for imparting a sense of independence, self-respect and efficacy as virtuous circle for the integration of Syrian refugees (Shneikat and Ryan, 2018). Moreover, social capital is shaped by gender relations across a whole range of integration processes such as employment language, health, education, employment and housing. In each area, and therefore in terms of integration overall, women tend to fare worse than men. Cheung and Phillimore (2017) found significant gender differences and inequalities where prolonged separation from extended family support networks contributes to the burden of stress for refugee women. As they became more settled refugee women were found to be more likely to be in education and training than men but were less likely to be in employment. Despite the loss of cultural, social, material and personal resources, refugee women, especially younger women. demonstrate resourcefulness and resilience as they negotiate new opportunities for the self-development (Shishehgar et al, 2017).

As is well known, bonding social capital is formed within closely integrated familial, ethnic, national or occupational groups, bridging capital refers to the strength of loose ties with wider social networks, while linking capital attempts to capture relationships with formal structures of legitimate authority, such as the state bureaucracy (Ager and Strang, 2008). Ager and Strang (2008: 3; Strang and Quinn, 2019) developed an influential social capital approach to refugees that has 'shaped policy, practice and academic discourse surrounding refugee integration'. At a policy level core indicators of integration include the employment and unemployment rates of refugees (compared with rates amongst the general population) and average annual earnings and/or income for refugees and/or refugee households, supported by

related indicators of under-employment (number of refugees with professional and university qualification holding manual employment) and of refugee self-employment. Social capital approaches makes the relatively uncontentious claim that the reciprocity of social relationships and trust are at the core of a sense of belonging for both refugees and non-refugees. As rational actors refugees mobilise their inherited resources as efficiently as opportunities allow.

To measure the effectiveness of integration processes the different domains of integration need to be snapped together like a jigsaw. Implicit in many social and cultural capital models of migration is what Erel (2010) termed a 'rucksack approach'. Such an approach assumes that migrants draw on a fixed bundle of cultural resources generated in their country of origin that may or may not align with the 'culture' of the country of destination. Variously labelled 'human capital' or 'ethnic capital' it assumes well-defined, stable forms of ethnic group boundaries and that embodied and objectified cultural capital can be converted (or not) as frictionless resources for bridging and linking forms of social capital largely unaffected by state classification systems and national and local normative codes. Migrants do not merely unpack cultural and social capital from their 'rucksacks' but generate afresh their own networks and mechanisms of validation alongside those of dominant institutions and local people. Emergent migrant social capital is formed by an economy of practices that ensues from the encounter of a habitus developed historically by the society of emigration with specific national and local economic, political, social and cultural field conditions of the society of immigration (Sayad, 2004).

3. Research Methods and Conceptual Framework

Methodologically this study relies on rhythmanalysis as a critical phenomenological perspective within which being a refugee is not just a juridical status or a social condition, but a 'mode of being in the world' (Aranda et al. 2015, Brettell 2023). It has also evolved as a specific method used to collect and analyse the data (Lassen et al. 2020). We draw on Lefebvre's concept of polyrhythmia - a multitude of economic, social and cultural rhythms of everyday life. By co-researching with members of Syrian refugee communities, we explore the coexistence of multiple, different, yet rhythmic worlds, which are being radically altered by the pandemic (Coutin and Yngvesson, 2008). To achieve this aim, we relied on a combination of qualitative methods, including timeline drawing (Marshall 2019), audio-narrated solicited diaries (Kaley et al. 2019), and photovoice (Teti et al. 2019) - as key elements in exploring the complexity of everyday life (Holmes et al. 2020). Our study draws on the methodological tools from studies by Marshall (2019), Kaley et al. (2019), Teti et al. (2019) and Holmes et al. (2020). With the help of community organisations and network sampling, we identified 20 Syrian refugees in Scottish urban areas. We asked research participants to make audio and photo entries at least three times a week (using iPods - supplied) to collect the data about the day-to-day events in the lives of the participants; this will provide a unique insight into everyday realities of these marginalised individuals (focussing on what their lives were, what they are now, and how they may evolve in the new post-COVID context).

4. Rearranging Disrupted Lives: Findings and Analysis

Our study discovered that the Syrian refugees in Scotland face varying degrees of dependence, interdependence and independence as they adjust to the new life in the Scottish society. The adjustment to this new life brings with it challenge of learning and negotiating

relationships with socioeconomic actors, such as other refugees, citizens, local actors, NGOs and local government bodies.

For Syrian refugees resettled in Scotland, the seasonality and rhythmic structure of their socioeconomic and cultural life is extremely altered due to double migration. The first flight migration was from Syrian to intermediating country and then the second migration from a refugee camp to the UK. The continuous state of incoherence due to disruptions in their rhythms and rituals of life (Lefebvre 2013) and the challenges of their actuality has created a reality that is full of contradictions, dichotomies and paradoxes. The fixed, and metronomic constraints imposed by the outer world of temporal social ecology has periodically and dramatically altered the acquired dispositions and codes of perception of habitus. This has resulted in creation of an unremitting flow of disharmonic and arrhythmic flux of existence for the Syrian refugees in Scotland.

The positive outcome of the realisation of this new life and its contradictions, dichotomies and paradoxes, is the creation of a stratification of will-power to in Syrian refugees to achieve happiness, wealth, prestige and social status (Grusky, 2019). This has resulted in a mindset of creating prosocial socioeconomic behaviour within Syrian refugees. All of our participants were actively involved in recreation of everyday rhythms – however the realities of Covid-19 lockdown and social experiences of post Covid-19 has resulted in a continuous cycle of formation, deformation, reformation of everyday rhythms in lives of Syrian Refugees. During this recreation of their everyday rhythms, Syrian refugees undergo multiple reconfigurations of their economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital accumulated both in Syria, during their migration and within their newly formed lives in Scotland.

Consequently, processes of being, seeing, acting and thinking acquired from life in Syria no longer provides a 'natural' point of orientation for responding to divergent socioeconomic conditions for the "daily life place-making" (Friedmann 2017). Their personal dispositions and competences acquired over a lifetime also no longer matches the new socioeconomic conditions grounded in the temporal context of (im)mobilities (Bourdieu, 2013). Such a rupture represents a grievous loss of function referred to by Bourdieu (1977: 78; 2008) as the disorientating feeling of 'habitus clivé', usually translated as 'cleft habitus', 'divided habitus' or 'fractured habitus'. Life in this fractured habitus produces ambivalent and contradictory dispositions and relationships. It also revises the concept and rigidities of gender, class and social change (Skeggs, 1997; Silva, 2016).

The Syrian refugees through the stratification of will-power has accepted these revised roles of gender and age. While the adult Syrian refuges are coming to terms with the psychological aftermath of displacement, the adolescent children are embracing the new life. In the household of our participants, adolescent children were making majority of socio-economic and political decisions. Adolescent children by attending local schools and interacting with their peers have developed a better understanding of Scottish society, norms, legal framework of Scotland. The adult Syrian refugees regularly consult their adolescent children to make everyday decisions. We witnessed this inverted family structure within the most refugee households.

The overarching theme within the photo dairies was 'emptiness', where participants were creating a coalescing belonging in Syria and Scotland into one notion. The description provided by the participants suggested that the time and space has merged within their idea of

belonging and notion of home. The has created an emptiness, where an experience of going to café with friends was overshadowed by the past experiences in Syria, resulting in a notion of 'something is always missing' within the lived social experiences in Scotland. This was particularly prominent with socioeconomic capital they have gathered in their past lives, which neither recognised nor acknowledged within their new reality. For instance, one of our participants was a lawyer in Syria, however the lived experiences in Scotland are only based on a reinforced identity of a refugee. Their neighbours, government documentation, local authorities and community members know them as a refugees, stripping away all other identities they carried with themselves throughout their displacement.

This is consistent with the findings of other literature that when people face a crisis, they develop a need for a rhythm of life that provides a reimagined triangulation of time, space and energy (Lee 2016). Aiming to restore ontological security, at least provisionally, refugees engage in practices of place making, creating "a sense of being at home in more than one place (or, potentially, no particular place)"(Gu and Schweisfurth 2015:950). Our findings are also consistent with the results of other studies on lives of Syrian refugees in Scotland. Study by Mulvey et al (2023) show that Syrian refugees positively grade the local authorities in Scotland as compared to Syrian refugees settled in England. However, the legal residency of Syrian refugees is currently not providing a social citizenship (Mulvey et al. 2023; Anderson and Hughes, 2015). While there are multiple pathway to housing available for Syrian refugees (Meer et al 2019), however there are lack of paths that lead to "any semblance of a dignified life" (Burns et al. 2022). Other than the impact of hostile political and social environment, the social measures during the pandemic have had detrimental and permanent impact on lives of Syrian refugees who were in-between belongings during this time (Armstrong et al. 2020). Other studies have also echoed our findings on the impact mental health and wellbeing of Syrian refugees as the social capital they acquired through their lives in Syria becomes obsolete within their new lives in the UK (Jaber, 2023; Burns et al. 2022; Armstrong et al. 2020).

The untimely unfolding of Covid-19 crises has had a profoundly impact of Syrian refugees. It has reshaped already fragile and disrupted rhythms of displaced Syrians in ways that are not yet well understood. However, one thing is clear in our data and through other studies (Mulvey et al. 2023) that Syrian refugees living in Scotland are facing a tremendous social and economic challenges, as they are trying to rebuild a version of livelihood that was lost.

5. **Conclusion and recommendations for policy**
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Our research examined the ways refugee establish, or work to establish, renewed rhythms in Scotland faced with their recent migratory journeys, disrupted connections and now the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and its socially isolating implications. Our findings show that many Syrian refugees establishing rhythms based on activated networks and relations, within the highly controlled spatial-temporal relations arising due to the pandemic. Our study shows everyday life responses to the multiplying and intersecting discordance of life and the life-affirming resilience of different rhythms (Lefebvre 2013). Conceptually, this study sharpen our understanding of dislocation and reorientation through a rhythmanalysis of the restructuring of the habitus clivé of refugees as Syrian refugees adjust asymmetrically to the routines and repetitions of everyday life of another society.

Our study suggests that the support provided to Syrian refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) fails to bridge the gap between their social capital and economic skills, and the economic opportunities available within the Scottish context. The grievous loss caused by the absence of socioeconomic opportunities to utilise economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital accumulated in Syria, is causing a condition of 'displaced presence' (Sayad 2004: 283). This is one of the biggest hurdles in daily life place-making for Syrian refugees living in Scotland.

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