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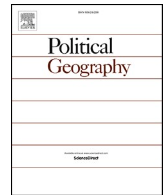

Full Length Article

Political geographies of everyday life and agency in camps

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A B S T R A C T

Millions of displaced people currently live in various camps throughout the world. Asylum and refugee camps – both formal and informal – are growing in size and scope, becoming more permanent features on their respective landscapes. Our attention in this article is focused on the space of the camp itself, which has long been marked by profoundly unequal relations of power. A common theme that characterizes camps, whether operated by the UNHCR or any other group, is that of control exercised over the inhabitants' daily lives, routines, and mobilities. In this article, we consider what the reality of camp life looks like for those within them, drawing on the voices of the (multiple) dispossessed and how they experience everyday life in these places. Our argument is not that camps represent spaces of control; that much is both self-evident and confirmed by much scholarship through the years. Drawing on interviews with camp residents –both refugees and asylum seekers–across different regions and displaced by different contexts, we look at some of the key features that characterize life within the camp, that illustrate what forms control might take, and also indicate the ways in which camp residents seek to actively resist and transform those regimes of control.

1. Introduction

Refugee and asylum camps are in a moment of transition today. They are larger in physical size than ever before, filled with a greater number of residents who face increased longevity in spaces that are regulated by a complex constellation of organizations and actors. Many camps are little more than spaces of informal sanctuary, while others resemble neighborhoods or even cities. As forced migration crises continue to grow unabated across the world due to civil wars, armed conflicts, persecution of minorities, climate change, and development projects that displace people from their homes, the role of camps – as temporary or, in many cases, long-term shelter – becomes increasing important to examine in closer detail. What does daily life look like within these camps? How is life within regulated? What kinds of futures can camp inhabitants make for themselves, given the constraints they must endure? As we contemplate what the growth of forced migration populations means globally, we must examine refugee camps as they evolve within these new realities.

Our attention in this article is thus on the space of the camp itself, which has long been marked by profoundly unequal relations of power. Such relations may differ depending on the context and depending on variables including gender, class, sexuality, race and ethnicity, age, or geography, on whether the camp is run by a national government, a military, an NGO, a multilateral organization, militant groups, warring factions, or any other assemblage of entities. However, a common theme that characterizes camps, whether operated by the UNHCR or any other group, is that of control exercised over the inhabitants' daily lives, routines, and mobilities. The potential increase of such control is an ever-present threat for many reasons including geopolitical instability, environmental vulnerabilities, and/or public health risks. Indeed, we have seen camps increasingly becoming heterodox spaces as "security" measures and corporal control of migrants intensify and perhaps trap migrants within these spaces.

In this article, we consider what the reality of camp life looks like for those within them, drawing on the voices of the (multiple) dispossessed and hierarchies of governance in these places. Our argument is not that camps represent spaces of control; that much is both self-evident and confirmed by much scholarship through the years. Drawing on interviews with camp residents –both refugees and asylum seekers–across different regions and displaced by different contexts, we look at some of the key features that characterize life within the camp, that illustrate what forms control might take, and also indicate the ways in which camp residents seek to actively resist and transform those regimes of control. The data the authors collected from interviews are from individuals from different nationalities, ethnicities, classes, genders, spiritual/religious backgrounds, legal status, and age is not intended to represent a homogenized representation of refugees or asylum seekers. Instead, we aim to highlight key commonalities and governance structures pertaining to experiences of forced migrants living in camps. We also examine demands made by advocacy networks operating within

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and outside of camps, through the perspectives of camp residents and NGO workers inside camps. Through theoretical and empirical analysis, we work in this article to critically elucidate everyday embodied experiences, practices, and enactment in camps. We discuss the spatialities of control that are exemplary of the everyday security practices (e.g., biopolitical technologies, rules governing migrants' access to employment/ education, transportation, etc.) involved in the camps.

This article is organized into three main sections. It begins with a discussion of theoretical perspectives on how to understand the modern camp itself developed and diversified from its historical origins. The second section presents some perspectives on life within the camps as retold by residents within a number of former refugees now resettled in the U.S. The third section describes how advocacy groups build on such experiences to challenge the hazards, surveillance, and isolation refugees experience within the confines of camps both in the U.S. and E.U. asylum camps. We then conclude by reflecting on key arguments presented in the article and avenues for further research.

2. Theorizing the space of the camp

Over twenty-two percent of all forced migrants today live in camps, both formal and informal, with a population estimated to exceed over six million people (UNHCR, 2021). These camps are established in response to emergencies and are commonly viewed as temporary and exceptional spaces created and governed until the corresponding emergency or danger is resolved. Although their formation was originally intended as a temporary or short-term emergency response, many refugee camps have existed for decades due to states' geopolitical strategies regarding outcomes of conflicts or catastrophes. The experience of those living in these camps are influenced not only by their personal needs and aspirations but also by bureaucratic structures and humanitarian operations. Geopolitically, displaced people face a double displacement: their own government is unwilling or unable to provide assistance, and often a host country provides minimal support. While aid for survival and protection against forced repatriation offer some security for refugees, these measures do not resolve the political deadlock refugees encounter. Without permanent legal status, refugees are regularly denied essential rights, including access to housing, education, employment, and freedom of movement (Hyndman & Giles, 2016). Moreover, the enduring existence of camps is particularly troubling. As, the UNHCR (2014, p. 4) reported, "our experience has been that camps can have significant negative impacts over the longer term for all concerned."

The creation of camps is not a new phenomenon and commonly are perceived as places for those fleeing conflict, oppression, or other forms of violence. Camps have long been the subject of a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary scholarly investigation, which include the fields of philosophy, geography, political science, anthropology, sociology, and history. Specific to this study, political geographers have long contributed to investigations of camps and "camp studies" (see Katz et al., 2018; Minca, 2015a). Scholarly work has framed camps and the experiences of their inhabitants in various ways: as sites of humanitarian care and management, sovereignty and governance, insecurity, colonial expansionism, as well as resistance and forced migrant agency (Agier, 2011; Bose, 2023; Coddington et al., 2020; Dempsey, 2020, 2021; Grayson-Courtemanche, 2015; Katz, 2016; Martin et al., 2020; Pallister-Wilkins, 2016; Turner & Whyte, 2022). Such work is significant for various reasons, including providing a greater understanding of how camp contexts influence the embodied experiences of those living within such spaces, and how forced migrants' agency shapes new geopolitical, biopolitical, spatial and social realities within these spaces (Paszkiewicz & Fosas, 2019; Ramadan & Fregonese, 2017; Stel, 2016).

Some early scholarly work on camp spaces focused on concentration camps, often building on Agamben's theories about the biopolitical nature of Nazi camps (Agamben, 1998, 2005; see also Arendt, 1951; Giaccaria & Minca, 2011). Agamben framed these spaces as "permanent spatial arrangement" of a state of "exception," thereby rendering bodies contained by the state as "constitutive" outsiders excluded from the host society (1998, 168). Following this argument, camp spaces produce marginalized and disempowered subjects that are governed (e.g., Ehrkamp, 2017; Hyndman, 2000) and lack agency or voice. Malkki (2002, p. 355) suggests that "refugee camps are not 'test beds' of global segregations yet to come, but, rather, part and parcel of well-established international technologies of power for the control of space and movement. In those technologies, the refugee camp is 'standard equipment,' along with transit centers, reception centers, holding cells, prisons, labor compounds, ghettoes, and other familiar features of the modern sociopolitical landscape." Historically, camps were commonly envisioned within colonial spatial frameworks and were often implemented in unethical and exploitative ways to contain, control, and order unwanted people or cultures (Césaire, 2000; Gilroy, 2004). Today, over 80 % of the world's refugees reside in the Global South, a situation underpinned by policies by states in the Global North aimed at specifically target and preventing asylum claims from the Global South (UNHCR, 2023). Hyndman and Giles (2016) shed light on this regional system of containment and repatriation, which they argue exacerbates the protracted refugee situation primarily confined in the Global South. This regional containment further enables the international community to overlook their presence and needs of displaced people until a terrorist attack or a catastrophe brings their plight to the fore.

Research on camps has continued to expand, incorporating more nuanced and varied conceptual approaches to studying camps and camp landscapes. This includes studying spatial formations such as colonial, postcolonial, detention, transit, and formal and informal refugee/ asylum camps, as well as spaces of resistance and transformation (Coddington et al., 2020; Dempsey, 2020, 2021, 2024; Davies & Isakjee, 2018; Martin et al., 2020; Bialasiewicz, 2012; Katz et al., 2018; Mountz, 2011; Mountz et al., 2013). Ramadan and Pascucci (2018, p. 212) identify the presence of a "continuum of camps" instead of a single or inherent description of camp spaces. For many, long-term displacement is an "assemblage of material humanitarian assistance, basic human rights unrealized and geopolitical disinterest – a particular mapping that obscures the multiple power relations that produce it and generates statis for those facing extended exile (Hyndman & Giles, 2011, p. 363).

Recognizing the diversity of camp environments, scholars have highlighted significant variations in physical conditions and structures within the camps rather than viewing them as homogenous entities (e.g., Katz, 2017). For instance, if individuals initially are living in a tent or temporary structure within a refugee camp, over time, inhabitants often develop their own more permanent structures or housing (Brun & Fábos, 2015). Additionally, scholars highlight how many "refugees live in camps, others in cities and informal settlements that vary in character and condition, but all such persons are deprived of the full de jure (official) protection of a government that can guarantee the necessities of life" (Hyndman & Giles, 2016, p. 3.) As Long (2011) argues, the rations refugees receive in camps are merely a form of humanitarian aid. Yet, if this minimal support is continued for decades, it fails to provide the most basic human rights and the political or economic protections these individuals need. Within this broader body of "post-Agambien" scholarship, there has been an increasing emphasis on studying refugee and asylum camps. These new approaches move away from conceptualizing camps solely as spaces of exception and bare life, and instead include a new focus on the dynamic and complex social relations that exist within these environments. Some have suggested these spaces can foster potential for new political identities and political action (Perera, 2018; Redclift, 2013). Accordingly, methodologies for studying camps and camp-like spaces have also proliferated (Dempsey, 2018, 2021; Ehrkamp et al., 2018, pp. 124–132; Hagan, 2022; Jordan & Moser, 2020; Nagel & Grace, 2023; Tazzioli, 2020; Weima & Brankamp, 2022).

This growing body of work examines the temporal elements of various types of camps, including long-term permanent refugee/asylum camps (Brankamp, 2020; Ramadan & Fregonese, 2017), short-term as well as informal, make-shift, self-made, and temporary camps (Jordan &

Minca, 2023; Jordan & Moser, 2020; Katz, 2017). There are also studies focusing on the temporal elements of migrant (im)mobility (Conlon, 2011). Brun & Fábos, build on Hyndman & Giles' (2011) concept of the "stuckness" that results from long-term limbo and encampment to argue that the immobility "contributes to a "feminization of refugees – a depiction of displaced people as helpless, passive, and static. This feminization discourse further associates refugees and their home-making strategies with stasis and immanence" (Brun & Fábos, 2015, p. 7). These theories also highlight how people on the move are often perceived as a threat by host communities (Dempsey & McDowell, 2019). By containing or "fixing" people in camps, the perception of displaced people as dangerous is reduced. Cresswell (2006) emphasizes that while mobility is a right for many, it is often denied or obstructed for the "unspoken Other," who may travel between formal and informal camps throughout a journey. Turner and Whyte (2022) explore how camps are "carceral junctions," which paradoxically both confine and detain asylum seekers while also providing networking opportunities and particular forms of mobility. Other research examines these camps as spaces of security and safety, deficiency, inclusion, and exclusion (Brankamp & Glück, 2022; Fluri, 2008, 2009; Gill et al., 2018; Gilmartin & Wood, 2018; Oesch, 2017). Studies that focus on the social, political, and physical exclusion of forced migrants, include examples of authorities forcing evictions, denying entry, and destroying camps (Ramadan, 2012). Other work emphasizes the prolonged period of waiting that many experience in these camps, including those residing within them for years, decades, and throughout multiple generations (Agier, 2018). Indeed, interviews with forced migrants highlighted how a feeling of lost time and opportunity due to waiting in camps is recognized as a "de facto abandonment" and, for many, what the UNHRC identifies as an "intractable state of limbo" (UNHRC, 2015; Dempsey, 2020; Myadar & Dempsey, 2021; Katz, 2017).

Recent scholarship also highlights how the boundaries of camps are not always neat and bounded. Instead, camp boundaries "transgress" into the host community, extending into towns and cities physically, socially and economically. Camp residents, particularly those located in or near urban areas, often utilize services outside the camps such as schools, restaurants, hospitals, and other social services; thus, these spaces of "exception" influence and interact with the surrounding sociopolitical environment (Ramadan, 2012; Obradvoic-Wochnik, 2018; Myadar, 2023; Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2017). Refugees actively seek opportunities for economic and social development both inside and outside of camp boundaries throughout their protracted refugee situation. Weima and Brankamp (2022, p. 339) argue "camps do not exist in political isolation, but often tend to reveal something more profound about the broader environments and societies of which they are part. What occurs in camps always has repercussions beyond their geographical confines and, vice versa, the sociopolitical landscapes that surround them impact and shape experiences of encampment." Hyndman and Giles (2016) demonstrate how examples of refugee self-reliance, which include periodically moving in and out of camps to improve their livelihoods. For instance, they reveal that many Somali refugees living in refugee camps in Kenya work illegally in cities like Nairobi, pursue educational opportunities, and engage in economic opportunities such as starting small businesses. Brun and Fábos (2015, p. 8) suggest "that refugees can work to improve their sense of "home" in a refugee camp through a process of homemaking that may help them feel more comfortable, even in less-than-ideal circumstances. They argue this is possible because "home may also emerge in the making, and where home is experienced may shift, expand, or shrink as a result of displacement." Establishing daily routines and forming new social connections within a camp can help foster a sense of security for its inhabitants.

While highlighting agency, resistance, and hybrid governance in camps, it is important to acknowledge that many refugees and forced migrants are excluded from many of the rights afforded to citizens (Martin, 2015). The interactions and "transgressions" between camps and what lies beyond the confines of camp borders include emerging messy, "grey spaces" (Sanyal, 2014; Yiftachel, 2009), provisional or irregular shelters such as "shantytowns" (see Maestri, 2017; Martin, 2015) or makeshift, temporary shelters (Tazzioli, 2021). Jordan and Minca's (2023) examination of these makeshift camps identifies an array of merging and overlapping forms – jungles (improved, more rural or semi-urban settings), urban squats (established repurposed constructions), and adjunct camps (informal add-ons to pre-existing camps). Examining the emergence of such spatialities provides scholars with greater insight into the dynamic contemporary experiences and functions of refugee and asylum camps.

Scholarship also investigates the diverse experiences of forced migrants within camps, considering factors such as legal status, the background of migrant inhabitants, environmental forces, and the economic and geopolitical contexts of a camp's location (e.g., Casas-Cortes et al., 2015; Feldman, 2015; Hyndman, 2012; Wilson, 2014). Experiences in camps vary significantly across different geographic scales, as each state regulates asylum and refugees in unique ways. Additionally, a government's treatment of displaced populations from specific countries may also change over time. Geographic factors, such as access and proximity to urban areas, may facilitate greater opportunities for camp residents compared to those in rural or isolated locations. Furthermore, cultural and economic regulations can impact refugees' abilities to achieve self-reliance. For instance, Hyndman and Giles (2016) illustrate that the Kenyan government actively restricts refugees from leaving camps to settle in urban centers, while in Iran, refugees are unofficially welcome to work as temporary workers in the informal economy of urban areas. The authors also highlight that while most camps are located in the Global South, their inhabitants are often perceived as threats, associated with the potential for terrorism or invasions into wealthier northern countries. The narrative of refugee camps as "nurseries for terrorists" is a prevalent trope that reflects tensions present between state security needs and the protection of refugees and displaced persons (Rawlence, 2016). Since September 11, 2001, it has been increasing difficult for asylum seekers in the Global North to have their claims approved, as "Terrorism-related grounds of inadmissibility have led to the exclusion of thousands of refugees and denials and delays in hundreds of asylum cases" (Kerwin, 2012, p. 1).

Scholarship also brings to the fore refugee experiences in the 'spatialities of the camp' (Katz, 2017; Minca, 2015b; Ramadan, 2012) and reminds readership that camp spaces are not homogeneous, as the conditions, environments, and assemblages vary greatly. Accordingly, these examinations place a particular emphasis on specific contexts, migrant diversity, provisional legalities, or mobilities (e.g., Casas-Cortes et al., 2015; Fluri, 2022). Migrants have different experiences in camps, many of which are underpinned by one's "nationality, social class, 'racial profile,' gender, their overall embeddedness within territorial political institutions and their place of residence" (Minca 2015, 80). For instance, Ramadan (2012) highlighted that Palestinian refugees – who currently make up over 30 % of the world's refugee population (UNHCR, 2023) – live in different environment depending on the host state. In Lebanon, most Palestinians reside in refugee camps and camp-like settings. In contrast, Palestinians in countries like Syria and Jordan are more often integrated into urban environments, although many have been displaced again due to violence in countries like Syria. Additionally, while Palestinians frequently live in camps in Lebanon, Syrian refugees are less likely to reside in camp settings within the same country. Such dynamic situations may encourage many residents to establish their own communities and develop camp-based identities (Carter-White & Minca, 2020; Katz et al., 2018; Redclift, 2013).

Aligning with such themes, investigations of camps also examine the politics, governance, and internal hierarchies that manifest within camp spaces. For example, investigations of governance over and within camps examine the highly uneven power relations and specific modes of governance or sovereignty (Agier, 2011; Häkli & Kallio, 2021; Hyndman, 2000; Khan & Minca, 2022; McConnachie, 2018). Jones

(2016, p. 96) argues how state sovereignty and legislation intersects with conditions "constituted by a number of other power relationships such as colonialism, class, and gender relations" that result in xenophobic control and governance of "the Other" within its territorial borders. Hovil (2014) argues that refugee camps should be understood as a physical manifestation of the belief that refugees are outsiders and a threat to society. States impose a variety of corporeal control, categorization, exclusion, segregation, and surveillance over forced migrant bodies through a number of technological and physical methods. Scholars have also investigated the role of humanitarian agencies in camps and camp governance (Hyndman, 2000; Pallister-Wilkins, 2016; Weizman, 2011). Others studied developing informal economies and social relations formed within and across camp borders (Brankamp, 2020; Davies et al., 2019; Martin, 2015). Some studies that focus on specific forms of camp governance highlighted the presence of overlapping, competing, and dynamic sovereignties. For example, instead of a single form of state governance, Ramadan and Fregonese (2017)'s investigation of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon highlights a history of "hybrid" forms of sovereignty that is negotiated between the state, camp residents – including political and militant organizations–and international organizations such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Other research has identified "patched," "ambiguous" and contested" entangled forms of camp sovereignty that may include residents, national and international organizations, municipal governments, private organizations, and military organizations (Katz et al., 2018; Oesch, 2017; Ramadan, 2012).

Significantly, work has also shed light on refugee camps as sites of struggle where migrant agency is produced (Dempsey, 2021; Dempsey, 2025; Häkli et al., 2017; Kallio et al., 2019; Myadar & Dempsey, 2021; Paszkiewicz & Fosas, 2019; Singh, 2020). Camps function as spaces of control and governance; however, refugees within these camps actively engage in various strategic efforts to improve their living conditions, access resources, and exercise forms of self-empowerment. Research has shown the emergence of new forms of political subversion, protest, and resistance in these camp environments (Brown et al., 2018; Ramadan & Fregonese, 2017; Stel, 2016; Tazzioli, 2017; Turner, 2015). By highlighting refugee agency, these studies offer valuable insights into the effects of different migration policies on forced migrants and their subsequent responses (Hiemstra, 2019; Hyndman, 2004; Mountz, 2004). In particular, this scholarship highlights "the various conditions of encampment or capture and the multiple practices through which refugees and asylum seekers escape or contest these techniques of policing and provisioning" (Opondo and Rinelli, 2015, 932). For example, Brankamp (2019, p. 75) describes how "business-savvy" Somalis in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya effectively "exert agency and manipulate detrimental power differentials by deploying corruption in their favor … making them objects of envy from often poorly-paid officers." Furthermore, additional research reveals that camps can also be seen as spaces that may give rise to new forms of citizenship, as residents demand recognition of rights previously denied to forced migrants (Dempsey, 2021; Grbac, 2013; Martin et al., 2020). Specifically in the context of refugee camps, Agier (2011) argues that the re-appropriation of these spaces by their inhabitants may lead to a distinctly new form of citizenship, which may serve as a platform for the emergence of political identities and acts of resistance against the state or other authorities.

Ultimately, we highlight how camps and their inhabitants are not homogenous. Instead, the range of temporal, environmental, and legal differences is augmented by the diversity of those residing within. The relationship between residents and camps is dynamic, with these spaces being "crucially transformed by the agency of their residents, often generating new forms of political and social identity. While in many cases the refugee camp remains a biopolitical tool for population management, at the same time, it is sometimes appropriated by those who inhabit it as a space of identity from which to claim visibility and specific rights, as a site of potential resilience and political resistance" (Martin et al., 2020, p. 760). Therefore, camps continue to be spaces of repression, surveillance and governance of forced migrant bodies; however, the control and governance exerted over them is incomplete as forced migrants exhibit various forms of agency and resistance both within and outside of camp space.

3. CAMPS and everyday life – regimes of boredom, control, and creativity

How do the inhabitants of camps negotiate and manage these spaces – across uncertain geographies, timescapes and futures? In this article, we seek to understand some of these experiences through a series of qualitative interviews conducted between 2012 and 2019. These interviews took place in multiple locations and included diverse populations. We concentrate on this period, which was prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as 2011 marked the beginning of the most recent increase in the global forced migration population. The COVID-19 pandemic raised significant concerns about the impacts on asylum seekers and refugees housed in cramped conditions in camps and if such environments would be as devastating as those in prisons worldwide. However, the outbreaks and their outcomes were considerably less severe in camps. This can be attributed, in part, to the fact that the camps were shut down to the outside world, with access controlled through military checkpoints and travel restrictions on both migrants and humanitarian staff (Ullah et al., 2021). Consequently, the activities of those within the camps became even more regulated than before, with a keen focus on their social behaviors and activities, with scant attention to the other kinds of vulnerabilities they might be exposed to within these spaces.

The experience during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that it is the underlying architecture of the camp – and daily life within it – that is more important to focus on, rather than the particularities of a specific situation or context. To understand the lived experience of life in these camps, therefore, we draw on research with individuals who could provide insight into these spaces (see Table 1). The first is a study conducted between 2012 and 2017 of forced migration experiences for refugees from Burma/Myanmar, Bhutan and Somalia resettled in the U. S. The second is a study conducted between 2016 and 2019 in camps located the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark with refugees and asylum seekers displaced from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Burma/Myanmar, and Bhutan.

Caption: Background information regarding interview participants and corresponding camps. Interviews were conducted in the listed camp or an interviewee described daily life in that camp, as many forced

Table 1
Interview participants and camp locations.

Study 1 (US)	Displaced From	Camp Location	Age Range	Gender
	Myanmar	Mae La (20)	19–57	15M, 5F
	Bhutan	Beldangi 1 (20)	18–62	10M, 10F
		Beldangi 2 (15)	22–75	8M, 7F
		Sanischare (10)	18–77	5M, 5F
		Khudunabari (10)	19–66	8M, 2F
	Somalia	Dadaab (15)	19–55	11M, 4F
		Kakuma (10)	18–63	9M, 1F
Study 2 (Europe)				
Netherlands	Syria	Drachten (10)	18–44	9M, 1F
		Heumensoord (6)	19–64	4M, 2F
		Ter Apel (7)	18–28	7M, 0F
	Afghanistan	Drachten (5)	18–26	4M, 1F
	Iraq	Heumensoord (2)	28–32	1M, 1F
	Burma/Myanmar	Heumensoord (2)	22–27	1M, 1F
	Ukraine	Heumensoord (4)	18–53	1M, 3F
Sweden	Syria	Malmo (8)	18–21	8M, 0F
		Stockholm (7)	18–42	5M, 2F
	Pakistan	Malmo (3)	18–67	2M, 1F
	Somalia	Stockholm (4)	21–42	2M, 2F
Denmark	Syria	Sandholm (10)	20–39	6M, 4F
	Bhutan	Sandholm (2)	18–36	1M, 1F

migrants often reside in various camps while displaced.

Each of the authors conducted interviews with a range of individuals who had spent time in refugee and asylum camps across these different locations. Participants in the U.S. resettlement study were recruited following IRB approval on the basis of having spent at least six months in a refugee camp, were over the age of 18 at the time of the interview, and were able to conduct the interview in English.

All participants in the European camps' study were recruited in accordance with IRB protocols. Interviewees were located in asylum and refugee camps in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden and identified through local social workers and Red Cross employees who had worked in camps and through snowball introductions via other interviewees. All interviewees had lived in European camps for at least six months, some up to two years. All interviews were conducted in English or facilitated through a translator, based on the interviewee's preference.

The following section highlights responses from the first of these studies, with three resettled communities within the U.S.– Somali Bantu, Burmese Karen and Bhutanese Llhotshampa. These interviews, conducted between 2012 and 2017 were primarily focused on experiences of arrival and adjustment to new lives within a non-traditional refugee destination, including questions regarding employment, education, mobility, housing and civic participation (Bose, 2022, 2024). As part of the background profile of each respondent, a series of questions regarding their displacement experience, including in some cases initial flight and in most cases stops in transit including both formal and informal camps were also included within these interviews. These interviews and the questions in particular were carefully negotiated with respondents in an effort to disrupt the violence of the interview process and avoid triggering traumatic memories (see, Dempsey, 2018). This author is a part of several projects intended to provide support to the survivors of trauma within these communities and all research interventions are designed to avoid - as much as possible - not retraumatizing participants. While authors conducted interviews with respondents from across a number of other communities as part of larger studies, within this article we focus primarily on perspectives from respondents within the Bhutanese Llhotshampa, Somali Bantu and Burmese Karen communities for three reasons:

1) Each of these displaced populations represents one of the largest resettlement groups of the last decade within the global refugee populations (and in the case of the Bhutanese Llhotshampa, one of the major resettled (though not displaced) communities in the U.S. and globally since 2008)
2) Each of the respondent groups are emblematic of what are known as 'protracted' conflicts (Simeon, 2017); in other words, the displacement has not been short, violent and sudden, taking place over a relatively compressed number of years, but rather long, violent and without apparent resolution, with displacement continuing over years and even decades and generations
3) Each group spent much of that initial period of displacement within large-scale refugee camps in neighboring countries. For the Bhutanese Lhotshampa that has meant camps primarily in Nepal (Evans, 2010), for the Somali Bantu this has meant camps primarily in Uganda and Kenya (Smith, 2013), and for the Burmese Karen this has meant camps primarily along the Thai-Myanmar border (Dudley, 2011)

Our focus in this first part of the article is primarily on the experiences of each of these respondent groups, thus providing insight into life in a particular kind of spaciotemporal camp setting – that of the long-enduring and semi-permanent camp. The lifespan of the camps in Nepal reached upwards of twenty years before a relatively successful resettlement program moved the inhabitants mostly to the U.S., Canada, and Australia (Gartaula, 2015), while the camps in Uganda, Kenya, and Thailand continue to be active and fluctuate in size, demographics and population.

The reasons for each respondent groups' expulsion differ. The Somali Bantu are a historically marginalized population, some of whom were originally transported from southern Africa through the Indian Ocean slave trade to the eastern coasts and remained the targets of discrimination throughout the twentieth century (Webersik, 2004). They found themselves a continued target during the conflicts that caused the disintegration of the Somali state during the 1990s and sought refuge in nearby countries. The Burmese Karen, a heterogenous set of ethnic and tribal communities, were similarly a targeted population in Myanmar in the postcolonial period, especially as military juntas sought to consolidate power through appeals to ethnonationalist territorial and identity claims (Tangseefa, 2006). Prior to the more widely known campaigns of terror against the Rohingya, the Burmese Karen were the targets of state terror and responded via a series of ongoing guerrilla actions and militancy over the decades. Many Karen fled across the border into Thailand as well as to other countries. The Bhutanese Llhotshampa are another example of a minority being discriminated against by a majority population in a state of flux. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, nearly a sixth of the population of the tiny Himalayan mountain kingdom of Bhutan was expelled based on being Hindu and speaking Nepali and being perceived as a group of irregular labor migrants, in a majority Buddhist country (Rizal, 2004).

The camps that have or had developed to accommodate these displaced individuals and communities are not identical nor even similar. However, by the 1990s, there were certain templates that the UNHCR, national governments, and NGOs were beginning to follow to try and standardize the delivery of some services and bring some level of consistency to the structure of camps (Hyndman, 2000). The common features usually include administrative offices, medical buildings, food services, storage facilities, latrines or toilets, housing, community spaces, and educational and recreational areas. The boundaries of each camp have also varied based on their location – some blur into the surrounding jungle, desert, or surrounding community. Others are demarcated by a ditch, a fence, or even a more permanent wall. As camps began to grow in size and scale and the politics of encampment became more charged through the 1990s, the fortification of these boundaries became more ossified. Finally, it is significant to keep in mind that even within particular refugee camps, there exists much difference – camps are thus important to think about as often a set of complexes, each with its own sets of distinct privileges and disadvantages, rather than as a singular space.

In order to examine some of the ways in which camp space(s) influence inhabitants, we analyzed interviews with individuals who have this lived experience. Presented below are themes that arose from interviews with respondents from each of these resettled groups. The authors recruited participants from within each community based on longstanding relations with them and/or with the agencies that provide them social services and who could make an introduction. Each interview was conducted in a local community center, took place either in English or with the aid of an interpreter, lasted between 30 and 60 min, was transcribed and translated as necessary, coded and analyzed using qualitative software. The three main themes related to our interest in camp life that appear in interviews and which we highlight below are boredom, control, and creativity.

3.1. Boredom: A sense of lost time

Most of our respondents described the feeling of being stuck in limbo, with nothing much to do in their lives in the camp. This concern was also ubiquitous for respondents within asylum and refugee camps across three European Union member states. Indeed, interviewees within this second group universally stated their concern and "suffering" over the lost time they were forced to wait in camps (Dempsey, 2020). As Hyndman (2012) argues, camp inhabitants are regularly forced to endure increasingly long waiting times during which their lives are, in essence, forced to be "put on hold." This not only reflects a lack of

progress in an individual's day (or life), but such imposed lost time, opportunities (and potential financial and personal resources) has been identified as a form of structural or "non-linear violence" which many identified as "'more painful' to wait and waste time in a foreign place" (Dempsey, 2020, 2024). Many responses that represent this concern came from the Bhutanese Llhotshampa, Somali Bantu and Burmese Karen individuals that we interviewed:

> Waiting every day. Waiting for the doctor. Waiting to go to the classroom. Waiting to line up to get our food ration. Waiting (Male Burmese refugee, age 27)

Many of the refugees we interviewed reflected this sense of being stuck in place, which corresponds with other research that highlights forced migrants' sense of lost time and opportunities (Agier, 2018; Dempsey, 2020; Katz, 2017). The refugee camp enforced a sense of timelessness, both in the everyday existence of scheduled delivery of whatever services were available and in the longer reality of being trapped without an endpoint of release from the camp itself. For some – especially those who had been displaced between multiple camp settings, complexes or locations – it was a jarring experience of boredom *and* dislocation:

> It's like in the science fiction movies and you're just waiting, waiting, waiting to be sifted into another artificial habitat (Male Bhutanese refugee, age 34)

Even for those who did find more structure, they told us they had very little control over defining those rules. While life in the camp could be fraught – especially for women, children and minorities who are more likely to be subject to additional or continued violence even in these spaces of shelter – for others, camp life is one of monotony:

> Life changed color so quickly [when we got displaced]. It was all red and black and so bright. And then we are in the camp and life is brown and it is dull for so long (Female Somali refugee, age 42)

A routine thus might be present – a time to go to school (where available) for children, times when rations would be allocated, food available at a commissary, or appointments scheduled for medical care. However, all of these were punctuated with long periods of waiting at best and precariousness and terror (especially for those who were especially vulnerable due to their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class or any number of other markers). Dempsey (2020) suggests that the precarious feelings and lost time waiting in camps is a form of violence against forced migrants. Studies suggest this is particularly problematic for children, who are at higher risk for developing emotional or cognitive problems due to extended periods of protracted waiting and potential upheaval in camp environments (MPI et al., 2015, pp. 1–32).

But the implications of wasted time was also mentioned as being of deep concern to the adults that we interviewed. We heard from many that they felt quite literally 'useless' with nothing to do. Many expressed an interest in being involved with their host communities, sometimes to prove their own worth to a skeptical broader public, and sometimes to try and improve their own situation. As Weima and Brankamp (2022) remind us, camps do not exist in isolation and our interviewees were very clear that they were as aware as possible about their local context and chafed at being unable to participate within those broader politics. Boredom for many of our interviewees in this sense is not simply about waiting on someone else's schedule and priorities, but being excluded from many aspects of life itself. It is, as Martin (2015) points out, the denial of rights to migrants that constitutes yet another form of being marked as 'other' within the camp.

3.2. Control – "Outside(r)" control

Intimately connected to the notion of boredom – both benign and menacing – was a recurring theme of "outside(r)" control raised by the interviewees. This idea of control was omnipresent in people's lives – whether control over their own bodies, over time, access to resources, decision-making, authority, or even the perception of autonomy in their interpersonal relationships within families, kin-networks and communities. These concerns, particularly regarding camp control of an interviewee's daily routine, mobility, and person also appeared in interviews conducted in European Union refugee camps. Similar descriptions of constant vigilance and lack of personal autonomy proliferated interviewees' responses from members of the Bhutanese Llhotshampa, Somali Bantu, and Burmese Karen communities. Turner and White's description of camps as 'carceral junctions' is brought to mind, for example, by this reminiscence by a Somali refugee

> I hated being on someone else's time. I hated being told I couldn't do what I wanted. I hated not knowing what was next. (Male Somali refugee, age 24)

For some, it felt like a bit of a lottery, how much freedom and autonomy one might have. For Bhutanese refugees, the actual geographical siting of a camp often led to a very different set of experiences with the surrounding communities and with mobility itself:

> It depended which camp you were in. Some of the camps out in the country there wasn't anywhere to go. Our camp was close to Kathmandu, you could go into the city for jobs, for school, to see family. But in other camps you weren't so lucky. (Female Bhutanese refugee, age 44).

Several respondents echoed such sentiments – some of them were able to earn a living, gain access to education, and even interact regularly with their neighbors. But such connections were possible not only because of geography, but also due to other factors such as class, proficiency in local languages (or dialects), gender and caste. The camp itself might at times appear to be a 'grey zone' or a liminal space between those inside and out as Yiftachel (2009) and Sanyal (2014) have argued, but borders and barriers can remain impassable depending on who one is. A sense of paternalism on the part of camp authorities and resulting deep discomfort with being ordered about was evident for all of our interviewees:

> You feel like a child because everyone tells you where to go. You are told when you can eat and what you can do. I sometimes felt ashamed, especially when I would get yelled at in front of my own kids. (Female Bhutanese refugee, age 53)

Paradoxically, the very routine that some of the residents crave turns into a source of deep embarrassment, especially in the loss of power experienced by those who had previously occupied positions of authority within their communities or even within their family units. The idea that one might not have control over oneself might seem expected in the context of a refugee camp, especially if one sees it as a temporary response to an emergency situation. As previously noted, these three sets of camp contexts – and arguably the space of the refugee camp in many contemporary cases – is not a temporary one. What does it mean to exist in such a space and feel as if one does not have control over his/her person or situation for an indeterminate period? However, our interviews also suggested that camp residents do not passively accept these scenarios and loss of power, position and standing. Instead, what we found was that our respondents and their communities are often attempting to actively resist or at least negotiate such relationships. Indeed, another common theme amongst our interviews was the specific response to a feeling of boredom and a loss of control.

3.3. Creativity – Refugee ingenuity and problem-solving

While we heard from many respondents that a lack of autonomy characterized their experience, we also heard many stories of the ways in which inhabitants found ways to exercise their own – albeit often limited – agency. Other examples of refugee creativity were prevalent in

interviewees across camps in the European Union as individuals addressed barriers or deficiencies by finding creative solutions. This included individual actions and social-media networked engaged forms of creative problem-solving (e.g., see Dempsey, 2021). For some, it was a broad strategy to try and adapt – sometimes individually and sometimes collectively – to the new circumstances that were constantly being thrust upon the camp residents. As one Burmese respondent put it: We already had to make so many decisions so quickly, we had to come up with new ways to do things even just to get out of our bad situations before. So now we were in the camp and we had to learn all over again. And you had to make the best of it. Sometimes it meant even trying to see if the other camp was better, or the other [group of aid workers] or maybe it was another person even. And that wasn't always easy. But you would try anything to make it a little better, get to a better place and a better situation. (Male Burmese refugee, age 41)

There were different ways in which interviewees described trying to better their situation, as described above. In some cases it was quite literally 'camp shopping' as several of them put it – trying to ascertain which camp (or more accurately camp complex within a broader set of associated settlements) might have the best services, which staffers were the kindest, the most professional, the most efficient, the most pliable, which might have better or worse environmental conditions, and then trying to relocate if possible. Some respondents talked about receiving information from relatives and friends within a particular camp about whether or not they should seek shelter there, what kinds of paperwork might be required and whether there were specific dangers for their community in a location.

For others, the camp might even provide an opportunity to pursue new options, including creating new businesses:

> A lot of times we made our own businesses. It wasn't easy but we started to try and make some money – to get more food, to get some supplies, to trade with local [townspeople], to keep busy. Now [camp] is like its own town. And its refugees like us who made that happen (Female Somali refugee, age 32)

The pride with which some of our respondents spoke about these kinds of initiatives – born of frustration and desperation – was jarring when juxtaposed with the themes of boredom and lack of control expressed by the same interviewees. And yet they remain a strong part of their identity and sense of accomplishment despite the terrible circumstances that the camp residents found themselves within. Similarly, interviewees' descriptions of other survival techniques reveal some of their other desires to assert their autonomy as individuals:

> It was really difficult to find inner peace because the people from our host communities outside of the camp thought we were a 'burden'. So we 'illegally' entered the forest when we could and sometimes we stole chickpeas or catch fish and drink water from springs because we were so hungry, but mostly we spent more time studying because we knew if we just waited for others to do it for us we would never get out of the camps. (Male Bhutanese refugee, age 27)

Several respondents spoke similarly about the importance of education within the camps or if they were able to gain access to it in a nearby town. While geography and political circumstance, and other factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and class influence resident's experiences within camps, our respondents provide insight into various avenues of agency and counter-hegemonic efforts forced migrants utilize to improve their situation. Indeed, these examples reveal how individuals challenge and negotiate their living conditions. Through their physical actions and focus on studying to better prepare them for potential future opportunities, forced migrants demonstrate some of their proactive approaches, coping strategies, and agentive methods for improving their situation (Davies et al., 2019; Martin, 2015).

4. Perspectives from camps – demands by advocacy groups

As the previous section suggests, it is important to acknowledge that camp residents do not passively accept conditions they deem undesirable or unacceptable. Individuals and refugee advocacy groups regularly work to raise awareness of the human rights violations and dangers camp residents face. Indeed, such groups regularly advocate for greater protections for those living within camp confines. For example, while freedom of movement is considered a fundamental human right and articulated in international law, refugees' freedom of mobility is regularly curtailed or violated. The significance of refugee mobility is recognized in early iterations of the legislation that underpins the modern refugee law, including the 1938 Status of Refugees Convention. It is also explicitly articulated in Article 26 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and subsequent legal contracts such as the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. However, limiting or impeding refugee mobility is one of the most ubiquitous obstructions that refugees and asylum seekers continue to face as the emphasis of refugees' "temporary displacement" is on surveillance and their physical security, but not on the protection of their rights.

Refugee camps are also commonly located in remote, inhospitable, and isolated areas with limited transportation options for residences (Crisp et al., 2012; Katz et al., 2018). Indeed, while camp locations and conditions vary, most camp sites present notable transportation barriers for refugees, making it difficult to reach important destinations (groceries, employment, education, etc.) and mark them as "outsiders" in society (Smith et al., 2022). The geographic separation and stigma cast upon many camp inhabitants can significantly challenge their ability to integrate and thrive within society. Segregated away from much of society, camps can become geopolitical spaces of exclusion and state (or private company) control.

Confinement within a camp may also inhibit one's ability to grow their own food, establish an independent livelihood, own property, or access the local labor market. The UNHCR demonstrated that the longer a refugee remains in a camp, the worse the impact of camp life for a resident. This includes increased economic dependability on the state, health risks (infectious diseases and chronic health concerns), and greater critical protection risks such as gender-based violence and trafficking (UNHCR, 2016, 2017). Even if refugees are permitted freedom of movement, it is often geographically limited and requires regular check-ins at the camp via fingerprinting, iris scans, and other biometric monitoring methods (Minca 2015). Many argue that these surveillance measures of observation and control dehumanize individuals, in essence, reducing them to a number (e.g., Mountz, 2013). The outcome of forcing vulnerable individuals to reside within refugee camps can be so profound that according to a 2011 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights, confining individuals to the conditions in Dadaab camp in Kenya violates "the prohibition of torture" (ECtHR, 2011).

In order to combat such conditions, individuals and advocacy groups work to develop and implement policies that foster refugee self-reliance. Central to many campaigns includes access to official-legal employment, freedom of movement, and education. In many countries, refugees and asylum seekers do not have access to long-term local language classes or had to specifically campaign for language classes shortly after arriving in a host state (for example, see Dempsey, 2021). Refugees in Rwanda have long advocated for access to formal employment and eventually gained the right to obtain formal employment without a work permit as well as financial assistance to launch new business ventures (RDB, 2023). Despite these changes, advocacy networks argue that refugees still face significant challenges and would benefit from local, specialized and market-driven training for refugees and the larger community to optimize the success of all parties involved. They also advocate that governments ensure refugee camps have widespread access to electricity and public transportation. Other recommended measures include the creation of a refugee employment database and matching services, guaranteed fair payment for work garnered, and greater access to

fundamental financial services offered by local banks (MINEMA and UNHCR, 2021).

One of the most significant and evolving demands is the inclusion of refugees in government planning, particularly in regard to the establishment of National Adaptation Plans (NAP) climate change strategies. In the face of global climate change, refugees are particularly at risk with limited resources to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and climate hazards. Commonly confined in the least habitable environments, with restricted mobility and poor access to public transportation, this population is particularly vulnerable in a climate crisis. As an appalling paradox, refugees are forced to inhabit hazardous environments yet are excluded from NAP planning projects (Ober et al., 2023). In response, several refugee advocacy groups have argued for the mandatory inclusion of refugees as key stakeholders in the development process of a state's NAPs or future iterations of previously established plans. This includes specific development strategies for environmental and economic planning that incorporate refugees as beneficiaries and those who work to implement a NAP.

While the multiplicity of intersectional experiences that residents face in refugee camps is dynamic and individually embodied and emotionally experienced (Brankamp, 2022), providing perspectives from camp residents draws attention to the disparities produced by camps. More importantly, it can also highlight refugee agency and elevate the voice of individuals that may regularly be overlooked. Refugee agency and advocacy groups range from individual agitation, grassroots organizations, and state-sanctioned advocates such the Refugee Advisory Panel in Canada or New Zealand. Such groups comprise elected refugee leaders to serve as advisors to the national government. They are tasked with providing diverse perspectives from the myriads of communities with lived experience as refugees. While each state that possess a Refugee Advisory Panel is unique, four central aims of these organizations include:

1) ensuring decision-making is informed from the perspective of former refugees
2) provide advice and feedback on international, regional and national refugee issues
3) advise on the development of refugee policies, programmes and strategies
4) identify and actively take part in work that improves the lives of refugees in their new home (NZ RAP, 2023).

Whether advocacy work is directed by a state-authorized organization or grassroots resident-advocacy network, work to improve the livelihood of camp residents can be site-specific or universal. Methods of advocacy work include rudimentary methods (graffiti, picket signs, etc.), social media platforms and campaigns, public manifestations and civil disobedience, legal measures, and even personal bodily harm (lip-sewing, hunger strikes, etc.) For example, before grassroots refugee advocacy networks forced policy changes regarding legislation in the Netherlands, adult refugees were not offered long-term language and educational opportunities before the Dutch government ruled on their asylum status. In essence, asylum seekers were expected to wait months or years until granted refugee status before they gained access to long-term Dutch language classes. Concerned by a lack of comprehension of the Dutch language and legal procedures of the asylum process, camp residents campaigned for changes through social media platforms and public manifestations. As awareness of their campaigning grew, local media outlets interviewed camp residents and local community members helped advocate for legislation change for language classes in Dutch camps. As one camp resident explained in an interview:

> I speak Arabic, English, and French, but not Dutch. I could not understand what the controllers at the camp are saying to me and they did not understand me unless we had a translator. When I first arrived in the camp, they did not provide Dutch language classes to us. And I thought, how will I explain what I need to provide for my family? How will I complete my refugee paperwork? I will not wait months for my papers before I can speak to a local shop owner or talk to COA (government appointed refugee officer), so I joined the alliance at my camp to demand language classes immediately and eventually we were granted the classes (Male Syrian asylum seeker, age 28, Drachten.)

Through social media campaigns, this advocacy-driven policy changes inspired camp inhabitants in other European countries who also faced similar local-language legislative hurdles. Many modeled their campaigns off of this Dutch example.

Other refugee-led initiatives include advocacy for meaningful refugee participation, particularly in regard to climate mitigation planning and environmental crisis legislation. For example, during an interview with a member of New Zealand's Refugee Advisory Panel, the interviewee explained that contemporary refugees have little meaningful participation in decisions governing the global refugee regime. Subsequently, advocates work to address local camp concerns as well as create national and global opportunities for refugee participation. In the case of New Zealand, the panel ensured that refugee camps were physically and environmentally safe sites. Like the Netherlands, New Zealand's Refugee Panel overseas projects include language assistance, training, and translation for refugees. They also advocate for improved housing and employment skill training to foster successful refugee resettlement. Indeed, as the Refugee Panel member stated:

> Our mission is to support and include refugees into New Zealand's diverse society. This is not possible unless refugees feel safe, welcomed, and are permitted to meaningfully participate in decision making processes. Thus, the panel continues to advocate for greater inclusion of refugees' voices in both local and global refugee-policy making (New Zealand Refugee Panel Member, Māngere camp, Auckland.)

Other global organizations, such as the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) work to raise awareness of refugee agency as well as widespread concerns they face in camps globally. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic this organization documented and raised concerns regarding living conditions for many refugees. This organization mobilized local, national and other global networks in order to garner crucial support for refugees impacted by the virus as well as governments' restrictive regulations governing refugee camps during lockdowns. As this article demonstrates, advocacy by refugees for refugees emerges when individuals face undesirable or unaccepted environments within camps and beyond camp borders. For scholars, practitioners and advocates, it remains of paramount importance to take seriously the words and experiences of camp residents themselves – not only to understand the conditions within which they live, but also the ways in which they attempt to resist and transform those conditions through struggle and creativity and make a better life for themselves, their families and their communities.

5. Conclusions

This article employs empirical and theoretical analysis in order to critically illuminate some of the everyday embodied experiences, practices, and enactments in refugee camps. While camps have been framed as spaces of humanitarian care, spaces of exception, or governance through biopolitical control, this article brings inhabitants' actions, experiences, and voices to the fore. By exploring the lived experience of refugees, we highlighted how camp inhabitants negotiate and manage these spaces – across uncertain geographies, timescapes and futures. As control of refugee bodies continues to intensify, refugees demonstrate great strength, creativity and effectiveness for negotiating challenges and governance through self-advocacy networks to work for changes they deem necessary.

By focusing on the experiences of the camp by those who live within them, this article draws attention to the voices of the (multiply) dispossessed and hierarchies of governance in these places. More importantly, we highlight many of the ways that migrants themselves (through solidarity, insurgency, and adaptation) seek to adjust to, overcome, and resist forces of control. For this, we examined the carceral landscape(s) of camps and the demands made by advocacy networks operating within and outside of camps, as well as through the perspectives of both camp residents and NGO workers inside camps.

Interviews with various groups of camp inhabitants highlighted three main themes of note – these common experiences identified by all include boredom, control, and creativity. The ever-presence of boredom is significant. This not only reflects a lack of progress in an individual's day (or life), but such imposed lost time and opportunities which could include lost personal, educational, and financial resources. Additionally, camps, even if liminal, are spaces of governance and control. Increasingly, control is imposed over inhabitants' bodies, daily routines, and mobilities as camps become "secured" heterodox spaces, often framed as a solution for environmental vulnerabilities, geopolitical instability, or public health concerns. As this article demonstrated, inhabitants experienced a proliferation of bureaucratic regulations and regulations that control individuals within camps. However, this is not to say that camp inhabitants passively accept camp-related forms of control.

The final theme raised through interviews highlights how refugees utilize camps as spaces of agency through their creativity. Regardless of scale, every act of agency is embedded with the potential for geopolitical significance. Camp inhabitants demonstrate ingenuity and resourcefulness to address a concern in the face of various economic, political/bureaucratic, or cultural barriers. Such empowerment has the potential to transcend a particular camp space, as this article demonstrates, through network refugee advocacy work that focuses on local, national, and global campaigns. This is particularly significant in the face of global climate crises or future pandemics, as refugees commonly live in the most vulnerable locations. As the "front line" or "first responders" within their own communities, refugee-led advocacy organizations must be recognized as valuable contributors and must be increasingly incorporated in global decision-making processes that pertain to refugees. We conclude with a call for additional examinations on refugee camp experiences and advocacy work with an emphasis on specific strategies inhabitants employ to accomplish their desired objectives. We hope this article encourages further research and connections drawn between migrant agency and spatial enactments in camps, which we believe will contribute to a greater and more nuanced understanding(s) of camp spaces and embodied refugee experiences.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Kara E. Dempsey: Writing – original draft. **Pablo S. Bose:** Writing – original draft.

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