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Starting from refugees themselves: towards an institutional ethnography of resettlement

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Introduction

While resettlement is in part accomplished 'for' (certain) refugees it is unsettling to find so little written about their experiences of resettlement. The goal of this paper is to add to the existing literature on resettlement by highlighting the active participation of refugees in the resettlement process[1]. With the help of the generous concept of 'work' developed by Smith (1987, 2005) and some of her followers (Diamond, 1995, 2006; Gregor, 1994, 2001; Manicom, 1995; McCoy, 2006; Mykhalovskiy & McCoy, 2002), I want to look at what refugees[2] 'do' during the resettlement process abroad. More precisely I discuss the accounts provided by my resettled refugees informants (n=4) and call attention to their 'work' as refugees who were resettled in a mid-sized Canadian city located in the province of Québec.

In what follows I argue that my informants were far from being passive and that their participation is/was an essential, albeit not recognized, feature of the resettlement process. By participation here I mean more than 'being' a refugee under UNHCR mandate. Using institutional ethnographers' generous concept of work as a heuristic device enables me to emphasize different aspects of my informants' stories as they pertain to resettlement. It allows me to direct my attention to what refugees 'do' throughout the resettlement process and to "fill it" with experiential accounts.

Although the research on which this paper is based does not allow for an extended exploration of the resettlement process as a whole, especially of the elements of the process that took place outside Canada, and while it does not claim to be representative of all resettlement experiences, this research nonetheless made it possible to identify some of what refugees do abroad prior to their arrival in Canada. As such I was able to achieve two things. First, I provide a novel way of addressing refugee resettlement that allows us to discover the hidden face of resettlement i.e. the lived experience of refugees who are being resettled. Secondly I generate different questions for further inquiry of the institutional organization of refugee resettlement.

In what follows I first present an overview of Institutional Ethnography (IE) as a method of inquiry. Secondly, I look at the use of interviews in the resettlement process and to what it entails for refugees. I argue that my informants' constant re-telling of their traumatic experiences of exile constitutes a form of work that an analysis of refugee resettlement must acknowledge. Then, I show how waiting is a form of work that my informants engaged in for quite a long time before coming to Canada. I discuss how waiting can be conceived as work and show some of the investigative potential of doing so. I conclude by discussing the implications of using 'work' as a research tool and briefly sketch other forms of work that were not addressed in this paper but that could be explored in further research.

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS) annual meeting on May 17, 2012 at York University in Toronto. This paper stems from a larger research *supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council* conducted with government-assisted refugees (GARs) and people working for a community organization providing resettlement services to immigrants and refugees in a mid-sized Canadian city (Sévigny, 2011). The author would like to thank Daiva Stasiulis, James Milner, Megan Bradley and the CARFMS anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful input and comments on earlier drafts.

[2] For this paper the term 'refugee' is generally used to refer to refugees recognized under the Mandate of UNHCR.

What is institutional ethnography?

IE is a sociological approach that 'explores the social relations organizing institutions as people participate in them and from their perspectives" (Smith, 2005, p. 225). Institutions here are not conceived as a particular type of organization. Instead, an institution is viewed a "vast complex of coordinated and intersecting work-processes taking place in multiple sites" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 17).

For example, what an institutional ethnographer sees when he or she looks at the institution of health care, is a "vast nexus of coordinated work-processes and courses of actions – in sites as diverse as hospitals, homes, doctor's offices, community clinics, elementary schools, workplaces, pharmacies, pharmaceutical companies, advertising agencies, insurance companies, government ministries and department, mass-media, and medical and nursing schools" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 17). Similarly we can conceive of refugee resettlement as an institution i.e. as a vast complex of coordinated activities that take place in various locations including camps, offices, airports, hotels, etc. The activities are mediated by what Smith calls the relations of ruling.

IE was developed by Dorothy E. Smith as an 'alternative sociology' which instead of objectifying people's experience (as she claims is the case in 'mainstream sociology'[3]) would 'preserve the presence of the subjects'. As she puts it: "The focus of research is never the individual, but the individual does not disappear: indeed, she or he is an essential presence" (Smith, 2005, p. 59). IE is conceived as people-centered instead of theory-driven i.e. as a 'sociology *for* people' instead of a sociology *of* people. It draws on ethnomethodology as it sees people as the expert practitioners of their own lives. But in contrast to ethnomethodology, IE does not investigate people's experiences but rather uses them as a starting point to discover "how what they are doing is connected with other's doing in ways they cannot see" (Smith 2005, 225). In that respect IE is a materialist approach to social research and not an interpretive one. In fact, 'experience' does not have the same meaning in IE than it does in other types of research. As DeVault and McCoy (2006) put it, "in contemporary society, local practices and experiences are tied into extended social relations or chains of action, many of which are mediated by documentary forms of knowledge" (19). The focus of an IE is not on experiences per se, but on 'extended social relations'. Therefore, it is possible, from a single individual's experience, to begin an investigation the conditions of possibilities of his or her experience(s). Institutional ethnographers thus select cases not in terms of generalizability but rather in terms of the thickness of accounts. Although this paper is based on a relatively low number of participants, it nonetheless provides a rich description of refugees' active participation in the resettlement process and of its relation to the work of others situated at various locations within this process.

Work in a generous sense

In institutional ethnography the concept of work extends beyond commonsensical notions of paid employment or unpaid labour and refers to "anything done by people that takes time and efforts,

[3] When using the expression 'mainstream sociology' Smith refers mainly to structural functionalism (Smith 1987, 2005).

that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools, and that they have to think about" (Smith, 2005, pp. 151-152). In order to develop this 'generous conception of work', Smith drew on the thinking of a feminist group called Wages for Housewives, that originated in Italy, which believed that housewives were doing unpaid work that was sustaining the paid work in society and, by the same token, capitalism. Smith expanded the notion of work to include not only the unpaid work of housewives but also all the activities that are not recognized as work but that are playing an active role in sustaining the organization of social life and its institutions.

This focus on 'work' locates researchers' investigation into the everyday and mundane aspects of people's lives. This notion of work anchors investigation in material conditions and means. In their study that explored the work undertaken by people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) to look after their health, Mykhalovskiy and McCoy (2002) designed the concept of 'healthwork'. This conceptual device allowed them to focus on the various things that PHAs do in relation to their health condition without presupposing what these things were: "[h]ealthwork, as we used it, located our research within a genuine investigative mode of inquiry. It operated as an empirically empty term, one that waited to be filled as PHAs told us about their practice and their experience"(24). These two completely different expressions of the generous notion of work nonetheless share a specific function: that of anchoring the research in people's everyday lives.

Refugees and work

Drawing on Smith's extended notion of work (Smith, 1987, 2005) and more precisely on Mykhalovskiy and McCoy's (2002) notion of 'healthwork,' I started to think of refugee resettlement as involving 'work' not only on the part of the employees of the different agencies, organizations and government ministries involved but also on the part of the actual subjects of this process i.e. the refugees themselves. Using the generous notion of 'work' allows me to direct my attention to what people 'do' throughout the resettlement process and to "fill it" with experiential accounts.

The notion of work used in this study refers to the actual doings of refugees throughout the long and complex process of resettlement. Through an attentive look at the work performed by refugees we can start to see how what they do connects with what the other parties involved in resettlement also do and thus extend our research to the ways in which these various doings are put together so as to produce resettlement.

We should not confound here the notion of work put forward in this paper with other concepts such as "coping strategies" or "livelihoods". While the latters can certainly be conceived as forms of work, they do not constitute the only forms of activities that refugees engaged in throughout the resettlement process (both before and after their arrival in Canada) and that can be used a research device that orients us to the ways in which resettlement is institutionally organized.

Interviews after interviews: resettlement and remembering work

The experience of refugees, and especially resettled refugees, is characterized, among other things, by the constant submission of oneself to interviewing procedures. Interviewing is in an integral aspect of both refugee status determination (RSD) and refugee resettlement. In the following section I describe the use of these interviewing procedures and look at what it involves on the part of refugees.

Refugee status determination and interviews

In the case of refugees resettled in Canada, it is typically the UNHCR that refers them to the Canadian government. But well before any person is considered for resettlement in Canada, he or she has first to be recognized as a refugee, at minimum under the Mandate of the UNHCR. As Kagan (2006) argues, the "UN's refugee agency effectively decides among asylum-seekers who can be saved from deportation and in some cases released from detention, who can get humanitarian assistance, and often who can apply to resettle to third countries" (p. 2). In fact, each year "UNHCR's offices decide on the fate of more than 80,000 individuals, which makes UNHCR the biggest RSD decision-maker in the world" (Smrkolj, 2010, p. 168).

In order to decide if someone is a convention refugee, a UNHCR Protection Officer conducts one or multiple interviews with that person. For the officers responsible for RSD, the task is threefold. He or she has to

> (i) Ensure that the applicant presents his case as fully as possible and with all available evidence.
> (ii) Assess the applicant's credibility and evaluate the evidence (if necessary giving the applicant the benefit of the doubt), in order to establish the objective and the subjective elements of the case.
> (iii) Relate these elements to the relevant criteria of the 1951 Convention, in order to arrive at a correct conclusion as to the applicant's refugee status. (UNHCR, 1992, p. 34)

Credibility assessment is therefore an essential feature of RSD.[4] It relies almost entirely on the applicant's testimony "since asylum-seekers can rarely specifically corroborate the central elements of their claims" (Kagan, 2002-2003, p. 367). This puts enormous pressure on applicants and their ability to deliver a narrative that convinces the UNHCR Protection Officer that they have a well-founded fear of being persecuted if they are sent back to their country of origin. RSD is not an objective enterprise and "[t]he assessment of credibility is inevitably prone to some subjectivity because it calls for an adjudicator to judge the trustworthiness of another human being. Emotional impressions of a person and "gut feelings" can have a substantial impact" (Kagan, 2002-2003, p. 375)

[4] Neither the 1951 Refugee Convention nor the Statute of the Office of the UNHCR mentions credibility, but negative credibility assessments are a leading reason for rejections in most refugee status determination systems (Kagan, 2002-2003, p. 368)

Refugee resettlement and interviews

Interviews are also used by UNHCR to determine if a refugee should be referred to a resettlement country for their consideration. Upon reception of resettlement referrals at the field office, an evaluation is made of the resettlement needs of the case referred (this procedure is called Resettlement-Needs Assessment). An interview is then normally scheduled with the refugee whose case is being considered for resettlement. This interview is organized around the Refugee Resettlement Form (RRF) and its different sections.

Other than information on the principal applicant (PRA), his or her family members and other close relatives (including his/her spouse's close relatives), the form asks for the languages spoken by all the applicants as well as their level of education. In order to fill out the RRF, the UNHCR officer also has to ask about any travel/identity documents held by the PRA and list all the countries of transit in which the PRA has transited or resided since he/she is in exile. Medical status and criminal or detention records are also part of the RRF interview.

After the interview, the resettlement officer also needs to write the refugee claim as well as an assessment of the need for resettlement. If necessary, a special needs assessment and additional remarks are joined to the RRF which is then transferred to the branch office where the resettlement submission is prepared. Once the case is complete, the resettlement submission is sent to the country of resettlement. In the case of Canada the resettlement submission is usually sent to the nearest Canadian visa office. There, an agent will evaluate the case and may schedule an interview with the applicants.

Remembering as work

In their journey from their country of first asylum, all the resettled refugees I interviewed went through a process of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and of resettlement assessment at the hands of the UNHCR. They also had to go through the resettlement evaluation process at the level of the Canadian government. As shown above, the resettlement process relies intensively on the use of interviews. The questions that preoccupy us here are what kind of work (in Smith's sense) is involved on the part of the refugees through these procedures? And what does talking about their uprooting entail for refugees?

As we have seen, the purpose of interviewing throughout the resettlement process (starting with RSD) is to determine the eligibility and credibility of the applicant's case so as to ensure that the refugee to be resettled is a genuine refugee in need of resettlement. This is achieved through multiple interviews conducted by various people at various stages of the resettlement process. All these interviews center on the applicant's story of exile and especially on the reasons that lead them to think that they will be persecuted if they go back to their country.

In the case of the interviews around the Resettlement-Needs Assessment and the RRF the applicant is also being asked to explain why he/she cannot remain in his/her country of first asylum. This points to the hierarchy of durable solutions mentioned where resettlement is

conceived as a solution of last resort when both voluntary repatriation and local integration are not achievable.[5]

The repetitiveness of interviews accentuates the importance of remembering the traumatic events that lead refugees to escape from their home. Remembering in this context is definitely a form of work that connects with the doings of the various people at work within the institutional organization of refugee resettlement.

The work of remembering traumatic events is a particular kind of work. It involves an intense emotional charge and is a challenging and unpleasant activity. This was brought to my attention when one of my informants specifically asked that we did not talk about the events that pushed him in exile because he wanted to forget what happened back then. To forget is antithetical to resettlement work because of the institutional processes of RSD and resettlement assessment.

As Mr. Bemba suggests below, forgetting, or at least attempting to do so, becomes institutionally relevant only after resettlement has occurred. To forget seemed in fact to be one of Mr. Bemba's priorities after his arrival in Canada. During my research I had the chance to follow a resettlement worker and Mr. Bemba to the grocery store. We were there to buy the Bembas their first groceries on the day they moved from the hotel to their apartment. At one point, Mr. Bemba asked where he could find beer. He told me: "*Beer is good. It will help me forget what happened in Africa…We can forget this now*".[6]

Mr. Bemba had been in Québec for hardly a week and he felt like he could now start to forget. This was made possible in part because the focus of the institutional organization of resettlement once they are in Canada shifts from one's past to one's future. After their arrival in Québec, the focus of the institutional processes that shapes the everyday life of refugees then becomes oriented towards their integration into Québec society through various means such as becoming tenants, holding a bank account, applying to provincial health insurance, learning French or improving their French language knowledge, receiving social assistance, etc. Ultimately the resettled refugees will be stripped (at least institutionally) of the refugee label and will become a permanent resident like any other and, possibly, a Canadian citizen.

Before this happens, however, the refugees need to recollect the events that preceded their flight from their own country at several moments prior to their resettlement. Although, as it has been suggested above, the remembering of these events could represent an arduous emotional task, the recollection of events itself, however, seems to be less difficult. In fact, when I asked Mr. Banga if it was hard to recall his story, he answered as follows:

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[5] The end of the Cold War marked a shift in the prioritization of other durable solutions over resettlement. From 1985 on, voluntary repatriation came to be regarded as the preferable solutions to the refugee problem (Chimni, 1999). Today, there seems to be a hierarchy of preference among institutional actors regarding durable solutions and resettlement is usually considered the durable solution of last resort: The decision to resettle a refugee is normally made only in the absence of other options, such as voluntary repatriation or integration in the first country of refuge, or where resettlement is seen as the best durable solution for the individual or refugee groups in question. It becomes a priority when there is no other way to guarantee the legal or physical security of the person concerned. (UNHCR, 2004, p. I/3)

[6] All interviews were conducted in French. For the purpose of the present paper, however, all interview excerpts were translated into English.

> Mr. Banga: Well…the things you went through…at least the key elements…you know them. You may have forgot some details but if it's the name of someone who assaulted you…you will say: "this one assaulted me"… "This one asked me to join the movement". "Why did you not remain in Uganda?", "I could not go to Uganda because there was so and so from the opposite party who worked there and who knew me very well. I couldn't stay there". So all this…names like these…you won't forget them…I don't think so. So you will always remember the key elements. And I think that if I would have a detailed interview today I could still get through it.

Here, Mr. Banga suggests not only that he remembers certain elements of his story of exile easily but also that this remembering is intimately linked to the interviewing procedures he was submitted to. By referring to an interview setting, Mr. Bemba thus highlights the dialogic dimension of his remembering work.

In fact, the remembering work of refugees involves not only the recollection of an important event but also the telling of their stories to interviewers whose positions within the institutional organization of refugee resettlement allow them to scrutinize and evaluate these stories so that they can be written up and made institutionally actionable (or not).

The refugees I interviewed told me that they knew that the people asking them questions were looking for errors and contradictions in their testimonies. Here, is an illustrative excerpt from my interview transcript from my conversation with Mr. Banga:

> *Me: And your story about what happened in Congo did you repeat it often?*
> Mr. Banga: Yes! Of course! You never stop. Even precisions…they even check if you get the dates wrong. Because they want to confirm…after all these years…all these years is exactly to check the truthfulness of your story. Because often you are being asked precisions…something you said in 2000… or in 2007 then they come back with the same question. You run the risk of mixing things up…and that's what they are expecting.

My informants knew, to various degrees, that the interviewing procedures they were submitted to were in fact hooked into different institutional processes and that 'they' were keeping track of what was said in these interviews. From the experience of resettled refugees we can thus start to see that their remembering work is coordinated by relations of ruling that originate beyond the local setting of the interview and permeate it through the interviewing procedure conducted by the interviewer.

As we have seen above, these interviewing procedures always involve the use of forms or interview grids that are designed outside the particular location of the interview and it is through these texts that the ruling relations of refugee resettlement coordinate the remembering work of refugees and the work of the interviewer. The interview, in short, happens as the ongoing accomplishment of the remembering work of refugees and the interviewing work of the interviewers (be it UNHCR or Visa Office staff members) and is organized around texts that are produced conceptually outside the site of interviews.

Resettled refugees' accounts of their remembering work also suggest that while being interviewed successively prior to their resettlement, they knew that their stories were evaluated and that credibility was assessed. Here's how Mr. Bakale told me about one of the interview he had to go through:

> Mr. Bakale: Yes…they asked about the story…the reasons why we couldn't go back to Togo. So it's like the first interview that we went through. So if you contradict yourself it's because you lied. So they have all the papers…
> *Me: From the first interview?*
> Mr. Bakale: That's it! It's in the computer and they take it to check if it corresponds really to what you have said previously.

Mr. Bakale's understanding of his testimony as being written somewhere (in the computer) points to the textually mediated organization of the interviewing procedures within refugee resettlement and to the fact that the replicability of the applicants' testimonies allows for the assessment of credibility and authenticity of their claims as well as their admissibility to resettlement. In fact, the remembering work of refugees is conceptually organized by texts such as the UN Convention, the UNHCR *Resettlement Handbook*, the IRPA, etc. and materially inscribed in texts such as the RRF.

In brief, refugees remembering work comprises the negotiation of emotions and memories and certain aspects are easier than others to achieve. But the usefulness of Smith's generous concept of work does not reside in its ability to typify people's doings but rather in its capacity at revealing that what people do inescapably coordinate with the doings of other. Remembering work as a conceptual device has allowed us to see that refugees are active in interviewing and that the constant recalling of events on the part of refugees and the consistency of their stories is an essential feature of refugee resettlement as an institutional process. As such it points to the institutional organization of this process and can serve as the starting point of an institutional ethnographic investigation as discussed in the conclusion of this paper.

The present research, however, neither allowed for the observation of the interviewing procedures mentioned above nor for the interviewing of either UNHCR staff members or Canadian visa officers, and therefore could not explore further this aspect of refugee resettlement. Yet, my informants' accounts of resettlement suggest another type of 'work' they engaged in through the resettlement process, namely, waiting.

"Les années passent": the work of waiting

In his ethnography of a long term care facility in the United States, Timothy Diamond (1995) once described the elderly people waiting for their food in the morning (after a 14 hour fast) as a form of practice: "There each sat before breakfast, bib in place, eyes glued to the elevator. They waited quietly, with a wild patience, practicing patienthood, actively practicing the skills of silence" (p. 129). In order to highlight the active dimension of waiting, Diamond draws from Smith's concept of 'work in a generous sense'. In an interview with Smith, Diamond (2006) argues "[t]he beautiful thing about the generous concept of work is that it can include the doings

of all kinds of things, including the work of doing nothing, which may be the hardest work of all" (p. 51).

Like Diamond's patients, my informants also practiced active patienthood through the resettlement process. For them, however, the result of their patience was not the breaking of a fourteen-hour fast; it was the breaking of many long years of uncertainty and insecurity. The experience of resettlement for my informants was, in fact, characterized by long periods of waiting that sometimes added to their suffering.

For my informants, the various stages of the refugee resettlement followed one another at a very slow pace thus allowing for long periods of institutional calmness where they cannot but wait to be called, once again, by the competent authority. From the time they left their homes up to the moment they arrived in Canada, my informants spent between 10 and 17 years of 'waiting'. As Mr. Banga told me, his life was one of transit: it was a life stuck "in between" i.e. a life where he did not know where to go but knew he could not stay indefinitely where he were. He was condemned to wait and such a life does not allow for long term planning:

> *Me: So for ten years you have waited...you seem to have been constantly waiting to see how your case would evolve…*
> Mr. Banga: You bet! You have no choice! You don't know how things will unfold. Some people say that you should go to South Africa…but do to what exactly? Because first you never have enough money to get there…so you're just there waiting…you live from day to day…you don't have long-term plan.
> *Me: No long-term plan?*
> Mr. Banga: No, almost nothing

Resettlement is not a *de facto* durable solution for all refugees. And it can take years before a refugee is considered for resettlement. During these years of waiting refugees can be active by trying to find organizations that could refer them to UNHCR. As Mr. Banga states:

> Mr. Banga: So you ask for resettlement at UNHCR. Often UNHCR says: "We don't know where we're going to resettle you"…and to be honest UNHCR is really overwhelm by so many refugees. Some have escaped from Burundi, from Rwanda…many. A good number were arriving from Sudan…thousands and thousands were arriving at the camp from Sudan. And also in Nairobi…so there are many refugees. And Kenya turned out to be the best refugee-receiving country. So what happened…So when you…when…UNHCR cannot resettle you…generally you go to organizations that help you for resettlement...and who work in partnership with UNHCR. So you knock on all doors and you explain and demonstrate the harshness of your life in Nairobi…the fact that you can't work…

No matter how active one is in his/her waiting, the outcome of this work is often uncertain. The unpredictability of the refugee's future is also exacerbated by what, drawing on Darville (1995), could be called 'organizational illiteracy' i.e. the fact that refugees do not (always) know 'how things work' at the institutional level:

> Mr. Banga: So I went to some organizations. Sometimes these organizations listen to you and if they believe that your case is a serious one they give you other appointments…appointments again and again…sometimes they say: "we're going to send your files somewhere" but they don't say where. They say that maybe you will be called one day by another organization that would be interested in your case, etc. After all these years…sometimes it takes six months…sometimes it takes years… years go by like this…then they send your files again. At one point I think that we send your address to UNHCR again and reiterate the fact that your case fit the resettlement criteria…I don't know how. Then UNHCR will call you in once again…It actually oversees the whole process… and you will be questioned again in preparation for resettlement. Finally UNHCR calls you in…we don't know how…we had already wrote many letters explaining our precarious situation…and then you are told that you don't fit the criteria…and they never tell you what these criteria are.

For refugees, organizational illiteracy can give rise to anxieties *vis-à-vis* the various institutional procedures at play in refugee resettlement. For instance, it can lead refugees to wonder if their cases are being properly processed:

Mr. Banga: Every year you renew your mandate and every year you go there and they take your fingerprints in order to make sure it's the same people that appear in your file. They even came to our home once to see how we were living. They asked us other questions. We were asking ourselves: "What wrong? It is as if we're new to the process…as if we are freshly arrived…what's wrong?"

Mr. Banga's concerns are also part of waiting work. His interrogations in relation to the processing of his case point to the institutional organization of refugee management. It suggests that the waiting work of refugees coordinates with certain procedures involved in the management of refugees and that waiting work is not performed in isolation. Rather, it is the product of a particular institutional arrangement that includes not only the work of paid employees working for organizations but also the waiting work of refugees. Such work includes, among other things, the emotional management of the various anxieties and concerns produced by this institutional arrangement.

During the period that separates exile from resettlement, different events challenged my informants' patienthood. For instance while they waited for their case to be processed, they witnessed other refugees being resettled. As Mr. David recounts here, this situation can sometimes create tensions that refugees need to manage.

> Mr. David: Because the Ogoni, the Nigerians were gradually arriving…And as they arrived…they hardly stayed three months and the USA took them, that is they went to the USA.
> *Me: So you have seen Nigerians arriving at the camp, staying three months and leave for the USA?*
> Mr. David:…and be resettled there yes. But as for those of us who are from Togo, no.
> *Me: For you it took longer?*

> Mr. David: Much longer. Because they think that we don't have the same needs…because they have tried to split this thing…
> *Me: And does it create some tensions between the Togolese and the Nigerians?*
> Mr. David: Of course! Fortunately the Togolese as…like we say…placid. That is that they are resilient. But if it were the Nigerians that we were trying to split like this there would be murders!

Mr. David was definitely at work there managing his frustrations and when he argues that if it wasn't for the peaceful character of the Togolese there would have been murders, he highlights quite eloquently the very fact that waiting IS an active dimension of resettlement. For resettlement to happen as it does, refugees must peacefully wait their turn and actively practice the 'skills of silence'.

Eventually, however, their turn came and my informants were selected for resettlement by the Canadian government. This obviously marks an important point in their experience of resettlement. It was a decision that was welcomed with joy and relief as demonstrated by Mr. Bakale:

> Mr. Bakale: So they told us: "you have been selected by Canada"
> *Me: Was it a great day for you?*
> Mr. Bakale: Of course! We celebrated! If finally started…when you are told that you're going in for the medical examination…you leave…you know you will leave soon. And it's a relief of course!

For my informants, however, the relief of knowing that they will be resettled in Canada was followed by another period of waiting. In fact the processing of cases in the Canadian visa offices can be very slow. This is especially true in the Visa Offices where my informants' cases were processed. According to CIC's website, the processing time for resettlement cases coming from Africa is the longest at the Visa Offices in Accra, Ghana (41 months) and Nairobi, Kenya (37 months).[7]As a comparison, the processing time in Cairo (Egypt) is 15 months and is of 11 months in Pretoria (South Africa).[8]

In the following interview excerpt, my informant tells us that he usually counted 6 months between the different steps of the resettlement process after he knew he would be resettled in Canada:

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[7] The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) even launched a campaign to raise awareness on the long delays at the Nairobi Visa Office. According to CCR (2011), "Thousands of refugees in many different countries are affected by the long delays at Canada's Nairobi office. Canada's visa office in Nairobi covers 18 countries in East and Central Africa. These countries host hundreds of thousands of refugees, including Somalis, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Congolese, Sudanese, Rwandans and Burundians. Many have already been waiting years for a durable solution, barely surviving in wretched camps or in precarious situations in the cities." […] "These long delays leave vulnerable refugees in dangerous situations for longer than anywhere else in the world".(CCR, 2011)

[8] For the processing time of all the Visa Offices see http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/perm/ref-government.asp

Me: How long was it between the interview at the embassy and the medical examinations?
Mr. Banga: Six months…as often. We often counted six months…and ix months again. And then we were able to go through the medical examination stage rapidly…but one of the children, they said, had something…a pectoral shadow…and she needed to take some X-rays. It worried us. So she went there and took x-rays...four times actually…and they found nothing, We asked ourselves if it wasn't another way to torture us more. After six months the embassy called us once again. They told us that the organization that is responsible for organizing transportation would eventually call us. Then, six months after, they called us for the paper work…we signed some papers.
Me: Was it at that time that you learned that you would be resettled in Canada?
Mr. Banga: Yes…no…as soon as you go to the embassy and that the embassy confirms that you tell the truth you know that you will be resettle in Canada. But you still need to take medical examinations. They also make a criminal record check…these are formalities. You don't know how it actually works but there is an office that takes care of all this...that makes sure that you don't have a criminal history…that during the time you spent in Kenya you did not have problems with the government. They need to check all this. I think that it is a section of IOM that does it. Then nothing much happens…they only give us the date of the departure.
Me: From then on, how long is it before you leave?
Mr. Banga: Not long…two months after you find yourself at the airport, you take the plane and leave for Canada.

Mr. Banga's accounts here shows beautifully how his waiting work after his selection by the Canadian government was coordinated by the processes that connects the work of people located in various sites such as the medical examination room, the visa office and the IOM. Consistent with Smith's sociology, we can say that Mr. Banga's waiting work was accomplished at the level of embodied experience and was accomplished in coordination with the work of others in places he could not see.

Ultimately, there is a moment in the journey of refugees when resettlement becomes 'real' i.e. that their knowledge about having being selected is transformed into their actual departure from their country of first asylum. One day, refugees who have been selected for resettlement in Canada actually pack up their belongings and leave. There is a clear shift in the narratives of the resettled refugees I interviewed when they recount their departure from their country of first asylum. Up to this moment in their story, we can feel the weight of the waiting and the heaviness of uncertainty. Then, there is a precipitate acceleration in the narrative: all of a sudden, they are urged to hurry up and get prepare to leave promptly. Here's how Mr. Bemba depicts his departure:

Mr. Bemba: In 2011 Canada told us to be ready to leave because almost everything was up to date. We were waiting. And then it finally happened: "Be ready because you will leave at such date".
Me: Ok. What did you do to get ready?
Mr. Bemba: UNHCR gave us some money to buy suitcases.
Me: And what happened the day of your departure?

> Mr. Bemba: They told us on Wednesday and we left on Sunday. And everything was rushed! Rushed! We have to do everything really quickly. So much so that we didn't even have time to let our family know.

After having waited for 14 years as refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Bemba and his wife, their nine children and their granddaughter had about four days to prepare their departure. As he mentioned, they did not had the chance to let other family members and friends know that they were actually leaving. And one of the first thing Mr. Bemba asked when he arrived in Canada was that if he could phone Africa to reassure his relatives and inform them that the whole family had been resettled in Canada and that everyone was well. This is an illustrative example of how what happens abroad affects what happens in Canada.

Conclusion

When we apply Smith's generous concept of work to the study of refugee resettlement we come to see refugees as participants in rather than recipients of resettlement. In fact, without refugees' active participation within the institutional organization of refugee resettlement, their resettlement would not be possible. Of course the resettled refugees interviewed for this research all benefited from resettlement, but to limit our understanding of resettled refugees as only recipients prevents us from seeing how resettlement shapes and is being shaped by the actions of refugees.

In this paper, Smith's notion of work was used to highlight the active participation of refugees in the various interviewing procedures that characterized their journey from exile to resettlement. What was brought to our attention was that in order to qualify for resettlement my informants had to learn to be interviewed and to retain a memory of key narrative points that described their exile.

Although these memories are presumably traumatic they had to be repeated over and over to various people for different purposes. Moreover my informants knew, to a certain extent, that their stories were scrutinized and analysed so as to assess their credibility. The repetitiveness of the interviewing procedures also created anxieties and concerns about the unfolding of the resettlement process. The interviewing of refugees is thus a dialogic event that involves the works of refugees and interviewers. And, as we have seen, the interview is also a textually mediated event i.e. that texts coordinate the unfolding and outcome of the interview.

The second form of work that this paper has highlighted is that of 'waiting'. It was shown that the waiting that my informants were engaged in during the pre-resettlement phase constituted a form of work. This type of work is characterized by the impossibility of having long-term plans and the reliance on the resettlement process to set the pace of one's life. The waiting work of my informants was coordinated in part by the "five-step" process of resettlement[9] and by the work of

[9] UNHCR implemented of a five-step process (Milner, 2005) for resettlement. Although it would be wrong to assert that resettlement always occurs in the same way no matter where it is being conducted, we can nonetheless provide an ideal type of the resettlement process using the five-step model described by Milner (2005):

people situated in various sites outside the local settings of my informants' waiting work. By using the notion of work to analyse this waiting, we can see how waiting is not only an outcome of the resettlement process but that it was an integral aspect of my informants' experiences of this process.

When we look for instance at CIC's table of processing times at the various Visa Offices we see but a number (e.g. Nairobi – 37 months). This number conceals the experiences of refugees and does not allow us to see what exactly this number means or involves for them. By starting with the resettled refugees' experiences, we can get a better sense of what waiting means in terms of 'work' and we can start to see that refugees are playing an active role in this waiting not only in terms of managing their emotions but also in terms of waiting their turn and not revolting.

Of course 'remembering work' and 'waiting work' are but two examples of the myriad of activities involved in the resettlement process on the part of refugees. Other forms of work such as finding food, getting to various places (such as the Visa Office, the IOM offices, the medical examination room, etc.), "killing time", etc. were not addressed in the present paper but could certainly constitute the focus of other studies. For instance, one could explore the ways in which refugees feed themselves and how the ruling relations of refugee management shape this activity. Or one could ask how refugees get to their interviews and how this coordinated with the institutional organization of refugee resettlement[10].

The ways in which refugees kill time could also serve as the basis of an inquiry into the social relations of refugee life and offer an entry into the institutional organization of refugees. By asking "how do refugees spend their time and how is this shaped by extra-local relations?" we could investigate the ruling relations shaping the lives of refugees prior to their arrival in their country of resettlement. These are some of the potential foci of research suggested by particular attention paid to refugee's work.

Finally, being attentive to refugees' active participation in the resettlement process can also be fruitful for policy-makers and practitioners of refugee protection. In fact, paying close attention to what refugees actually do while on the resettlement track can render the effects of policies and practices more visible and predictable thus allowing for the development of policies and practices that are more streamlined and accountable for refugees. This analysis also highlights the importance of including the perspective and capacities of refugees in discussions on the resettlement process itself.

The first is the identification of refugees in need of resettlement on the basis of their eligibility according to above criteria. Next, a resettlement dossier is prepared and submitted to a resettlement country for adjudication. If accepted for resettlement, refugees then go through the pre-departure formalities before they arrive in their resettlement country and begin the process of integration. (522)

[10] In his study, Anderson (January 2012) analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively the time and money spent by urban refugees in Nairobi in order to access different services. This study provides an interesting empirical argument to the fact that refugees are "at work" during their experience of exile.

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