

Panel 35: **Strategies for Forging Social Integration and Belonging among Refugees, Displaced, Migrants, and their Children in Diaspora**

Friday 18, 14.45-17.15, Aula 254

Convenors: **Louise Cainkar** (Marquette University), **Abla Amawi** (UNDP, Amman)

Discussant: **Joseph Schechla** (Habitat International Coalition, Cairo)

This workshop examines a range of approaches to forging the sense of belonging and social integration of refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and their children living in diaspora. Schechla reports on a project that applies global criteria for “right to the city” to Syrian refugee sanctuaries. It develops local-governance discourse among refugees so they are empowered to act as participants in and make demands upon local governance. Amawi reports on the findings of research seeking to determine what Syrian refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), especially those aged 15-24, have lost in the fields of higher education and post-graduate training. The project’s purpose is to improve their access to education in the front-line states (i.e. Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey) so they are not depleted of human capital upon returning to their homelands. Darwaza speaks about the creative role played by ‘Cinema in Refuge,’ a travelling festival that highlights films produced by young Syrian film amateurs and professionals, whose purpose is to raise awareness of and increase advocacy for refugee rights in the region. Dini’s presentation concerns the importance of providing space and opportunities for socialization with local inhabitants for the tens of thousands of migrants who have reached the shores of Italy. She assesses an integration project run by a community at Rome’s Sacred Heart Basilica, set in the context of other local projects. Cainkar speaks about the ways in which Palestinian youth living in diaspora in the US experience their identities and imagine Palestine, about how these change upon moving to Palestine, and on how they plan to find their place with dignity upon return to the US. Solombrino analyzes the horizon of possibilities opened up by the Web, and the ways in which Palestinians articulate their diasporic dimensions, composing new politics and poetics of palestinianness through digital narratives.

Paper givers:

- 1) **Joseph Schechla** (Habitat International Coalition, Cairo), ***Rights to the City: Migrants as participants in local governance***

This year marks one century of Lebanon hosting Armenian refugees, whose community of over 150,000 now form an integral part of the country’s economy and social fabric. Also, 450,000 Palestinian refugees are registered in Lebanon, mainly originating from families displaced during 1948. Given their respective historical contexts and subsequent local politics, the conditions of both communities remain diverse. While war displacement represents a global responsibility, the majority of displaced people in the world take refuge within a few kilometers of their original homes. The consequent challenges for adjacent local governments and authorities in one affected region (e.g., Lebanon), nonetheless, remain at the margin of international relief efforts through central government institutions, ostensibly designed to meet the current exigencies of Syrian refugee flows. This

presentation and paper relay the findings of a current project applying the global criteria for the “right to the city,” drawing also from global criteria as developed and specific global experiences (in Korea, Japan and Brazil), to develop local-governance discourse in Syrian-refugee sanctuaries that accommodates migrants as participants in local governance, and expresses how international commitments apply to the local situation of municipal citizens without nationality.

2) **Abla Amawi** (UNDP, Amman), *Right to Life – Freedom to Learn*

This paper relays the findings of a broad-based research that aimed to understand what Syrian refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) have lost, particularly in the fields of higher education and post-graduate training, and available opportunities to improve their access to educational opportunities in the front-line states (i.e. Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey). As war engulfed their countries, families have joined the exodus and included among them is a large number of youth aged 15-24, whose higher education, professional development, and technical training has been disrupted as a result of the violence and general deterioration of high schools and public and private universities. The role of highly-skilled and educated young people in vulnerable communities is not often the focus of established humanitarian policies and programs. This neglect persists despite the fact that the stability and rebuilding of post-conflict countries depends on maintaining the human and intellectual capital these young people represent. The failure to connect young university age refugees with higher educational and training opportunities now will only worsen that decline in human development in their countries. It will also prevent them from entering fields of study are critical to helping their countries recover in the future.

3) **Sawsan Darwaza** (Karama Human Rights Film Festival), *Cinema In Refuge*

This paper focuses on the plight of the Syrian Refugees and is part of a project on ‘Cinema in Refuge’ a travelling festival that highlights films produced by young Syrian film amateurs and professionals. It is an attempt to advocate for refugee rights and raise awareness for refugees in the region. The festival is a chance for Syrian refugees to engage in an entertaining and educational cultural activity where they can interact and communicate with communities and start a dialogue on issues affecting refugees’ communities. At the same time, the festival aims to create a change in mindsets and attitudes towards refugees within the audiences of the hosting countries. The festival is a way to understand and address the needs of refugee communities and creates a platform where they can communicate and develop new initiatives and projects. The festival will screen films and feature debates and cultural activities in refugee clusters and cities that host refugees and local communities, held through 3 stations: Jordan, Turkey & Lebanon, and Europe as a later station.

4) **Elena Dini** (Pontifical Gregorian University), *Integration through Socialization: The strategy of relationships*

During 2014 about 170.000 migrants reached the shores of Italy. The Italian government and society are facing a challenge in trying to figure out how to welcome these people. The

government aims at answering their primary needs and associations from the civil society are helping by providing food, clothes and shelter. However, there are few places and activities dedicated to support and favor migrants' integration in the society. This presentation will deal with the importance of providing space and opportunities for socialization with local inhabitants. By establishing relationships beyond the general dynamics of host (Italian volunteer)-guest (migrant), an increased feeling of familiarity with the larger society is developed. The specific case study that will be analyzed is the integration project run by a community based in Rome, at the Sacred Heart Basilica. Examples from other experiences in Rome will provide a larger background and show how through personal relationships, education, volunteer service and work, migrants start to feel and represent an inner element of Italian society.

5) **Louise Cainkar** (Marquette University), *Finding Dignity in Diaspora*

Children of migrants experience both belonging and alienation in their places of birth and in relationship to their parents' homelands through a variety of interactions, mediums, and sources. Much as they may want to feel part of both societies, the ways in which they are treated, represented, and are able to organize matter. Under the simple assumption that all persons seek endorsement of and means to fulfill their human dignity, this paper looks at how transnational Arab American teenagers imagined their parents homelands while growing up in the United States, how what they imagined compares to what they found upon moving "back home," and how their identities evolved over time as teenagers seeking belonging in two homelands.

6) **Olga Solombrino** (Orientale University), *Narratives, belongings and poetics of diasporic palestinianness in the digital sphere*

The emergence of Web-based networks has changed the face of diaspora groups, and cyberspace could now be read as a transnational public sphere, meant as a critical and participatory space of political and social discussion. By configuring new spaces of expression and self-representation, it contributes to a de-marginalization and reaffirmation of identity and agency for Palestinian diasporic subjects. Asserting their presence in the virtual social sphere, Palestinians can re-conquer their space of self-expression, proposing their own narrations of history and identity, taking back their voice and reclaiming the 'permission to narrate'. My research analyzes the horizon of possibilities opened up by the Web, and the ways in which Palestinians articulate their diasporic dimensions, composing new politics and poetics of palestinianness through digital narratives. The paper addresses questions such as: how do Palestinian diasporic subjects re-define and re-negotiate the concepts of home(land), belonging and nation in cyberspace? How do they engage in the process of recovering their memories and collectivizing them? I will discuss how mapping, monitoring and heeding the Palestinian expressions in the virtual sphere could help us understand how the Internet becomes a space where to negotiate, cultivate and promote collective identities, that are otherwise marginalized or omitted.