

The Politics of Resettlement

Expectations and Unfulfilled Promises in Chile and Brazil

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Introduction

Refugee resettlement is a process of multiple negotiations, happening at different levels and times. In this chapter, I explore the relationship between resettled refugees and the different actors involved in the program in two Latin American countries, Chile and Brazil. I do so by identifying and discussing the tensions among actors (refugees; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR; nongovernmental organizations, NGOs; and governments) and by asking how these power relationships affect the resettlement experience, both before and after refugees arrive to the host country. The chapter builds on long-time ethnographic fieldwork to trace the perceptions and everyday encounters between Colombian and Palestinian refugees and the institutions running the resettlement programs in Chile and Brazil, exploring how resettlement as humanitarian governance is negotiated, performed, and resisted at the local level. Both countries are stimulating case studies: they are considered emergent resettlement countries and share a history of exile, as thousands of people fled each country because of the oppression suffered under dictatorship regimes, while both countries have also engaged in enforcement of their refugee national laws after their return to democracy.

The negotiations and power relationships involved in refugee resettlement have been explored in an interdisciplinary body of literature, covering different stages of the resettlement process and different locations, and it is a core concern of this volume (Shrestha 2011; Sandvik 2011, 2012; Thomson 2012; Thomson, this volume). This chapter aims to contribute to this debate, exploring the experiences of resettled refugees in emergent host countries in South America. Both Colombian and Palestinian refugees and the organizations involved in resettlement in Chile and Brazil created a set of expectations regarding resettlement even before refugees arrived. The chapter discusses how these expectations varied (or not) between groups and host countries, how they developed translocally between the first country of asylum and the third host country, and how they shaped the resettlement experience when those expectations were unmet.

On the one hand, refugees' expectations of resettlement turned into claims of "unfulfilled promises" generating frustration and mistrust between refugees and the resettlement program's actors. On the other hand, the resettlement organizations' unmet expectations lead to problematic representations of refugees' intentions and behavior. I argue that, due to the tensions that emerged between actors and refugees' disappointment in the host country, refugees' radical uncertainties (Horst and Grabska 2015) created by displacement and conflict extended into resettlement, shaping their experience as one of unsettlement (see also Lewis and Young, this volume). The discussion of these expectations and the negotiations that took place between refugees and the organizations involved exposes the contradictions of resettlement as an instrument of governance at the local level.

The following sections introduce the chapter's concept and methods and provides a brief background on Brazil's and Chile's resettlement programs. The expectations of resettled refugees and of resettlement organizations, developed and experienced translocally, are then contrasted and discussed, showing how unfulfilled promises on both sides sustain resettled refugees' unsettlement.

Concepts and Methods

This research mainly draws upon interconnected strands of scholarship in human geography, anthropology, and political science, among other related disciplines. In this chapter, I draw from this volume's understanding of power as the "relational effect of social interactions" (Allen 2003) to explore the temporal and spatial consequences of the negotiations between refugees and the organizations involved in refugee resettlement. Drawing on the work of Shrestha (2011) and Hyndman (2000) on the asymmetrical hierarchies and paradoxes of humanitarian work, this chapter focuses

on the power imbalances between refugees and the resettlement program, shedding light on the local (and translocal) dynamics of humanitarian governance (see Garnier, Sandvik, and Jubilut, this volume). A starting point in the recognition of the politics of resettlement is that this durable solution is a discretionary response taken by states, which involves the UNHCR at various levels (see also van Selm, this volume).

This means that power imbalances are embedded in refugee resettlement at the supranational and state level shaping the dynamics of resettlement (Sandvik 2011; Shrestha 2011; Garnier, Sandvik, and Jubilut, this volume). At the same time, these power imbalances are deepened in negotiations at the local and individual levels, through mechanisms such as the control of information and the perpetuation of waiting and uncertainty (Biehl 2015). While power imbalances in resettlement have been increasingly explored in refugee studies (Thomson 2012; Sandvik 2011; Harrell-Bond 2002), they have been underexplored in emerging resettlement countries such as Chile and Brazil.

In the discussion of the empirical data, I emphasize the significance of scale for the exploration of the negotiations among actors involved within different levels and spaces of the resettlement process. In this context, I use the lens of “translocality” to review both the spatial and temporal interconnectedness of the refugee experience within and beyond the national boundaries of the resettlement country. According to Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013: 373), translocality is used to “describe socio-spatial dynamics and processes of simultaneity and identity formation that transcend boundaries—including, but also extending beyond, those of the nation state.” This notion is relevant to enhancing the understanding of resettlement as an experience that starts in the first country of asylum, at the moment the refugee receives the information about resettlement, and develops in multiple localities.

Finally, throughout the chapter I discuss refugees’ experiences as those of “unsettlement,” drawing on the literature about uncertainty in forced migration (El-Shaarawi 2015; Brun 2015; Biehl 2015; Griffiths 2014). Uncertainty is understood here as the “imperfect knowledge of current conditions” and the “unpredictability of the future” (Williams and Baláz 2012: 168). Unsettlement, on the other hand, is discussed as the condition by which refugees’ feelings of uncertainty and instability, resulting from experiences of displacement, extend and normalize into resettlement (Vera Espinoza, forthcoming). I argue that the power imbalances of refugee resettlement contribute to the experience of unsettlement.

This chapter draws on data collected in two extended periods of fieldwork in Chile and Brazil between 2012 and 2014 as part of a larger doctoral research project.¹ I implemented a qualitative driven mixed methods methodology (Mason 2006), which included eighty semistructured interviews with resettled refugees and other actors involved in the resettlement program

(including governments, UNHCR, NGO staff, and others related to refugee assistance). I also conducted a survey with eighty-six resettled refugees across both countries, some of whom also participated in the interviews, and I carried out participant observation in two of the implementing agencies in each country. I analyzed the data obtained from the three methods separately and then brought them together through triangulation, comparing and contrasting the data and revealing the nuances (and contradictions) of the resettlement process.

Background

Chile and Brazil are pioneers in implementing resettlement programs in South America. Chile received the first group of refugees from the former Yugoslavia in 1999, while Brazil hosted a small group of refugees coming from Afghanistan in 2002. In 2004, resettlement emerged with a regional approach as part of the Mexico Plan of Action (MPA) adopted by twenty countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of the twentieth celebration of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration. With the longstanding Colombian conflict in the background, the aim of resettlement was to enable the countries of the Southern Cone to contribute to relieving the burden of refugees received by Colombia's neighboring countries (Nogueira and Marques 2008). From 2004 to today, five countries of the region—Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay—resettled more than 1,500 refugees from within the region and from outside the boundaries of Latin America (Ruiz 2015). The number is small compared with global resettlement needs. UNHCR has estimated that by 2017 the needs for refugee resettlement will be over 1,190,000 persons, a considerable 72 percent increase in comparison with 2014 (UNHCR 2016). However, the innovative efforts of Latin America to foster resettlement based on the principle of solidarity has been praised as a model of South-South cooperation and dialogue among states that can improve refugee protection (Harley 2014; see also Espinoza 2018).

The emergence of resettlement in the framework of the MPA also responds to specific political momentum and is motivated by specific political goals. In the case of Brazil, since the country's redemocratization, there has been an aim to reach subregional leadership in refugee protection (see also Jubilut and Zamur, this volume). In Chile, resettlement was considered a "gesture" to the international community acknowledging the protection given to Chileans in exile during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship (Daneri 2008). Both countries estimated that taking the lead on regional resettlement would position them as good players in relation to international cooperation and humanitarian burden sharing (Jubilut and Carneiro 2011). As a former member of the UNHCR in Brazil told me, "Everything related to

refugees is political. The assistance may be humanitarian, but the drive is political. . . . And there was an ambition by both Brazil and Chile to be the first ones offering resettlement in the region.”

The solidarity resettlement program was mainly aimed to protect Colombian refugees. Since 2005, more than 5,500 Colombian refugees with specific protection needs have been resettled to a third country, 20 percent of which have been resettled in countries of the Southern Cone (UNHCR 2010: 20). Most of them have come from the first countries of asylum such as Ecuador or Costa Rica, and a smaller number of Colombians have been resettled from Panama and Venezuela.

In 2007, Chile and Brazil opened the resettlement program to those from outside the boundaries of Latin America and decided to resettle a group of Palestinian refugees living on the borders between Iraq, Jordan, and Syria. This program became known as the Humanitarian Resettlement Programme (see Vera Espinoza 2017). Between September and October 2007, Brazil received 108 Palestinian refugees from the Ruwashed refugee camp in Jordan. Chile, on the other hand, received 117 Palestinian refugees coming from the Al Tanf refugee camp on the border between Iraq and Syria (Ruiz 2015).

In terms of design and implementation of resettlement, in Chile and Brazil the program relies on a tripartite structure that includes the participation of the government of each country, the UNHCR, and NGOs that act as implementing agencies (see Ruiz 2015; Bijit 2012; Jubilut and Carneiro 2011). The program in both countries received contributions and technical support from Norway, Canada, and the United States (Guglielmelli-White 2012).

In this chapter, I discuss how unmet expectations of both resettled refugees and members of the program in each country created tension and mistrust between them, affecting the resettlement experience.

Displacement and the Construction of Expectations

Leaving the first country of asylum or the refugee camp and arriving in the resettlement country is an experience full of anxieties and expectations. The construction of expectations emerged as a constant theme in the narratives of resettled refugees I interviewed in both Chile and Brazil. These expectations emerged as important in shaping refugees’ decisions to take up resettlement as well as through their actual experiences of resettlement. In this section, I briefly discuss how these expectations were constructed in a context of uncertainty and then explore how they turned into “unfulfilled promises.”

Expectation is usually understood as a strong belief that something will happen (Oxford English Dictionary 2007). The refugee studies literature has largely referred to the different range of expectations that refugees de-

velop about their resettlement experience, both in Latin America (Bessa 2006; Bijit 2012) and in other contexts (Kenny and Lockwood-Kenny 2011; Westoby 2009; Marete 2012). In addition, the UNHCR and service providers have recognized that one of the biggest challenges of resettlement is what they refer to as “unrealistic expectations” (van Selm 2013). The refugees I interviewed based their expectations about third-country resettlement on what other people said (organizations and other refugees) but also on the meanings that they created from their own experiences—including hopes and aspirations. From the interviews with both Colombian and Palestinian refugees, I identified four key factors in the construction of refugees’ expectations predeparture: the emergency that framed their resettlement decision (see also Kenny and Lockwood-Kenny 2011), the lack of clear information provided in the first country of asylum or in the refugee camp, the information given by family and friends resettled in other countries (see Horst 2006), and time spent in the places where they were first displaced.

These factors also shaped their uncertainties predeparture. Uncertainty appeared in refugees’ narratives as a constitutive element of their experiences of displacement (Biehl 2015) but also as predominant during the events prior to departure for the resettlement country (El-Shaarawi 2015). That is to say, expectations of refugees were generated in a context of long-term uncertainty (Horst and Grabska 2015).

Rabah’s experiences predeparture help to exemplify how some of the factors above shaped expectations in the context of Palestinian refugees. Rabah is 1 of the 108 Palestinian refugees resettled to Brazil from the Rwaished camp. They were the last group in the camp, and they witnessed with resignation the resettlement of others. During the five years’ wait in the camp, Rabah experienced all the factors mentioned above, creating double-edged emotions from great happiness to anger:

I was sitting there, waiting every day. Seeing how my friends were taken to other countries and I was still there. . . . One day, they called us for a meeting and that day I couldn’t take it anymore and I took the chair and broke it on the floor. I was so angry because of waiting! . . . So when that lady [UNHCR officer] came to a meeting to talk about vegetables and cleaning, I told her, “We need neither vegetables nor cleaning, we just need to get out of here! I don’t want to die here! I am going mad.” I didn’t want to argue with her. I was nervous, angry. . . . I broke the chair and I felt sad because of that. After that, she came back and told me about the opportunity of Denmark and sent me to go to the Italian hospital in Jordan to take the medical exams. When they sent you there it meant that you may go soon. She left me dreaming, living again! I knew about Denmark because I had a friend resettled there. That night I couldn’t sleep thinking about going there, dreaming. I was so happy! . . . When the group from Denmark came to the camp they didn’t know about us [Palestinians]; they had come for the Kurds. Why did she lie to me? They told me that just to calm me down?! (Rabah, Palestinian Refugee in Brazil)

In his narrative, Rabah explored the different sources of uncertainty experienced in the refugee camp in relation to resettlement, such as inconsistency and lack of information, sudden changes in resettlement options, and unclear selection criteria. As a result, Rabah described constant feelings of anxiety about the possibilities of leaving the camp, desperation at not knowing how or when, and resentment because of what he perceived as the “UN’s constant lies.” Rabah’s desperation was a response to the bureaucratic system that decided his resettlement. As El-Shaarawi (2015) explores through her research with Iraqi refugees in Egypt, the resettlement process predeparture becomes another source of uncertainty that is both spatial and temporal, since refugees are uncertain of where they will go and when. The uncertainty experienced by the Palestinian refugees while waiting at the Rwaished camp revealed that refugees constructed their expectations abstractly, around the need to leave the camp and the sparse information they received, rather than around their aspirations of resettlement in Brazil. This is also because when the possibility of resettlement in Brazil was presented, there was no other real option and otherwise they would have to stay in the desert.

Waiting (Brun 2015; Khosravi 2014) and uncertainty (Horst and Grabska 2015) also characterized the predeparture resettlement process of refugees who came to Chile from the Al Tanf camp between Iraq and Syria. Although their decision was also framed by the need to leave the appalling conditions in the camp, they did not have the extra pressure of being the last group there. Instead, their main doubts were related to accepting resettlement in Chile, or waiting, again and for an indeterminate time, for the option of resettlement in another country. In the case of both Palestinian groups, the information that the refugees received about the host countries was crucial in their decision to take the resettlement option, considering that most refugees told me they knew nothing about Chile and very little about Brazil.

In this context, another difference between the Palestinian groups in each country was their source of information about resettlement. For Palestinians resettled in Brazil, there was no selection mission, and the information was provided by members of the UNHCR in Jordan. In the case of the Palestinian refugees resettled in Chile, they received information about the resettlement country directly from the institutions involved in the program who participated in the mission to the Al Tanf camp. In both cases, the information received in relation to the entitlements of the resettlement programs framed their expectations about the host countries. The account of Aziza facilitates discussion of the context of these expectations:

We had a meeting before the interview. We went, sat in front of a big screen, and saw Chile. What did we see? . . . We saw the beach, kids playing, everything pretty. We asked about the program, and they said that they would give us around US\$500, and that would be enough because you can eat and rent. And that we all would get a passport as well. (Aziza, Palestinian refugee in Chile)

Most Palestinian refugees built their expectations about resettlement around what they referred to as the “UNHCR’s promises.” Refugees recognized that those promises were ambiguous but did ensure that all their basic needs would be covered, that they would have access to housing, language classes, and, eventually, naturalization. Interviewees also referred to the promise of family reunification. Refugees in both countries also told of being promised that the monthly stipend they received would be enough to cover their basic needs and that access to rights would be guaranteed. In addition, resettlement also sparkled aspirations, independently of the host country, since it was perceived as the only solution for finally leaving the camp and hoping for a better future.

Despite the differences in the patterns of displacement between Palestinian and Colombian refugees, similar factors influenced Colombian refugees’ expectations about resettlement. In most of the cases, the resettlement option came as the last resort when persecution found them again in the first country of asylum. Expectations were therefore constructed in a context of emergency and fear, in which Chile and Brazil did not represent the most attractive options but were indeed the only options. The narratives of Paula (resettled in Chile) and Daniela (resettled in Brazil) illustrate how these elements framed their expectations:

After we received death threats we told everything to the authorities and they moved us almost immediately here. The only delegations that came to Ecuador at that time were Chile and Brazil . . . and I was a bit disappointed because my dream was to go to another place, I don’t know, like Canada or Sweden. But when I realized that those weren’t an option, we thought we should just take whatever comes because we needed to protect our children. (Paula, Colombian refugee in Chile)

We didn’t know how we were going to get here; we only knew that we will have some guarantees. . . . They told us many things, everything very pretty. Based on that we decided to accept [to go to Brazil]. (Daniela, Colombian refugee in Brazil)

Similar to the Palestinian refugees, Paula and Daniela described how they built their expectations about resettlement in Chile and Brazil in the context of an emergency and based on vague information about the program. Unlike Palestinian refugees, Colombians did have some knowledge about Chile and Brazil. These countries would not have been their first choices, which is why the information provided by the resettlement organizations, even if vague, was key in their decision to accept the offer of resettlement. Being resettled within Latin America—a region characterized by inequality—generated another source of uncertainty, and the information provided by the resettlement organizations was the only resource for people to cope and manage these uncertainties (see Griffiths 2013).

In the case of the Colombian refugees, their expectations were also influenced by the time spent in the first country of asylum. Most of the Colombian refugees that I interviewed in Chile and Brazil had spent between two and eight years in the first country of asylum (Ecuador, Costa Rica, or Venezuela), and before they were persecuted in those countries, some of them enjoyed their life there. As Milena, a Colombian refugee resettled in Chile, told me, “I didn’t want to leave Ecuador. I would have stayed, because I liked it there. . . . But we had to leave because we were in danger.” In some cases, the process of local integration in the first country of asylum was disrupted by persecution and violence.

In the case of both Colombian and Palestinian refugees, the expectations created were related to the aspirations of socioeconomic stability and security, firmly relying on what the organizations offered as part of the resettlement program. But whereas, to Colombian refugees, security was related mainly to physical protection, in the case of Palestinians, security was understood as the guarantee of their rights. Both groups aspired to have a stable living standard. It is relevant to note that expectations were more or less similar across genders.

The discussion of refugees’ experiences predeparture enhances our understanding of how refugees framed their expectations, what these expectations were, and the pivotal role that the information provided in the first country of asylum or displacement had in refugees’ acceptance of resettlement. Information as a key factor in the creation of expectations reveals how it became a mechanism of coercion that put in question how voluntary the acceptance of the resettlement option was. The next section briefly explores how these expectations turned into “unfulfilled promises” affecting the relationship between actors and the resettlement experience.

Refugees’ Unmet Expectations

The expectations that refugees generated predeparture clashed with their experiences in the host countries, and, soon after arrival, they turned into complaints of unfulfilled promises. As the Palestinian groups in each country arrived roughly at the same time in 2007–2008, their perceptions postarrival in Chile and Brazil seemed to be more similar than those of Colombian refugees, whose perceptions varied depending on their year of arrival.

The complaints of the Palestinian refugees in Chile focused on the lack of accuracy of information given to them in the Al Tanf camp by the Chilean commission (composed of members of the UNHCR, the government, and the implementing agency) and how this contrasted with their socioeconomic situation in the resettlement country. Rahal highlighted some of the main issues:

Here it is different to what I thought it would be. Very different. . . . I thought that in this country I would have a good situation and that I could live fine. But when we arrived, finding a job was difficult and we worked so much for very little money. (Rahal, Palestinian refugee in Chile)

While Palestinian refugees criticized the lack of accurate information, staff from the resettlement program in Chile stated that all the information was given but that refugees may have misunderstood what was said in the camp. Regardless of the reason, unmet expectations had a direct impact on refugees' experiences of resettlement and their relationship with service providers. Refugees perceived that the organizations lied to them about the country, particularly in relation to the high cost of living and the stipend that they would receive. This perception created mistrust of institutions involved in resettlement and added a layer of tension to their daily relationship (Hynes 2003; Daniel and Knudsen 1995).

Palestinian refugees faced their unmet aspirations with fears of further downward social and occupational mobility after two years in the refugee camp. Most of them had had jobs and a stable socioeconomic situation in Iraq. However, after years of displacement, Palestinian refugees faced a new beginning in Chile with the difficulty of learning a new language and the challenge of finding stable employment (Bijit 2012).

As with their counterparts in Chile, Palestinian refugees in Brazil showed great frustration in relation to unmet expectations but also great disappointment with their current life in Brazil. Mahfoud was one of the oldest Palestinians in Brazil, at sixty-seven years old. As with other Palestinian refugees in vulnerable situations, Mahfoud was uncertain about his future or where he was going to live after the announcement that the UNHCR would stop supporting elderly and vulnerable Palestinians at the beginning of 2014. Mahfoud's account illustrates some of the promises made by the UNHCR staff in Jordan and his frustrations over the unmet promises:

They told me, "Look there in Brazil you are going to study Portuguese, you will find a house, you will have a job, everything." And nothing [was accomplished]! Nothing! . . . The problem is the UNHCR, nobody else. The UNHCR doesn't want to help us, they don't want us to work, they don't want anything to do with us, and they just want to leave us here. If we die, we die. If we live, we live. Two hundred reales per month? What am I? A cat? I am not a cat, I am a man! (Mahfoud, Palestinian refugee in Brazil)

Mahfoud's criticism underscores how the mistrust toward the UN, developed predeparture in the refugee camp, extended into the resettlement country once refugees faced the unfulfilled expectations. Palestinian refugees in Brazil, as in Chile, blamed the UN agency for providing unclear and misleading information about the resettlement country, but they also criticized the UNHCR approach in relation to their current situation. The

quotation above emphasizes that the mistrust inculcated toward the UN system goes beyond the boundaries of the specific places of displacement and develops translocally, shaping the complex relationships and dynamics between refugees and service providers (see Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013; Hynes 2003). As in Chile, the focus of their anger and apathy was the UNHCR and the implementing NGOs, and, to a lesser extent, they also blamed the government, demonstrating the relational aspect of power. Even though it was the governments who accepted their resettlement in the first place, refugees' daily contact predeparture was with the UNHCR and with the implementing agencies in the host country, who they identified as direct recipients of UNHCR funds.

For Mahfoud, as for other Palestinian refugees in both study sites, the uncertainty and instability experienced during displacement did not end with a durable solution in Brazil but instead became a constant, extending the temporal and spatial limits of uncertainty (El-Shaarawi 2015) and shaping the experience as one of unsettlement. Mahfoud's case was particularly acute because, being sixty-seven years old, he felt powerless. His major frustrations were related to his lack of self-sufficiency, precisely one of the main goals of the resettlement program in the country. He did not have permanent housing, and he was dependent on other people.

While the expectations of Palestinians in Chile and Brazil were similar, their conditions in the resettlement country five or six years after arrival were very different. While most of the Palestinian families interviewed in Chile were relatively socially and economically settled, those interviewed in Brazil, particularly the elderly, were unemployed and living in conditions of societal marginalization (no secure income, lack of access to some social programs, risk of being homeless, and poor language skills). Palestinian refugees in Chile had most of their immediate material needs covered and had at least one source of income per household. In addition, all the families had their own house after the government managed to include them in national housing subsidies. In Brazil, only one of the Palestinian families I interviewed managed to access a housing subsidy. Some young families and single refugees seemed to be doing better in Brazil, having secured jobs and built important social networks.

In the case of Colombian refugees in both countries, perceptions about the accomplishment of expectations were more diverse than in the case of Palestinian resettled refugees. However, there was a consensus that the information given by the resettlement organizations was rather superficial and misleading, portraying both countries' socioeconomic situation and access as better than they really were, particularly in relation to housing and jobs. Colombian refugees in Chile also highlighted issues related to cultural differences and discrimination, while Colombians in Brazil focused on the poor quality of the Portuguese classes and the barriers to accessing higher

education. Some refugees in both countries also spoke about their security concerns due to the arrival of large numbers of Colombians in both host countries.

Exploring how expectations were constructed and how they turned into unfulfilled promises shows that refugees are not static within their own experiences. Refugees' expectations were also revealed as coping mechanisms and expressions of hope, particularly in the period of predeparture, as suggested by Horst and Grabska (2015), but also as a negotiation tool of power and resistance against the bureaucracies of resettlement once in the host country. They were central to refugee claims and active forms of organization (see Moulin 2012). In all these forms, expectations were at the center of the sometimes tense relationship between the resettlement program and the Palestinian and Colombian refugees in both countries.

Expectations, as shown in this chapter, are a translocal expression of the refugee experience, as they were spatially developed in one or multiple places and they shaped the communication with the organizations involved pre- and postresettlement (Westoby 2009; Fanjoy et al. 2005). Finally, exploring refugees' expectations reveals the pivotal role of information as an instrument of power that can produce "protracted uncertainty" (Biehl 2015), by which limited knowledge, waiting, and instability marked the experience of refugees both in the first country of asylum and in the resettlement country.

Resettlement Organizations' Expectations and Power Imbalances

Whereas the previous section focused on refugees' expectations, this section explores the way in which refugees were discursively constructed by members of organizations involved in resettlement through their own expectations. While some expectations were based on the program's objectives, the assumptions about refugees' behavior were shaped by hegemonic discourses about what "refugeeness" should be. I explore some concrete examples of how these representations play out in relation to the program's aim of self-sufficiency before discussing the different understandings of refugee protection. Each actor based her or his aspirations and assumptions on her or his experiences and rationale, together with structural (and budgetary) constraints.

Refugee Mentality and the Hegemonic Discourses about Self-Sufficiency

During my fieldwork at both research sites, I interviewed twenty people directly involved in the resettlement program as staff (or former members)

of the organizations in each country.² While all of them expressed commitment to refugee protection and highlighted the well-intentioned aims of the resettlement program, some of the staff members held contradictory views about refugees. These representations of refugees affected and shaped their work, resulting in either a victim-savior approach (Harrell-Bond 2002) or the need to overcome what they called “refugee mentality.” These two ideas emerged in the interviews in both countries and were evident while exploring the expectations held by the resettlement program in relation to the refugees’ integration process. For example, one of the goals of the resettlement program in both countries was refugee self-sufficiency, which was understood by the implementing agencies as economic autonomy and refugees finding employment as key to their integration. This notion of self-sufficiency was even considered during the selection process, as both countries recognized that one of the criteria was “integration potential” (Gugliemelli-White 2012). NGO staff in Chile and Brazil explained that this potential was assessed in terms of previous experience, personal relationships, family composition, and willingness (and capacity) to work. As the resettlement coordinator of one of the NGOs in Brazil told me:

We have to select people with a perspective of fast integration. . . . Against our will we are discriminating against families with high vulnerability because we don’t have the capacity to work with them. At the moment of the selection, we privilege people that after a year can be economically self-sufficient. (resettlement coordinator of an implementing agency, Brazil)

It is worth noting that the expectations held by the resettlement organizations in relation to self-sufficiency and access to the labor market were not different from what the refugees themselves wanted. However, there was a gap between the assumptions of refugees and the program about what type of job they should access and how and when they should get it. In the case of Palestinian refugees in both countries and the Colombians in Brazil, language was an explicit barrier along with the type of employment (sometimes completely different from refugees’ previous experience or aspirations). Additionally, refugees faced obstacles validating previous academic degrees and other issues related to age, gender barriers, or family dynamics that may have delayed their access to the job market.

Furthermore, there was a difference in what the institutions and refugees understood by self-sufficiency. For the program in both countries, self-sufficiency was related to economic stability. For refugees, self-sufficiency involved economic autonomy as well as agency and ownership of their resettlement process. For example, refugees raised demands in relation to what they considered unmet promises (discussed earlier) as well as a desire for citizenship and equal access to rights. This attitude was sometimes considered ungrateful by the resettlement organizations and explained away as due to

their “refugee mentality.” The notion of “refugee mentality” that emerged from the interviews was associated with the belief that refugees were used to being assisted and unable or unwilling to develop their own livelihood projects. This rhetoric was more common when referring to Palestinian refugees but was also used to explain the behavior of some Colombian refugees. The quotations below show how this idea was framed in the narratives about the program in each country:

There was a change in the attitude of the [Palestinian] beneficiaries that I placed around the second half of 2009. Because Palestinians always had a refugee mentality, you know, that the “international community own us.” . . . So, at the beginning there was a constant asking and asking. (resettlement analyst, Ministry of Interior, Chile)

You have that Colombian refugee that was so long in Venezuela; I don’t know . . . we usually said that those are the most likely to return or the ones that want to extend the financial assistance. Because when they are in the first country of asylum, they are being assisted as well, so they don’t want to stop being assisted. They are used to it. (resettlement coordinator of an implementing agency, Brazil)

In the case of Palestinian refugees, the resettlement organizations associated their refugeeness with living in a refugee camp, because “they were getting all their basic needs covered there.” This view focuses only on the basic assistance refugees received, decontextualizing that help from the appalling conditions in which refugees were living in the middle of the desert, unwillingly and unable to leave. As Malkki (1996) argues, these types of views depoliticize refugees and remove them from their historical context, reducing them to humanitarian subjects. I argue that in the case of Chile and Brazil, depending on refugee compliance in what was expected from them, their refugeeness made them either “universal victims” worthy of help and protection (Rajaram 2002) or “ungrateful” subjects who were used to claiming and unwilling to integrate (Moulin 2012).

The narratives that construct refugees as recipients of assistance (Rajaram 2002; see also Sigona 2014) do not account for how refugees themselves construct their own identities and agency. Most of the Palestinian refugees that I interviewed constructed their refugeeness in relation to their own narratives, relational settings, and historical processes, with being part of the Palestinian diaspora, displaced from their homeland (Doraï 2002). Indeed, their collective refugeeness was not only a humanitarian issue but also a political issue that demanded recognition, and a solution, from the international community. In this context, their refugee status, as they did with their expectations, was used as an instrument of power negotiation and resistance to claim part of the life they had lost. However, refugees did not see their refugeeness as being linked to continuous assistance but indeed

as a reminder that their lives were disrupted and put on hold because of a displacement that they did not want.

Protection versus Integration: Framing the Good Refugee

Expectations surrounding what constituted the “good refugee” that emerged from the organizations’ narratives were also related to the resettlement program’s main objective: refugee protection. This notion of protection is mainly understood as legal protection (Helton 2003) in line with the requirements of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The resettlement program in both countries understood protection as the reestablishment of basic rights by taking people out of dangerous or appalling situations in the context of a humanitarian emergency. This emphasis is evident in staff members’ narratives of implementing agencies in both countries:

Ok, I agree that you had to leave behind relatives, parents, brothers, I don’t know, friends, your life and a particular environment . . . but the program is not designed to provide you the life you used to have. The program is there to save your lives, you know? (former interpreter in an implementing agency, Chile)

When you asked me for the main objective of the program, I told you about the goal of autonomy, mainly through insertion to the labor market. However, thinking in the bigger picture, the main aim before anything else is the one of protection. And that is pretty much something that they can get in Brazil. (staff member in an implementing agency, Brazil)

According to these accounts, protection is understood in relation to refugees’ safety in the host state, the recognition of refugee status, and the state’s decision to grant them a residency permit. This understanding of protection that prevails as the main goal of the resettlement program in both countries conveniently dismisses refugees’ demands in relation to their substantial integration. The accounts of implementing agencies focused on the idea that refugees were safe in the host countries and therefore should be thankful. Indeed, refugees were thankful for Chile’s and Brazil’s protection, but they understood protection as needing to include the rights that they could not access and the accomplishment of unfulfilled promises. Between both understandings of what should be the scope of protection emerged the well-known paradox between refugee protection and refugee integration: legal status does not necessarily guarantee substantial citizenship and/or belonging (Da Lomba 2010; Hyndman 2011). Hence, it can be argued that resettlement as a durable solution does not necessarily mean the end of the refugee cycle, and many refugees found themselves living in a condition of prolonged uncertainty.

Furthermore, in both countries narratives emerged about the “ungrateful subject” (Moulin 2012), those refugees who appraised the *gift* of humanitar-

ian protection as not sufficient without equal access to rights and services in the host country. Moulin argues that refugee resistance goes against the gratitude expected by hosts in relation to the *gift of protection* granted by the sovereign authority. In her analysis, she argues that expectations of gratitude by hosting societies are based on the premise that by providing freedom and protection, the refugees must be self-sufficient and obedient.

The trade-off between protection and refugee compliance to the “laws of gratitude” suggested by Moulin shaped to an extent the relationship between resettlement organizations and refugees. This tension was not exclusively between Palestinian refugees and the resettlement program. Colombian refugees were, to a lesser extent, also regarded under the lens of the “good and thankful refugee.”

In this context, Colombian and Palestinian refugees who complained about unmet promises or who requested more attention from the organizations were deemed as “problematic,” as “ungrateful,” or as having the previously discussed refugee mentality. An example of this rhetoric was the case of Eugenia and her family, who developed a tense relationship with one of the NGOs in Brazil when the family actively demanded written communication, either on paper or by email, from the NGO. I discussed this case several times with members of the NGO, and they thought Eugenia and her family were “making noise” to get more assistance. They told me that they had never before received a request for written communication from refugees and that they did not have time to answer her directly.

Eugenia’s request for written communication was not outside the possibilities of the NGO. However, there was no interest in responding. This case, and the service providers’ narratives, showed that, on the one hand, there is mistrust in relation to the true intentions of the refugees’ demands (Daniel and Knudsen 1995). On the other, none of the NGOs involved in resettlement expressed the need to be accountable to refugees (see Harrell-Bond 2002). They were accountable to the UNHCR, the donors, and the governments through different types of reports and daily communication, but not to the beneficiaries.

The NGO’s refusal to provide the information in writing as requested by Eugenia resituated her in the position of *waiting*. This waiting leaves refugees expecting information from others, unaware of how long they may have to wait and uncertain of what they should or should not wait for. The wait for clear information puts the refugee on hold, reducing their negotiating power. As Bourdieu (2000: 228) argues, waiting implies submission and is “one of the ways of experiencing the effects of power . . . making people wait, . . . delaying without destroying hope . . . is an integral part of the exercise of power.” That is to say, to be a refugee is to be subordinated to the will of others (Auyero 2012): the countries, the international organizations, the host society, and even the NGOs.

Some staff members unintentionally reinforced this exercise of power during their daily encounters with refugees by providing (or not providing) specific information or by making decisions that changed some of the terms and conditions of the program. Refugees were constantly reminded that the resettlement organizations set the dynamics of their relationship, since they were the ones facilitating mobility into the country; they provided their subsistence allowance and enabled, for example, their applications to certain entrepreneurship credits or benefits. In this context, control over information was crucial for defining the power structures within resettlement (See Harrell-Bond 1999, 2002). As one former staff member of the program told me, “Access to information is a right, but in the context of resettlement [it] is treated as a privilege.”

In Brazil, some organization members recognized the need to improve and standardize the information provided to resettled individuals in the host country and to make transparent the criteria used for specific decisions, because the ad hoc approach in place was guided by the personal affinity between staff and certain refugees. In Chile, the delivery of information was also weak and needed to be harmonized. One refugee, Paula, told me that in order to know what was happening she used to go to the NGO’s premises every week to check if there was a new service, information, or activities available. Basically, information was indeed provided, but on request only.

The performance of the resettlement organizations in Chile and Brazil vis-à-vis refugees exemplifies what I call the paradoxes between the politics of humanitarianism and the politics of belonging. The resettlement program has been designed and implemented based on the emergency and the need, expressed by the organizations, to provide immediate relief to victims of displacement, in line with common understandings of humanitarianism (Barnett and Weiss 2008). At the same time, however, the program demanded that refugees adopt the passive role of a humanitarian subject who complied with the logic of gratitude and the responsibility of self-sufficiency as the main means of integration.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the power imbalances in the resettlement process of Colombian and Palestinian refugees in Chile and Brazil, showing how these were developed at different scales of the refugee experience: from the discretionary decision of both states to resettle to the exercise of power through the control of information. The findings discussed in this chapter support the suggestion that the humanitarian structure of refugee protection has institutionalized, depoliticized, and silenced the figure of the refugee (Rajaram 2002; Malkki 1996; also Sandvik, this volume) and has exacer-

bated the power imbalances between the resettlement organizations and refugees (Hyndman 2000; Harrell-Bond 1999). Consequently, the processes and interventions of NGOs have been shaped in a way that encourages the mistrust and resentment expressed by refugees.

This chapter traced these power imbalances by looking at the expectations of both refugees and the organizations involved, showing how these interactions contributed to refugees' experiences of unsettlement by extending and normalizing refugees' uncertainties in the host country, while regulating how these uncertainties are "framed and made sense of" (Biehl 2015: 70).

This discussion adds new dimensions to the understanding of refugees' experiences by exploring the pivotal role of interactions in resettlement and the role of organizations as part of the resettlement experience. The analysis of the experiences of resettlement in these two Latin American countries is more relevant than ever. The prospects of the Global Compact on Refugees and the shift on humanitarian governance to reinforce protection in the regions of origin place new emphasis in South-South responses and in emerging resettlement countries such as Chile and Brazil. As such, refugee resettlement has global and regional implications as well as local and individual ones that go beyond the emergency of taking refugees out of the camp or dangerous zones. Through the study of resettlement in Chile and Brazil, this chapter contributes to the understanding of this durable solution in emergent resettlement countries, showing that the power imbalances of resettlement as a humanitarian tool are transversal across host countries and affect resettled refugees of different origins equally.

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Notes

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Sheffield ethics committee in 2012 before the beginning of the fieldwork. All the interviews, participant observation, and surveys were conducted after informed and written consent was given. All the data provided by the participants has been treated confidentially. In order to protect refugees' identity and confidentiality, their names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

2. I also interviewed another sixteen informants who were involved in refugee assistance or related to the program—either through formal or informal partnerships.

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