

WAITING FOR ASYLUM IN GLASGOW

>> REBECCA ROTTER

Ohhh my goodness. Our life was put on pause for six years and a half. Living with the stress to be deported at any time, living in stress to be detained at any time, fear of dawn raids any time, any time someone could knock on your door very hard and then maybe it would be broken down. Not able to sleep properly over the night, keeping watching from the window, hearing other people are deported in an unhuman [sic] way...living on the very small of the benefits £5 a day...not allowed to do, to work or you know, many things, deprived of things. For six years and...Maybe it would be OK if you are living in this way a few months but not for six years and a half. It was a very stressful situation...I have now heart damage, you know...You are scared...

But in the meantime we are released by the support which we've been getting from nice people, Scottish people, organizations. And new Scottish government have done so much things. They were great. If not for the nice people then maybe we would early be deported, all asylum seekers would be early deported, in one box...Really, really, the help of the organizations was very appreciated, was very appreciated, was very helpful...

[Going to community projects] relieved me of being stressed. As well I can meet other people in the same situation, of course with the supporters, the campaigners, and we can expose our concerns, talk about ourselves, plan what we do, what to do. And many times we have an opportunity to be heard by the high circles like Scottish government, Westminster and [The Joint Committee on Human Rights]. So if we didn't go there we would never have our voices heard. So it was very helpful for the campaigners to know our concerns and to expose them, because it's good to hear from them but even better to hear from asylum seekers, for them to speak for themselves.

-Manal, asylum seeker from North Africa

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, there was a dramatic rise in the number of people seeking asylum in the UK, reflecting a global increase in people on the move (UNHCR 2000). The British government introduced a number of relatively draconian legislative measures to respond to what was perceived as uncontrolled and unwanted immigration. Administrative measures were also instituted to reduce intervals between various stages of assessment in the asylum process. Nevertheless, application levels remained high and by the end of 1998, a backlog had developed of over 64,800 asylum cases awaiting an initial decision and 80,800 cases awaiting action (Home Office 1998). The New Asylum Model was introduced in 2005, with the objective of resolving new cases at a much faster rate. However, in 2006 it was revealed that an estimated 400,000-450,000 asylum cases which had been processed under the old system were still unresolved (National Audit Office 2009). Such people had been waiting in the asylum process for many years, uncertain of what futures lay ahead for them.

Scholars, advocates, service providers and legal professionals have highlighted that long waiting times are a source of prolonged suffering for applicants (cf. Stewart 2005; Sigona and Torre 2005; Pirouet 2001; Zetter 2007). Politicians, public sector auditors and the Home Office have also identified lengthy asylum determinations as a problem from the perspective of bureaucratic efficiency and costs to the taxpayer (cf. BBC 2002; National Audit Office 2004, 2009). Yet few studies have made the waiting period a primary topic of investigation. When I began my doctoral research in 2005, I regarded this period of time not as an 'empty interlude' (Chan and Loveridge 1987), but as highly informative and significant for asylum seekers' experiences of migration and (re)settlement. I set out to consider what happens when people live in a protracted state of waiting, asking: How are people

oriented in time when they wait? How do they cope with contingency and give meaning to experiences of waiting? What do they do while waiting? Are they able, and do they consider it desirable, to develop a sense of belonging in the local milieu while occupying a temporary status? In this article, I want to briefly touch upon some of the points that arose in pursuing these questions during fieldwork with a group of asylum seekers living in Glasgow. Specifically, I want to describe some key aspects of the experience of waiting for asylum, and to highlight the roles that local asylum advocacy organizations played for asylum seekers during this period, which are highlighted in Manal's account above.

Since the policy of dispersal began in 2000, Glasgow has accommodated more dispersed asylum seekers than any other city in the UK. The city and its residents were reportedly unprepared for dispersal in terms of community relations and equalities structures. There was a legacy of neglect of race issues in Scotland (Williams and De Lima 2006); few refugee or ethnic minority communities were already resident in the dispersal areas; and media reporting tended to convey negative attitudes towards asylum seekers (Kelly 2002). However, since that time, the Scottish government¹ and residents of Glasgow have taken an increasingly pro-active and positive stance to the presence and settlement of asylum seekers. This stance in many respects lies in tension with the approach to immigration and asylum taken by central government in Westminster. A consultative group was set up by the Scottish government in 2002 to develop plans to enable the successful integration of asylum seekers

1 Following a referendum in 1997, the Scottish Parliament was established. Devolution transferred responsibility for a number of areas of governance, such as integration and social cohesion, children's affairs, education and training, social work, housing and planning, and health, to the Scottish government. Immigration affairs remained the responsibility of central UK government in Westminster.

and those with Refugee Status in Scotland² and the provision of more accessible, coordinated and good quality services (Scottish Refugee Integration Forum 2003). A range of services and voluntary sector organizations were established and funded under this framework. Grassroots lobbying groups, befriending schemes, and support programs for people in detention were also initiated. Artists, writers and poets collaborated with asylum seekers to challenge dominant discourses about asylum-seeking, address the marginalization of asylum seekers, and create spaces for new identities and social bonds to emerge.

Their work has been significantly facilitated not only by the Scottish government's support for asylum seekers, but also the extended duration that applicants have lived in Glasgow. Over many years of residence in the city, asylum seekers from diverse backgrounds have developed English language skills, taken up educational and volunteering opportunities, and established relationships and networks with other asylum seekers, co-nationals and locals. Their children have attended school, built friendships and become acculturated to local life. In other words, their lives have in many ways come to resemble the settled, routinized lives of long-term residents. This has both facilitated their regular and ongoing involvement in community projects and enabled community organizations to target and maintain contact with them.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I conducted ethnographic research with around sixty asylum seekers living in Glasgow over a period of twelve months. Ethnography involves prolonged immersion in the lives of research participants so that a descriptive, detailed and holistic account of their social world(s) may be given. Research data is

² The approach in Scotland has been to support the integration of people from the point of their arrival in Scotland, in contrast to the policy of Westminster, which is to support the integration only of those recognised as Refugees.

collected through participant-observation, which involves "informal, interpersonal and 'everyday' types of encounters" (Rodgers 2004: 48): living among participants, taking part in informal conversations, conducting semi-structured interviews, participating in shared activities, and observing interactions and practices. This approach allows the voices of forced migrants themselves to be heard, revealing multiple experiences and perspectives, and capturing tacit knowledge and values (ibid.). It enables the identification of experiences that are more easily articulated through practice than dialogue, which might not be verbalized in the single instance of an interview. And it offers a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexity of the everyday lives of asylum seekers, including changes which occur over time.

A significant part of my fieldwork involved working with a refugee advocacy organization (RAO) in Glasgow which I will call 'Ralston Community Integration Project' (RCIP). I conducted participant observation at its projects, as well as in the homes of asylum-seeking participants, at appeal hearings, meetings with solicitors, community events and celebrations such as weddings and national or religious holiday parties. RCIP ran regular activities for asylum seekers and locals, including drop-ins with English language tuition, a women's group and various arts-based projects involving collaborations with musicians, choreographers, poets, writers and photographers. It organized community events to challenge myths and stereotypes about asylum seekers, present their stories, and offer opportunities for meaningful contact between them and others living in the local area. A small workforce supported by a number of volunteers designed and delivered the projects, secured funding, co-operated with other voluntary and statutory organizations, and provided information, advice and various kinds of support to asylum seekers living in the local area of Ralston.

The asylum seekers who attended the projects or dropped into the office for a chat or advice came from over twenty-five countries, and spoke Arabic, Urdu, Farsi, Kurdish, Turkish and French, as well as a number of local languages. Most had fled from their countries of origin due to intimidation, oppression and/or torture, having been targeted for their membership of a political, religious or ethnic group; or civil war and unrest. The majority of individuals were part of a family unit.

Very soon after I began attending the RCIP projects, I realized that they played an important role in the experiences of the asylum seekers who attended, of waiting for asylum in Glasgow.

THE WAITING PERIOD AND THE ROLE OF REFUGEE ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Waiting is an integral part of human experience yet its forms have proliferated with the onset of modernity, which is characterized by a complex system of inter-dependent relations and events, in which the individual plays only a small part and exercises only limited control (Giddens 1990; Vanstone 1982). As Vincent Crapanzano (1986) has noted in his ethnography of South Africans waiting for the end of apartheid, waiting is inherently linked to power. People generally wait upon some process, individual or force that is beyond their control. They may seek an end to their waiting, but they essentially cannot hasten its arrival. As such, “one has no alternative to waiting, no personal action or initiative to which one can resort in lieu of that which the system, in its own time, delivers” (Vanstone 1982: 19).

The asylum process is representative of many kinds of bureaucratically-induced waiting that are part of everyday life. After lodging an application for protection, asylum seekers must wait for numerous events and processes to take place. They wait to be dispersed to accommodation and to receive an initial decision on their claim, which in the majority of cases is a refusal. When

this decision is appealed, applicants must wait for notification of whether their request for appeal has been successful; to be informed of the date of an appeal hearing; to meet with their solicitor to prepare their case; to receive medical reports testifying to their experience of torture; to learn the outcome of an appeal hearing; and so on. Some wait for the day they can safely return to their country of origin; to hear from friends or relatives there; and to be re-united with estranged relatives. The waiting of asylum seekers is qualitatively different to other forms of bureaucratically-induced waiting because of the rules that govern the terms of their waiting and because of what they are waiting for. Ultimately, they wait in a positive sense for a form of protection to be granted, which symbolizes and practically enables the continuation of life itself. Most of my participants anticipated that life with the right to remain in the UK would be ‘normal’, ‘free’ and filled with opportunities. In a negative sense, asylum applicants wait to receive a deportation order and forcible return to the country of origin, which represents threats to life or limb, and in many cases, death. For the people with whom I conducted research, the waiting period was characterized by certain cognitive, emotional, socio-economic and political ‘states’, which were articulated with certain procedures involved in the asylum process, particular policies, and waiting as a kind of existential condition.

UNCERTAINTY AND INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE

For an applicant to be granted asylum, his/her claim must comply with the Refugee Convention and its interpretation by the British courts, and be deemed ‘credible’. The requirements and procedures involved in achieving this can be difficult to understand by anyone without legal education and training, or familiarity with a similar legal system. As Good notes, applicants ‘often lack even folk knowledge of the principles of British law, and may hold very different ideas regarding justice, legal

procedures, and personal rights' (2007: 18). Many asylum seekers also face linguistic barriers and are dependent on legal representatives and interpreters who may not, and in many contexts, cannot, interpret and explain everything (see Rycroft 2005, 2009). My participants often communicated a sense of incomprehension at the aims of asylum procedures, legal concepts and legalistic jargon used in Home Office correspondence and appeals, as well as the grounds on which their applications were refused and appeals dismissed.

Many people told me that they constantly anticipated the possible paths their cases could take, and their conversations with others were a testament to this preoccupation with the future. However, it was particularly difficult to predict which of the possibilities they played out in their minds would be realized. This is partly because of the arbitrariness of asylum decision-making (Asylum Aid 1999), which makes it difficult for anyone to predict how a case will develop. Moreover, we rely on past experience to make assessments about what the future entails, including the likelihood that whatever we are waiting for will be delivered (Crapanzano 1986). When they became asylum seekers, most people lacked previous experience of flight and the asylum system. In other words, they had no personal precedent which could be invoked to provide a sense of meaning and order in relation to the asylum process. Consequently, many people were faced not only with a partial understanding of what was happening as present events unfolded – how their futures were being determined – but also with manifest uncertainty over the direction that their lives would take. This created an immense sense of powerlessness. As one woman told me, 'This is torture, waiting, not knowing. I don't know anything. I don't know what will happen to me tomorrow. I don't have a future. I just wake up everyday. I could go to the Home Office tomorrow and be sent back.'

Furthermore, the asylum process denies people any notion of when the things that they are waiting for will come. Everyday forms of waiting – the arrival and departure of public transport, the announcement of exam results, the birth of a child – tend to involve a well-defined point in the future, with date specificity, to which one may orient oneself. With this date in mind, we are able to 'count down' and perceive that we are moving towards the future goal or event. As such, there is a sense of progression in time. Most events in the asylum process and its absolute end do not have this temporal specificity. For asylum seekers, this gave their experience of waiting an open-endedness, which they found particularly difficult to cope with (see also Brekke 2004).

Organizations like RCIP help to structure the time of asylum seekers around a series of short term and longer term goals. The regular projects, meetings and events organized by RCIP provided asylum seekers with a platform for social interaction and the transmission of knowledge in a safe and supportive environment. With the assistance of interpreters, staff provided regular updates on Home Office policies and procedures in lay terms that were relevant to people's claims. They explained the purpose of various procedures, the timescales usually involved in each part of the asylum process, documentary requirements, and legal concepts. Project organizers and asylum seekers disseminated advice to other asylum seekers on how to find good legal representation and conduct affairs with legal practitioners (e.g. how regularly to contact them, what advice to seek). Links with other groups and organizations, such as the Home Office, the Scottish Refugee Council and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), were utilized to investigate issues of concern and the outcomes of such investigations were reported back to project participants. Written materials were regularly distributed so that people could later read

the information disseminated, or present it to their legal representative. Such practices had the effect of making the asylum process less obscure and impenetrable.

Asylum seekers themselves also shared their firsthand experiences of the asylum process with one another in one-on-one and group settings. They suggested actions that others might usefully take and specified how long they themselves and others they knew had waited for various actions. I often witnessed people using the experiences of others who were deemed to be in a similar position as a kind of 'proxy precedent', which enabled them to gain an idea or approximation of their own chances of being granted asylum, and how long they could expect to wait. Though such information was not always accurate or comparable, it nevertheless helped people to interpret and frame their own experiences, to transform individual, isolating experiences of waiting into a communal experience. Many felt reassured, more in control of their predicaments, and empowered by ideas about how they could proceed or act vis-à-vis their claims.

ISOLATION AND ALIENATION

A number of my participants had fled from countries where members of their population have only recently begun to migrate to the UK, and had few, if any, family, friends or acquaintances already resident in Glasgow. Particularly for those who knew only a couple of co-linguals in the city, dispersal was an extremely isolating experience. Many had united with kin, friends or co-nationals resident in London upon arrival in the UK, but, as Zetter et al (2005) have observed, dispersal tended to fracture the connection with their frameworks of community support. Most were keen to develop their English skills, to make friends with native English speakers and to learn about British/Scottish society. However, some people experienced shyness in conversing in English; were put off my perceived or direct experiences of prejudice towards asylum

seekers from local populations; were concerned about the differing behaviors and moral codes of conduct of locals; and lacked social contexts for interaction. This combination of factors could make it difficult to befriend local residents.

The RCIP projects importantly offered a space where personal relations with other asylum seekers and native speakers of English could be nurtured. The atmosphere at the projects was one of consociation and warmth, where people consistently made sympathetic enquiries into one another's well-being and shared in the successes and setbacks of one another's asylum cases and lives in general. Several elements were crucial to creating this atmosphere. The principle of advocacy underlay all RCIP operations. Support was unconditional, and the right of all asylum seekers to remain in the UK was accepted without question. Generally, there was an unspoken agreement that people were entitled to remain silent about their pasts and the substance of their claims for asylum. As such, their dignity was protected and the kinds of judgments most felt were being passed on them throughout the asylum process – about their credibility, trustworthiness and worth – were avoided. People were bound together by their difficult experiences in the asylum process and their opposition to the Home Office/immigration. The long-term nature of membership also allowed people to become familiar with one another and thus build a degree of trust. Some asylum seekers referred to the larger group of participants, volunteers and staff as 'community', and even more poignantly, as 'family' when they have no family in Scotland. Such language conveyed the sense of being wanted and accepted by a community in Glasgow, and of the existence of a place where they could belong.

Alongside campaigns such as Oxfam's Positive Images and community events such as Refugee Week, the RCIP projects were heavily geared towards educating local populations about the reasons why

people seek asylum and the hardships they face once they arrive in a country of asylum, in order to change attitudes and behavior. They provided an opportunity for asylum seekers to contribute their own ideas and accounts to debates about asylum in media stories, public talks and other forums, creating counter-discourses and new categories.

PASSIVITY AND DEPENDENCY

Asylum seekers who spend years in the asylum process must endure the passivity produced by both the condition of waiting itself and asylum policy. Waiting as a condition is characterized by passivity because its cessation is dependent upon the action of some force or entity beyond the reach of the individual who waits. People can seek the things for which they are waiting, but their arrival or non-arrival is beyond the individual's control (Crapanzano 1986). People must wait on their legal representatives, asylum decision makers and the system itself. The asylum seekers with whom I was involved often explained that while waiting, 'there is nothing I can do', 'you just sit' and 'you are like couch potatoes'. Such remarks not only expressed their relative inability to act in a way that would secure that which they waited for, but also their exclusion from desired activities - such as paid employment, full time tertiary education, travel, marriage, and exercising choice in housing - that integrate people into the ongoing life of a society.

The prohibition on paid employment was generally seen as the most debilitating factor, and linked to both psycho-social well-being and material conditions. Those who had previously worked in a professional career and/or were responsible for providing for their family's sustenance underwent a dramatic shift, and denigration, in role and status, when denied the opportunity to work. Many people felt shame and anger at being forced into a relationship of dependency with the state, especially since they believed that being on welfare was perceived by the host community as evidence of

their lack of work ethic and intent to exploit British society and the economy. One asylum-seeking woman from Zimbabwe who desperately wanted to work pointed to the stigma associated with being on welfare from both Scottish people and co-nationals. Mudiwa said of Scottish students in college: 'They see you as being different. For example, in class the other day we were doing something about calculating taxes, like gross and net and national insurance. A student in the class was explaining what taxes are used for and he said 'to take care of immigration, people coming here'... How does he feel about me? He resents me. He thinks I'm taking money from him. Most people have their opinion already set.' She further spoke of how the asylum seeker status was regarded within the Zimbabwean community, many members of which have the right to work in the UK as permanent residents or citizens: 'It's as if it's a curse, or it's something that you have to be embarrassed, ashamed about, so they don't really want to be put in the same category as you...most of them are working, they are getting all this and they just think 'you're on state benefits and you don't get much anyway' and they just think you're not worth anything.'

The meager financial resources available to asylum seekers limited their access to social and leisure activities. Once daily needs had been met - usually with careful planning - little money remained for public leisure or extra curricula activities for children. It was virtually impossible to own a car (or obtain a drivers license) so most had to rely on public transport and could not easily travel to areas outside of the city.

The RCIP projects were designed around free social, leisure and vocational opportunities. At the women's group, asylum-seeking women took turns to provide a meal for the remainder of the group, and the session was spent in discussion and working together on arts-based activities. Like other organizations, RCIP offered volunteering

opportunities, vocational courses, and workshops such as on financial planning or citizenship. These enabled people to continue to develop their skills, not only in order to feel a sense of development in the present but also to be better placed to take up employment in the future, if granted Refugee Status. Many said that along with studies at college and the responsibility of caring for their family unit, attending the projects gave them a task-focused purpose for each day. An improvement in confidence and well-being was observable in many individuals as they were able to exercise agency in decision-making and personal expression, and received the recognition of others.

EMBODIED PAIN AND SUFFERING

Women in particular communicated their experience of waiting with reference to bodily and psychological suffering. Often when I would ask women 'what is it like to wait?', they would answer with such comments as 'it's like torture', 'it drives you crazy', 'it plays with your mind', and confess to suffer from one, or many, bodily ailments, such as disturbances in sleep, depression, anxiety, rheumatism, headaches and stress, with the observable symptoms of weight gain, weight loss, poor skin condition, and tiredness. Such ailments were regarded as inextricably linked to the asylum process and were distinguished from acute or seasonal illnesses that attacked the body temporarily. As one woman said, 'all [asylum seekers] come with good health but it's the asylum process that makes them sick...the asylum process makes people die, it makes people mad, it makes people sick!'

These forms of suffering were a common theme of group conversation at the projects. Daniel (1996) has highlighted that more socialized pains, such as headache and toothache, are given names of recognition in folklore and diagnostic labels in medical lore. Even though no one pain is like another, their representations are public and available to more than one person to map his/her

private experience onto. Sympathy and empathy may then take over, making the pain more or less shareable. Amongst the participants in RCIP projects there was a shared understanding that naming one's suffering meant that others would witness the speaker's pain and struggles. Such 'witnessing' could engender collective sympathy that would help alleviate their suffering. Additionally, a number of individuals explicitly described the activities at the RCIP projects as a kind of temporary relief from suffering, as they diverted the attention. As one woman said of the project, 'while I'm here, I don't have to think about my troubles'.

THE THREAT OF DETENTION AND DEPORTATION

Until recently in Glasgow, 'dawn raids' were regularly used to target asylum seekers whose applications had been refused and appeal rights exhausted. Immigration personnel would arrive at the applicant's flat in the early hours of the morning to maximize the likelihood of the applicant being at home. Officers were entitled to force their way into the flat if they believed the applicant was at home but refusing to facilitate entry. Several asylum seekers spoke to me about their firsthand experiences of dawn raids and being detained by Immigration. Their accounts touched upon the sense of powerlessness and indignity they felt when uniformed men broke down their door and invaded their private space. They feared for the well-being of their children who were also detained, and were extremely anxious when family members were separated during the raid. They compared these traumatic events to experiences of violence and persecution in the country of origin. Dawn raids can be traumatic not only for the people targeted but others living in the flats who witness them, and children who arrive at school to find that their classmates have disappeared. Unsurprisingly, being "dawn-raided" and eventually deported was the primary fear overshadowing the lives of my participants. One woman described a recurring

nightmare in which she heard the stomping footsteps of outside her door and men's voices. She would wake up in a cold sweat only to hear silence, but would be unable to return to sleep.

Much of the campaigning around asylum in Glasgow has pivoted upon the issue of dawn raids. As responsibility for children has been devolved to the Scottish government, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People spoke out against the practice (BBC 2005). In 2008, the First Minister of Scotland entered into talks with Westminster to have the Dungavel detention centre closed and the following year the Scottish government entered into an agreement with UKBA to pilot a project in Scotland aiming to reduce the need for detention and enforced return of failed applicants (Ross 2008; UKBA 2009). Community organizations such as RCIP have provided concrete protection for those targeted for deportation. For example, an extremely vulnerable elderly man whose solicitor described his case as 'strong' received a deportation notice in the post. He immediately notified RCIP staff, who in turn contacted a Scottish person who acted as an advocate for many asylum seekers. With the consent of the applicant, this advocate assumed a supportive role, arranging an appointment with the man's solicitor to glean the substance and status of the case and find out what could be done, in addition to contacting the local MSP to raise public awareness of the case. Fearing dawn raids, the advocate also organized safe temporary accommodation where the man could stay until the status of his case was clear. He avoided deportation and was later granted Refugee Status.

Other grassroots organizations in Glasgow also have arrangements in place to act promptly if detention occurs. In one scheme, applicants register their details with an organization and sign into its logbook before they make their weekly or monthly visit to report at the Glasgow branch of the Home Office. If they fail to return in a reasonable time,

their solicitor is contacted, and if they are detained, a public campaign for their release initiated. If bail for release from detention is granted, the organization can raise and provide the sum.

It is this approach that Asad, an African asylum seeker, had in mind when he told me that 'People in Glasgow care...[RCIP] give hope to our women...if something happens, a hundred percent, the community do their best to find out [how to solve the problem]'. He compared the situation for asylum seekers in Glasgow to that in London. In London, he said, there are many people and no one will notice if an asylum seeker has been detained. Members of the national or ethnic community can help but they do not have the funding, resources and connections that organizations in Glasgow possess, which enables them to assist promptly and effectively. According to Asad, organizations in Glasgow, 'they know this thing...And they can find a good solicitor and even help you where you are, it's easy for them—phone here, phone there—because they are already a charity organization so they have contact with other connections so they can find help as quick as possible'. This kind of support was highly valued by every asylum seeker I met, as it helped to 'give hope', allay fears and enhance a sense of security. The efforts of Glasgow organizations, MSPs and resident-run campaigns revealed a desire and commitment to prevent the deportation of asylum seekers, and this helped to open up a space where asylum seekers could nurture a sense of belonging in Glasgow.

CONCLUSION

Not every asylum seeker wishes to become involved with RAOs like RCIP. Many people prefer to exclusively maintain formal or informal networks of support along national, ethnic, linguistic or kinship lines. Such networks undoubtedly offer a range of support that both overlaps with and is distinct from the forms covered here. For others, involvement with fellow asylum seekers can be complicated,

highlighting a stigmatizing identity they would rather shed, and drawing their attention to the asylum process when they would rather 'get on with life'. For the majority of people I met during my fieldwork in Glasgow, involvement with RAOs was regarded as beneficial and relatively unproblematic.

In the passage presented at the beginning of this article, Manal indicates that waiting has put her life on pause, and produced restriction, powerlessness and fear. Her account is fairly representative of experiences of the asylum seekers involved with RCIP. As I have outlined, the organization helped to combat the negative effects of waiting as an existential condition and asylum policies, which dictate the circumstances of everyday life. It was a space in which social processes pertaining to knowledge, recognition, attitudinal change, communality and protection, took place. Such processes were consistent with people's broader efforts to create normality, certainty and stability, for themselves and their families, while waiting. Without the asylum seekers' willingness to participate in the projects; commitment to continue attending despite the psychological burden they carried; and courage to openly share their stories with strangers whilst confronted with the hostility of the asylum system and rapid socio-cultural change, such processes would unlikely have taken place. Likewise, the success of the organization's endeavors was dependent upon the remarkable time, energy and dedication of staff to refugee empowerment and social justice. As waiting times draw out for asylum applicants in refugee-receiving countries, the issues raised here will continue to be of relevance to both people who search for protection and those who advocate for them; much can be learned from the case of Glasgow.

REFERENCES

- Asylum Aid (1999) *Still No Reason At All: Home Office Decisions on Asylum Claims*. London: Asylum Aid.
- Brekke, J. (2004) *While we are Waiting: Uncertainty and Empowerment among Asylum-Seekers in Sweden*. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.
- Chan, K.B. and Loveridge, D. (1987) 'Refugees "In Transit": Vietnamese in a Refugee Camp in Hong Kong'. *International Migration Review* 21: 745-759.
- Crapanzano, V. (1986) *Waiting: the Whites of South Africa*. London: Paladin.
- Daniel, E.V. (1996) *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Good, A. (2007) *Anthropology and Expertise in the Asylum Courts*. Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish.
- Home Office (1998) *Asylum Statistics: United Kingdom 1998*, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hosb1099.pdf>, accessed 19 May 2008.
- Kelly, E. (2002) 'Asylum Seekers and Politics in Scotland: August 2001'. *Scottish Affairs* 38: 1-26.
- National Audit Office (2004) *Improving the Speed and Quality of Asylum Decisions*. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 535 Session 2003-2004: 23 June 2004.
- (2009) *Management of Asylum Applications by the UK Border Agency*. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 124 Session 2008-2009.
- Pirouet, L. (2001) *Whatever Happened to Asylum in Britain? A Tale of Two Walls*. Oxford: Bergahn.
- Rodgers, G. (2004) "'Hanging Out" with Forced Migrants: Methodological and Ethical Challenges'. *Forced Migration Review* 21: 48-49.
- Ross, S. (2008) *Salmond in talks to force closure of Dungavel centre*. *The Scotsman*, 4th June 2008. http://thescotzman.scotzman.com/scotland/Salmond-in-talks-to_force.4147884.jp, accessed 24 June 2008.
- Rycroft, R. (2005) 'Communicative Barriers in the Asylum Account' in P. Shah (ed.), *The Challenge of Asylum to Legal Systems*. London: Cavendish.
- (2009) 'Interpreting in the Immigration Context', paper presented at France-UK Workshop on Asylum Procedures, Edinburgh, 30th-31st March, 2009.
- Schwartz, B. (1974) 'Waiting, Exchange, and Power: The Distribution of Time in Social Systems'. *The American Journal of Sociology* 79: 841-870.
- Schweizer, H. (2008) *On Waiting*. New York: Routledge.
- Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (2003) *Action Plan*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
- Sigona, N. and Torre, A. (2005) *Positive Contributions: Being a Refugee in Britain*. London: Refugee Housing Association.
- Stewart, E. (2005) 'Exploring the Vulnerability of Asylum Seekers in the UK'. *Population, Space and Place* 11: 499-512.
- UKBA (2009) *Voluntary Returns Project for Refused Asylum Families will Start in June*, 12th May 2009, http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/voluntary_returns_project, accessed 12 May 2009.
- UNHCR (2000) *The State of the World's Refugees: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*. Oxford University Press.
- Vanstone, W.H. (1982) *The Stature of Waiting*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd.
- Williams, C. and De Lima, P. (2006) 'Devolution, Multicultural Citizenship and Race Equality: From Laissez-faire to Nationally Responsible Policies', *Critical Social Policy* 26(3): 498-522.
- Zetter, R. (2007) 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20(2):

172-192.

- , Griffiths, D. and Sigona, N. (2005) 'Social Capital or Social Exclusion? The Impact of Asylum-Seeker Dispersal on UK Refugee Community Organizations'. *Community Development Journal* 40(2): 169-181.