

TRANSNATIONAL PUBLICS: ASYLUM AND THE ARTS IN THE CITY OF GLASGOW

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For the increasing numbers of stateless people, displaced by war and political violence, the arts and culture might seem like low priorities. Advocacy groups and activists primarily focus on protection, whether at the level of human rights, the asylum hearing process, immigration policies, or securing basic needs like shelter and food. Even for asylum seekers who succeed in escaping to countries like Canada and the United Kingdom where they can face years of uncertainty waiting for their refugee claims to be assessed—poetry, photography, writing and performance might seem like distractions from the realities they face. In Glasgow city, however, culture and the arts have been vital in creating inclusive transnational publics where asylum seekers are recognised as active contributors to civic life.

CULTURAL POLITICS IN GLASGOW, SCOTLAND

This issue of West Coast Line shares the work of artists, poets, photographers, story-tellers, journalists, a political cartoonist, art galleries, advocacy organisations, arts organizers, museums, cultural policy experts, social workers, academics and organisations run by asylum seekers who have contributed to the transformation of Glasgow. With the arrival of thousands of asylum seekers in 2000 when the British Home Office's National Asylum Support Service (now the UK Border Agency) started its dispersal program, sending incoming asylum seekers to "dispersed" locations across the UK. The Glasgow City Council signed a contract to house 2,500 asylum seekers per year for five years¹ in low-income social housing projects, referred to

as "housing estates," which are located in the social margins of the city. This has made Glasgow the main destination for asylum seekers in Scotland and over the last decade, has provided the conditions for new social possibilities in a city haunted by its industrial past with high levels of unemployment and rates of heart disease, alcoholism and violence.²

In the first year of dispersal, over 3,000 arrived from countries as diverse as Iraq, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan and China. According to the Scottish Refugee Council there are now approximately 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.³ The sudden arrival of so many asylum seekers has forced Glaswegians and the newly formed Scottish government (in 1999) to consider their responsibilities to this vulnerable sector of the population whom, unlike in Canada's multicultural society, are highly visible because of their cultural differences and also because they are spatially segregated in the housing estates. Like activists, academics and advocacy organizations in Canada,⁴ those in Scotland (see Good, Rotter, Kay and Phipps in this issue) are now assessing the obligations of governments and residents in their jurisdictions to

1 Aileen Barclay, Alison Bowes, Iain Ferguson, Duncan Sim and Maggie Valenti with the assistance of Soraya Fard and Sherry MacIntosh (2003), "Asylum Seekers in Scotland," Report of the Scottish Executive, Edinburgh, p. 20. This contract was extended until 2010 but was not renewed in 2011, which could mean asylum seekers will be scattered across other regions, rather than concentrating everyone in Glasgow. This will radically change the inclusive civic space that has developed in Glasgow with its networks of support and accumulated knowledge.

2 Ian Jack (2011) "So much in Glasgow has changed, but violence against women persists," Guardian, March 12, 2011; accessed April 3, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/12/celtic-rangers-glasgow-domestic-violence?INTCMP=SRCH>.

3 Scottish Refugee Council (2008) "Annual Report," Glasgow, pp. 1-22.

4 Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (eds) (2008) *Acts of Citizenship*. London: Zed Books; Peter Nyers (2009) *Securitizations of Citizenship*. London: Routledge. Here, there are important debates on what constitutes a "Just City" (Marcuse 2009) as well as research that develops Henri LeFebvre's work on "rights to the city" in a global world. See for example, Peter Marcuse, James Connolly, Johannes Novy, Ingrid Olivo, Cuz Potter and Justin Steil (eds) (2009) *Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice*, New York: Routledge; Edward J. Soja (2010) *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press; Rob Shields (1998) *LeFebvre, Love, and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*. Florence, KY, USA: Routledge; Isin and Nielsen cited above.

non-status migrants like asylum seekers as well as migrant workers who can cross borders more easily with the changing international agreements. In a global world where there are increasing numbers of stateless people, the idea that access to rights should be primarily based on national identity and citizenship is being questioned.⁵ This is why there is much to learn from cities like Glasgow where there have been initiatives to create forums as well as policies to include asylum seekers as members of Scottish society.⁶ This “problem” is not going away, even if countries like Britain and Canada are increasing restrictions on crossing borders and accessing fair hearings.⁷

At a global level, by the end of 2009 the total “population of concern” to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was estimated at 36.5 million people, including 10.4 million refugees and 983,000 asylum seekers.⁸ The term ‘Refugee’ refers to “stateless persons” who have left their countries of residence for fear of persecution and been granted refugee status by a receiving country, while those referred to as asylum seekers have sought protection but not yet been granted refugee status. These figures do not include migrant workers, and other sectors of the global population

that have been displaced in the name of resource extraction, tourism, military occupation or other such developments.

How have the arts and culture contributed to the emergence of transnational publics in cities throughout the United Kingdom, where the media has fanned feelings of hate and fear against asylum seekers and other migrants?⁹ Consider Glasgow. It is a city of 584,240 (2008) with only a small black and minority ethnic population.¹⁰ Renowned for violence and “alcohol related harm,”¹¹ “in terms of social needs...[Glasgow also] has ‘a range and concentration of poverty unmatched by any other major city in the UK’.”¹² In this context it is not surprising that like many towns and cities in the United Kingdom, at first there was a hostile response to the arrival of asylum seekers. In this issue Jennifer Ferguson, a community worker with extensive experience, explains that once forums were set up for locals and asylum seekers to meet one another and enter dialogues, in many cases they realized they shared similar problems and this made it possible to build relations. As contributors in this issue make evident, different groups in Glasgow have come together not just to break down the walls of fear and hostility, but to befriend and extend

5 The broader debates on rights and questions of citizenship in a transnational world are succinctly outlined by Milan Singh, a Ph.D. candidate at Simon Fraser University in her comprehensive exams under the direction of Catherine Murray of SFU.

6 See footnote #2.

7 In her article in this issue, Rebecca Rotter refers to the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum, which was a consultative committee established in 2002 by the Scottish Government to identify the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland and to ensure services meet required standards. See the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (2003) “Action Plan.” Edinburgh: Scottish Executive. Also see Anthony Good (2007). *Anthropology and Expertise in the Asylum Courts*. London: Routledge-Cavendish.

8 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2010) “Statistical Handbook 2009: Trends in displacement, protection and solutions”, October, p. 7.

9 See “Chapter Seven: Media Monitoring” in “Asylum Seekers in Scotland” in footnote #1; also see Oxfam’s Asylum Positive Images Project (see the report, “Asylum and the Media in Scotland: A report on the portrayal of asylum in the Scottish Media” by the Oxfam Asylum Positive Images Network and Glasgow Caledonian University, May 2004, pp. 1-88.

10 See S. Virdee, C. Kyriakides and T. Modood (2006) “Codes of Cultural Belonging: Racialised National Identity in a Multi-Ethnic Scottish Neighbourhood,” *Sociological Research Online* 11(4).

11 Glasgow City, Strathclyde Police and National Health Services of Greater Glasgow and Clyde, “Glasgow City Joint Alcohol Statement” October 2007, pp. 1-16.

12 Nicholas R. Fyfe and Christine Milligan (2003) “Space, citizenship, and voluntarism: critical reflections on the voluntary welfare sector in Glasgow,” *Environment and Planning A*, 35, pp. 2069-2086.

support to incoming asylum seekers.¹³

By no means should Glasgow be seen in utopian terms, for example, as free of racism and violence, but the point here is that the city is fundamentally different from when large numbers of people seeking asylum began to arrive in 2000. As the BBC documentary, “Tales from the Edge: Glasgow Girls” (2005) documents, there are local Scottish residents who have developed strong bonds with their asylum seeker neighbours, especially through their children. When immigration officers have conducted surprise “dawn raids” to extract asylum families from their flats and take them to detention centres, Scottish residents have formed human barriers to protect their friends whom they view as members of their community, rather than foreigners and strangers.

There are networks of support in other cities in the United Kingdom, like Manchester, that have taken stances against the “fortress Europe” ideology that drives immigration policies across Europe. But Glasgow is distinct from other towns and cities in the UK, especially in England, since it has a political identity as a Scottish city and also as a working class city that suffered severe economic decline when the Conservative government, under Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, shut down major industries throughout the 1980s. Thus Glasgow can tend to pit itself against England and by extension residents are more prone to reject the Home Office’s policies,

including policies on asylum. When the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, it sought to define a distinctive vision of Scottish society. This was an opportunity for the Scottish Refugee Council (see Belinda McElhinney and Gary Christie in this issue), a voluntary organization that advocates on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees (and also provides advice and support services), to step forward and work to ensure the new government embraced human rights as a defining principle for Scotland, drawing on actual events and mythic ideas about Scottish history.¹⁴ The government’s position regarding asylum seekers has been that integration into Scottish society begins the moment they arrive, in contrast to the British government, which starts providing integration services only if and when asylum seekers receive leave to remain.¹⁵ In Scotland at a policy level, this translates into funding for integration and support services, including extensive translation and childcare services for asylum seekers attending meetings and training programs.

IN RELATION TO CULTURAL POLITICS IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

It is crucial to note that neither Scotland nor Glasgow has jurisdiction over immigration policies. Due to the increasingly restrictive policies of the New Labour government (and now the Conservative Liberal-Democratic coalition), the number of asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom has significantly decreased from 80,315 in 2000 to 24,250 in 2009, with approximately 30%

13 Also see Lynn Jamieson and Sue Grundy (2004) “Fortress, Melting Pot or Multi-Cultural Society: Attitudes to Immigration and Cultural Diversity”, Research Briefing 6. In addition to Rebecca Rotter in this issue, who completed her Ph.D. research on asylum in Glasgow at the University of Edinburgh in 2010, there are postgraduate students conducting research on asylum in Glasgow like Teresa Piacentini, whom I met when I first visited Glasgow in 2007 on the recommendation of Andrew Smith from the Department of Sociology at Glasgow University. See R. Rotter (2010) ‘Hanging In-Between’: Experiences of Waiting among Asylum Seekers Living in Glasgow. Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh. Geraldine Smyth from the University of Strathclyde is also conducting research on refugees in Scotland. See the 2010 special issue of *The Journal of Refugee Studies* on integration.

14 For more critical analyses of publics in Scotland, see Jean Barr (2008) *The Stranger Within: On the Idea of an Educated Public*. Rotterdam and Taipei: Sense Publishers; Philip Schlesinger, David Miller and William Dinan (eds) (2001) *Open Scotland? Journalists, Spin Doctors and Lobbyists*. Edinburgh: Polygon at Edinburgh. Also note that historically Glasgow has had divisions between the Catholics and Protestants. For the history of migration in Glasgow see Mary Edward (2008) *Who Belongs to Glasgow*. Glasgow: Glasgow Libraries.

15 see footnote #2.

of the applicants being granted leave to remain in 2000 and 27% in 2009.¹⁶ While some scholars argue that sites of struggle should focus on sites of power where, for example, policy decisions are made, this singular focus assumes that power is in the hands of policy-makers alone (rather than policy-making being one, albeit, key site of power). Despite the lack of control that Scotland and Glasgow have over immigration policy,¹⁷ Glasgow has been a significant site of organization, protest, struggle and transformation.¹⁸

I went to Scotland as a Canadian researcher to learn about the role of the arts in creating inclusive transnational spaces for asylum seekers.¹⁹ I visited the city over a four year period and saw parallels but also differences between the political organizing and the cultural politics that transformed Vancouver (and other regions of Canada) starting in the

1970s and most visibly in the 1980s and 1990s, when artists and activists from Indigenous as well as racialized communities mobilized to demand recognition in the arts—recognition from curators, critics, publishers, funding agencies, film boards, academic scholars, civic and national art galleries and museums. I have seen how cultural politics has transformed who is recognized as a legitimate member of the public.²⁰ In Vancouver (as in other regions across Canada during this period) cultural production was a key site of struggle. The circulation of their artistic work and critical scholarship in art galleries, publishing houses, theatres, university courses, public lectures and film theatres as well as on television and radio, was a way to make the voices and visions of Indigenous People and racialized groups legitimate in the public domain and radically question the cultural hegemonic norms of racial exclusion.

Challenging the cultural hegemony²¹ was essential for movements to redress historical injustices, including Aboriginal land claims, the movement for reparations for the abuse at Indian Residential School, the Japanese Canadian Redress Movement and the Chinese Head Tax Redress Movement, among others. While the Canadian government began to lift the restrictions on these

16 Home Office, Immigration Asylum Statistics: <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration-asylum-publications.html>; Refugee Council, 2009 "Tell It Like It Is: The Truth About Asylum," London, pp.1-11.

17 For a parallel argument that cities are irrelevant sites for struggles for justice because cities as geographic units and jurisdictions do not hold power over the mechanisms of exclusion and exploitation see Fainstein (2009). Specifically, Fainstein points out that writers like Castells (1979) claim that since production is a regional rather than a city function, cities are irrelevant units of analysis for struggles over justice (Fainstein 2009, p. 20) see Susan S. Fainstein "Planning and the Just City" in *Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice*, editors Peter Marcuse, James Connolly, Johannes Novy, Ingrid Olivo, Cuz Potter and Justin Steil, New York: Routledge, p. 19-39.

18 During my field work in Glasgow where I attended a range of meetings and public forums on asylum, informally I came across a range of criticisms about the government including the view that the Scottish Executive has taken a position on asylum that contrasts the Home Office's position in order to distinguish Scotland from England and bolster support for an independent Scottish nation. Another critical view is that the main reason that the Scottish Executive welcomes asylum seekers is due to the rapidly declining population.

19 My own study will focus on individual art projects and artists who work in collaboration with galleries and theatres while moving into the political and social spaces of the city and beyond.

20 See Marcia Crosby (1991) "Construction of the Imaginary Indian" in Stan Douglas (ed) *Vancouver Anthology: the Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver: Talon Books, pp. 267-294; Gerald McMaster (1998) *Reservation X: the Power of Place in Aboriginal Contemporary Art*. Fredericton, N.B, Goose Lane; Lorna Roth (2004) *Something New in the Air: the Story of First Peoples Television Broadcasting in Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press; Roy Miki (1998) *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing*. Toronto: Mercury Press; Monika Kin Gagnon (2000) *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press; Artspeak Gallery; Kamloops Art Gallery; Monika Kin Gagnon and Richard Fung (2002) *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics*. Montreal: Artexes Editions.

21 Systems of beliefs and values promoted by mainstream media, the government, educational institutions and so on, that support the established economic, political and social hierarchies and systems of governance.

groups – such as restrictions on the right to vote and the right to practice their cultural heritage and political ceremonies like the potlatch - from 1947 into the 1960s, they still had little social legitimacy. Their presence, their lives and their histories in the province and more widely in Canada did not “count.” Thus these groups began to assert their existence and challenge the views imposed by mainstream society as “backwards” “ethnics” and “natives” through art, scholarship, literature and cultural production where they explored identity in terms of their historical conditions of existence and the principles of their future “becoming” in Canada. Rearticulating themselves as subjects with legitimate concerns and rights was the basis for forming new publics to challenge the historical injustices that continued to justify exclusionary practices that elude the law.²² They mobilized and made claims for redress, whether as citizens of Canada or as Aboriginal Peoples who had never ceded the rights to their territories. Their struggles were about justice and remaking the Canadian nation and/or their relation to the Canadian nation as distinct nations— not simply about being asked for multicultural acceptance as members of the nation (see Folorunso in this issue for a critique of multiculturalism in the UK).²³

THE HISTORICAL PAST OR THE TRANSNATIONAL PRESENT?

In Glasgow, like in Vancouver, art and culture has been an important terrain for persecuted subjects to make themselves “present” in the city in the wider networks of advocacy groups, art galleries, in the media, government forums, in community halls, at international rallies and so on. Making themselves present and legitimizing their presence has been important for the formation of emerging transnational publics concerned with issues of in/justice. What is radical about Glasgow’s emerging publics is that they are not necessarily organized around homogenous cultural-social groups. While there are groups that have formed on the basis of religion (often across different national affiliations) and cultural events (often based on national affiliation though other members of the public are actively welcomed - see Bergen, Ferguson, Jury, Lane, McElhinney, Stewart and the Karibu and Maryhill and Central and West Integration Networks profiles in this issue), as the contributors to this volume show, groups working on asylum issues include people from different regions and cultural backgrounds, including local Scottish residents.

As playwright and arts organizer Rachel Jury of ConFAB, Janice Lane of Glasgow Museums, writer and story-teller Liam Stewart²⁴ and scholar Rebecca Rotter point out in this issue, this raises important social possibilities and challenges, including challenges at an interpersonal level. This is the realm of belief, habits and feelings that either repel people from one another or lay the grounds for mutual acceptance, which makes interpersonal relations an essential component in the formation of new publics. One of the most significant differences between the cultural politics in Vancouver and in

22 See for example Roy Miki (2004) *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Redress*. Vancouver: Raincoast Books.

23 In response to the anti-racist and Indigenous movements in the 1960s and 1970s the Canadian government introduced policies and Acts on Multiculturalism starting in the 1970s that many scholars argue were an attempt to curtail the structural changes these groups demanded. See Audrey Kobayashi (1993) “Multiculturalism: Representing a Canadian Institution” in James Duncan and David Ley, (eds) *Place/Culture/Representation*. New York: Routledge, pp. 205-223; Marlene Brant Castellano, Linda Archibald, Mike DeGagné (eds) (2008) *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools*, Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Aboriginal Healing Foundations webpage for their research series: <http://www.ahf.ca/publications/research-series>; Canada (1996) “The Indian Act,” *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume I*, Ottawa: Government of Canada.

24 Liam Stewart was also involved in the radical writers’ workshops in the 1980s that were focused on the many workers who lost their jobs when Thatcher closed down shipbuilding and other industries in Glasgow.

Glasgow is that Glasgow has focused on injustices in the “transnational present” rather than injustices from the historical past. Thus the emerging publics in Glasgow are forming with local residents and incoming stateless subjects, specifically global flows of asylum seekers and refugees, as well as Roma and migrant workers from countries that recently joined the European Union, such as Poland. The work in Glasgow made me wonder about what was happening in Vancouver at this level. In Vancouver asylum seekers are relatively invisible and become the focus of public attention typically when there is a perceived crisis, for instance the arrival of the boat with Tamil asylum seekers in 2010. While there are groups like No One Is Illegal, I wondered why groups who have undergone historical persecution in Canada, like my own community of Japanese Canadians who mobilized in movements for redress, were not now mobilizing around the transnational present.²⁵

Again I want to emphasize that Glasgow is not some kind of transnational utopia. There continues to be racism, problems with human trafficking, violence, exploitation, exclusionary practices and anti-immigrant groups. The Border Agency continues to incarcerate asylum seekers in the Dungavel Detention Centre south of Glasgow. The city itself is still hierarchically organised like many other cities in the UK, Europe and North America, segregating not just asylum seekers but also other sectors of the population suffering from deprivation, poor health and lack of education; while upwardly mobile classes have capitalized on Glasgow’s redevelopment²⁶ as a European City of Culture in 1990 and a British City of Architecture

in 1999.

Some activists are cynical about Glasgow City’s involvement in asylum issues and claim the housing contracts that the Council signed were just a means to refurbish thousands of units, while others argue that the city has made essential contributions to making inclusive publics. Meanwhile, cuts by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government have devastated social services, public facilities like libraries and community programs, public housing, and education, resulting in a massive loss of jobs in the public sector. This environment is not conducive to the inclusion of stateless (and foreign) others. Regarding this point, Femi Folorunso of Creative Scotland provides an incisive analysis of “multiculturalism” and anti-racist movements in the United Kingdom in the larger context of neoliberalism. He critically analyzes the false assumptions underlying, on the one hand, the government’s formulation of multiculturalism, and on the other hand, criticisms of multiculturalism. In both cases, the questions of fundamental rights to equality have been overlooked.

In this context, how is it that voluntary organizations, institutions and different levels of government in Glasgow have structurally reorganized themselves around the needs of asylum seekers, amidst hostility, segregation, detention centres, and increasing numbers of “destitute” or homeless asylum seekers? There are not just one or two or even twenty instances of inclusive public spaces. Rather, structurally, there have been many public spaces, some short-term and others long-term, like Karibu and the Maryhill and Central and West Integration Networks (see profiles), the Intercultural Arts Network (iCAN), Glasgow Museums (see Lane), and Refugee Week (see McElhinney). These spaces have been reorganized in way that reflects the specific needs of asylum seekers and local Scottish residents, whether in terms of language, trauma support, befriending

25 For transnational justice movements in Vancouver, and in particular the Philippine domestic workers movement, see for example, Geraldine Pratt (2004) *Working Feminism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

26 Gordon MacLeod (2002) “From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a ‘Revanchist City’? On the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow’s Renaissance,” *Antipode* 34, pp. 602-624.

programs, cultural programming or advice and advocacy projects. Of crucial importance are the connections these spaces foster, as Jason Bergen shows in his article on the collaboration between Oxfam and the Scottish Poetry Library that brought together Scottish residents and asylum seekers for a public poetry project.

While there are similarities between Glasgow's and Vancouver's cultural politics, there is one fundamental difference. Unlike groups in Vancouver, asylum seekers are not citizens. Their right to remain in the UK depends on the outcome of their interviews with the UK Border Agency and if refused, their appeal to an Immigration Judge. In his detailed analysis of the asylum appeal process, Anthony Good provides a chilling look at the operating logic of Britain's refugee status determination process. As Good concludes, this process negates the subjectivity of individuals seeking asylum and in so doing, ironically limits the court's ability to effectively assess cases.

For vulnerable subjects, stepping forward in a hostile climate to identify the denigrating circumstances of their existence is challenging, but even more so when subjects have no legal citizenship rights and are suffering from loss, violence and fear for their family and friends elsewhere. This is where Glasgow has shown how culture and the arts can contribute to creating inclusive publics for subjects in precarious situations. The fact that asylum seekers have stepped forward and made themselves public figures in Glasgow suggests they feel safe sharing their views, participating in political rallies and meetings and exploring their new terms of co-existence even if temporary, with Scottish residents. This shows the strength of the social and political networks and infrastructure that have been established over time to legitimate their presence in Glasgow. Thus while there are parallels it is also clear that the approach required for working with a vulnerable transnational population of

asylum seekers differs from the approach developed from "identity politics" in the 1980s and 1990s in Canada.

ART AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN GLASGOW

The contributors to this issue are just a small selection of the many people and organizations involved in the layers of cultural, artistic and political activity that have contributed to the emerging transnational publics in Glasgow. Many are people I met over the last four years while conducting research in Glasgow. When I first visited Glasgow in 2007 to conduct research, I was fortunate to arrive right in the middle of Refugee Week, a "festival" of arts that the Scottish Refugee Council runs annually (see McElhinney). It is a weeklong forum for poetry, visual arts, theatre, story telling, traditional food, dancing and singing, and community events, as well as films and public lectures. In part because Glasgow and also Edinburgh have such tightly organized civic spaces, with overlapping arts and community venues (see Lane), Refugee Week events transform these cities for the week (both have city-wide and neighbourhood festivals so the reconfiguration of their public spaces around these events also makes them conducive to the city-wide Refugee Week). Occurring throughout the day and into the evening, they link together contemporary art galleries, community halls, the Scottish Parliament and city chambers, large and small-scale theatres, football pitches, film and media centres, and museums, in a network of events that involve a range of groups from the deprived margins to members of the Scottish Parliament. The preparation of Refugee Week takes place over the year—creating a structure of production where people meet, collaborate, and engage that precedes the week itself. Street Level Photo works (see Timmermans), Glasgow Museums (see Lane), and organizations run by asylum seeker and refugee organizations like Karibu²⁷ and the

27 Thanks to Charlotte Atta, Development Officer at Karibu and the Karibu members for taking valuable time to create

Maryhill, Central and West Integration Networks (see profiles in this issue),²⁸ as well as GRAMnet (the Glasgow Refugee and Migrant Network set up and run by Rebecca Kay and Alison Phipps of the University of Glasgow), now run arts projects, performances, publications, films, lecture series, seminars, workshops and exhibits throughout the year.

I was introduced to many of the contributors through Refugee Week. Over the last decade many of the individuals and organizations in this issue have had a central role in or organized key projects that have influenced the reality of asylum in Glasgow, including the Scottish Refugee Council (see Christie and McElhinney) the Maryhill Integration Network (see their profile), Oxfam Scotland (see Bergen) and Glasgow Museums (see Lane), Glasgow City's community workers (see Ferguson) and Creative Scotland (see Folorunso). There are many other advocacy organizations, such as Positive Action in Housing, Unity and the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (formally, Glasgow Anti-racist Alliance). Many of the contributors in this issue have had an ongoing role in the city's cultural life (see Jury, Lane, Stewart, and Timmermans) as well as roles in Glasgow's news media, reporting stories on asylum and human rights (see Briggs and Catlin).²⁹ Poets and writers like Tessa Ransford

and Iyad Hayatleh, and Sue Reid Sexton and Kusay Hussain, highlight the creative work of individual writers in collaboration that has opened up borders and connections in the literary and critical spaces of Glasgow and Edinburgh that interface with the support of Oxfam and Story-telling and Poetry centres (see Bergen and Stewart) as well as Scottish PEN.

Art and culture, as artist and arts coordinator, Iseult Timmermans, explains in this issue, offers more than just a means to meet other people, express feelings and allow vulnerable subjects to articulate their identities. The arts also have the capacity to open up what are typically the instrumental terms that categorize and manage asylum seekers as "humanitarian burdens" or more negatively "needy victims" who require scarce "resources." The arts by definition are not instrumental. They explore, for example, what is entailed in the very experience of asylum, the very nature of being stateless, which as Rebecca Rotter writes in this issue, entails a state of "waiting," suspended in time without a place. Rotter's contribution is based on intensive field work with asylum communities in Glasgow conducted over a twelve month period and offers nuanced insights into the everyday lives of asylum seekers as well as the spaces and social bonds they form.³⁰ For those "waiting," the arts can, as Stewart explains in his discussion of story-telling and theatre projects, generate the emotional capacity to move beyond the walls of fear and distrust that the mainstream media has created. Even when individuals cannot imagine what lies beyond those walls, the theatre project that Stewart as well as

a profile and send photographs of their events; also thanks to Jason Bergen who worked with them on the profile.

28 Thanks to Rose Filippi, the Administrative Assistant of the Maryhill and Central and West Integration Networks for making the arrangements to put together their profile, including the photograph by photographer, Karen Gordon. Most of all, I must thank Remzije Sherifi of the Maryhill Integration Network (which now includes the West and Central Networks) for her kind welcome and openness to researchers like myself. She has published her own riveting account of her family's escape from Kosova where she was a journalist. See Remzije Sherifi (2007) *Shadow Behind the Sun*, Dingwall, Ross-shire: Sandstone Press.

29 In terms of media representations, Oxfam and the Scottish Refugee Council have run media education projects and annual media awards ceremonies for the best coverage of

asylum issues, which have encouraged especially the Scottish press to write more informed stories about asylum. The Scottish Refugee Council has run programs to give asylum seekers the opportunity to develop skills to tell their own stories through the press.

30 See R. Rotter (2010) 'Hanging In-Between': Experiences of Waiting among Asylum Seekers Living in Glasgow. Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh.

Jury discuss made it possible for local residents to reach out to incoming asylum seekers and create deep bonds, if only for the short period before the asylum seekers moved or were deported. These are the bonds that are the basis for belonging to a place, to a city like Glasgow: they are the bonds of mutual respect, care and warmth. That said, as Jury writes, spaces where communities cross paths in no way should be idealized. These are spaces that include conflict and difference but as such, as Stewart and Jury write regarding the play entitled, "The Flats," they are also places where new possibilities open up. Londi Beketch, a cartoonist and textile design artist before he arrived in Glasgow (where he is completing film degree), was an actor and storyteller in "The Flats" and now performs at many events in Glasgow. For this issue of West Coast Line, he draws on his astute observations and artistic skills in his cartoons of Glaswegian characters (locals and newcomers) to playfully present shared experiences of the residents in Glasgow.

Much of the work in Glasgow has focused on either integrative collaborative projects that include local residents or testimonial work by asylum seekers that mediate experiences of loss, memories of their homelands and human atrocities, with life in Scotland. For artists and writers, finding artistic and textual forms that permit ways to bridge differences and create safe spaces of communication have been key. Stewart observed while he was working on a project with the director of the Village Story-telling Centre, Rachel Smillie, that traditional stories were a safe and powerful medium. At the same time, as Timmermans has noted, there are increasingly those with asylum backgrounds who are more interested in working with new forms and new narratives, exploring what is meaningful for their lives now rather than pedagogical forms of art. Other contributors, like journalist Billy Briggs and photojournalist Angela Catlin, use their powerful skills as journalists to capture the conditions of

living for asylum seekers in Glasgow and link them to the realities of friends and families living in refugee camps overseas, extending the emotional boundaries of the city. They show it is possible for the media to present asylum seekers with dignity and give them a forum to speak, while revealing the violence that continues to shadow their lives.

Jury writes that there is a need to critically review the implications of how arts funding policies from charities and governments intersect with immigration and refugee policies. As she notes, with the rapidly changing policy landscape where those seeking asylum are now "processed" in six months (as opposed to the legacy cases where many asylum seekers waited up to five years), and with the increased attention on Eastern European economic migrants and Roma, the terms of funding are increasingly shifting away from projects concerned strictly with asylum seekers, who are in fact made even more vulnerable and insecure by recent policies. One of the great challenges that a number of artists and art workers have discussed is how new (punitive, security oriented) asylum policies have undermined some of the key conditions that established community arts projects typically rely on: the first groups of asylum seekers were in Glasgow long enough to begin "living" there, actually locating themselves in the city's routines, spaces, and rhythms of life, danger and support (see Rotter). Over time they have had the chance to acquire language skills in English, and build relations of trust with community workers, other asylum seekers and other residents. With a chance to orient themselves in their new locales, encouragement to become involved, and settled into daily routines with the time on their hands (they are not permitted to work), they were willing to become involved in art projects. Yet at the same time, this also places them in a suspended state of waiting, as Rotter explains. The new policies mean that asylum seekers are housed for a short period in temporary housing

that tends to be isolated from more permanent residents, making it difficult to involve them in arts projects that build stability and relations of communal support. For an assessment of the coming decade, I turned to Gary Christie, the Policy and Research Manager at the Scottish Research Council. He draws on his experience and knowledge to give a concise and cool assessment of the current situation, both in terms of the accomplishments of the Scottish Refugee Council over the last ten years as well as the massive funding cuts implemented by the newly elected Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition government. In this context, the question that arts activists and artists now face is what types of creative practices can work in meaningful ways in these highly unstable environments.

With its commitment to cultural politics *West Coast Line* seemed like a good home for this work. There are some important parallels in the work from Glasgow and cultural politics in Vancouver, as is evident with the work in recent WCL issues like “Active Geographies” or earlier issues like “Colour: An Issue.” Publishing this work in *West Coast Line* is also a way to create transnational links between the work happening in Vancouver and Glasgow, both geographically second tier cities with very active, independent art scenes build upon a strong ethos/aesthetics. These links offer useful parallel examples rather than the periphery-centre focus on London, New York, Tokyo, Beijing and other hubs of power.³¹ The work in this issue will also be of interest because of the very different political and social conditions of artistic and cultural production in the UK, from the perspective of Scottish residents and people seeking asylum. The contributors share their writing and art as well as their research and insights, their experiences and analyses that feed into and are generated in Glasgow’s transnational publics.

31 Eugene McCann (2004) “Urban Political Economy Beyond the ‘Global City’” *Urban Studies* vol, 41, no 12 pp 2315-2333

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Jamieson, Professor of Sociology and co-director at the Centre for Research on Families and Relations at the University of Edinburgh gave me an academic home where there was a dynamic community of researchers, ongoing seminars and conferences, and a chance to present my research. The centre also literally offered me the keys to their unit giving me a sense of security in a new country as well as research community and activist network. As well Anthony Good, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, took the time to meet with me about research on asylum and engage me in the scholarly and methodological issues on asylum. In 2009 Philip Schlesinger, Professor and the Director of the Centre for Cultural Policy Research provided an academic base at Glasgow University where during what was an intensive period of field research, he made sure I kept a link to ongoing scholarly activities and discussions. Jean Barr, Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow also must be thanked for her critical questions about publics in relation to culture and politics. The asylum, arts and activist community in Glasgow has been extraordinary welcoming and generous to me as a stranger from Canada wanting to learn about their work. Despite the mad pace of work, the pressing demands and constant crises, people have made time to meet and talk with me. They

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