

Blurred Lines and Syrian Tea

Negotiations of Humanitarian-Refugee Relationships in France

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Introduction

Akram sat across from me, shoulders slumped, words stilted and tangled in emotion. His throat caught. He recounted a botched foot surgery in Turkey that forced his underaged daughters to earn a meager wage to support their family as he lay home, unable to walk. The shame consumed him; this, coupled with the anger he felt over the abuse his two daughters endured under the cruel tactics of their boss in the textile factory where they worked, cast him into bouts of depression and insomnia. Now in France with his family under refugee status, Akram still suffers from high levels of stress and anxiety, not knowing how or when he will be able to seek employment. His limited grasp of French and residual health problems worry him.

Refugees of the war in Syria, like Akram, face uncertain futures upon arrival in a destination country and additional obstacles in navigating a new web of realities. Across Europe, many Syrian refugees have experienced xenophobia, Islamophobia, violence, and discrimination—particularly as immigration remains the primary anxiety of Europeans (Buchowski 2017: 520; European Commission 2018a: 76–9). For these reasons and more, Syrian refugees remain a “structurally vulnerable” population in Europe, caught within and dependent on a “government of the precarious” in which their

lives, health, hopes, and realm of possibilities are determined by a mix of external actors and policies (Bourgois et al. 2017: 299; Fassin 2011: 3).

However, as I argue, Syrian refugees are also remarkably “structurally resilient,” working within and beyond the limitations of their situations to achieve desired goals—even when the permutation of possibilities is relatively narrow (Panter-Brick and Eggerman 2012: 369). This chapter examines the social interactions between Syrian refugees in France and a team of French humanitarian social workers who provide housing and psychosocial support to them in Montévrain, a commune outside of Paris. Based on six months of fieldwork in France, this chapter explores the interactions between a humanitarian team and twenty-four refugee families (where interviews were conducted with adults) as they negotiate relationships together, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes tensely. It seeks to illuminate how Syrian refugees navigate humanitarian support schemes in France, and how their agency works to challenge narratives in refugee and humanitarian studies that they are a helpless population at the mercy of the schematics of humanitarian governmentality. The chapter focuses not on the violence of humanitarianism (e.g., see Feldman 2007; Ticktin 2006); rather, it suggests that refugees find ways to rewrite the norms of the humanitarian-refugee relationship, at times persuading humanitarians to be instrumental in achieving their individual and collective desires.

Three ethnographic vignettes indicate how the refugees achieved their goals, claimed their dignity, and redefined the meanings and outcomes of particular events. These vignettes, woven together with many others that I have encountered thus far, suggest how refugees are blurring the lines of the humanitarian-victim complex by seeking to renegotiate the relationship. Instead of “humanitarian governmentality” presiding over and disciplining a “disadvantaged” refugee population, the process of subjectification between humanitarian and refugee is nuanced, complex, and mutually constitutive.

Background: Being a Syrian Refugee in France

In 2018, France ranked fourth in the world for the highest number of new asylum claims, receiving 114,500 claims (UNHCR 2018: 3). Since 2015, France has taken in approximately 30,000 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers (Pew Research Center 2018). Like much of Europe, France has tightened its borders since 2015, when the continent received its highest numbers of migrants in a single year since World War II (UNHCR 2018). It has also made stringent modifications to its asylum process in recent years—halving the time allotted to make an asylum claim once a migrant has entered France, offering fewer rights of appeal if an asylum claim has been

denied, doubling the time for maximum detention of asylum seekers from forty-five to ninety days, and cracking down on deportation for unsuccessful asylum seekers (Human Rights Watch 2018). Current French president Emmanuel Macron announced during his presidential campaign in 2017 that he wanted refugees “off the streets, out of the woods,” pledging to find a solution for the thousands of refugees surviving without housing (Wilkins 2018). He has approached this in controversial ways, however—most notably by forcibly clearing refugee camps. Human Rights Watch (2017) reported that in France, “the treatment of refugees and displaced people is characterized by excessive use of police force, a chronic lack of available information about asylum laws, substandard living conditions and an inadequate response to the safeguarding needs of unaccompanied minors in displacement.”

Since late 2018, France has grappled with weekly protests by the *Gilets Jaunes*, or the Yellow Vest movement, a grassroots economic campaign launched by members of the French working class against rising energy costs and high costs of living. While this movement (and the violence that has often accompanied its protests) has received global media attention, a parallel movement comprised and organized by migrants, displaced persons, and refugees—the *Gilets Noirs*, or Black Vests—has also made a mark on the French political landscape. On 12 July 2019, hundreds of Black Vest protesters, many of African origin, occupied the Panthéon in the Latin Quarter of Paris (“France Arrests 21” 2019). Though the movement began to organize in 2017, the peaceful occupation of the famous mausoleum of French citizens, including Victor Hugo, was the first event to gain widespread media attention across the country. The Black Vest demonstrations highlight an increased boldness among disenfranchised migrants to air their grievances alongside French citizens, while providing an interesting paradox. According to the November 2018 Eurobarometer report of European public opinions, immigration remains the most pressing concern among citizens (European Commission 2018b: 12). But while public sentiment is largely against immigration, the lack of public backlash against the *Gilets Noirs* movement simultaneously emboldens and silences it.

Methods: An Ethnography in the Making

The research for this chapter took place in a transit housing center for Syrian refugee families in Montévrain, France, a commune to the east of Paris. The center is operated by the French organization *Habitat et Humanisme*, which typically provides housing in France to French citizens with unstable employment, unstable family situations, or inadequate salaries to support long-term housing for their families. However, in 2017, the organization created a separate mandate to provide limited housing for migrants to France

with refugee or protected statuses, and others for asylum seekers with uncertain legal prospects. For refugees and protected migrants, these housing assignments last until more permanent housing suited to the specific needs of the family (including medical or disability accommodations) is found in France through other housing *opérateurs*, and are often scattered throughout the country. The center in Montévrain houses only Syrian refugee families, of which there are at least fourteen at any given time residing in fourteen houses rented by the organization in a small, gated neighborhood. A fifteenth, two-story, house was converted into an office.

The entire team of humanitarian actors working in the center—referred to here using pseudonyms—consists of six people, four of whom are full-time, permanent workers and two of whom are young professionals on temporary contracts to teach refugee children supplementary school lessons. Of the four, one serves as the director (Jean-Luc); one is an assistant director, *accompagnateur*, and translator for Syrian Arabic (Pierre); and two are social *intervenants*, or social workers (Layla and Marie). Layla also speaks limited Arabic and often does ad-hoc translations. The fact that none of the refugee residents speaks French produces an interesting dynamic, explored below.

Over a six-month period, I conducted interviews with all the humanitarian workers and with the adults of twenty-four families, whose members ranged from one (a single woman) to nine (a nuclear family with six adult and teenage children and the mother of the couple's father). In a single session, interviews (conducted in Arabic and translated to English for this chapter) lasted between half an hour minimum to three hours maximum. I was drawn to this fieldsite to explore the daily activities that occurred within this center, how the Habitat et Humanisme staff interacted with the residents, and the experiences, challenges, and hopes of the Syrian migrants. But while I expected a verticality to dictate the relationships between humanitarian and refugee, I discovered that these relationships were much more nuanced. The refugees I encountered were unsurprisingly quite skilled at understanding and shaping situations, events, and relationships. This chapter explores the ways in which the refugees employed these skills to tip the verticality of the relationships between them and the Habitat et Humanisme staff to create more complex and advantageous dynamics.

The Push and Pull of the Refugee-Humanitarian Relationship: Three Ethnographic Vignettes

How do refugees negotiate a humanitarian-refugee relationship with providers of humanitarian aid that is advantageous to their needs, challenging humanitarianism as a practice that subdues and subjectifies the “disadvantaged” refugee? These vignettes portray the complexities and nuances of

subjectivity through three different lenses: time, space, and role-switching. These lenses provide multidimensional illuminations of how refugees negotiate being and becoming subjects in France and how they navigate individual and collective social engagements in new contexts. The first vignette uses the practice of “tea hospitality” to illustrate how Syrian refugees invite members of the humanitarian team into their homes and seize the opportunity of a captive audience to amplify their voices—who they are, what they want, and what is important for them. By taking ownership of their temporary homes and extending invitations to French humanitarians to enter, they are reversing the role of “guest” and “host” on a microscale and subverting French idioms of time. The second vignette recounts the recurring event of a group of Syrian boys jumping fences in the neighborhood where the center is located to catch the bus, avoiding taking the long way around but aggravating French neighbors by entering private property. Because it was not possible to identify the boys specifically and because the boys all refused to identify who the culprits actually were, the incident recurred, leaving the director, the neighbors, and the municipality to sort responsibility and pass blame among themselves. Here, the rules of the game are being rewritten, and the literal “field” is being both geographically and authoritatively redefined by a collective act of rebellion underwritten by group solidarity (Bourdieu 1998). The final vignette tells of a weekend event when a French volunteer came to the center to make crêpes for the Syrian families. However, because she did not properly wash her hands or prepare her work station, according to several Syrian women, they refused to eat what she provided and instead seized the opportunity to show her how to make a Syrian sweet. Because their disapproval transpired in Arabic, the French volunteer did not realize why the shift had occurred. This snapshot also highlights the power, and simultaneous lack thereof, that the two Arabic-speaking humanitarian workers wielded, and how the refugees often took advantage of the language disconnect.

Vignette One: An Invitation for Tea

When Nahla saw me coming toward her house through her half-open kitchen window, she waved enthusiastically. She disappeared from view for a moment before flinging open the door and shouting an exaggerated “*Bonjour!*” that echoed through the courtyard, serving as both a warm welcome and proof that she was working on her French. Small Syrian children from the neighborhood rode tricycles through the cul-de-sac where Nahla’s house sat. As I approached the front door, with Pierre right behind me, Nahla warmly yet forcefully grabbed my arms and leaned in for three air kisses on the cheeks. We chatted pleasantries in a slightly clumsy mix of French and Arabic as she ushered us inside and bid us to sit down in the small, naturally lit living room. It smelled of cloves. She had prepared a fresh pot of tea.

I met Nahla during my first week at the center. She was initially shy, deferring to her husband to speak, and almost never looked me in the eye. But this began to change the more she would see me, the more I would smile, and the more we would chatter about small bits of gossip from around the neighborhood and the families with whom we had both become acquainted. It helped that I spoke Arabic. She seemed to find my mistakes as I spoke endearing, even funny, and I suspect it made me seem unthreatening. I was operating in a linguistic space in which she held the dominant hand, and she would gently correct me with a sense of poise and confidence that was missing during our first encounters.

As Pierre and I got comfortable on one of the living room couches, Nahla's husband, Hamza, burst through the front door, greeting us in the same enthusiastic manner that Nahla had. Before we had time to react, Hamza doused us both in a Syrian perfume and piled pillows behind us on the couch to make us more comfortable. Nahla brought in cups of tea, placing them on a makeshift table fashioned out of two chairs pushed next to each other, with a bowl of sugar. "*Sukar?*" She asked me, in Arabic. "*Non, merci,*" I responded. But she added two spoonfuls to my cup anyway and placed it, warm, into my hands. "*Ahlan wa-Sahlan!* Welcome to our home!" Hamza exclaimed, radiant with pride.

While I was thrilled at this over-the-top reception, relieved that my presence sparked enthusiasm rather than unease, Pierre was much more standoffish. There was a micropolitical game being played of which I was not immediately aware, but of which I became so nearly three hours later. More than claiming dignity (Arabic: *karama*), more than "revitalizing their collective selves" (Vandevoordt 2017: 605), and more than a display of high quality of character—although it was likely a *mélange* of all of these things—this gregarious act of hospitality (*karam*, a word related in Arabic to dignity) was also a play of sovereignty (Shryock 2012: 20). The guest becomes a "prisoner" of the host in space and, perhaps more critically, in time. It also places a mantle of responsibility upon the guest to behave according to the rules of the game, as being a "bad guest" runs not only into superficial questions of etiquette, but into consequential ones of morals (Shryock 2012: 27). While I was temporarily oblivious, Pierre was keenly aware of these implications from the moment he stepped inside the door, having previously engaged in skirmishes over time sovereignty many times before in this small neighborhood of Montévrain.

"How would you describe your life in Syria, before the war?" I asked. As I drank my last sip of tea, Nahla jumped up to replenish my cup. "Syria before the war was *helwa*, *helwa jidan* [sweet and beautiful]," Hamza waxed, spreading his arms in grand gestures as he talked. Before the war, Hamza had been an engineer of farm equipment. As he described the beautiful two-story house where the family had lived in Aleppo before fleeing the war in

2013, Nahla broke down in tears. “Should we take a break?” I asked. “*La, la*. No. I want to keep talking,” she responded, her voice cracking. Her daughters crowded around her. “It’s OK, mama. Don’t cry,” they comforted. I watched the glow in her eyes while listening to her husband describe their home in Syria darken to bitter pain as the nostalgia hardened to feelings of loss.

We sat in silence for a moment. I contemplated whether to reschedule the rest of the interview, but Nahla said through muffled sobs that she wanted to continue. Pierre looked at his watch, and then to me. It appeared he was thinking the same thing, though with an additional reason; he had work to do, and the long answers of the family had kept him, at this point, an hour longer than we had anticipated. “Humanitarian time” was being subjected to a parallel idiom of time; our nonverbal communication through glances and shrugs was interrupted when Hamza brought in a tray of coffee. “No, no,” Pierre insisted, “you’re too kind, but we can’t stay too much longer.” Hamza dismissed his polite pleas with a wave of the hand as he added sugar to both our coffee cups. Pierre looked at me helplessly as we both reached for our cups, and Hamza asked his daughter Fatima to say something about her life and friends in Syria.

As Pierre continued to cast intermittent, furtive glances at his watch, Fatima told us that she wanted to become an airplane engineer when she grew up. “Why?” I asked, slightly taken aback by the specificity and conviction. “Because then I can build the planes that will fight Bashar al-Assad,” she said proudly. I glanced at Hamza, with surprise. “This was her idea!” he exclaimed. However, he took advantage of the opportunity to launch into a long discussion of his views of Syrian politics and American and French intervention in Syria, a tirade against Turkey, and a plan he would promote to resolve the brouhaha in Syria. As his guests, Pierre and I listened to his grand theories; Hamza had merged his identities as refugee and host to two non-Syrians to become an expert of Syria. As Pierre once again stared at his watch, his only act of rebellion, Fatima brought in another tray of tea.

This event was repeated throughout many of my interviews at the center. The Syrian residents extended warm hospitality to me even before getting to know me, which I had not expected, inviting me into their homes for tea, meals, musical performances, and parties, and even to stay the night with them so that I would not have to make the long trip back to Paris. But as an anthropologist, I was there to listen to them, to experience life with them. The humanitarian workers, however, were not; yet they all recounted many incidents of the same. Layla often told me how she had become attached to many of the families and, when she first started working in the center, spent more time in the homes of the refugees over tea or shisha than she did in her office. These seemingly innocuous invitations for tea presented a true conundrum—consistently declining invitations proved “rude”

and delayed the development of rapport between the families and humanitarians that would ultimately aid in placing them in permanent housing. But consistently accepting invitations drew attention away from attending to other needs. More often than not, the humanitarian team acquiesced to tea. Through these experiences, they developed relationships with the refugees that extended beyond the work day—taking them to the hospital after working hours, attending events on weekends, or even helping them to secure jobs through an extensive understanding of their skills, thanks to many conversations over tea.

Vignette Two: The Elusive Fence Jumpers

When I knocked on Jean-Luc's office one chilly March morning, he barked from the other side to enter. I gingerly opened the door and stuck my head in, not sure whether the stern tone was intended for me or not. "Come in, Rachel," he gestured. "What's wrong?" I asked, concerned. With a sour face, Jean-Luc told me how his entire morning thus far had been occupied by fielding complaints from French neighbors who lived in the housing complex adjacent to the center, and subsequently from the managers of the actual refugee neighborhood where the humanitarian organization was renting its houses and office. As he recounted it, several Syrian teenage boys had made it a habit to jump the fence between their neighborhood and the adjacent one in order to catch the bus rather than take the long way around both neighborhoods to the bus stop. Dressed in black and difficult to identify due to their stealthy behavior, the boys had so far escaped recrimination because there was no one in particular to hold accountable.

"Why not meet with all the boys and have a talk about what is off limits?" I suggested, trying to be helpful. "I did that last night," Jean-Luc replied, defeated. He had stayed late, after his working day had ended, to try to resolve the issue. But to no avail—the next morning, it happened again. When he tried to offer a reward for the one who "turned in" the boys who were committing the nuisance, they all refrained, seemingly protecting each other. I was confused by the necessity of the fence jumping. Walking to the bus took perhaps three minutes, and there was considerable risk involved in getting caught. As if reading my thoughts, Jean-Luc said, "Apparently this happens in Syria; property is not thought of in the same way, and shortcuts are taken through the yards of others without repercussion." In essence, he argued, the boys were doing what they knew. And despite the stern talkings-to on the part of the director, the fence hopping did not stop. As bewildered as I was about the motivation for this behavior, it was equally as noteworthy that Jean-Luc was so quick to Orientalize the boys, shrugging off the "why" with the explanation that Syrian boys are just linked to such behavior.

The issue persisted. Frequent discussions took place between the director of the center, the manager of the housing complex, the French neighbors, and the *mairie*, or representatives from the municipality. No one could discern where the exact blame fell and whom to hold responsible. However, Jean-Luc was consistently warned by the others that there could be repercussions for the center if he did not act. But as exasperated as he was behind the scenes with me and the humanitarian team, to the outside, he defended the boys.

The boys involved in these recurring incidents were all young, likely oblivious to the larger issues their thrill-seeking exploits evoked. They were not privy to the discussions among the tired and bewildered Jean-Luc, the exasperated neighbors, or the stern *mairie*. But their episodes of rebellion had a double effect. While they were expanding their realm of possibilities, surreptitiously pushing the limits, they were reconfiguring their options and undoubtedly enjoying the power they conjured in collectively evading discipline. The combination of forging an otherwise inadmissible path and getting away with it were seductive enough to repeat the action. An implicit goal of the boys, perhaps, was to consolidate this power by normalizing the behavior; but once normalized, would it even be fun anymore? The second effect, however, of which the boys were unlikely aware, is the power they ineluctably exerted over Jean-Luc. It was both unfair and impractical to punish all the boys of the neighborhood, as it was undetermined which of them took part, and the boys were often the ones who ran errands for the whole neighborhood, such as the quotidian task of buying and distributing bread to all the families. Unable to contain the issue within the confines of the gated community, Jean-Luc bore the discipline for the boys in the form of stern warnings and admonishment from the aggrieved external parties. When disciplining the boys failed internally, Jean-Luc was forced to advocate for them externally.

Eventually, as the fence jumping continued into April, all parties involved—except for the boys—began to lose energy. The nameless, faceless culprits continued in their revelry. The boys, likely without even knowing it, had found an accountability loophole and had taken advantage of it for their own interests. Not only did they continue to bend the rules of the possible within their immediate spatial geography, their unwillingness to turn each other in to the director left Jean-Luc with little choice but to give in, and to save face with the neighbors, the manager, and the *mairie* by advocating for the boys instead of turning on them and therefore presenting himself as weakened and unable to keep his own house in order. Thus, more than a “boys will be boys” scenario, these repeated incidents illustrate a microscale example of how these boys turned the tables of authority through spatial subjectivity—expanding the field both literally and figuratively—to reach a desired goal.

Vignette Three: When Crêpes Become “Helwat”

On a breezy Saturday afternoon, giddy children chased each other through the parking lot as their mothers scolded them in hushed tones to slow down. The families had gathered for a much-anticipated monthly event: a cooking session with *une femme bénévole*, or a female volunteer, from Paris, who had come to teach them how to make French crêpes. After a demonstration, the woman, Camille, planned to cook large batches of crêpes for all the families who had come to participate in order to share a lunch together. As the women in particular began to gather, Reima whispered something to Rania. Soon enough, several of the Syrian women were chattering among themselves in Arabic, inaccessible to Camille and to most of the team gathered. While Layla was not there that day, Marie and Jean-Luc stood by and glanced back and forth to each other, certain something was wrong but unsure what.

Reima finally approached Pierre and, in delicate and soft Arabic, whispered several sentences to him before stepping back. Pierre looked uncomfortable. Jean-Luc asked him to translate, but Pierre would not. As Camille began her demonstration, Pierre translated for her into Arabic as Jean-Luc agitatedly asked him again and again to translate what Reima had said. I had only seen Pierre as poised and professional during my time there, but for the first time he appeared flustered, presumably both by what Reima had shared and by the added pressure of Jean-Luc to translate, when he clearly felt uncomfortable doing so.

Finally, Pierre pulled Jean-Luc aside and huddled with Marie. Apparently, the Syrian women had noticed that Camille had not washed her hands in a way they deemed clean enough to handle food. Furthermore, Reima had remarked that the equipment she was using appeared dirty. She refused to eat. Camille was unaware. But as she prepared to move from demonstrating to cooking crêpes for lunch, Rania, a more socially aggressive woman than Reima seemed to be, dragged Pierre by the sleeve to translate for her to Camille. “They want to teach you how to make *helwat*,” Pierre said to her, somewhat sheepishly, referring to a sticky, honey-infused Syrian treat. Jean-Luc, Pierre, and Marie exchanged somewhat nervous glances. Pierre explained to a residually frustrated Jean-Luc that he was hesitant to translate initially because he felt it was a betrayal of the women’s trust—an interesting revelation that illuminated to whom his sense of obligation lay—and because he did not want them to seem ungrateful. Camille, however, was delighted, oblivious to the underlying rationale.

The role-switching in this vignette represents two interesting avenues for analysis. First, despite the Saturday crêpe lesson being considered an act of kindness by the humanitarian team, the Syrian women were aghast that Camille was not adhering to their standards of culinary cleanliness; not only

did they refuse to eat and therefore remained faithful to their own cultural standards of what is acceptable and what is not in the kitchen, but they involved the humanitarian team in enacting their decision. However, in part because of the delicacy with which they handled the situation and in part because of Pierre, Jean-Luc, and Marie's refusal to make a scene of it, what had originally been a lesson in French culture turned into a lesson in Syrian culture without the majority of the attendees fully knowing exactly how this transition occurred. The agency of the women to push back and change the situation was both clever and effective. And by using Pierre to deliver the message, the women implicated him—and the rest of the humanitarian team by default—in their mission to subvert the day's plans after they deemed them inappropriate. The women reversed the roles of guest to host, knowledge-receiver to knowledge-transmitter, novice to expert, all through the deft commandeering voice and authority of Pierre.

Also noteworthy—and indicative of much broader, similar incidents—is the language barrier between Camille and half of the humanitarian team and the refugee women. While not being able to speak French is a huge impediment to the refugees in many ways, they have learned how to catalyze it in others. The women were able to reach a consensus about what they wanted by speaking among themselves without drawing negative attention from Camille or seeming ungrateful to her. And because they were not able to speak for themselves, they elicited the help of Pierre—who had little choice in such a delicate social setting but to translate what they asked him to—to shift the situation. By involving him as their default spokesman, the women invoked the authority of the humanitarian team to advocate for what they wanted. This authority was unquestioned by Camille, who presumably did not suspect that something was amiss and agreed to the change in plans without knowing the real reason underwriting it.

Conclusion

Akram and I sat on flimsy plastic lawn chairs, huddled around cups of tea as we basked in the day's last rays of sunlight. Pale clouds of smoke from his cigarette lingered in the chilly air, as did a somberness from our earlier conversation. As he stared out into nothing with a heavy look in his eye, I leaned in, as if to probe his thoughts. He suddenly turned to me and let out a hearty laugh. I was startled; with a simple laugh, he had pierced my gloomy interpretation of the moment and replaced it with delight. My look of shock seemed to delight him even more. He had brought me to Turkey with him, and I had felt a glimpse of the agony he had endured there; now, he brought me back to a sun-soaked patch of green April grass and a warm cup of spice-infused tea.

For the humanitarians working in Montévrain, moments like this are similarly unexpected, but powerful. The “unexpected” is only so, however, because the negotiations of subjectivity among Montévrain’s refugee population are, through microscale iterations, redefining the normal. Though seemingly innocuous and minute, operating on planes of morality through hospitable offerings, youthful tenacity through crossing prohibited boundaries, and dignity through rescripting social interaction, the events described in these vignettes are significant in reshaping humanitarian engagement with refugees. They work to loosen the fabrics of a tight-knit humanitarian governmentality with its complex and bureaucratic dynamics of power and control, in which refugees and other disenfranchised populations are uncharitably tangled.

While we are right to consider the ways in which refugee lives are precarious and vulnerable, it is time to move beyond envisaging them purely as “victims” (Ticktin 2016: 255). Rather than a linear relationship between humanitarian and refugee, where power operates in a vertical fashion, such a relationship is more aptly viewed as a negotiation. The rigidity of humanitarian policy is often challenged on the ground as small but powerful acts of refugee resilience and resourcefulness reshape the nature of humanitarian engagement.

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