CHAPTER 10

The Authority of Expertise

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Jalalabad, December 2007. I have organised a field visit to the east of the country for two ECHO officers. They are here not only to check in on UN-HCR programmes, but also more generally to evaluate the situation on the ground after the end of the repatriation season. Donors are entitled to make a field visit at any time, but as they have no presence outside Kabul, it is often the UNHCR that provides access to the field, taking charge of transport (in the organisation's vehicles) and accommodation (in its residences). UNHCR teams also reserve the right to choose the itinerary – in line with the donor's wishes, of course, but also depending on the messages they wish to communicate. The two ECHO representatives are therefore accompanied and guided in the field by a succession of UNHCR staff.

Being based in Kabul, I had the overall view of the country: during the journey from Kabul to Jalalabad, I placed the programmes, and the issue of returns to the east, in the general context of Afghanistan. Once we arrived at the Jalalabad office, the ECHO officers were briefed by the Head of Sub-Office, who sketched an outline of the region, summarised the current situation and offered guidance on how to interpret returns and reintegration. To help with this, they also received the Sub-Office's briefing kit containing maps, statistical data and descriptions of projects. The Field Officer then took over to escort them to the sites, where he showed them around and helped them talk to the local leaders and recipients of the projects. The Head of Sub-Office took up the baton again to facilitate a meeting with the deputy governor, and at dinner talked with the visitors about what they had seen. UNHCR staff thus planned the route and showed the way, preparing the representatives for what they would see and discussing it afterwards. In the field, UNHCR staff stepped back to allow them to observe freely what was happening around

them, but were always at hand to explain what they were seeing, translate what was being said, help them to interact with people and answer their questions. Ultimately, while the UNHCR was not the only source of information for these ECHO officials, it played a major role in the construction of their observations and analyses.

Through their 'updates' and their 'explanations', UNHCR staff framed the way in which its partners saw Afghan migration, and how it was and should be governed. The impact of this 'information' thus went well beyond simple monitoring of what was going on. UNHCR officers explained to their partners 'what is happening', 'how things are' and why, how they should be and how to make them as they should be. The organisation conceptualised and defined phenomena and processes, established relationships between cause and effect, and on the basis of these analyses expressed opinions as to the best way of intervening in reality. In doing so, it powerfully influenced the way in which its partners grasped that reality. Although it has no territory and no coercive force, the UNHCR does have discourse and the production of knowledge at its command, and through these shapes the perspectives of others on migration and how it should be governed. The organisation deploys its discursive resources continuously, and the resulting narratives are often taken as authoritative: it is to the UNHCR that people turn for the most reliable, 'official' data and analysis on the subject of refugees.

One of the central themes of Michel Foucault's thought is the correlation between knowledge and power. Knowledge both conveys and produces power:

> [P]ower and knowledge directly imply one another: ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault 1995: 27)

Foucault uses the example of the birth of criminology following the reform of the French penal system to demonstrate this: the new science posited the 'criminal' as the object of a new way of addressing and sanctioning crime (Foucault 1995). The action of governing implies the production and mobilisation of specific knowledges that constitute individuals as governable subjects. Through her analysis of the way in which the UNHCR represents refugees, Lisa Malkki (1996) shows that the destitute, dehistoricised and voiceless victims portrayed by the organisation embody the ideal subject of the 'solutions' it is able to offer. Similar observations could indeed be made with regard to the way in which the UNHCR depicts Afghan returnees: the accounts, quotations, images and statistics that the organisation deploys help to create infantilised victims who are finally able to return to their country, but need help to reconstruct their lives. But more generally, drawing on Foucault's analysis, the international refugee regime can be seen as a field

of power-knowledge within which the UNHCR wields a very particular authority, to the extent that its narratives are considered especially reliable, or indeed read as truth.

A number of authors have pointed out that the authority of the UNHCR and other international organisations is located largely on the cognitive and normative level (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Chimni 1998; Douglas 1986; Fouilleux 2009; Malkki 1996; Nay 2012, 2014; Pécoud 2015; Valluy 2009). Barnett and Finnemore emphasise that the 'power of social construction' – framing the questions, defining the meaning and nature of social actors, establishing policies and identifying the key issues in negotiations – is the main form of power exercised by international organisations (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 7–9). Jérôme Valluy describes the UNHCR as the 'principal 'collective organic intellectual' in the forced migration sector' (Valluy 2009: 161). But few researchers explain how these representations are actually produced, what characterises them, how they are used and why they hold influence.

This chapter is based on the set of narratives on Afghan migration produced by the UNHCR between 2001 and 2008, and on my own experience of writing some of these texts as an officer of the organisation. I first show that for the UNHCR, producing expert knowledge and deploying it strategically is a key way of exercising its authority – an authority that is exerted both over migrants (who are thereby constituted as governable subjects) and over the various partners who see the analyses and data produced by the UNHCR as significant or even as the truth. I then examine the factors that make the UNHCR's accounts convincing and attractive, including their technical specificity, their internal consistency and the legitimacy they draw from the UNHCR's links with the academic world. Third, I show how these factors operate as mechanisms of depoliticisation, concealing the fact that the organisation's cognitive repertoire is itself shaped by the power relations within which it is embedded as a UN agency. The nation-state order and the power relations between European countries and countries of the Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan region in particular determine what can be conceived within the UNHCR – including the content of the ACSU project – and are thereby naturalised and reproduced by the organisation's statements.

The Power to Frame Perspectives on Migration

Through my work as Donor Relations Officer in Kabul, I realised that the relationship the UNHCR has with donor countries cannot be seen as one of unilateral dependence. In Kabul the donors also needed the UNHCR. They needed analyses, reports and data to guide their own analyses, decisions and

positions, which only the UNHCR was in a position to produce. For specialist donor bodies like ECHO and the BPRM in particular, the ability to act as a wise astute donor depended on the 'raw material' of accounts produced by the UNHCR. Other donors also turned to the UNHCR Office for 'information' or 'clarification' on current questions, the situation in the field, or simply 'the Afghan refugee question'. My job was to continually explain all of this, both in writing and verbally. There was a constant flow of narratives from the UNHCR to donors – in the phrase often repeated in the office, we had to continually 'feed' them.

Most of the time, this was done through a combination of various types of written material. Funds were sourced through calls for donations or applications for funding. At the end of a funding period, activity reports would have to be written. Each week, I put together a Weekly Update, reporting on recent developments. At meetings with donors, a briefing kit containing the latest statistics and information brochures would be prepared for each participant. Then I had to respond to all the individual questions that came by email or telephone: here I would adjust the level of detail in accordance with the donor's familiarity with these questions, often supplementing my answers with statistical data and forwarding brochures and key strategy documents. The volume of reports sent to donors gives an indication of the UNHCR's influence on the perceptions donors have of reality. By disseminating its own interpretation guides, the UNHCR sets itself up as an essential cognitive intermediary.

In addition to accounts for donors, a great deal of time and resources were devoted in the Kabul Branch Office to the production of data, and the writing and dissemination of reports. Some posts were entirely dedicated to this work – for example, the Head of the Communication Unit or the officers who worked in the Data Section. The senior managers formulated the strategic orientations, which they would present as 'policy papers', 'concept notes' and so on, depending on the context (meetings, workshops and conferences). Thus, from 2001 onwards, a substantial and unequal body of knowledge on Afghan migration between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, produced by the UNHCR, took form. It was made up of strategy and analytical documents (UNHCR 2007a), statistical data (UNHCR 2007d; UNHCR, SAFRON, and PCO 2005), bulletins (UNHCR 2007h, 2007p), press releases (UNHCR 2007g), brochures and prospectuses (UNHCR 2007q), requests for funding and activity reports, and directives on the assessment of asylum requests from Afghans (UNHCR 2007c), not to mention the many studies commissioned and partially funded under the ACSU project.[1] Similar observations could be made with regard to the activity and publications of Headquarters in Geneva.[2]

All of these documents were very widely disseminated through a dedicated strategy. Because they were published and issued online on the UNHCR's

website and other sites, and translated into several languages (Dari, Pashto, and where appropriate the languages of donors), these texts were immediately accessible to NGOs and officers of international organisations, as well as to researchers. Statistics were updated each month, disseminated to a lengthy distribution list and published on the UNHCR website. Studies funded by the UNHCR could be found on Google Scholar, and being in electronic format had a potentially wider circulation than academic articles.

This body of knowledge about Afghan migration produced and disseminated by the UNHCR inhabits and occupies the discursive arena, thereby structuring how the question is framed and how it arises for a wide range of actors – the media, NGOs, funders and researchers. The accounts and representations produced by the UNHCR constitute an important reference for them, an authoritative or even 'official' source that they can draw on to validate, justify or contextualise their own analyses and/or actions. And, indeed, all the publications about Afghan migration, including academic articles, cite UNHCR data at least once.

As Mary Douglas points out (1986), the authority of institutions is located principally on the cognitive plane: they 'think for us', influencing our categories of thought, our clarification processes, the way in which we construct the spaces of meaning within which we put and define questions and problems. They provide a set of interpretative tools that allow actors to decode and attribute meaning to the events they encounter. In the case of the UNHCR, this consists in conceptualising and producing cognitive frameworks and narratives around the phenomenon of migration and the way in which it is and should be governed. This explains the breadth of resources (financial and intellectual, in terms of staff) devoted to discursive production within the organisation.

Thus, without territory, armed forces, financial autonomy, legislative or judicial power, the UNHCR nevertheless has the authority to produce discourse and knowledge. When it provides definitions, produces analyses, accounts and recommendations, it can be seen as possessing a form of freedom, a creative power that can claim to be 'final', and sometimes does succeed in imposing itself as such – creative because the organisation produces accounts that did not exist before and would not exist without it, and thus shapes the epistemic space of the refugee regime, and final because the UNHCR speaks as the principal authority on the subject. This is clearly evident in the style of its documents: their tone is assertive, stating facts, describing processes with certainty and allowing no space for any objection. It is also normative; these accounts 'fall from on high', like 'revealed truths'. They are also often self-referential: there is no reference to sources other than the organisation's own data and analysis.

Douglas Holmes highlights the performativity of statements by institutions, analysing the 'ever-changing ecologies of discourse by which the economy is created and articulated' (Holmes 2009: 411) by central banks; it is

these discourses that create the context and the analytical framework for other actors. They thus create the economy itself as a field of communication and an empirical fact. The UNHCR does not have an authority or a monopoly over discourse comparable to that of a central bank, but the performative effect of its discourse persists. It is principally on the basis of the statements and concepts promoted by the UNHCR that policies concerning refugees are created and negotiated by those involved in their design and implementation.

The crisis over deportations from Iran shows that it was often the analyses and positions of the UNHCR that structured debate. In late April 2007, following a sudden rise in deportations, the UNHCR was the first port of call for the media, funders and NGOs that were uncertain as to whether the deportees were 'refugees' or not. An emergency meeting was called, with representatives of the main Afghan ministries and international organisations present in the country. Most of those present did not know how to interpret this unprecedented development. It was the UNHCR Representative who contextualised the events, put them in perspective and, on the basis of data produced by UNHCR Sub-Offices at the border, explained their significance and what was at stake, thus defining the terms of the problem to be resolved. The NGOs working on reintegration of the returnees drew extensively on the data, definitions and classifications formulated by the UNHCR ('high-return regions', 'vulnerable returnees', etc.) in developing their programmes.

The UNHCR's cognitive influence also shapes the thinking of those not directly involved in the government of refugees – public opinion, the media and researchers throughout the world. Take, for example, the distinction between 'refugees' and 'migrants', of which the UNHCR is the primary arbiter: the classification is now accepted as a 'natural' and appropriate distinction by many journalists, researchers and a much wider public. There is also the way in which many people in the world think about Afghan migration: the post-2001 return (quantified by UNHCR statistics and pictured in images of returnees crammed into trucks) has become established as the most significant aspect, and the word 'return' is often taken as synonymous with the UNHCR's repatriation programme.

The UNHCR does not have the monopoly on representations of migration. State authorities, NGOs, local leaders, researchers and sometimes migrants themselves intervene in this political, cognitive and discursive arena. And there is often a lack of consensus among these actors as to the way in which migrants should be conceptualised and governed. This was clear in the case of the deportations from Iran in 2007 (see Chapter 7). Some NGOs also sometimes express divergent opinions. In 2007, for example, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an NGO, published two reports condemning the closure of the camps in Pakistan and the deportations from Iran (NRC 2007). These reports were also quite critical of the role of the UNHCR (despite the

fact that the organisation was the source of almost all the data on which they were based). The organisation immediately reacted in the same tone, retorting that many of the reports' assertions were erroneous and inaccurate.[3] The UNHCR thus eroded the authority of the NRC's reports, at the same time reasserting its own authority to produce the most influential and reliable accounts on the subject.

Discourse as a Weapon

The influence of the UNHCR's accounts varies depending on the context and who is engaging with them (see also Garnier 2014). In relationships with funders, NGOs, the Afghan authorities, other international organisations and the public at large, the authority of the UNHCR's discourse to define, classify and explain is powerful. However, as noted above, it is much more difficult for the organisation to impose its vision when it comes to influencing the way in which states, particularly interior ministries, deal with foreigners in their territories. Even faced with the arbitrariness of states' migration policies, the UNHCR's expert discourse still remains the main weapon at its disposal. Whether in the form of legal directives (see Chapter 7), press releases (see Chapter 8), strategy documents (see Chapter 2) or studies, the accounts produced by the UNHCR constitute the organisation's arsenal for promoting its objectives. This arsenal is created and deployed strategically.

This is clearly apparent in the extreme care and attention devoted to the formulation of texts for public dissemination. Making a public statement that will be examined and perhaps cited by other authors, these texts have a very different status from internal documents. They must all be 'cleared' by a superior. Thus, Saverio or the Deputy Head of Mission read, approved and sometimes edited all the documents that the Communication Officer and I prepared. Indeed, they made this a priority, despite their heavy workload. At the beginning of the summer, the senior managers of the Afghan Operation drew up a communications strategy, which was circulated within the Branch Office and to all Sub-Offices. It specified precisely the messages and certain key phrases that should always feature in external communications.

These included, for example, the concept of 'absorption capacity'. Prior to 2007, this phrase had only rarely appeared in the UNHCR's accounts and never in reference to Afghanistan or any other country of origin. It was introduced in 2007 by the senior managers in the Kabul Branch Office when pressure for return from the Iranian and Pakistani authorities and the worsening situation in Afghanistan was making the situation increasingly difficult. The phrase began to be used systematically by all the UNHCR offices in Afghanistan (see, for example, UNHCR 2007a: 2–5, 11; 2007g). It was a

concept that easily caught on. While it had a hint of a technical term relating to political economy and demographics, it also effectively conveyed, through a striking image, the difficulties and contradictions presented by repatriation to an economically poor country that was once again submerged in conflict. It was deployed strategically, as part of the discursive framework that the UNHCR put in place to counter the pressure for return from the Iranian and Pakistani authorities. It was thus an effective weapon in the ongoing political struggle over how Afghan migrants should be governed.

The ACSU project offers a perfect illustration of the UNHCR engaging in a confrontation that took place primarily at the cognitive and discursive level. The aim of the project was precisely to alter the way in which the Iranian and Pakistani authorities viewed Afghan migration, so that they would consequently modify their way of governing it. Justifying its proposals in terms of the prolonged nature of the Afghan crisis, the UNHCR argued, through the project's strategy documents, that the question should now be posed in different terms: 'we should move our thinking' (AREU and MoRR 2007: 12) and therefore create 'new arrangements'. This approach went hand in hand with, and was conveyed through, a specific mode of expression, made up of key messages and a vocabulary that was continually promoted. In short, this was a conceptual, theoretical and terminological framework that shaped the UNHCR's discourse and made it proactive. Each time the organisation spoke, it was practising a cognitive lobbying.

This framework is evident in the strategy documents and studies commissioned under the aegis of the ACSU project. As soon as Saverio arrived in post to lead the Afghan Operation, it began to be integrated into the Operation's external communications through the communications strategy. Familiar with and indeed a keen supporter of this strategy, I was concerned to ensure the accounts I produced were consistent with its discursive register – for example, in my choice of vocabulary. As in the strategy papers produced by Eric and Saverio, I strove to use the term 'refugee' in a restricted and considered way in order to make clear that the Afghan population in Iran and Pakistan no longer consisted only of persons 'in need of protection', but was more complex. A plethora of other expressions was used and highlighted in place of 'refugee': 'population movements', 'second-generation Afghans' and 'cross-border movements'. The concept of the 'residual population', on the other hand, which is fairly frequently used within the UNHCR to describe populations in host countries who are yet to be repatriated, was eliminated from my vocabulary, because it gave the impression that return was the standard choice for all Afghans in Iran and Pakistan.

Extensive and systematic dissemination of these discourses was integral to the implementation of the ACSU strategy. In addition to ensuring that it pervaded external communications, Eric and Saverio concerned themselves with

the publication and dissemination of studies. As they were published, these successive studies also formed the basis for organising targeted forums that offered opportunities and tools for lobbying (AREU and MoRR 2005, AREU and CSSR 2006, AREU and UNHCR 2007). These meetings – variously titled 'strategic consultations', 'high-level workshops' or 'conferences' – brought together government decision-makers and representatives of international organisations, but were particularly targeted at the Iranian and Pakistani authorities. Presented as initiatives aimed at 'raising the awareness' of Afghan migration among those present, these meetings in fact operated as the main channel through which the UNHCR tried to influence how the Pakistani and Iranian authorities perceived and governed migrations.

The Source of Authority of the UNHCR's Accounts

What makes the UNHCR's accounts persuasive, convincing and influential, or even 'final' in some cases? How do they become established and recognised by a broad range of actors as plausible, reliable and indeed truthful? What makes them so difficult to equal and to challenge? Here I note five factors, linked to the UNHCR's expert status, the characteristics of these narratives and the legitimacy they draw from the UNHCR's relationship with academic research.

The accounts that the UNHCR produces are authoritative first of all because they are issued by an institution widely considered to have unrivalled expertise on the subject of refugees. As the refugee regime became institutionalised and expanded over the second half of the twentieth century, the niche of this domain of government extended and became 'filled' with norms, technologies and contexts of intervention. As the regime expanded, a political-epistemological space emerged within which people fleeing conflict and violence and the phenomenon of their migration were constituted as objects of knowledge and government. The UNHCR, riding the tide of this expansion, acquired and then consolidated its position as the number-one expert. Hence, its expertise grew exponentially. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004) note, 'expert' authority was gradually added to and superimposed on the 'delegated authority' and 'moral authority' the UNHCR held when it was set up. Legal norms (treaties and directives) proliferated, and the UNHCR promoted, negotiated and even wrote them. Contexts of intervention became increasingly diverse, and the UNHCR established a presence in each case and extended its geographical range. It also designed and implemented all the technologies (camps, repatriation programmes, etc.), and thus became the source of all the refugee regime's areas of specialisation. The UNHCR therefore possesses an unrivalled capacity to position itself and control the international norms

relating to refugees, and to align new norms and new initiatives with what has gone before. It also manages and controls the collection of most of the data on refugees, which it gathers through its own programmes. As such, the organisation has a unique authority to 'fill' this epistemic field and shape it through its accounts. This space could be seen as an 'epistemic jurisdiction' within which the UNHCR holds a pivotal role. The accounts, analyses and recommendations it issues are those of a specialist body. They form what amounts to a technical, competent knowledge – an expertise.

Three features of the UNHCR's accounts help to make them attractive and convincing. These are their internal consistency, their universal explanatory capacity and the fact that they are embedded in an already hegemonic episteme.

A large part of my work involved writing UNHCR reports on Afghan refugees. Over time, I realised that producing these texts was essentially an exercise in consistency. The UNHCR's accounts are usually consistent and 'armoured'. The strategic considerations and recommendations are backed up by empirical data. These accounts align with the organisation's previous policies and with the analysis and programmes of other international organisations. Initially, when I was drafting the reports, I thought I was *restoring* consistency: my aim was to seek consistency between the multiple elements from which I could compose my accounts, and make it evident. But I realised that it was more a question of *giving* them consistency at the point when I was putting them together.

The 'ingredients' I used to fulfil my task were, first, analytical frameworks: they consisted essentially of the refuge episteme and the Afghan Operation's strategic directives, which I internalised by reading strategy documents and listening to the senior managers talking. Second, there were all the data and accounts produced within the context of the Afghan Operation, which I absorbed and learned to source and handle. I followed the course of events by attending internal meetings, I looked at and analysed data on repatriation, reports from Sub-Offices, the material produced by my predecessor, and I could also go directly to colleagues in the Sub-Offices to obtain specific data. Then I would assemble and shape this 'raw material' in line with analytical frameworks and strategic directives. The consistency I succeeded in giving my texts was an internal consistency, derived from the self-referential and non-verifiable nature of the data and accounts I was working with. Producing these accounts required discernment, but not in terms of questioning the substance of the elements that made up my raw material. At that time, I was not a specialist on migration and I almost never left the office. My discernment related to the form: how to assemble the elements, which data to discard and which to highlight, how to link some to others depending on the type and function of the document I had to produce. Over time, I began to find this role

frustrating: rather than gaining a better understanding of the context around me, it seemed on the contrary that I was completely losing contact with reality. I was floating in a world of discourse and could not relate the representations I was manipulating to the reality they claimed to describe. But it was precisely this self-referentiality and nonverifiability that allowed me to manipulate them with no regard to their relation to reality, and to produce credible, influential texts.

The capacity of the UNHCR's accounts to provide apparently universal explanatory models – in other words, models that effectively articulate the contextual and the global – also helps to make these accounts attractive. Each account finds its place in a global system of knowledges that offers keys to interpretation, explaining and comparing what is happening throughout the world. Two elements make this possible: first, the refugee episteme, a vision of the world that is universal in scope and structures the thinking of the organisation's employees; and, second, the globally deployed translocal structure of the UNHCR, which enables the organisation to produce accounts and data from a multitude of contexts. Created on the basis of internally developed standardised legibility tools (see Chapter 4), these elements make it possible to produce data and reports on transnational phenomena, which states and many other organisations that are less widely established than the UNHCR find more difficult to do. In addition, the translocal structure makes it possible to produce and disseminate tailor-made reports adjusted to the context, target readership and the language they speak.

It should also be noted that the refugee episteme is itself attached to an already hegemonic episteme. I noted above that this incorporates a vision centred on the state: all the fundamental categories through which the political and migrations are understood are framed by the state and the principle of state sovereignty. The state is the principal and final actor, and migration is classified first and foremost as internal or external, legal or illegal. The UNHCR's activity and knowledge are all the more attractive and convincing because they coincide with the conception shared by a large proportion of the world's population, including many researchers (Foucault 1979; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003), of the political and of migration.

The UNHCR's Relationship with the Academic World

One final factor contributes to making the UNHCR's accounts convincing: the organisation's proximity to the academic and research sectors. Academic knowledge is often deployed to substantiate its analyses and validate its recommendations, lending greater legitimacy to the UNHCR's expertise. This relationship is constructed through the creation of a zone of intersection, or

'grey' zone, where expert knowledge and academic knowledge interweave, allowing the UNHCR to appropriate scientific knowledge and integrate it into its own discourse. The UNHCR devotes substantial financial and human resources to creating and maintaining this grey zone in which expert knowledge is fabricated. This possibility rests both on funding provided by the organisation and on the desire of many researchers to see the impact of their work in the real world.

During the 1990s and 2000s, the UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) was in permanent contact with academic researchers, always listening and ready to digest new approaches and critiques. Its primary academic partners were university research centres that have made refugees a specialist academic field. The Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford, set up in 1982, was followed by others, such as those at the Universities of York and Cairo. These centres receive funding from the UNHCR, providing a pool for recruiting consultants. Since the 1990s, the grey areas inhabited by both practitioners and academics have proliferated, ranging from the Association for the Study of Forced Migration, which brings together researchers working in this field, to the many journals such as the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, the *Forced Migration Review* and *Refugee Studies Quarterly*: UNHCR representatives sit on their editorial and/or review boards, and help to fund them. The former director of the PDES himself created the series *New Issues in Refugee Research* in 1992: the material it published includes the results of some consultancies, reflections from UNHCR officers, and articles by academics critiquing the refugee regime. Many UNHCR officers published in 'grey' journals or collections (see, for example, the articles by Crisp, Feller, Grandi, Lombardo, Macleod and Ogata cited in the bibliography). The texts produced by the former director of the PDES, an influential senior officer in the organisation, are emblematic of the 'grey' nature of this knowledge about refugees and the multiple forms it can take: while he was the principal (and anonymous) author of many UNHCR strategy documents, he also published in academic journals in a personal capacity. In these articles he might explain the UNHCR's point of view or its internal thinking in order to publicise them more widely, or express personal reflections where he revealed his own critique, putting forward points of view that contrasted with the organisation's official approach.

In this 'grey' zone, academic knowledge is often absorbed and manipulated to serve the UNHCR's ends. One example is consultancy reports, often written by academic researchers: these documents read more like the normative texts produced by the UNHCR than academic papers. There is always a prescriptive aspect; there are few academic references. It is these reports that are likely to be cited by experts rather than the academic articles upon which they may rely. But the refugee episteme is particularly greedy for analytical

frameworks and concepts. The most striking example is the fact that the category 'refugee' has come to define an academic discipline, in which it is used as a descriptive sociological category. This is also true of a whole series of other concepts. In a book published in 2008, for example (Loescher et al. 2008), UNHCR officers and academic researchers write alongside one another, addressing 'protracted refugee situations'. The academics seek to conceptualise and theoretically refine this notion, but ultimately remain embedded in the refugee episteme. In addition to its role of validation and legitimisation, this proximity with the academic world often extends the influence of the UNHCR's expert knowledge because it fosters the production of an academic knowledge 'contaminated' by the refugee episteme.

The ACSU project offers an excellent illustration of the UNHCR engaging with academic research as a way of reinforcing the authority of its recommendations. The project made production of knowledge about Afghan migration a priority. Numerous studies were commissioned from research centres and consultancy companies such as the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit and Altai Consulting, based in Kabul, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute and the Collective for Social Science Research, based in Pakistan, the University of Tehran and individual consultants. Between 2003 and 2009, no fewer than twenty-four case studies and research summaries were conducted and published.[4] All of this research supported and corroborated the recommendations contained in the ACSU strategy, demonstrating that they were 'grounded' (AREU and UNHCR 2007), and therefore relevant and appropriate. Both the form and the content of these studies reveal a strong influence from the UNHCR. All the central arguments put forward by the ACSU project as to the most appropriate way to understand, classify and manage Afghan migration are present here. The specific themes of the various series of studies conducted cover the central points in the arguments of the ACSU strategy: cross-border movements and transnational networks, Afghanistan's 'absorption capacity', the role of Afghans in the Iranian and Pakistani labour markets, and the propensity of second-generation Afghans living in Iran and Pakistan to return. The conclusions and recommendations often broadly reiterate (sometimes word for word!) the classifications and reasoning of UNHCR strategy papers,[5] and for good reason: Saverio and Eric monitored the conduct of these studies closely. They wrote terms of reference for the research teams, reviewed the texts and sometimes even edited them, particularly the summaries, conclusions and recommendations, where they checked to ensure that the UNHCR's key messages were clearly articulated.

The example of anthropologist Alessandro Monsutti's collaboration with AREU nevertheless shows that while collaboration with researchers often works to legitimise the organisation's recommendations, the relationship

between researchers and the UNHCR is not always one of one-way epistemic and political submission. As the academic author of the most detailed ethnographic study of Afghan migration, Monsutti was contacted by Eric and Saverio and agreed to act as advisor for the first pilot series of studies on transnational networks on behalf of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (Monsutti 2006; Stigter and Monsutti 2005). Monsutti took on this consultancy because the approach of the ACSU project was fundamentally in agreement with his work, and in many respects was attempting to go beyond the limits he had identified in the refugee regime (see Chapter 2). He saw it as an 'illuminated' approach and respected Eric and Saverio, who, he said to me one day, 'had understood everything' even before they encountered his work (published in 2004). He saw this consultancy as 'a unique opportunity in the life of a researcher'. Participating in the research project gave him the opportunity to put forward a critical approach and to ensure that the results of his own research influenced the way in which Afghan migration was governed by states. Moreover, it is worth noting that his papers, although they took the form of consultancy reports, were not 'swallowed up' by the refugee episteme; while they produced a knowledge that sat within this episteme and was understood through it, he retained control over the vocabulary and analytical categories. For example, he asserts that it is not possible to establish a clear distinction between refugees and migrants (Monsutti 2006; Stigter and Monsutti 2005), whereas it would be difficult to find a similar assertion in a UNHCR document.[6] Moreover, after participating in these studies, Monsutti published a critical reflection on the limitations of the three 'traditional solutions' (Monsutti 2008), probably prompted by his proximity to the UNHCR during his consultancy.

The five factors considered above explain why the UNHCR's accounts are particularly authoritative. Despite an academic literature critical of the organisation's activity, despite many internal proposals for reform, among the media and many of those involved in the international refugee regime, the UNHCR's accounts are often accepted as truth. Their self-referentiality makes them unique and immune to all criticism of substance, and their integration into the universal analytical framework of the refugee episteme reinforces their consistency and their attraction; at the same time, the UNHCR's multilocalised presence gives them a solid, unrivalled empirical foundation, and their global dissemination reinforces their influence. Unless one is to contradict the appropriateness of the UNHCR's accounts on the basis of an even more localised and/or distributed presence, or question the refugee episteme as a whole (but by this token in a different register, alternative to rather than challenging that of the UNHCR), the UNHCR's accounts are difficult to equal or to challenge.

The Naturalisation of the National Order

The five factors identified above also operate as mechanisms of depoliticisation. By obscuring the fact that these accounts are interpretations, and the hypotheses and strategic goals that structure them, they help to produce narratives and recommendations that claim to be objective and not subject to any moral-political scrutiny. Yet, in fact, the UNHCR's accounts are highly 'political'. As I have pointed out, they are always the product of internal negotiations and, as I have shown above, they serve to promote specific objectives with regard to how migration is to be viewed and approached,[7] and are often used for strategic ends. In the remainder of this chapter I examine how these accounts are embedded in a hegemonic episteme and in international power relations. This episteme defines the field of what is thinkable within the UNHCR, and is at the same time naturalised and indeed reinforced by the performativity of the UNHCR's accounts.

A number of those who have researched international humanitarian and development institutions have noted the existence of powerful depoliticisation mechanisms that elide the power relations and dominance structures at work, presenting interventions as purely technical operations (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010; Chandler 2006; Ferguson 1994; Murray Li 2007; Monsutti 2012a).[8] In his pioneering study of a World Bank-funded development project in Lesotho, James Ferguson (1994) describes the bureaucratic structure put in place to run this project as an 'anti-politics machine', because it reduced poverty to a purely technical issue. The structural political and economic relations, particularly the unequal and asymmetric distribution of resources and power, were completely ignored in the construction of the problem and the solutions, concealing them while at the same time fostering the expansion of state bureaucratic power. Tania Murray Li, in her study of the World Bank in Indonesia, reveals the depoliticised and depoliticising approach taken by those working in development, who see the villages targeted by their projects as 'incarcerated localities' (2007: 275) and fail to take into account local, national and global power relations, eliding their own positioning in these relations entirely.

Following on from these studies, here I approach the UNHCR's narratives as historical and situated productions. Despite their normative tone, which presents the refugee 'problem' and the concomitant 'solutions' to it as self-evident, these texts are located in an epistemic space with a defined and specific validity and legitimacy that determines in advance what it is possible and acceptable to say. This space arises out of the UNHCR's positioning as an interstate institution, and has consequences at both the epistemic level (what can be seen within the UNHCR and how it is seen and spoken about) and the moral level (what is considered normal and abnormal, legitimate and

illegitimate). Here I focus on two factors that shape the field of power-knowledge at issue: the national order, and the unequal power relations between the states of the Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan region and European states.

As I noted in Chapter 2, the cognitive framework within which the UNHCR's accounts are set is structured by the national order, skewing them towards the nation- and state-centred, sedentary model. The background to migration is the set of mutually exclusive territorial state jurisdictions: the state holds the ultimate power, and nationality is the criterion for classification and distribution of human beings over the earth. Any discourse and any knowledge produced by the UNHCR are situated within this cognitive framework, but this is never explicitly stated. Accounts are formulated as if the world really worked this way. This is reinforced by the declarative and normative tone of the organisation's statements: its discourses are worded as if they were setting out observations that go without saying, as if they described universally valid facts, mechanisms and phenomena.

Take, for example, the selective way in which Afghan migration is represented in the range of UNHCR texts that I have analysed in this chapter, including those from the ACSU project. The spatiality of migration is rigidly anchored in the geopolitics of the interstate system, and the institutions of state sovereignty and citizenship. Migrants are first Afghans before they are human beings, Pashtuns or others. What counts, in their migration, is the fact that they have left the jurisdiction of the Afghan state and are non-nationals in another state jurisdiction. A series of other phenomena and realities derived from other sociopolitical orders than the nation and the state – for example, tribal solidarity or circular migration – remain largely elided and obscured in the organisation's narratives. When they are taken into account, they are read purely through the state-centred lens of the nation-state order, emphasising their 'irregularity', 'informality' or their 'social' nature.

By naturalising the national order, the UNHCR contributes not only to reproducing this order but also to strengthening its effects. Because the organisation's discourses and interventions are shaped by this cognitive framework, its activity works to reinforce it, making it operative and influential – in short, shaping the world to align with this view of the world. Through its discourse, the UNHCR roots this order in the minds of all those who hear it. Through its activity, it imposes it on the real world, imprinting it. The actors who in their turn situate their discourse and practices in relation to the UNHCR and within the refugee regime (NGOs and donors) do the same.

By reproducing the national order and rendering it operative, the UNHCR helps to naturalise the framework within which its activity and its existence are set and acquire meaning: it is within this framework that the 'refugee problem' is posed, and therefore that the UNHCR's mission and the 'solutions' it proposes are appropriate. What defines refugees is precisely that they are

'displaced' in relation to the national order; without this order, there would be no refugees – and no UNHCR. The UNHCR's accounts thus shape the world into one where the organisation's existence and activity are legitimate, relevant and indeed essential.

The Restricted Holism of the ACSU Project

The UNHCR's narratives naturalise not just the national order, but also power relations within the interstate arena. Here I focus particularly on the power relations between the countries of the Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan region and European countries. The latter, which are wealthier and have greater influence in the international arena, are also affected by Afghan migration, though to a lesser degree than the former.[9] A comparison of the UNHCR's policies towards Afghans in the two regions pushes the analysis of the ACSU project's strategy documents further and reveals the regional impact of the innovations it introduced. This is why the 'comprehensive solutions' approach can appropriately be described as *restricted holism*.

A comparison of the ACSU strategy adopted in Asia and the UNHCR's policies in Europe in the mid-2000s[10] reveals a number of differences in the way in which the situation was analysed, migration flows were understood, and the problem and priorities were formulated in the two contexts. In Asia, the UNHCR proposed 'comprehensive solutions' to address Afghan 'population movements'. It thus adopted a holistic approach and took into consideration all kinds of movement, seeking appropriate solutions for each of them. In Europe, the focus was on identifying the 'refugees' amid 'mixed migration' and reducing 'secondary movements'. In other words, the aim was to pick out the refugees from among all the migrants in order to offer them access to European countries and to reduce the level of unauthorised migration to Europe.

There are three significant differences between the two approaches. First, the 'comprehensive solutions' strategy highlighted the need to look beyond the refugee paradigm and take the entire spectrum of migrants into consideration. However, in Europe, a 'refugee focus' prevailed, hand in hand with a selective approach: the UNHCR was concerned only to identify, among all migrants, those under its mandate, in order to ensure them the right of entry and residence. The aim was to carve out and preserve a space for asylum in European immigration policies. There was a strict binary logic, with a division between the two categories of migrants ('migrants' and 'refugees', who mix to produce 'mixed migration'), and the difference in treatment reserved for each was brutally apparent.

Second, the formulation of the problem faced at the gates of Europe was much less contextualised. The long-term strategy for Afghanistan was based

on fine-grained analysis of the political, economic and social context and of migration patterns. The situation was understood in terms of 'population movements' that needed to be studied in all their complexity in order to arrive at 'comprehensive solutions'. In the policies developed for Europe, on the other hand, migration was approached in a more piecemeal way. Apart from a few generic references to 'globalisation', the phenomenon of migration was neither contextualised in relation to historical, economic, social and political processes nor related to the migrants' situation in their country of origin. The notions of 'development' and 'poverty' were never raised. No particular attention was paid to the situation in Afghanistan and its migration flows because the migrants who reached Europe were seen as an indistinct mass, regardless of their origin. No one asked if these migrations were an irreversible phenomenon or how they might evolve in the long term. The problem was formulated as one of access to asylum for the population that fell under the UNHCR's mandate; it was therefore an isolated question that could be resolved by isolated measures.

Finally, the way in which mobility was seen also differed. The ACSU strategy recognised the importance of migration, its history and its irreversibility. However, in the UNHCR's policies for Europe, movement was seen as a problem (even as *the* problem) to be solved. What states see as a problem automatically becomes the UNHCR's problem. These policies therefore aimed quite explicitly to put a brake on movement. This is clear in the information campaigns the organisation instigated in regions of origin, and the statement that priority would be given identifying migrants as close as possible to their country of origin. The documents I examined also recommended reducing undocumented 'secondary' migration in order to preserve the institution of asylum and ensure protection of (potential) migrants, reducing their risk of being trafficked.[11] The fact that 'secondary movements'[12] are unauthorised because there are no legal avenues for migration or that it is precisely the most vulnerable people who are at risk of exploitation in migrating seem to be relegated to the background. As noted earlier, the ACSU strategy also saw irregular movement as a problem. But it was precisely this observation that led it to seek ways to increase the legal possibilities for migration – not to eliminate movement altogether.

Moreover, in documents relating to the UNHCR's policies in Europe, the organisation readily recognises the right of states to control their borders and decide their immigration policies. It even asserts that granting asylum should not make controls more difficult, and that irregular immigration breaches states' rights to control the entry and stay of non-nationals in their territory.[13] This position is particularly ambiguous because these countries have systems of asylum, besides resettlement procedures, and the UNHCR seeks to improve them. The attitude of supporting reduction of 'irregular' and 'secondary'

migration, while actively working in support of those who manage to reach countries not contiguous with their country of origin 'spontaneously' thus conceals a perverse logic whereby the possibility of legal settlement in Europe is only offered to those who manage to get there by clandestine routes.

Comparing the UNHCR's policy documents on Europe and the Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan region starkly reveals the regional scale of the organisation's policies vis-à-vis Afghan refugees, including in the ACSU project. The 'problem of Afghan displacement' is presented in UNHCR documents as a pre-eminently regional issue. The contiguous states of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan (identified as 'South-West Asia') are the spaces pertinent to both understanding the phenomenon of Afghan displacement and formulating the problem and the solutions to it. The region is seen as a self-sufficient space, cut off from the rest of the world.

A number of anthropologists and geographers have shown that scales, as cognitive devices through which we understand and interact with reality, are social constructions (see, for example, Hill 2007; Marston 2000; Smith 1992). The point here is also to ask what 'will to knowledge' the policies formed in relation to Afghan refugees are expressing. What kind of division governs the discontinuity in the UNHCR's understanding of the phenomenon of Afghan migration, and its formulation of problems and solutions, in two regions of the world at a particular moment in history?:

> Certainly, as a proposition, the division between true and false is neither arbitrary, nor modifiable, nor institutional, nor violent. Putting the question in different terms, however – asking what has been, what still is ... the kind of division governing our will to knowledge – then we may well discern something like a system of exclusion (historical, modifiable, institutionally constraining) in the process of development. (Foucault 1971: 10)

Murray Li describes the operation whereby decision-makers omit certain elements in constructing the problems that determine their programmes – elements such as global political and economic relations, and macrolevel inequalities – as 'constitutive exclusion' (Murray Li 2007: 27).

Up to this point, I have presented the ACSU project as the fruit of an encompassing, holistic approach and 'in-depth' analysis of Afghan migration. But this depth is at the same time selective, in that it is structured on the regional scale: not only is the region the space delimiting the phenomenon to be analysed, but the influence of all external factors and actors also remains completely concealed. The general effect of this regional focus is to create a dissociation between the region and the rest of the world, which aligns with a split between regional and extraregional migration.

The centrality of the regional focus is evident in the way in which the problem is formulated. Everything that goes beyond the region remains out of

consideration.[14] The source of the 'displacement' (and hence of the problem) is the situation in Afghanistan. The causes of this situation are not entered into in detail, and nor are the external factors that had contributed and continue to contribute to it (for example, the circumstances under which the Afghan state had been created, interstate power relations and the intervention of foreign powers). Chimni and Duffield make a similar observation: Chimni describes the 'internalist causes' that are emphasised in refugee policy (Chimni 1998), while Duffield remarks that in accounts furnished by humanitarian and development bodies intervening in a crisis, the only causes of conflict referred to are those that are internal to the country (Duffield 2001). Not only is migration beyond the region not taken into account, but the links with the outside are also passed over. Transnational networks and money transfers, for example, are only referred to in relation to migration within the region. While Iran and Pakistan's restrictive policies are highlighted, those of other countries are not mentioned.

The solutions are also sought within this regional space. The place that the UNHCR must create has to emerge within one of these three state jurisdictions. In order to solve the 'equation', the organisation strives to balance the two solutions of repatriation and integration in Iran or Pakistan: the possibility of resettlement further afield is never mentioned. The few hundred people who leave each year for Western countries under 'resettlement programmes' are not mentioned. Countries outside the region are only referred to as external agents, donors and actors who might put political pressure on governments in the region. Their role in history and in the conflicts in Afghanistan, past and present, is not mentioned at any point. As donors, and stakeholders in the post-2001 future of Afghanistan, they are instead the target readership of the UNHCR's strategy documents. An examination of the use of the word 'Europe' in these documents reveals that this set of countries appears not as a potential region of destination, but exclusively as a donor to the UNHCR.

As soon as Afghans leave 'South-West Asia', they are no longer seen in terms of their nationality and are therefore no longer the focus of policies targeted specifically at Afghans. Thus, UNHCR policies towards Afghans seeking to reach Europe treat them as members of an undifferentiated flow of migrants making their way to Europe. It is therefore no longer the relation to the situation in Afghanistan, or the fact of being reducible to the phenomenon of Afghan migration, that counts. The phenomenon to which Afghan migrants are reduced, and to which the UNHCR seeks solutions, is no longer 'Afghan displacement', but 'mixed migration' or 'secondary movements'. Chimni (1998) highlights the 'myth of difference' in the way in which migration flows that began to reach Western countries from African and Asian countries in the 1980s were constructed as qualitatively different from those within the migrants' region of origin, thus justifying different policies.

The emphasis on the regional scale in the understanding and management of 'Afghan displacement' is also reflected in the volume of knowledge produced on the subject of Afghan migration. The UNHCR produces a huge quantity of data on migration in 'South-West Asia', as all of the statistics, commissioned research, analyses and strategy documents cited in this book show. However, a search for data on Afghan migration outside the region, even taking into account documents produced to give a global overview of forced migration (UNHCR 2006a, 2008a) or in other regions of the world (UNHCR 2008b), turns up very fragmentary, much less complete information.[15]

The Internal Economy of UNHCR Policies

Thus, an internal economy of UNHCR policies emerges, revealing on the one hand the attempt to optimise solutions within the region (repatriation, integration and migration), by way of an innovative approach, and on the other hand the limited solutions offered to those who leave the region – despite the fact that the 'equation' within the region becomes more insoluble each year. Taken together, the two regional policies of restricted holism in the long-term regional strategy, and the system of selection and restriction on movement at the borders of Europe implicitly collude to discourage migration of Afghans outside the region.

This position is fundamentally consistent with European countries' openly declared aim of containing the flows. It also aligns with the structure of European countries' bureaucracies, splitting the perspective of the donor, for whom Afghan refugees are a foreign policy issue (victims who should be helped) from that of the host country, for whom they represent an internal political issue (illegal migrants from a Muslim country close to a source of terrorism and drug production, representing a danger to European societies). This structure defines two separate domains – 'humanitarianism' and 'immigration' – that are seen and managed as if they were fundamentally different questions.

The genesis and reach of the ACSU project can thus be contextualised in a web of power relations that go beyond internal relations in the UNHCR. The reason the strategy came about was also because the structural conditions were favourable to it. These conditions supported the emergence of an innovative project, but at the same time limited its reach. The holism of the 'comprehensive solutions' was thus the counterpoint to selection at European borders. European donors' willingness to countenance attempts to move beyond the impasse in the region, even by way of such an innovative project, was the obverse of the restrictive policies being adopted at Europe's borders. Indeed, the first funding from the European Commission, the project's main

funder, came in 2003, the year in which European countries began to call more forcefully for the externalisation of international protection for refugees. Their proposals included the concept of 'region of origin', and the creation of partnerships with countries contiguous with the country of origin so as to increase their capacity to manage migration flows and create conditions where 'persons in need of international protection' could obtain it 'as rapidly and as close to their country as possible'. In this way, they would not need to seek this protection elsewhere (European Commission 2003, 2004, 2005).

Thus European countries' priorities helped to produce a configuration favourable to the introduction of the ACSU strategy. This helps to explain how, in the European Commission, such a project found a partner willing to fund it. It explains not only how the strategy became conceivable and fundable, but also why until 2008 it did not feature strongly in the UNHCR's external communications. It was seen more as a technical strategy, developed in response to a specific, particularly complex problem. Internally, it remained a unique and isolated project. Documents describing the strategy often asserted that it was the complexity and longevity of the Afghan crisis, and the nature of the population concerned, that justified such a specific approach. The singular strategy was thus justified by the exceptional nature of the Afghan refugee crisis.[16] In this way, its innovative, destabilising potential was 'contained'. As such, the organisation effectively produced a highly innovative, even revolutionary project for an interstate organisation. But this project could only be rolled out within precise limits. Its conception of migration as positive and irreversible related solely to the region. The state sovereignty that the UNHCR was directly, robustly challenging was that of Iran and Pakistan, while that of European countries continued to reign in Europe. Ultimately the project was caught up in the global power relations in which the organisation is enmeshed, which are immanent to it and in which the priorities of European countries carry particular weight.

For the UNHCR, this set of power relations constitutes a systemic and structural system of constraint. The organisation can neither ignore them nor radically transform them. Thus, they define the UNHCR's field of possibilities, including its cognitive repertoire. Before they determine the content of its policies, global power relations shape the way in which policy sectors are constituted, and the concepts and context within which the UNHCR understands the phenomenon of migration, conceptualises problems and formulates its recommendations.

It is widely acknowledged that refugee policy is shaped by the interests of the wealthiest industrialised countries, which fund the UNHCR's programmes while remaining concerned to limit immigration by some non-nationals (including Afghans). Many researchers have highlighted the UNHCR's dependence on donor states and have noted that this allows these countries to forward

their interests at the level of the organisation's policies (Agier 2003, 2011; Chimni 1998; Duffield 2008; Valluy 2009). In this chapter I have shown that the influence of European donors on UNHCR policies is not mechanical and direct, a sort of blackmail in exchange for funding. On the one hand, I have shown that in some contexts, when UNHCR officers interact with European countries in their 'donor mode' rather than their 'host country mode', it has powerful authority, as they need its expertise in order to be 'good donors'. On the other hand, I have also shown that European countries' priorities are furthered through the UNHCR's policies, even before funding is provided, through bureaucratic and cognitive procedures that determine in advance the divisions between policy domains, the concepts that govern how phenomena are understood, how problems and solutions are constructed, and how the bureaucratic structure is organised.

The configuration of power relations within which the UNHCR's expansive bureaucracy is enmeshed thus shapes the field of possible policies. The UNHCR can neither ignore these power relations nor radically transform them: operating through bureaucratic and cognitive mechanisms, they shape the organisation's cognitive repertoire and its repertoire of possible actions. In their turn, the UNHCR's policies refresh, reassert and help to reproduce these same power relations.

Notes

1. Abbasi-Shavazi 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Abbasi-Shavazi and Glazebrook 2006; Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008; AREU and CSSR 2006; AREU and MORR 2005; Aftab 2005; Altai Consulting 2006, 2009; CSSR 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Gulbadan and Hunte 2006; MPI 2005; Monsutti 2006; Saito 2007; Saito and Hunte 2007; SDPI 2003, 2006; Stigter 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Stigter and Monsutti 2005; Wickramasekara et al. 2006.
2. The briefing notes presented twice a week at press conferences in Geneva, *Global Appeal* and *Global Report*, the magazine *Refugee* and the five-yearly publication *The State of the World's Refugees*, widely cited by researchers and institutions. There are also the strategy and discussion papers, the position papers presented at international forums, the directives on 'refugee status determination', etc.
3. For example, the NRC stated that the deportees included holders of the *Amayesh* card and that Iran had not signed the 1951 Convention. The UNHCR countered that the few *Amayesh* cardholders were immediately returned to Iran (unlike the NRC, the UNHCR was present at the border and had dealt with this issue directly). The UNHCR also pointed out that Iran had signed the 1951 Convention and recommended the NRC read certain documents, including UNHCR-commissioned research.
4. See the list of references in note 1.
5. In the review of the series of case studies conducted by the Collective for Social Science Research on Afghans in Quetta, Peshawar and Karachi (CSSR 2006), for example, the arguments put forward are entirely aligned with UNHCR strategy documents

(UNHCR 2003a, 2004a, 2007a). The final summary suggests the three questions decision-makers should consider as a priority: transnationalism and money transfers; cross-border movements; and changes in 'population movements' over the decades and why they need to be rethought. Finally, the 'way forward' urges readers to recognise that Afghans in Pakistan have diverse needs, particularly those of the second generation, migrant workers and Afghans 'in need of protection', and recommends setting realistic goals for repatriation, taking into consideration Afghanistan's limited 'absorption capacity'.

6. The ACSU strategy instead states that not all Afghan migrants can be seen indistinguishably as refugees – a different position.

7. In the same vein, Barnett and Finnemore (2004) remark that the International Monetary Fund presents its analyses as neutral and technical, whereas in fact their aim is to reconstitute the economies of certain countries so that they conform to the model of the Washington Consensus.

8. Similar mechanisms have been noted in the work of state bureaucracies (Arendt 2006; Herzfeld 1992; Spire 2007).

9. The migration pathways Afghans have established also extend to countries further away than Iran and Pakistan: first to the Middle East and the Gulf States, then to the Central Asian republics, India and Russia, and finally to Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. While during the 1980s and 1990s emigration to the West was almost exclusively the province of the educated, urbanised elite (Centlivres and Centlivres-Dumont 2000; Gehrig and Monsutti 2003), since the 2000s it has become more generalised (see, for example, Monsutti 2009).

10. The following outline of the UNHCR policies at European borders is based on these documents: UNHCR 2000a, 2003b, 2004f, 2005a, 2006a, 2006c, 2007c.

11. '[B]y virtue of its mandate for the protection of refugees, UNHCR has a broader interest in initiatives that are intended to reduce the number of migrants who move in an irregular manner and who submit unfounded applications for refugee status … the people involved in such movements have to spend large amounts of money for the services of human smugglers, and are then obliged to undertake very hazardous journeys in which their lives and liberty are at constant risk. Even then they have no guarantee that they will reach their destination. It is for this reason that UNHCR gives such priority to building capacities in countries of asylum' (UNHCR 2006c: 3–58).

12. This concept emerged in the 1990s, as transcontinental migration expanded worldwide. It concerns asylum seekers who arrive in countries not contiguous with their country of origin by clandestine routes, like Afghans who arrive in a European country. They come 'spontaneously', a term often used to emphasise that their migration does not fit into any of the institutional frameworks designed for it. This is a phenomenon not provided for within the three 'traditional solutions'. From the point of view of noncontiguous countries, these people circumvent the institutional resettlement system, which by contrast ensures an ordered and quantitatively limited flow of non-nationals from unstable countries.

13. See, for example, the following passage: 'UNHCR is especially mindful of the need to ensure that the provision of protection and asylum to refugees and other people of concern to the Office does not compound the difficulties that states experience in controlling more generally the arrival and residence of foreign nationals and in combating international crime' (UNHCR 2007n: 2).

14. The only exception is the eligibility guidelines for the status determination of Afghan asylum seekers (UNHCR 2007c). In this document, reference is made to external causes, although they remain discreet: there is mention, for example, of 'open conflict' ongoing in the country (the informed reader knows that foreign troops are involved in such a conflict) and the list of at-risk categories includes 'Afghans associated with international organisations and the security forces'. Furthermore, the very existence of this document indirectly implies that there are Afghan asylum seekers outside of the region and that these countries are potential host countries. The singular nature of this document was counterbalanced by the fact that it was disseminated to a very limited number of people in the region and among UNHCR staff and partners dealing with 'South-West Asia'. Although largely written by the Protection Department at the Kabul Branch Office, it was then published by Headquarters and distributed to the authorities responsible for 'refugee status determination' in states that had established such procedures. The document was not designed for the general public, but for specialists and lawyers.

15. The only exception I found was a document published in 2005 that compared data on repatriation with the number of asylum applications made in Europe (UNHCR 2005b). Its aim was to establish a link between the situation in Afghanistan, the high rate of return from Iran and Pakistan under the repatriation programme, and the fall in asylum applications from Afghans in European countries since 2001. This is clearly a document written for European partners, aiming to show that donations were well used, in line with their interests.

16. '[U]nder normal circumstances a population movement of this dimension would signal an end to a refugee situation' (UNHCR 2003a: 2).