

Refugees as translators

Challenging the traditional understanding of refugees as passive actors who only submit to policies, our research defines a new subject position for refugees, as people who have been forced to find creative solutions to life threatening situations and as people who can generate new forms of knowledge and information. Rather than mere passers-by or victims of circumstances, refugees can also be regarded as creating and using networks, constructing spaces for their own possibilities, cultivating solutions, and articulating relationships between disparate cultures by translating between them. Most importantly, they become carriers of cultural knowledge in and through their personal experiences, which are often missing from accounts that focus on their numbers and patterns of movement. This knowledge takes form prior to, during, and after their odysseys to new countries. The project will therefore also have a micro level focus on the perceptions of refugees about border, asylum, reception and integration policies. We believe that such a micro level focus will deepen our general understanding about push and pull factors.