



HPG Working Paper

The 'humanitarian anchor'

A social economy approach to assistance in protracted displacement situations

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1 Introduction

The humanitarian endeavour finds itself at a crossroads. There is a growing clamour and urgency to find answers to how humanitarian action can effectively uphold the dignity and human security of displaced people and local populations alike. The lack of availability of so-called durable solutions and the increasingly protracted nature of displacement have prompted some humanitarians to question the relevance of their work in situations that call for more longer-term developmental approaches.¹ The dilemma has been acknowledged by international agencies including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) (UNHCR, 2017: 3; UNDP et al., 2010: 1), and there have been persistent calls, particularly among influential multi-mandate actors, for ‘responses to humanitarian and economic crises ... to be brought together with responses to foster long-term development’ (Oxfam, 2013: 5).

This paper makes the case for reconfiguring the contribution of humanitarian actors in societies and economies affected by mass displacement. As such, it is squarely located in ongoing discussions of the ‘humanitarian–development nexus’, and efforts to combine humanitarian and development interventions *from the onset* of a crisis, pursuant to the New York Declaration of 19 September 2016, under which the UN General Assembly set out a vision for a new Global Refugee Compact. The declaration tasks UNHCR with initiating and developing, in coordination with a broad range of public and private stakeholders, responses to crises of mass displacement: ‘to ease pressures on the host countries involved, to enhance refugee self-reliance, to expand access to third-country solutions and to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity’.² While the

thinking underpinning the Compact is far from novel, and arguably just the most recent iteration of long-standing debates on the humanitarian–development divide/gap/nexus, this renewed impetus around holistic approaches opens up opportunities to imagine and explore new cartographies that bring together the economic, social and cultural lives of local residents and displaced people.

In what follows, neoliberal ideals of what the market is and does are jettisoned in favour of a social economy approach.³ I argue that cooperative modes of production are an integral component of the community economy and can provide the necessary tools to alleviate poverty; reduce tensions between host and displaced communities; ease pressures for onward migration; and enhance the dignity and well-being of displaced people. What is proposed is an economy that works for displacement-affected communities.⁴ This paper rejects the taken-for-granted binary of ‘host’ and ‘guest’ communities (Zaman, 2016a; Brun, 2010), and challenges paternalistic approaches to assistance embedded in the colonial histories of the humanitarian endeavour and its post-colonial imaginaries, in which displaced people are rendered ‘speechless emissaries’ (Malkki, 1996) and alternative modalities of humanitarian response are silenced (Mayblin, 2014; Haddad, 2008; Zaman, 2016). Instead, we need to ‘shift the focus of discussion away from how “we”

1 UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as one in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five consecutive years or more in a given country of asylum. Protracted situations are of course more dynamic than this as this measure does not adequately capture the movement of people over time. Protracted situations are often a result of successive mass displacements of often different groups.

2 UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 September 2016, A/RES/71/1, 3 October 2016 (<http://bit.ly/UN-NewYorkDeclaration-2016>).

3 A normative definition of the social economy has been put forward by Defourny and Delvetere (1999: 16) who posit that it includes ‘all economic activities conducted by enterprises, primarily co-operatives, associations and mutual benefit societies, whose ethics convey the following principles: 1. Placing services to its members or to the community ahead of profit 2. Autonomous management 3. A democratic decision-making process 4. The primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of revenues’.

4 While the terms ‘displacement-affected communities’ and ‘displacement-affected economies’ are used throughout this paper, the focus is on those who have crossed a national border. The humanitarian social economy approach is equally relevant to internally displaced people and the communities in which they have sought refuge. The political dynamics of refugee situations are complicated by populations being categorised on the basis of access to citizenship rights. IDP situations also require a nuanced approach as in each situation the relationship between the displaced population and the state will vary.

organise “our” aid, and towards the lives of people suffering from crises’ (Mosel and Levine, 2014: 5). As such, the paper eschews the common understanding that donors and subcontracting agents in supply chains are necessarily the principal actors in responses to displacement, and challenges the primacy of ‘the project’ as the key unit of humanitarian production (Krause, 2015). Instead, an infrastructural approach is advocated wherein direct investment in displacement-affected communities is considered as an optimal route to opening up the humanitarian market to those most affected.

The paper is organised in four parts. First, the role of the humanitarian marketplace in displacement-affected economies is considered. The humanitarian market is predicated on a chain of subcontracting relationships that help meet the material needs of displacement-affected communities. This section teases out the presuppositions underlying relationships in the humanitarian market, and the opportunities that arise for displaced people and resident hosts as economic actors under this arrangement. The next section reviews recent developments in recognising the economic agency of displacement-affected people. Challenges and opportunities arising from an alignment of market-led ideals with humanitarianism are identified, with a particular focus on direct cash transfers to displaced people. The liberalisation of procurement markets, which has seen more private sector actors competing in the humanitarian economy, is also examined. Such market-led trends in

humanitarian response encourage entrepreneurialism among refugees in displacement economies. While useful, this cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive strategy for responding to protracted displacement.

The shortcomings of market-led responses need addressing, and part three makes a case for an alternative approach involving cooperative modes of business ownership to underpin an economy geared towards working in the interests of local communities. The concluding section asks whether such developments in cooperative organising can be recalibrated for use in the humanitarian field. Following on from the weaknesses in market-led responses discussed in the preceding section, the current trend for the liberalisation of procurement markets is explored further as a tool for transitioning towards a social economy. Here, the concept of a ‘humanitarian anchor’ is introduced as a means of disrupting the humanitarian market so that it can better address the concerns of people in protracted displacement.⁵ I consider how this model breaks from the path-dependent and isomorphic behaviour of humanitarian actors embedded in the formal humanitarian system – acknowledging instead the institutional multiplicity characterising the humanitarian field (Sezgin and Deijkzeul, 2016).

5 A humanitarian anchor recognises how actors and agencies from the formal humanitarian system are embedded in protracted displacement situations. It seeks to link INGOs and agencies to worker-owned cooperatives through the procurement channels of the former.

2 The humanitarian market in a displacement economy

Mass displacement doesn't just produce refugees, host communities and an attendant humanitarian system populated by UN agencies and international NGOs. The question of 'what (more) does displacement produce?' lies at the core of what Hammar (2014) describes as a displacement economy approach. It asks us to look beyond the population management-oriented interventions that characterise responses to what we label crises and emergencies. It is a 'generative question' (ibid.: 25), eliciting a series of further enquiries and illuminating the 'multiple geographies of linkage and flow' (Amin, 2004) that characterise situations of mass displacement. It reminds us that processes and experiences of forced migration are as much about social transformation as they are about loss (Castles, 2003). While transformation may not be at the heart of what humanitarians traditionally concern themselves with, displacement is transforming and transformative for those who experience it. A displacement economy perspective prompts questions concerning shifts in forms of production and consumption, the allocation of resources and the relationships between alternative and official economies. It draws into its orbit, not only international humanitarian and development actors, but also the state, the private sector and civil society. It also recognises displaced people as resilient and active agents engaged in the business of negotiating exile in constrained and precarious conditions.

With growing numbers of displaced people in urban rather than camp settings, refugee communities are not sealed off from the wider economic structures, formal or otherwise, that shape the strategies open to them. The spaces they inhabit are shared with residents confronting similar developmental challenges of precarious livelihoods, limited educational opportunities and failing infrastructure. The thrust of relief efforts, therefore, must be to create opportunities that reshape and revitalise links, affiliations and networks between displacement-affected communities and their metropolitan location that have hitherto been made less visible by formal responses to mass displacement. 'Recognising and understanding this represents an

opportunity to turn humanitarian challenges into sustainable opportunities. It has the potential to unlock ways to enable those economic systems to be channelled to the benefit of refugees, host states, and donors' (Betts et al., 2014: 6). The overwhelmingly protracted nature of contemporary displacement demands greater attention be paid to the economic relations and practices produced in such situations. Today, protracted displacement is the rule rather than the exception: more than 80% of refugee crises last for at least a decade, and half of these drag on an additional ten years or more (Crawford et al., 2015: 12; UNHCR, 2014), raising the question whether care and maintenance models of humanitarianism are sustainable or indeed required. With just over a quarter of all international humanitarian assistance being spent on protracted displacement situations (Crawford et al., 2015: 16), more careful attention to how this significant resource shapes displacement-affected economies is required.

2.1 The humanitarian marketplace

The principal donors of the formal humanitarian system are governments. Two-thirds of all global humanitarian assistance, or \$17.2 billion, is sourced from OECD-DAC governments, and a further \$1.9 billion from other governments. The bulk of this money is channelled through multilateral agencies, which received \$11.3 billion in 2016. Other notable recipients were NGOs and Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, which received \$3.8 billion and \$2 billion respectively (GHA, 2017: 71). Of the international assistance channelled directly to NGOs from government donors, 0.2% or \$7 million was allocated to local NGOs. The figures look even less encouraging for advocates of localisation when taken as a proportion of total humanitarian assistance – a mere 0.03% (ibid.: 73–75).

This close(d) network of relations between OECD donors and multilateral agencies and INGOs has

led some commentators to claim that the formal humanitarian system operates as an oligopoly (Collinson and Elhawary, 2012). High financial, cultural and regulatory barriers to entry to the formal humanitarian market have inhibited those on the outside from developing constructive and meaningful engagement other than on terms dictated by those from within (Bennett et al., 2016: 56). Where necessary, formal humanitarian actors retreat into the language of humanitarian principles and an imagined exceptionalism to guard against the entry of ‘outside’ actors, including diaspora and faith-based groups and worker-organised collectives (Sezgin and Deijkzeul, 2016).

Within this system, who are the buyers and the sellers? What is the product? While a neoclassical model of economic relations would suggest that the recipient of the good or service is the buyer, this is not the case in the humanitarian marketplace given that the target ‘beneficiary’ does not have the resources to purchase humanitarian goods and services directly. This introduces the concept of ‘third-party buying’. It is the donor⁶ who is the primary buyer of humanitarian assistance; target beneficiaries are simply end-users. ‘What is being consumed by donors are not pots and pans or tents or food, but the act of giving’ (Krause, 2015: 47). It is the opportunity to intervene in a displacement situation that is purchased. Through purchasing humanitarian assistance from aid agencies, government donors demonstrate to concerned local constituents that something is being done about distant suffering.

The fact that suffering is usually distant means that donors are also confronted with the challenge of propinquity. As outlined above, the principal donors of the formal humanitarian system are governments physically and contractually distanced from the populations for whom the humanitarian assistance is purchased. Unwilling and in some cases unable to finance local responders to displacement crises directly, donors instead entrust large tranches of financial resources to UN agencies and INGOs. This incurs significant and persistent transaction costs as intermediary actors

6 Weiss (2015: 6) identifies a composite group of ‘donors’ that purchase humanitarian services, comprising governments, international agencies, corporations and individuals. Aid agencies, which are increasingly in competition (and cooperation) with private sector actors, are the principal suppliers. These roles are not fixed and governments may directly supply humanitarian goods and services, while aid agencies may buy goods and services from private sector actors or contract a smaller NGO to implement its programme (ibid.).

levy charges of up to 20% before passing resources on to a subcontracting partner further along the supply chain (Bennett et al., 2016: 63; Carbonnier, 2015: 59; Walker and Pepper, 2007: 28). These intermediaries act as the primary funders of small, local operational partners (Collinson and Elhawary, 2012: 19; Weiss, 2015: 6; Development Initiatives, 2017: 76). In so doing, humanitarian organisations of varying size enter the market ‘at specific stages along complex supply chains that involve an expanding web of affiliates, contractors and subcontractors’ (Carbonnier, 2015: 58). This opens up space for outsourcing aspects of their operations, not only to local NGOs, but also to the private sector (ibid.).

Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Monika Krause has argued that relief should be understood as a form of production with a very particular kind of output – the project:

The pursuit of the project develops a logic of its own that shapes the allocation of resources ... the project is a commodity, and thus those helped, the beneficiaries, become part of a commodity. The pursuit of the good project encourages agencies to focus on short term results for selected beneficiaries (Krause, 2015: 5).

For Krause, the project as a measurable unit of humanitarian work for a defined population over a particular timeframe is the outcome of a managerial tool – the logframe. With a focus on clearly delineating and achieving singular goals, ‘management tools like the logframe do not determine what people do, but they shape it: they shape what people get to see and know about the world, and the people’s idea about what the task before them is’ (ibid.: 76). One consequence of the use of logframes is that the recipients of aid – the ‘beneficiaries’ – become part of a bundled package of a commodity – the project – that is sold to donors. With its specific outcomes, definite dates and established budgets, the project lends itself to a coherent narrative that tells the story of the work done by humanitarians to both external (read: donor) and internal audiences (ibid.: 25). Nonetheless, the prevailing use of intermediate implementers, contractors and subcontractors for projects runs the substantial risk of undermining accountability to both donors and beneficiaries (Daly and Brassard, 2011: 530). For displaced people in *protracted situations*, stand-alone projects implemented over short periods of time for a purposively selected sample population add little in the way of coherence and meaning to lives embedded

in broader social and cultural relations. To be sure, humanitarian actors (in the Dunantist sense) have an important role where needs are at their most acute, resources unequally distributed or lacking and the capacities of local state actors limited. The questions being asked here are: when is humanitarian assistance no longer required, and how do humanitarians recognise that this point has been reached? How and to whom should the baton be passed once displacement is acknowledged as protracted? And exactly what roles and responsibilities are being passed on given the emerging consensus that humanitarian and development approaches should work hand-in-glove from the onset of a displacement crisis?

2.2 The humanitarian labour market

According to the Global Humanitarian Database, there were approximately 4,480 organisations comprising 450,000 employees providing humanitarian assistance in 2014, the vast majority of them (four of every five) national NGOs (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2015). Around 91% of field personnel from UN agencies, Red Cross/Red Crescent organisations and NGOs were

recruited from within the countries where aid was being provided (ALNAP, 2015: 38).⁷ While the money earned by these employees will eventually trickle down as they consume goods and services, there is no precise data available to indicate how much of this reaches communities affected by displacement. National staff, conversant with the language of logistics and project management, are typically recruited from outside displacement-affected communities, and the fact that refugees are routinely denied the right to work means that they are largely excluded from participating in the humanitarian labour market. Where they do submit their labour they do so ‘under conditions over which they have little control’ (Krause, 2015: 60). In other words, they provide their labour with negligible remuneration as part and parcel of the unit of humanitarian production – the project. As such, refugees have at best a peripheral engagement with the economy brought into existence by virtue of their condition of displacement. The following section explores how humanitarians have sought to address this apparent disconnect between the humanitarian market and the broader displacement economy of which it is a part.

⁷ This number does not include the many community-based organisations that operate in communities affected by protracted displacement.

3 The state of humanitarianism today: towards a market-led response to protracted displacement

The negative socio-economic impact of mass displacement has in recent years been mitigated to a limited degree by what Zetter (2014: 3) calls a ‘market-led development praxis’, which recognises first and foremost that displaced people are economic actors who consistently ‘adapt their survival strategies and develop new ones to maximize all available resources and opportunities’ (Jacobsen, 2005: 3). Far from being a burden and dependent on humanitarian assistance, refugees are connected to wider social networks that help create sustainable livelihood opportunities and make a positive contribution to local economies (Betts et al., 2014). While useful, however, encouraging entrepreneurialism among refugees in displacement economies does not constitute a comprehensive strategy for responding to protracted displacement. Attempts by humanitarian actors to facilitate access to livelihoods have met with limited success, in part because short-term funding impedes meaningful attempts to expand the resilience and self-reliance of displaced people (Crawford et al., 2015: 28).

3.1 Humanitarian cash transfers

In an effort to better integrate displaced populations into the market, humanitarian actors and agencies are increasingly promoting the use of direct cash transfers. Humanitarian cash transfers overcome some of the limitations of project-based delivery. In particular, the multi-sector approach gets beyond the narrow remit of project-based delivery. This allows recipients to choose how to spend their allocated cash grant in accordance with their own specific needs and preferences. Despite cash programming clearly favouring market-based solutions and substantially reducing transaction costs, a note of caution is nonetheless required. Cash is no panacea. First, in protracted displacement

situations cash transfer programmes cannot be sustained indefinitely. As donor interest dwindles, cash transfer programming will run into the same funding problems current modalities of aid programming face. Second, and related to the first point, although there is a proven multiplier effect to the injection of cash transfers on local economies, the expectations of local residents that they will receive similar welfare transfers from their government are unlikely to be met. The limitations of non-productive assistance have been acknowledged by the sector, resulting in increased interest being paid to displacement economies.

3.2 Tapping into refugee economies

Humanitarian actors have directly engaged with the private sector in the procurement of local goods and services. While there is a clear incentive for humanitarian organisations to buy goods directly from local suppliers, contributing to producing an amenable economic and political environment for hosting displaced people, there is something of a missed opportunity in failing to link the procurement of goods and services with the livelihoods of both displaced people and local residents. For transnational humanitarian actors, the national is made synonymous with the local. This conflation of scale arguably results in the marginalisation of resident actors located at the heart of a mass displacement situation. A case in point is the misnomer ‘local’ used for national staff, who often have few substantive ties with the peripheral locations inhabited by displaced people. Similarly, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in displacement-affected communities may be unfamiliar with the bidding and tender processes

through which humanitarian actors and agencies award procurement contracts. The size of contracts may also discourage local SMEs from engaging with the formal humanitarian system. In this way, the procurement channels of the formal humanitarian system effectively filter out opportunities for SMEs based in displacement-affected communities to engage with them, instead favouring long-established firms operating nationally.

In an occasional policy paper on humanitarian innovation for OCHA, Betts and Bloom (2014: 11) call for ‘an alternative [procurement] model [that] would base the opportunity to supply humanitarian goods not just on regulatory privilege, but on performance and value, opening the system up to non-traditional ideas and suppliers, including *the military and the private sector*’ [emphasis added]. Here, refugees and IDPs are reconfigured as ‘consumers or end-users in untapped markets’ (ibid.), with little reference to the capacities and capabilities of displaced actors as productive agents. Clearly, the envisioned participation of refugees in the market is limited, leaving little room for them to take on other, more transformative roles.

On asking what a refugee-centric perspective on humanitarian innovation should be, the Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) settles on the principle that, whatever it is, it must be participatory (Betts, Bloom and Weaver, 2015: 5). In a recent report on refugee innovation, the HIP cites examples of entrepreneurial activity in Uganda, where regulatory conditions for refugees permit such market-based initiatives. Rural refugee settlement sites in the country are characterised by poor infrastructure and constrained access to public goods. While supply may be lacking, demand is not, and refugee innovators are ‘explicitly attempting to address these gaps in available public goods and services as a way of benefiting their wider communities’ (ibid.: 12). Residents of Nakivale camp in southern Uganda have supplemented the limited energy supply available through the official camp infrastructure by investing in generators, which provide power to micro-enterprises throughout the camp, allowing traders to keep refrigerated goods and supplying power to a rudimentary cinema, an internet cafe and a restaurant (ibid.: 13). Despite a permissive regulatory environment that makes such activities possible, there are limitations, chief among them a lack of access to finance and credit (ibid.: 14). Accessing credit for refugees has been notoriously

difficult in countries of first asylum. This can be attributed to a reluctance on the part of the so-called ‘host’ state to countenance any meaningful local integration of displaced people, making it difficult for refugees to open accounts. For potential lenders, the problem is compounded by the expectation that refugees will shortly be repatriated or resettled or will undertake onward migration, putting the possibility of repayment at risk (Jacobsen, 2005). Tellingly, the HIP study candidly acknowledges that ‘successful entrepreneurs are in most cases “outliers” among their communities’ (Betts, Bloom and Weaver, 2015: 7).

The Ugandan example is instructive on a number of levels. First, it provides further confirmation that refugees can be resourceful economic agents when given the opportunity. Second, economic activity is not considered solely at the level of the individual or household, but is located within the wider community. Third, there is a definite ceiling under which such initiatives operate, limiting access to resources. Fourth, success is measured against other refugees rather than entrepreneurs from the host community. For many, meaningful and secure interaction and participation in the marketplace remains limited. This bounded understanding of economic activities undertaken by refugees mirrors the ways in which refugees are often set apart and isolated socially from so-called ‘host’ communities (Zaman, 2016).

Arguably, opening up access to the market for refugees can be a means of expanding livelihood opportunities. However, there is little to suggest that it makes refugees’ precarious situation more secure. In Lebanon and Jordan, both of which have long endured double-digit unemployment, access to the labour market is limited to low-paid migrant work in the agricultural, construction and cleaning services sectors – and even here the number of work permits issued by the Lebanese state is paltry (Errighi and Griesse, 2016).

According to one study by Oxfam, for Syrian refugees in Lebanon average household income is a little under \$250 per month, compared to average monthly expenditure of \$520 (Oxfam, 2013a). The same study found that savings are typically depleted shortly after arrival, and three-quarters of all households surveyed reported being in debt. A recent ILO (2014) survey of 400 households found that, of the 47% of Syrians who declared themselves to be economically active, most were working informally and in precarious

conditions – 92% were recorded as having no work contract and 56% were working on a seasonal, weekly or daily basis. In circumstances such as these, the proposition that championing entrepreneurship and the liberalisation of markets can address the challenges of precarious livelihoods must elicit a strong dose of scepticism. Instead, social and solidarity economy approaches are more amenable to confronting and overcoming such challenges.

The social economy approach outlined below is designed to improve conditions and outcomes for displacement-affected populations over the course of a protracted displacement crisis. In reconfiguring the displacement economy and the humanitarian marketplace, the social economy approach sets out to challenge perceptions and ameliorate anxieties concerning the presence of displaced people through everyday encounters between so-called ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’.

4 Developments in social economy

While market-led responses to protracted displacement situations have been attracting focused attention from practitioners and academics alike, there has been less interest in the possibilities afforded by the social and solidarity economy. Here, economic activity is controlled neither by the dictates of the state nor by the forces of the market, but is subservient to the social well-being of the community (McMurtry, 2010: 4). In directing our gaze away from a purely market-oriented economy and towards a social and solidarity economy, there is an opportunity to produce spaces of economic activity that are embedded in the social and cultural, rather than solely for purposes of profit maximisation. Practices of enterprise merge with ideas around social protection, active citizenship, rights and equality – the market is understood as one of a plurality of ways in which to organise social and economic practices (Utting, 2015: 16; Hart et al., 2010). This alternative approach to the political economy of development is located squarely within a ‘community economy’ that recognises economic relations as being more than simply profit-oriented, but guided also by ethics of care and solidarity (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Bergeron and Healy, 2015). In what follows, I make the case that cooperative modes of production are an integral component of the community economy, and can provide the necessary tools to alleviate poverty, reduce tensions between host and displaced communities, ease pressures for onward migration and enhance the dignity and well-being of displaced people.

Cooperative production is founded on the principles of autonomy, participatory democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, with an emphasis on serving cooperative members (King et al., 2013: 165). Cooperative production is also at the heart of what Gibson-Graham (2006: 101) refers to as the ‘intentional economy’ or ‘projects that treat the economy as a political and ethical space of decision’, rather than projects that demand profit maximisation irrespective of external costs. Around a billion people belong to cooperative societies worldwide, with assets

worth \$18.8 trillion and an estimated annual turnover of between \$2.4 billion and \$3 billion (Utting, 2015), covering sectors as diverse as finance, housing, agriculture, textiles and white goods.

Adapting the cooperative model to protracted displacement situations may not at first seem intuitive. Refugees have to contend with considerable temporal and political uncertainty, not knowing whether home will be in the country of refuge, a third country of resettlement, or re-established in the country of origin. They are also often confronted with antagonistic or even hostile political discourses concerning their presence. Conflict-induced mass displacement in particular can last for decades, and the availability of so-called ‘durable solutions’ is far from guaranteed. In addition, a model such as this lends itself more readily to displaced people in urban locations; in situations where refugees are spread across rural and urban locations, developing vertical supply chains between agricultural and urban-based initiatives is possible, but there are clear challenges to such a model in contexts where markets are less developed and access to credit and banking facilities is more limited.

4.1 The Mondragon model

In rethinking the role of cooperative societies in contexts of mass displacement, much can be learned from the networked employee-ownership model of the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC), founded in 1956 in the Basque region of Spain. Many of the challenges faced by humanitarian/development responses to protracted displacement crises today are similar to those confronting the Basque region midway through the twentieth century, including scarce opportunities for education, large-scale unemployment and poverty and socioeconomic inequality. At the heart of the model is an ethos promoting an economy built on solidarity and social welfare, achieved primarily through a recognition of the sovereignty

of labour, to which capital is subordinate.⁸ Under this principle of people over capital, control of cooperatives is squarely in the hands of the worker-owners. It is they who determine how surplus will be distributed.

An integral factor to the success and longevity of the Mondragon project has been its commitment to the *transformation* of Basque society through expanding employment opportunities. From its inception, the Mondragon model looked to secure its financial well-being by developing networked internal markets or diversifying vertically to secure supply chains between cooperatives. The creation of a credit union, the Caja Laboral Popular, and its central strategic role in knitting the cooperatives of the Mondragon system together, ‘was a key intervention that enabled the economic power of cooperatively produced surplus to be marshalled within the cooperative system as a whole’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006: 116). It is the ‘inter-relationship of these support institutions’ (Cantón, 1995: 187) that lies at the heart of Mondragon’s success, demonstrating that the survival of a cooperative enterprise is contingent on whether there are other similarly structured organisations in the region, sector or supply chain (Smith, 2001: 29).

The strategy employed by Mondragon for scaling up its operations is reminiscent of the ‘developmental state’ model (Amsden, 2001; Chang, 2007; Mazzucato, 2013). Contrary to contemporary neoliberal wisdom, which restricts state involvement in development in favour of market-led solutions, the developmental state model avoids directing resources to micro-level enterprises and instead supports the establishment of enterprises that are innovative and skills-driven; connected to other organisations both vertically (through supply chains and procurement) and horizontally (in clusters); and able to create new organisational routines (Bateman, 2015: 155). Applying a more localised developmental state model to protracted displacement situations would represent a shift in approach from actors within the formal humanitarian system, which hitherto have

8 Education alongside sovereignty of labour is at the heart of the Mondragon intentional economy. There are five other principles internal to each individual cooperative company: the instrumental and subordinated nature of capital, democratic organisation, open admission, participation in management and wage solidarity. Three principles are related to each cooperative’s relations with other cooperatives and wider society: inter-cooperation, social transformation and universality.

concentrated their energies on supporting micro-level enterprises.

4.2 Anchor institutions: the Cleveland model

A more recent development in the cooperative movement has been to link producer cooperatives with institutions embedded or ‘anchored’ in urban areas. Most notably, this model has been developed in the so-called rust belt of post-industrial America, in Cleveland with the Evergreen Cooperatives (Howard et al., 2010) – largely modelled on the MCC. Here, institutions such as universities and hospitals are recognised as anchored in or having a long-term commitment to the cities in which they are located. The Cleveland model develops worker-owned enterprises that offer ongoing services to these anchor institutions, from laundry to producing and installing solar panels. The goal is to create jobs and wealth within the city – each dollar earned is circulated and multiplied within the community. Rather than saturating existing markets, the cooperatives seek to open up the emerging green economy in which the city has a vested interest. There is recognition on the part of the anchor institution that its procurement capacity can play a vital role in securing the financial health of the cooperative in its formative years, as it grows and diversifies into other areas.

The Cleveland model has been adapted in other parts of the world, notably through the European Union (EU)-funded URBACT Procure Network,⁹ which encourages local governments in cities across Europe to reconsider their procurement practices in pursuit of sustainable urban development. Cities signed up to the network undertake sustainable local procurement following a range of diverse approaches. Residents in Candalaria in Spain co-design public goods and services in partnership with the local municipality; in Koprivnica, Croatia, the local municipality encourages SMEs to bid for opportunities by reducing the number of quotes required for tenders valued at below €20,000.¹⁰ A lead actor in the network is Preston City Council in north-west England – a region experiencing similar challenges of post-industrial decline under conditions of austerity.

9 ‘Creating a Good Local Economy through Procurement’ (<http://urbact.eu/procure>).

10 See ‘The Importance of Procurement to City Economics’ (<http://urbact.eu/importance-procurement-city-economics>).

To enable a more conducive economic environment for worker-owned enterprises, the city council is itself establishing a cooperative network as a hub to help identify procurement opportunities for existing cooperatives and locally based SMEs, as well as seeking funding to build community-owned energy infrastructure linked to cooperatives in the supply chain.¹¹

The anchor institution model can best be understood as a variant of what Bateman (2015: 158) calls the 'local development state'. Constructive intervention on the part of local institutions or local government plays a fundamental role in establishing a successful social and solidarity economy. There is a growing body of empirical evidence pointing to the success of cooperatives being contingent on initial external support from either the state (Deng et al., 2010) or NGOs and international donors (Poole and de Frece, 2010). 'The challenge,' Muradian (2015: 125) tells us, 'is to find the right balance between external support and enough autonomy in cooperative development.' In what follows, we shall consider the opportunity for a social economy approach to situations of protracted displacement afforded by the presence of considerable resources in the form of humanitarian assistance.

4.3 Discussion: towards a cooperative model of assistance in protracted displacement situations

Cooperative-led responses to mass displacement emerged in the context of the so-called 'European refugee crisis' of 2015. The economic crisis in Greece resulted in an exponential increase in the number of empty buildings in Athens, enabling social enterprises to secure favourable leasing arrangements and push forward projects to encourage interaction between local residents and new arrivals. Working on principles of volunteerism, the WELCOMMON project has taken a former nine-storey clinic and repurposed it as an accommodation centre for 200 refugees and migrants, while providing paid employment for people from the host community.¹² Similar housing initiatives

operating along cooperative principles can be found in Germany¹³ and Italy.¹⁴ More radical social and solidarity responses include autonomous housing collectives in Athens,¹⁵ where an ad hoc parallel system of care for refugees and asylum-seekers outside of traditional humanitarian response has emerged to meet the urgent shelter needs of thousands of asylum-seekers. While this autonomous response has (literally) made space for newcomers, over time it has arguably suffered from a lack of connectivity with the economic life of the neighbourhoods where these housing collectives are located. Such housing arrangements are often not recognised as legitimate by the authorities or by the buildings' original owners, who continue to be billed for property tax and utilities.¹⁶ Where consent from local authorities is more forthcoming and property ownership not in dispute, a less fraught picture emerges, as with the WELCOMMON project.

Partnerships with the formal humanitarian sector continue to be dominated by the private sector rather than social economy actors. A case in point is the recent initiative between UNHCR and the IKEA Foundation to build a solar energy plant in Azraq refugee camp in Jordan. With a grant of \$9.6 million, UNHCR contracted a local Jordanian firm, Mustakbal, to oversee the project. Mustakbal trained and employed 50 refugees to build the plant, several of whom will be retained as maintenance staff.¹⁷ Clearly, as this initiative shows, there is space for engagement with the private sector. Nonetheless, a refugee camp remains a refugee camp, whether there is access to sustainable energy or not. Protracted displacement should be considered a failure of access to durable solutions that arises from the constrained political environment in which displacement exists. Faced with little prospect of a durable solution and a protracted

11 ThinkPlace interview with Councillor Matthew Brown of Preston City Council.

12 'WELCOMMON: A Model Center for Housing and Social Inclusion', 18 October 2016 (<http://anemosananeosis.gr/en/aboutwelcommon/>).

13 'This German Cooperative Shows the Rest of the World How to Welcome Syrian Refugees', *Quartz*, 25 August 2015 (<https://qz.com/483247/this-german-cooperative-shows-the-rest-of-the-world-how-to-welcome-syrian-refugees/>).

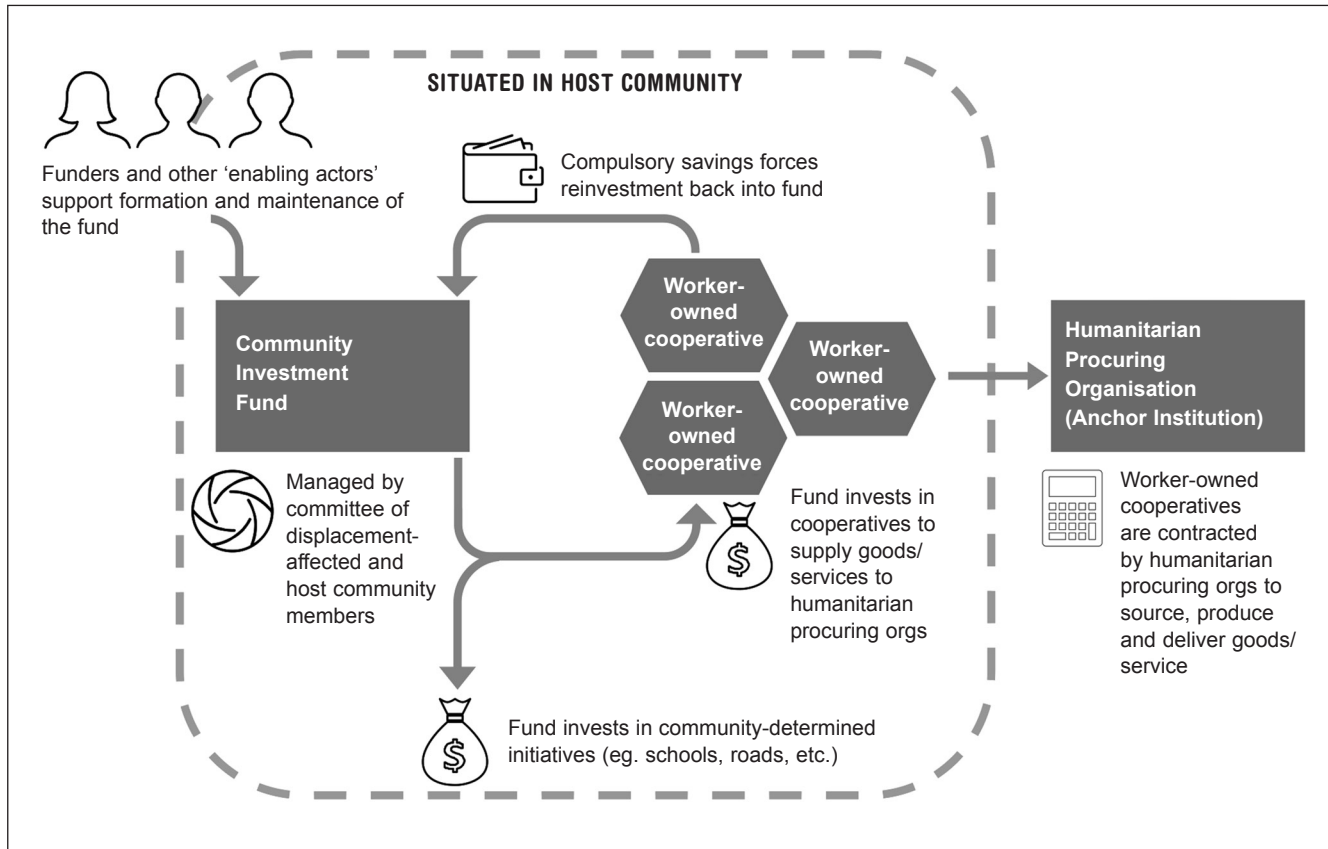
14 See <http://www.cooperativaruah.it/>.

15 'Athens and the Struggle for a Mobile Commons', *Refugee Hosts*, 14 June 2017 (<https://refugeehosts.org/2017/06/14/athens-and-the-struggle-for-a-mobile-commons/>).

16 'More Than 2000 Refugees Live in Athens Squats', *Ekathimerini*, 10 May 2017 (<http://www.ekathimerini.com/218260/article/ekathimerini/community/more-than-2500-refugees-live-in-athens-squats>).

17 'World's First Refugee Camp Powered by Renewable Energy', *IKEA*, 17 May 2017 (https://www.ikeafoundation.org/stories/post_tpestoriesp2614/).

Figure 1: Flow chart describing resource flows under a humanitarian anchor approach



Source: HPG, *A Design Experiment: Imagining Alternative Humanitarian Action* (London: ODI, 2018).

period in displacement, care and maintenance offers displaced populations little beyond immediate material relief. This is borne out by the growing trend of displaced people shunning encampment in favour of spontaneous self-settlement in urban locations. While it is evident that the private sector has specific expertise, initiatives such as this play a limited role in generating wealth for displacement-affected communities. Synergies must be found between the specific needs of humanitarian agencies, the expertise of private sector actors and the human capital in communities affected by displacement.

Figure 1 sets out a restructured vision of how assistance can be better integrated into the displacement economy. The starting-point is the humanitarian marketplace as it is today. Government donors and humanitarian actors in the formal system are not ready to abandon the rationality afforded by the logic of the 'good project' any time soon (Krause, 2015). There is, however, increasing recognition of the growing range of financial instruments that can be used to plug shortfalls in humanitarian funding (GHA, 2017: 37–41), potentially loosening the grip OECD-DAC countries have on humanitarian funding.

With new avenues for non-traditional donors to enter the humanitarian marketplace, the short-term funding cycles on which humanitarian projects are based could give way to funding that has a longer-term horizon and is advantageous to investment in displacement-affected communities.

4.3.1 The humanitarian anchor

As noted above, the anchor institution model has largely been applied in the global North, where institutions offering health and education provision are long-established and well-developed. Mass displacement crises in recent years have been concentrated in lower-middle-income countries where similar institutions exist, but which lack the endowments, resources and capacities to fulfil the anchor role independently. In the context of mass displacement crises, it would be a stretch to claim that international agencies and INGOs as 'anchor institutions' are tied to a specific location (Webber and Karlstrom, 2009). As such, the case for mobilising the international humanitarian architecture as locally based 'anchor institutions' seems at first counter-intuitive. On closer inspection, however, INGOs and international agencies fulfil key characteristics of an

anchor institution: they are large procurers of goods and services; have a stake or an important presence in the community; facilitate learning and innovation; and have an impact on spending patterns (University of Pennsylvania, 2008). To reiterate, humanitarian actors and agencies are already engaged in roles that would contribute to the functioning of a social economy. The difference here is to recalibrate their relationships with displacement-affected communities away from the language of beneficiaries, projects and subcontracting.

The left-hand vertical portion of Figure 1 shows the humanitarian market as it currently operates. Under the proposed social economy-oriented model, an additional role aside from implementation and subcontracting is found for humanitarian actors in the formal system. Along with representatives from the local municipality, public institutions, local community-based organisations and NGOs, and an elected and representative advisory committee from the displacement-affected population, actors from the formal humanitarian system are charged with helping to lay the groundwork for establishing and overseeing a community-owned enterprise cluster. Instead of contractual arrangements, partnerships are sought with the latter to enable and create a conducive space for a humanitarian social economy to thrive. The lifespan of this enabling actor is limited. Once funds have been successfully transferred, distributed and mobilised in the displacement-affected area to the satisfaction of both the displacement-affected population and the donor, the enabling actor's role becomes less prominent. Its focus shifts towards community education – cascading learning to other communities and localities where a humanitarian social economy can be catalysed.

A key component of this proposed social economy is the creation of a community investment fund (CIF) to act as a conduit for resources from traditional development donors, foundations or philanthropists. In much the same vein as the *Caja Laboral Popular*, the CIF undertakes the strategic function of knitting together social enterprises, channelling resources to establish worker-owned cooperatives (WOCs) that meet the specific procurement needs of aid agencies and INGOs. Identifying enterprises for cooperative organisation would be contingent on the procurement needs of the humanitarian anchor. The sums involved are far from inconsequential – the procurement spending of UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNDP and WFP in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey for 2014

alone amounted to \$865 million (UNOPS, 2015). The prioritisation of sustainable procurement under the UN System at the Rio+20 Summit on sustainable development has meant that the purchasing power available to communities through the procurement channels of aid agencies is increasingly seen as a tool to facilitate capacity-building, poverty reduction and improved equity (ibid.). In 2014, the 35 UN agencies that comprise the UN System reported a global procurement spend of \$17 billion (ibid.: 18). The tables provided in Appendix 1 offer a detailed breakdown of UNHCR, UNICEF and UNRWA's annual global procurement spending.

The diverse range of goods and services humanitarian agencies and INGOs require may mean that communities affected by mass displacement do not have the necessary expertise to meet all of those needs. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that displaced people do bring skills and expertise that will allow them to establish the necessary enterprises to match some of the procurement demands of local anchor institutions. Procurement supply chains could be scrutinised to identify items suitable for local production, for instance food and beverage products, clothing, luggage, personal care products and shelter equipment and supplies.

While international agencies and NGOs act as anchor institutions for fledgling cooperatives, seed funding for cooperative projects can come from the development arms of donor states. For example, the EU has prepared a three-year Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) for Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq covering two programme areas, the costs and impacts of displacement on refugees and host countries and refugees' protection needs. Both programme areas can be addressed through a social economy infrastructure facilitated by a consortium of actors – the enabling actor. Appeals can also be made to philanthropic foundations looking to incubate community-owned enterprises.

To get a better purchase on how this works, think enterprise with training wheels. Rather than being thrown in at the deep end, a procurement contract with a humanitarian agency or INGO over an agreed period affords WOCs the security of having a steady cash flow and time to develop products that can be truly competitive in the market. The idea is to give WOCs time to succeed in the market and to provide a structured path for them to move away from

financial dependence on procurement contracts from humanitarian/development actors. In addition, the establishment of WOCs that fit into vertical supply chains helps nurture a self-sustaining ecosystem for cooperative enterprise. Here, lessons can be learned from the Mondragon approach to building a productive social economy, where the success of each cooperative ultimately hinged on there being other similarly structured organisations to cooperate with, either horizontally in their sector, or vertically in the supply chain (Cheney, 1999; Cantón, 1995; Smith, 2001).

Surplus earned by the private sector through procurement contracts with INGOs and aid agencies, which has hitherto seeped away from displacement-affected communities, now finds a means of being locked into the local economy and furthering social outcomes. Through a compulsory savings mechanism, a proportion of surplus (70% for the sake of argument) earned by WOCs can be returned to the CIF. The latter then consults with displacement-affected people to decide where and how spending on public goods and services can be directed. Thus, by way of example, health, education and social care services can be financed, operated and owned by displacement-affected communities, rather than INGOs and their intermediaries. This frees up resources for the humanitarian sector to engage with strictly emergency situations or hard-to-reach populations.

Throughout this paper, there has been the unspoken assumption that displaced people should be understood as being embedded in a wider constellation of historically informed socio-cultural networks and relations, rather than as atomised individuals or households. Access to this social and cultural capital is much valued in situations of mass displacement. However, these non-material forms of capital are not evenly distributed, and assuming that they are has far-reaching implications. Displacement situations can be opportunities for some and a debilitating challenge for others. To reduce the possibility of co-option and corruption and address the unhealthy power relationship between aid givers and recipients that has characterised humanitarian action, potential risks have to be acknowledged and safeguards put in place. Integral to this safeguarding role is the CIF. More than simply a mechanism for distributing resources, the CIF is the beating heart of the humanitarian social economy. Comprising an elected and representative fixed-term committee chosen from the displacement-affected population, the CIF is responsible for

ensuring the timely and detailed communication of its operations to the wider community. This is achieved through three further sub-committees: a consultation committee that conveys information and reports back to the displacement-affected population; a recruitment committee tasked with producing job specifications for WOCs and guiding the recruitment process; and a grants committee tasked with assessing proposals for community investment and prospective WOCs against community needs and capacities.

While there is an assumption here that people from the displacement-affected population have the financial literacy to organise a community investment fund, this is an obstacle that can be readily negotiated.¹⁸ The establishment of a community investment fund is integral to the up-scaling of the social economy approach. It is through the mechanism of an internal capital accounts scheme wherein compulsory savings ensure surplus is fed back into the local economy. This helps create sustainable employment for other cooperatives linked either vertically or horizontally to existing WOCs meeting the procurement needs of the anchor institution. The driving impetus of this model is that socially embedded livelihoods generate other possibilities that diminish vulnerabilities. This leaves humanitarian actors free to reorient energies and expertise towards emergency situations. Meanwhile, displacement-affected communities are supported through the leveraging of procurement channels of humanitarian agencies and actors in building their own resilience and self-reliance.

To mitigate against the capture of community-owned enterprises by an elite group or a particular social or kin network, or exclusion on the basis of gender, ethnicity or religious affiliation, we return to the notion that the humanitarian anchor model envisions a place-based economy. As such, it is necessarily bounded. Displacement-affected communities in a defined geographical area are the population sample from which the social economy is produced. The social economy approach operates on the understanding that a protracted displacement situation is not characterised by fixity and homogeneity, but shaped by variegated movements of people over time, comprising different ethnicities, religious affiliations and class fractions

¹⁸ In another conflict context, the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) worked effectively with 72 primary societies to expand access to finance for people living in rural and conflict-affected areas (Evans, 2001).

(Chatty and Mansour, 2011). Thus, a displacement-affected community is not understood as monolithic. Acknowledging this, the enabling actor is tasked with ensuring that the selection processes for community enterprises are transparent and representative of the displacement-affected population.

The initial investment locates new avenues for multiplication within the local displacement-affected area. It provides a source of livelihoods, not only for members of the WOCs, but also for those employed by community-owned initiatives financed through the CIF. In one study on poverty in the UK, it was shown that as much as 70% of local expenditure is lost in poor areas as communities lack an employment infrastructure that can ‘keep the money in’ (Katz, 2004). The multiplier impact of humanitarian spending thus begins before wages are spent in the local economy.

This is in contrast to how resources circulate in the humanitarian marketplace. As mentioned earlier in the discussion on the missed opportunity of mobilising procurement channels in humanitarian assistance delivery, resources are constantly being drained from local economies as tenders for contracts are won by companies located outside of the displacement-affected area, rendering the multiplier impact negligible. Where cash transfer programmes are the preferred modality of humanitarian assistance the multiplier impact improves, but nonetheless passes directly into a round of consumer spending in the local economy. Instead, the humanitarian social economy model introduces additional productive rounds in the local economy prior to consumer spending, thereby boosting the multiplier effect. Essentially, donors invest in an alternative enterprise infrastructure that can compete with the private sector from which INGOs and aid agencies are already procuring. This is a long way from the narrow project-focused orientation of the humanitarian market discussed earlier. The labour of members of displacement-affected communities is no longer built in at heavily discounted rates for short-term projects. Donors are no longer purchasing a project as a unit of humanitarian relief production. Instead, they are investing in displacement-affected communities. This has far-reaching implications.

First, funding for the initial community investment fund can be pooled from multiple actors. This can include not only grant-making institutions, but potentially also private sector actors looking for an ethical return on their investment. Second, the holistic

experience of displacement is captured by linking livelihoods directly to the needs of the displacement-affected population through the mechanism of the CIF. Third, displacement-affected communities themselves democratically decide how revenue generated by the WOCs ought to be spent. Finally, this model also helps generate wealth in the displacement-affected area. In addition to a living wage, workers in the WOCs receive a dividend amounting to 30% of the surplus accrued through the procurement contract with INGOs and aid agencies. The accumulation of wealth can find additional outlets into the local economy through the financing of micro-enterprises.

The argument for a social economy approach is not solely economic. The emphasis is equally on the production of the social. As noted earlier, institutional actors located at the humanitarian–development nexus need to consider more deliberately the kinds of spaces they help produce. The movement of displaced people to urban locations demands a recognition of the opportunities and togetherness that reshape and revitalise existing links, affiliations and networks between displacement-affected communities and their metropolitan location. This is not to say that such geographies and spaces are not contested – they always are. What has consistently been lacking, however, is an explicit acknowledgement on the part of humanitarian and development actors that displacement-affected people are actors of change. The community-owned enterprise model goes some way to remedying this. Through its emphasis on participation via the WOCs and governance mechanisms, the social economy approach helps formalise expressions of ‘popular spaces’ (Cornwall, 2004: 2) produced by displacement-affected people, while at the same time opening up dialogue between actors from the formal humanitarian sector and displacement-affected communities.¹⁹

4.3.2 Challenging assumptions and limitations

Such an approach requires significant partnership-building – not least with state authorities, which may be wary of ‘hosting’ displaced people over the long term. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ever-present debates on refugee access to labour markets. The reluctance to grant refugees the right to work is indicative of a now well-rehearsed approach that

¹⁹ Popular spaces are defined by Cornwall (2004: 2) as ‘arenas in which people come together at their own instigation – whether to protest against government policies or the interventions of foreign powers, to produce their own services or for solidarity and mutual aid’.

resolutely sees an end to displacement crises through a return to the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1995) wherein sedentarist ideas of rooting people to a homeland are naturalised and taken for granted. From this perspective, over time a right to work can only contribute to a sense of place and belonging for the displaced person. It therefore seems logical to keep displaced people in a liminal state through a policy of precarious underemployment.

The right to work for refugees is protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Convention sets out minimum standards for the treatment of refugees. In the drafting of Article 17 pertaining to the right to wage-earning employment, the US representative emphasised that without the right to work 'all other rights [of the Convention] were meaningless'.²⁰ Where the prospect of refugee entrance to the labour market is met with antagonism or hostility, it is not uncommon to find governments arguing that unfettered access to the labour market adversely affects socio-economic opportunities for host country citizens. Furthermore, there is a fear that granting the right to work to refugees would encourage them to stay in their country of refuge permanently rather than return to their country of origin. In countries such as Lebanon, where a fragile truce between politicised sectarian affiliations perpetually teeters on the edge of a precipice, the prospect of a permanent demographic change is seen by political elites and their supporters as unwelcome, and as a threat. Challenging such perceptions seems an almost Sisyphean task, albeit a necessary one. Current regimes of care and maintenance in Lebanon have seen Palestinian refugees in protracted displacement for nearly 70 years, while continuing to face acute socioeconomic deprivation and legal barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights.²¹

Here, I remind the reader that what is being proposed in this paper is not a durable solution in itself, but an approach that helps facilitate durable solutions. Political actors are unlikely to heed calls for a blanket *de jure* integration of refugees, but this does not mean that policy-makers should completely disregard the everyday encounters and practices that contribute to

de facto integration. Lindley (2011), commenting on the protracted situation of Somali refugees in Kenya, argues for a more cumulative pathway to a recognised legal status. She reminds us that the option of local integration 'is too often presented as an all-or-nothing one. Options for piecemeal approaches (i.e. identifying eligible subgroups such as very long-term refugees/qualified professionals) or gradual approaches to integration (i.e. identifying progressive pathways to fuller legal status, contingent on the fulfilment of particular conditions) merit exploration' (ibid.: 37). While on the face of it this may seem an insurmountable obstacle to supporting a social and solidarity economy, the fact of protracted displacement should prompt state authorities to reconsider their approach – taking the opportunity to put to use the financial resources available through the formal humanitarian system to animate and invigorate displacement-affected economies. Here, the humanitarian anchor institution adopts an important convening role in bringing together local and national government institutions, other formal humanitarian actors and local responders from the displacement-affected population, such as faith-based organisations and self-reliance networks.

Access to formal markets is also prevented by local labour laws. In protracted displacement situations, the authorities often turn a blind eye to informal and exploitative working arrangements. Unscrupulous employers in the domestic, agricultural, service and construction sectors are the only actors that seemingly profit from such arrangements: the state incurs losses on potential tax receipts; refugee workers are subject to low-paid, precarious and highly exploitative conditions; and resident workers (often migrants themselves) competing in the same sectors complain about being priced out of the labour market. In formalising work permits for those employed in the humanitarian social economy, many of these ills can be alleviated. Jordan's recent experiment with special enterprise zones (SEZs) has demonstrated that, where a conditional case can be made for allowing refugees access to the formal labour market, the 'host' state is prepared to listen (ILO, 2017).²²

20 Travaux Préparatoire Article 17 1951 Geneva Convention: wage-earning employment (<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/travaux/4ca34be29/refugee-convention-1951-travaux-preparatoires-analysed-commentary-dr-paul.html>).

21 AUB, *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, 31 December 2010 (<http://bit.ly/1PDgESC>).

22 Under the terms of the so-called Jordan compact, the European Union agreed to relax rules of origin for 53 manufactured goods exported from Jordan on the proviso that employment opportunities be generated for up to 200,000 Syrian workers in 18 SEZs. The Jordanian government agreed to this, along with a mandatory 15% of the total workforce (rising to 25% in the third year of operation) in any one factory being comprised of Syrian refugees (ILO, 2017: 7).

The claim here is straightforward. Rather than establish SEZs, which a growing number of scholars have argued entrench precarious conditions for workers and augment existing inequalities (Levien, 2011; Arnold and Pickles, 2011; McKay, 2004), states affected by mass displacement should be seeking to encourage the formation of intentional economies attached to place and locality. Issuing work permits to displaced people could therefore be tied to economic initiatives that contribute to the humanitarian social economy, which we have established is place-based. The cost of being formally recognised as economic actors in situations where access to the formal labour market is non-existent is that labour mobility in the country of first asylum will remain limited for displaced people as compared to national citizens, who are able to move between a market-based economy and a social economy. This is clearly a compromise as it does not grant full access to the labour market – and may be construed as a compromise too far for UNHCR as it *indirectly* places restrictions on the movement of refugees contrary to Article 26 of the 1951 Geneva Convention pertaining to freedom of movement. However, it does not explicitly prevent movement.

There are clear barriers and obstacles at play here, not least the procurement procedures and processes of humanitarian actors and agencies themselves. Lessons can be learnt from strategic procurement strategies employed by municipalities across Europe.²³ For the formal humanitarian system, this translates into several concrete steps. Donors can insist on a proportion of procurement being made from displacement-affected communities as a mandatory practice. This necessitates a step-change on the part of donors themselves, who may be accustomed to using procurement as a means for redirecting aid back into their own economies. Humanitarian agencies and actors can similarly negotiate specific social outcomes directly linked to a procurement tender as the terms of an agreement. They can also encourage and enable smaller enterprises to bid for contracts. The enabling actor can support WOCs with user-friendly tools, dissemination of best practices and mechanisms for knowledge-sharing to help improve their capacity to submit and win bids. Such measures expand procurement from a rational accounting exercise to one that provides WOCs with a structured pathway into the market and a structured exit for humanitarian actors.

23 See footnotes 9 and 10.

A further obstacle has been the insistence by states in the global North on pre-empting and precluding any possibility of asylum, combined with little appetite for third-country resettlement. The UK government has been a leading donor to humanitarian responses to the mass displacement of Syrians, providing £2.3 billion for both IDPs and refugees in neighbouring countries.²⁴ At the same time, under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), the UK has committed to resettling 20,000 Syrians by 2020. At the end of 2017 that figure stood at around 8,000.²⁵ The reluctance to resettle refugees and the erosion of pathways to asylum, combined with donor countries from the global North propping up care and maintenance regimes, has been criticised as a strategy of containment, preventing the circulation of what Duffield (2008) has referred to as ‘non-insured life’. Convincing governments of so-called ‘host’ countries to create space for social economies to thrive while stubbornly denying movement to possible third-country destinations will remain a challenging proposition unless there is a concomitant commitment to opening up pathways for secondary movement. The New York Declaration offers a chink of light in this otherwise gloomy scenario.

It is largely in post-conflict settings that social economy perspectives have hitherto been employed. Several humanitarian agencies are moving towards more localised and small enterprise-friendly procurement strategies, suggesting that a social economy approach is not entirely inimical to the incentive structures of contemporary humanitarian actors. Through its Purchase for Progress (P4P) programme, WFP has committed to source 10% of food purchases from local smallholders, and is mobilising its considerable technical expertise to support smallholder farmers across the value chain, not solely at the production stage. Support is provided for post-harvest handling and marketing, as well as helping smallholder farmers establish business relationships with buyers other than WFP (WFP, 2012). In post-conflict Liberia, the P4P programme has brought together different communal farming groups to prepare and harvest rice fields, with other farming cooperatives contracted to process the

24 DFID Syria Crisis Response (<https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/dfid-syria-crisis-response>).

25 ‘8000 Syrian Refugees Settle in UK Following Public Call for Action’, *The Guardian*, 9 November 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/09/8000-syrian-refugees-settle-in-uk-following-public-call-for-action>).

rice. In this way, business relationships were established between groups that had previously been in conflict. The increased revenue has allowed some community-based enterprises to invest in building a guesthouse and training area to broaden the reach of their work.²⁶

Also in Liberia, the Gbonkuma Rural Women's Association (GRWA) was granted a procurement contract to supply WFP with rice and beans for a school feeding programme run by the Ministry of Education. The security of a guaranteed minimum price set under the contract meant that GRWA could plan its agricultural activities more effectively. Surplus revenue from the P4P contract was pooled and invested in a daycare centre, giving mothers more time for farming and marketing activities.²⁷ The P4P programme also helped build the resilience of post-conflict communities, allowing smallholder farming cooperatives to respond to pressing needs brought on by the West Africa Ebola crisis. The farmers provided 700 metric tonnes of rice, which was used to feed patients quarantined in medical centres.²⁸

The passing of the baton from humanitarian to development actors has seen a concurrent shift away from care and maintenance and towards the promotion of self-reliance. The Local Empowerment through Economic Development (LEED) project in Sri Lanka is paradigmatic of such an approach. LEED has yielded impressive outcomes, particularly in the agriculture and fishery sectors. Data gathered by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2017a) indicated a 900% increase in income per household

26 'P4P Liberia: Building Relationships and Growing Business', WFP, 30 July 2014 (<http://www.wfp.org/purchase-progress/news/blog/p4p-liberia-building-relationships-and-growing-businesses>).

27 'P4P Liberia: Women Growing Both Confidence and Rice', WFP, 5 July 2013 (<http://www.wfp.org/purchase-progress/news/blog/p4p-liberia-women-growing-both-confidence-and-rice>).

28 'Smallholder Farmers Supply WFP During the Ebola Outbreak and Recovery', WFP, 15 July 2015 (<http://www.wfp.org/purchase-progress/news/blog/smallholder-farmers-supply-wfp-food-during-ebola-outbreak-and-recovery>).

employed in the fruit and vegetables sector, while income for households employed in the fishery sector increased by 329%. Rather than operating through procurement channels, cooperatives pool resources for smallholders and fishermen to guarantee that their produce is purchased at an optimal price. In addition, cooperatives support members with logistics and quality control, and link producers with private sector partners. Technical expertise and infrastructure support, such as the renovation of mills and warehouses, is given by development agencies, along with help facilitating relationships between the private sector and cooperatives (*ibid.*).

Sivanarul is a social enterprise employing 60 people, 50 of them women. The enterprise generates its income from the processing and sale of organic products, including flour and spices. The LEED project provided infrastructure, equipment and technical assistance on sourcing, purchasing, storage, production engineering, packaging and marketing. Through a compulsory savings mechanism, the enterprise redistributes a proportion of its revenue to help finance community wells, sanitary facilities for people with disabilities, an orphanage and scholarships for employees' children (*ibid.*).

In Akkar in northern Lebanon, UNDP and the ILO have supported the establishment and growth of the Cooperative Association for the Development of the Vegetable Sector. The initiative brings together seven municipalities and more than 200 Lebanese and Syrian farmers, with the aim of increasing interaction between different communities and developing a common source of livelihood for both the displaced and existing residents. This example points to the possibility of employing a social economy approach not only in more stable post-conflict settings, but also during protracted displacement situations.

29 See 'UNDP Sets up Farmers' Cooperative to Help Increase Productivity' (<http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/successstories/undp-set-up-farmers-cooperative-to-help-increase-productivity-.html>).

5 Conclusion

For the worlds of social economy and humanitarianism to align, humanitarian professionals have to swim in relatively uncharted waters, letting go of their reliance on the logic of the ‘good project’ and its principal instrument, the logframe (Krause, 2015). The examples above demonstrate that opening up the procurement channels of humanitarian actors and agencies and organising displacement-affected communities into worker-owned cooperatives can yield compelling outcomes. Investing in displacement economies re-visions humanitarians operating in protracted displacement settings as facilitators and enablers of a social economy, nudging them away from the logic of project delivery and instead allowing displacement-affected communities to decide for themselves what the parameters and focus of any project ought to be.

Related to this is the idea of insisting on an infrastructural investment paradigm as the basis of humanitarian work. This perspective necessarily blurs understandings of development and humanitarianism. The case for such an approach put forward in this paper, however, was strictly in the context of protracted mass displacement situations. In thinking of elements of humanitarian and development work as being mutually inclusive, donors must be encouraged to break away from the short-term cycles of funding that have plagued responses to mass displacement hitherto focused on project delivery.

Not only does this demand a change in behaviour on the part of formal humanitarian actors and donors, but it also demands that host states put aside and reconsider their historical aversion to the figure of the refugee. In tackling mass displacement as a localised phenomenon, the humanitarian social economy model formulates a response that is anchored in the everyday lived realities of displacement-affected communities. This rescaling of mass displacement from the national to the local awakens and unlocks the dormant potential of the local developmental state. The supposed threat of the refugee ‘outsider’ to the body politic of the nation-state can potentially be defused.

This proposed intervention is targeted at communities affected by mass displacement – an explicit

acknowledgement that responses to mass displacement crises need to take into account the needs of so-called host communities in addition to those displaced in order to create a more secure protection space for the latter. The goal is to support displacement-affected communities to develop jointly owned businesses or cooperatives that provide ownership over the means of production. Such initiatives could meet the specific procurement needs of anchor institutions. In the context of mass displacement, aid agencies meet the criteria of anchor institution. The procurement supply chains of aid agencies could be scrutinised to identify items suitable for local production, including but not limited to food, blankets, bedding, cooking utensils, lighting, catering contracts, heating and hygiene supplies. Aid agencies typically procure on lowest cost, but in certain circumstances can adapt procurement processes to benefit local producers. Through basic feasibility studies, agencies could make the case to donors that spending would have a net benefit if cooperatives within displacement-affected communities were supported in the production of aid-related items. This, we believe, would help create jobs, develop skills and bring money into the local economy over the long term.

Through a low-cost investment programme, support could be provided to social enterprises or cooperatives to establish production either based in existing facilities or through investment in new facilities. Grant-funding institutions, donors and private sector actors can play a prominent role as catalysts for building the capacity and resilience of displacement-affected communities through their investment programmes. Cooperatives could be formed between displaced people and host communities to foster joint economic relationships. In so doing, the toxic binary of host/guest on which much humanitarian work is predicated can be diminished – making local integration in the country of first asylum a realisable durable solution to mass displacement. There is an assumption here that local governments will be amenable to displaced people taking part in the economy. Cooperative modalities of humanitarian response to mass displacement, however, can upturn the dominant logic of displacement from a crisis to an opportunity.

Agreements would be sought with agencies to produce items to the specifications required and with minimum risk to delivery. It is assumed here that the demand from the anchor institution is sufficient and consistent enough for the cooperative enterprise to succeed in the short to medium term. In the long term, the objective is to allow the cooperative to diversify and establish demand from markets other than aid agencies. Cooperatives are an attractive model for organising labour and ownership, with policies agreed by members and remuneration more fairly distributed. Social outcomes could be secured through establishing a community investment fund, where savings could be used to finance spin-off initiatives or contribute towards community assets such as schools, daycare centres and health clinics.

The focus of this paper has been very much on displacement-affected communities. The objective has been to demonstrate ways in which *de facto* local integration can be encouraged and facilitated through humanitarian intervention. While this may or may not one day become *de jure* integration, the anchor institution model does not of itself explicitly address the restoration of rights through

the provision of citizenship. Instead, it recognises that citizenship can be understood as enacted through everyday actions, and is not solely a legal status. Moreover, the understanding of integration advocated here is located at the local rather than national scale. This leaves the door ajar for repatriation should a displaced person wish to take that path. The community-building skills learned through participating in the growing of an intentional and social economy can be transferred back to the country of origin, providing a resource for rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The confluence of a challenging economic climate, where donor funding for humanitarian projects is unable to keep pace with needs, and an urgent and growing need for meaningful solutions catering to the demands of life in protracted exile is creating an unprecedented opportunity to bring the social and solidarity economy front and centre. This is a transformative agenda wherein communities involved will learn through doing. But first there needs to be ‘buy-in’ from political and institutional actors – a willingness to let go of ideological constraints and to recognise the cry for a dignified life.

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Annex 1

Annual global procurement spending patterns for UNICEF, UNRWA and UNHCR in 2014

Annual global procurement spending patterns for UNHCR

Rank (by value)	Goods/services	Number of POs	Value (US\$)
1	Management and business professionals and administrative services	2,829	177,955,915.08
2	Domestic appliances and supplies and consumer electronics products	447	131,260,508.12
3	Transportation and storage and mail services	3,232	104,860,166.06
4	Structures, building and construction and manufacturing components and supplies	427	76,761,437.11
5	Apparel and luggage and personal care products	738	76,524,042.64
6	Engineering and research- and technology-based services	2,007	62,847,618.21
7	Healthcare services	299	44,492,304.82
8	Building and facilities construction and maintenance	1,458	44,462,571.26
9	Motor vehicles and parts, accessories and components inc. other transport equipment	515	43,689,275.36
10	Shelter equipment and supplies inc. tents, blankets, mosquito nets and other items	151	36,887,167.56
	Top 10 procurement volume	8,277	799,741,006.22
Total number of orders and contracts raised during 2014		10,245	

Source: UNOPS (2015: 160)

Annual global procurement spending patterns for UNICEF

Rank (by value)	Group of goods/services	Number of POs	Value (US\$)
1	Pharmaceuticals inc. contraceptives and vaccines	273	1,732,136,891.10
2	Management and business professionals and administrative services	14,714	543,552,113.44
3	Medical equipment and accessories and supplies	969	405,120,295.23
4	Transportation and storage and mail services	169	142,868,283.14
5	Tools and general machinery	1,377	92,521,758.55
6	Building and facilities construction and maintenance	417	71,583,616.92
7	Educational equipment, materials and supplies inc. books, publications, musical instruments and toys.	899	63,109,054.80
8	Published products	1,827	60,811,519.33
9	Apparel, luggage and personal care products	485	57,001,564.84
10	Motor vehicles and parts, accessories and components inc. other transport equipment	464	48,356,681.38
	Top 10 procurement volume	21,594	3,217,061,778.73
Total number of orders and contracts raised during 2014		27,469	

Source: UNOPS (2015: 160)

Annual global procurement spending patterns for UNRWA

Rank (by value)	Group of goods/services	Number of POs	Value (US\$)
1	Food and beverage products	477	97,916,571.09
2	Building and facilities construction and maintenance	397	47,357,177.71
3	Pharmaceuticals inc. contraceptives and vaccines	530	18,903,256.90
4	Financial and insurance services	61	15,319,450.34
5	Fuels and fuel additives, lubricants and anti-corrosive materials	533	12,797,797.07
6	Live plant and animal material and accessories and supplies	235	8,976,220.09
7	Motor vehicles and parts, accessories and components inc. other transport equipment	685	7,920,450.10
8	Engineering and research- and technology- based services	222	7,637,082.95
9	Published products	146	7,221,060.23
10	Material handling and conditioning and storage machinery and their accessories and supplies	548	6,620,627.67
	Top 10 procurement volume	3,386	230,705,739.15
	Total number of orders and contracts raised during 2014	7,940	

Source: UNOPS (2015: 162)

Procurement spending patterns for UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, UN Procurement Division (UNPD) and WFP in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey

	Jordan	Lebanon	Turkey	Total
Total value of UN procurement	\$249 million	\$238.6 million	\$377.1 million	\$864.7 million
% of total UN procurement	1.44%	1.38%	2.19%	5.01%
Number of UN agencies procuring goods and services	20	20	22	n/a
Total number of suppliers	1,910	2,057	1,070	5,037
Value of procurement by UNHCR	\$74.52 million	\$73.31 million	\$70.81 million	\$218.64 million
Value of procurement by UNRWA	\$38.78 million	\$32.65 million	\$17.03 million	\$88.46 million
Value of procurement by UNICEF	\$37.84 million	\$32.64 million	\$9.21 million	\$79.69 million
Value of procurement by UNPD	\$42.90 million	\$32.51 million	\$3.03 million	\$78.44 million
Value of procurement by WFP	\$25.89 million	\$22.68 million	\$253.15 million	\$301.72 million

Source: UNOPS (2015)

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