

Theorizing the Refugee Humanitarian-development Nexus: A Political-economy Analysis

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This article theorizes development-led responses to large-scale, protracted refugee crises—a significant gap in our understanding given the remarkable speed with which international donors and humanitarian and development actors have engaged with this approach. The article is in two parts. The first sketches the emergence and characteristics of development-led responses to contemporary refugee crises, largely embodied in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. The second, and main, part theorizes the structural determinants and interests that are driving this international engagement, locating this in development theory popular in the 1970s to 1990s—the core-periphery/metropole-dependency model of economic dualism. I argue there are remarkable parallels with this model and how we might theorize the current refugee-response regime that subordinates impacted countries to economic-development and containment conditions applied by the advanced ‘imperial’ donor countries of the Global North. The limited capacity of the ‘empire’ to fight back concludes the article.

Keywords: Development-led, dependency and subordination, economic dualism, humanitarian-development nexus, rentier states

Introduction

This article offers a theoretical reflection on international, development-led responses to large-scale, protracted refugee crises—an approach that has gained remarkable traction in recent years, popularized in the concept and practice of the humanitarian-development nexus (HDN). Despite, or perhaps because of, the rapidity with which the approach has been engaged with by donors and a wide range of humanitarian and development actors, there has been only limited theorization. This has tended to focus on specific aspects of the restructuring of the refugee-assistance regime, for example on resilience

and the self-sufficiency of refugees. There has been no theorization of the structural questions that are raised by the paradigm shift to development-led approaches—a significant gap that this article seeks to fill. Essentially, the question this article seeks to answer is: ‘What is the meaning of “development” in the HDN?’

The article is in two parts. The first sketches the emergence and characteristics of the development-led approach and the so-called HDN to address large-scale, protracted refugee situations. Emphasizing the economic, social and political rationale, the article locates these foundations in the context of the reformulation of international responses to forced displacement embodied in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GRC) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

The second part considers the structural determinants and interests that are driving international engagement with the nexus. It theorizes this emerging paradigm by first acknowledging its neo-liberal economic ambitions, but principally by revisiting and locating it in an approach to development theory made popular in the 1970s to 1990s through the work of left-wing scholars such as Frank (1978), Amin (1976) and, more recently, Escobar (1995) and de Soto (2000)—the core-periphery/metropole-dependency model of economic dualism. I argue that the HDN has remarkable parallels with this model of economic dualism and how we might theorize the current refugee-response regime that subordinates impacted countries to an economic-development and containment model applied by the advanced ‘imperial’ donor countries of the Global North. The limited capacity of the ‘empire to fight back’ concludes the article.

Global Developments and the HDN

The displacement of refugees and IDPs has pre-eminently been framed as a humanitarian, protection and human rights challenge. But displacement conditions also offer significant development challenges and opportunities (Zetter 2014; World Bank 2017). Thus, for many decades, the aim of incorporating development approaches into responses to refugee displacement has been an enduring objective of international donors, frustrated by the escalating costs of the dominant humanitarian model, totalling \$27.3 billion in 2017 (Development Initiatives 2018); but host countries also have advocated new modalities of responsibility-sharing, contesting the imbalanced fiscal and socio-economic burdens that refugees place on their countries. For both donors and host countries, the search for new approaches also recognized that protracted conditions of refugee displacement require sustainable solutions for displaced people and hosts where none of the three orthodox, durable ‘solutions’ (repatriation, resettlement or local integration) could be realized. Although not of concern to humanitarians, the economic loss represented by the underutilization of a potentially productive economic resource—the refugees—must also be taken into account. Refugees are market

actors: harnessing their roles as producers and consumers can, under certain conditions, stimulate demand, thus expanding the productive capacity of the host country—offsetting some of the negative economic shocks, whilst also assisting in the accumulation of resources and assets for eventual return (Jacobsen 2005; Zetter 2014; OECD 2017).

With many institutional stakeholders and governments involved, as well as the need to establish effective funding mechanisms, the design and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive framework to deliver a developmentally oriented response have been persistently problematic.

In the vocabulary of the 1990s, and drawing on disaster practices, the linking of relief to rehabilitation and development was the mantra of the humanitarian actors (Ross *et al.* 1994; Mosel and Levine 2014). This represented an early attempt to tackle the HDN.

Taking up the challenge, although the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) promoted the need for developmental responses to sit alongside its lead humanitarian and protection role (Crisp 2001), progress has been largely piecemeal: this role has uneasily accompanied its primary mandate as the refugee-protection agency.

Reform of the United Nations humanitarian system in 2005 led to the creation of an ‘Early Recovery’ cluster, significant in that it was led by a development agency the UNDP: this was designed to bridge humanitarian assistance to longer-term recovery. Lacking donor buy-in and coherent policy and programme instruments, this failed to gain the traction that was anticipated.

The Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) in 2010 marked a further stage in international momentum for a stronger development response to situations of refugee displacement (UNHCR 2010). It fleshed out the scope for collaboration between the World Bank/UNHCR/UNDP in order to ensure more long-term engagement of development actors with humanitarian partners. Overcoming the limitations of a single lead-agency model in the ‘Early Recovery’ cluster, nevertheless, the TSI encountered similar constraints of establishing effective funding mechanisms and programme apparatus. Again, the principles of the approach exceeded its programmatic achievement.

However, in the last five years or so, a further push at the global level has yielded more concrete outcomes. Following the 2015 ‘Grand Bargain’ by the world’s leading humanitarian donors, all the stakeholders (donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), crisis-affected states) at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 recognized that strengthening the HDN was a key priority and was put into practice in the *New Way of Working* (OCHA 2017). This was succeeded by the 2016 United Nations High-level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, which laid the foundations for further reinforcement in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and operational consolidation in the CRRF.

More prosaically, it is the scale and protractedness of contemporary refugee crises that have galvanized international, and especially Global North,

efforts to bring forward new initiatives to tackle these situations. Above all, the Syrian refugee crisis has provided a further and much more sustained impetus for transitioning from humanitarian to development responses and has been popularized around the concept of the HDN (UNDP-UNHCR 2018). Whilst the scale of the response reflects the impact of the crisis on middle-income countries, and notably countries that are close to Europe (thus inescapably linking the response to ‘securitizing’ this refugee crisis), nevertheless, it transcends the immediate context by crystallizing innovative policies that are being applied in other refugee-impacted countries, with the emphasis firmly swinging towards promoting development-led approaches.

This nexus reconfiguration still remains experimental and pragmatic; it does not, as yet, constitute a coherent model or a set of norms in the way that the humanitarian assistance paradigm has come to be structured through many decades of experience. In any case, a standardized approach cannot be applied in different contexts of displacement (Sande Lie 2017) and development conditions. Although by no means fully formed, nevertheless, it can be characterized as a multi-agency and multi-sectoral approach to refugee crises that aims to achieve complementarity between humanitarian and development programming, funding, timescales and priorities. To this end, coherence between short-term emergency assistance and sustainable, resilience-building development for refugees and their host communities is the principal objective.

Already the uptake has been remarkable. One indication is the number and range of development and humanitarian actors now engaged with ‘nexus’ thinking and operations (see e.g. DANIDA 2017; OCHA 2017; NGO Voice 2017; UNHCR 2017; World Bank 2017; Save the Children 2018; UNDP-UNHCR 2018; UNICEF 2019; World Commission 2019b). Another indication of the traction is reflected by the fact that, in 2018, it was possible for a United Nations Evaluation to sample almost 100 evaluations from nine countries and a further 26 global, thematic, strategic evaluations and reviews in order to assess how humanitarian and development project evaluations considered the topic of the nexus (UNEG-HEIG 2018). And the development-led paradigm is being rolled out at an operational level of international responses through the CRRF, adopted in 15 countries including, for example, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda.

The Rationale for the Development-led Paradigm

In general terms, the HDN tackles three enduring challenges in refugee crises. The first is to mediate the impacts of protracted forced displacement on receiving countries and communities; the second is to address the longer-term livelihood needs of the displaced themselves in sustainable ways. The third, although understated, is particularly relevant in contemporary political rhetoric—the containment of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in their regions of origin.

Within this context, the humanitarian system and its normative and international legal frameworks are vital but insufficient in themselves to provide comprehensive responses to the complex situations of refugee displacement. Theoretical (see e.g. Barnett and Weiss 2008; Fassin 2011) and operational critiques point to the many limitations (see e.g. Keen *et al.*, 2009; World Bank 2017; Dubois 2018). Prevalent conditions of protracted displacement further reinforce the need for longer-term sustainable responses. At the same time, a development-led approach recognizes that refugees and other forcibly displaced populations have resources and skills, as well as their economic demand and supply functions that, if effectively managed, could boost aggregate productive capacity and the development trajectory of impacted countries. It is also the case that development-led responses that support resilience and self-sufficiency better respect and foster the dignity of forcibly displaced people.

Such an approach, however, requires new modalities of responsibility-sharing through sustained commitment to development-focused, longer-term economic strategies that provide for the needs of forcibly displaced people, and the countries and the communities supporting them. This approach is underpinned by the concept of resilience-building—a familiar characteristic of disaster risk reduction, but less recognized until recently in the refugee context (Betts and Collier 2017: 156–181). Equally, development-led approaches aim to promote durable solutions to situations of forced displacement and underpin policies that tackle prevention and root causes. Programmatically, comprehensive planning and implementation by both humanitarian and development actors are essential.

To this end, over the last decade, the growing scale and complexity of refugee situations have precipitated a marked global transformation of the institutional structure, development-funding mechanisms and operational instruments that govern the refugee-response regime. These three elements are now briefly reviewed.

In terms of the *institutional structure*, there have been significant, co-ordinated initiatives by the international community already outlined above: the 2015 ‘Grand Bargain’; the 2016 WHS; the 2016 UN High-level Meeting; the 2018 GCR; and, of peripheral relevance to the present discussion, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

These global initiatives, of course, did not happen by accident. Against the backdrop of the ‘moment of transition’ with the so-called refugee crisis in Europe in 2015, they are symptomatic of mounting political concern by (mostly Global North) governments, echoed in strident public rhetoric, about the perceived negative socio-economic impacts of the increasingly spontaneous global movement of people including refugees.

Taking as its starting point the reinforcement of protection, the relevance of the GCR to the present argument lies in the active promotion of development-led approaches to refugee displacement involving bilateral, multilateral and private stakeholders. Streamlined funding processes and practices for

responsibility-sharing, much discussed but not yet operationalized, require the commitment of major international donors to long-term, predictable and collective support for host countries elaborated on in new modalities of responsibility-sharing in the Grand Bargain.

New structures are paralleled by new *modalities of development funding* for refugee-impacted countries. These constitute another part of the reconfiguration of development-led modalities in the refugee regime, marked by significant buy-in from development actors, notably concessionary funding by the World Bank (2016) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). Thus, the severe fiscal stress and the developmental shocks and economic disequilibria that large-scale refugee influxes produce for host countries are now recognized and acted upon. For example, the IDA-18 and IDA-19 refugee sub-windows of the World Bank (normally made available only to the world's poorest countries) provide access to funding on concessionary terms for countries such as Jordan heavily impacted by Syrian refugees—a middle-income country that would not normally be eligible for IDA. These initiatives have largely come about because of the regional and global impacts of large-scale refugee displacement in the Middle East and North Africa region and Horn of Africa.

Beyond their traditional sub-contracting role, engaging and facilitating private- and corporate-sector funding and entrepreneurship are now promoted at all levels, from the micro economy to national-level development and investment (Binder and Witte 2007; Drummond and Crawford 2014; Zetter 2014; Zyck and Armstrong 2014; Carbonnier and Lightfoot 2016). Already, private humanitarian assistance accounted for 24 per cent (\$6.5 billion) of the global total of \$27.3 billion in 2017 (Development Initiatives 2018). As yet, the risky investment environments and the search for commercially viable undertakings act as impediments to significant uptake by the private sector at a scale that achieves significant development uptake in the impacted countries. But a proposal for a merchant bank to underwrite these risks is symptomatic of the structural changes in a refugee regime that for decades been perceived as the domain of public- and welfare-policy interventions (World Commission 2019a).

Finally, at an *operational* level, new instruments have been established to stimulate development-led responses, notably the CRRF, contained in Annex I of the New York Declaration. In the present context, but also aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the key policy objectives of the CRRF is to promote sustainable responses that foster resilience and self-reliance of refugees and affected communities.

Amongst an increasingly utilitarian repertoire of interventions, employment generation lies at the core of development strategies in the HDN. It is now promoted as the main platform for sustainable livelihoods (Jacobsen and Fratzke 2016), with increasing pressure on countries to open up their labour markets to refugees and relax their usually stringent limitations on refugees' right to work under Articles 17–19 of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention (Zetter and Ruaudel 2016). Incorporating locally impacted

communities, whose living standards are often severely negatively impacted by the arrival of refugees, is embedded in development-led approaches for employment generation; this reflects a more balanced and equitable response to the challenges faced by these countries.

The CRRF and employment-generation policies sit alongside other operational innovations such as the Syrian Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) (UNDP-UNHCR 2018, latest iteration), an archetype of development-led responses; and the Jordan and Ethiopian Compacts, agreed with various international donors and the European Commission, with the aim to stimulate job creation for refugees by, *inter alia*, concessionary trading agreements and investment incentives. Albeit rather pragmatically conceived, together, these instruments constitute what, on the face of it, is an international strategy to shift from a public welfare model to a private finance driven response to contemporary refugee crises.

Cash-based interventions or cash-transfer programming, now universally adopted by most humanitarian actors, are also a crucial instrument of development-led responses: injecting cash into aid delivery renders refugees as market actors, directly incorporating them into economic-development processes as consumers but potentially as producers, for example through micro-enterprise and start-up capital (ODI 2015; UNHCR 2016: 6). Promoting self-reliance and resilience, by designating forcibly displaced people as development actors, appeals to the wider aspirations of humanitarian agencies keen, on the one hand, to foster the image of refugees as agentive contributors rather than passive recipients of assistance and, on the other hand, to uphold the dignity of refugees.

Of course, despite the ‘progress’ made in promoting the HDN, much remains unresolved: the HDN is far from a coherent model. Contrasting precepts of humanitarian and development actions and actors highlight still profound imbalances. And, in practice, contrasting timescales, budgeting practices, regulatory frameworks and programming further emphasize the disjuncture between the ‘principled pragmatism’ of humanitarianism and the structural impacts of development decisions, strategic investment flows and economic policymaking. What these issues point to is that, whilst humanitarian action has a relatively well-theorized and well-established position in refugee crises, a fundamental explanation of what is meant by development in the context of the HDN remains unclear and unexplained. The article now seeks to develop such an understanding.

Theorizing the HDN—a Political-economy Perspective

To date, there has been little attempt to theorize the development processes and structural dynamics that underlie these development-led approaches to refugee crises. Transcending the immediate policy and operational characteristics of the HDN and development-led responses, the article now theorizes the development processes that are at play here. The core aim of my

argument is to challenge the current ‘state of the art’ where the meaning and purpose of ‘development’ in the context of refugee crises and the HDN are essentially taken as given, as a largely technical and policy process that, furthermore, is assumed to be ahistorical and apolitical. What is the meaning of development in this novel context?

One component that is being explored and elaborated is to revisit and extend concepts of resilience and self-reliance, familiar in the disasters literature but now invoked in the context of refugee displacement and the HDN (Clements *et al.* 2016; Betts *et al.* 2017; Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). Aligned with concepts of sustainability and the drive for employment generation, this line of inquiry supports, rather than critically engages with, the policy precepts and objectives of development approaches in refugee crises outlined in the first part of this article. Moreover, it provides only a partial theory that lacks the analytical power to engage with underlying determinants and the contingent structures of ‘power’, which again are long-familiar theoretical territory in disasters literature (Hewitt 1983; Wisner *et al.* 2004).

A more sophisticated analytical line, as yet unelaborated, would be to theorize the HDN and the development-led approach as a manifestation of neo-liberal globalization processes seeking to incorporate a small, but as-yet untapped, component of the global economy. Converting refugees from welfare recipients into market actors as consumers and producers through employment promotion and cash-based transfers (CBTs), and the increasing privatization of humanitarian space through entrepreneurial activity, align well with the micro-economic aspects of the neo-liberal agenda of economic globalization. At the macro-economic level, international finance interventions seek to manage refugee-impacted economies by mitigating fiscal stress and protecting private investment, public development and welfare gains from the economic shocks of large-scale refugee influxes. These objectives have been noted above.

A critique of these processes would note the following. First, these interventions to safeguard and expand markets are consistent with neo-liberal globalization agendas. Moreover, second, the decline of the long-established public-welfare model of refugee assistance in the face of the gathering pace of privatized humanitarian assistance reflects a core element of the neo-liberal ‘roll-back’ of the state. Third, demand-led rather than needs-based intervention inevitably and problematically shifts accountability and regulation away from state and international actors to private interests. Finally, despite the recent populist push-back against globalization in many advanced capitalist countries, corporate interests remain the dominant force in global economic processes.

These conclusions are important because, as I argue below, neo-liberal globalization should not necessarily be posed as an alternative to the economic-dualism model of development. Rather, it is compatible with, although in my view, an insufficiently convincing explanation of, the development dynamics embedded in the HDN.

Economic Dualism and the Metropole-periphery Model

A more compelling theoretical explanation, in my view, is to apply the model of economic dualism pioneered in development studies research from the 1970s onwards by Frank (1978), Amin (1976) and, more recently, Escobar (1995), de Soto (2000) and Harvey (2003).

Briefly, these Marxist scholars conceived the model to define the structural relationship between the advanced, capitalist metropolitan ‘centre’ and a less developed colonial and post-colonial ‘periphery’ of developing countries enforcedly dependent on the metropolitan core. The model, which incorporates colonial and economic power working in tandem, explained, for left-wing economists at least, the sustained economic underdevelopment of ‘peripheral’ countries compared to the industrialized Global North.

Rather than having the freedom to pursue an endogenous path, development in the ‘periphery’ is externally dependent on the industrialized world. This model of economic dualism is rooted in a general theory of imperialism in which forms of economic production are articulated at the ‘centre’ by capitalist countries. The means of production are then reproduced globally, through political, trade and sometimes military power, to extract the economic surplus of peripheral states that are consequently incorporated into a subordinate and dependent relationship to the core. In this way, surplus capital and profit are accumulated at the centre by dispossessing the ‘peripheral’ states of capital and resources (Harvey 2003)—a logic that thereby suppresses the possibility of engaging alternative and autonomous paths to capital accumulation and development. Further, the processes inherent in this model of economic dualism reinforce global inequalities between the core and the periphery.

Not surprisingly, given its Marxist origins, the model was subjected to extensive critique by neo-classical, free-market economists (see e.g. Bauer 1981, 1984, 1991) who both challenged the underlying economic assumptions as well as citing (albeit limited) counter factual examples of ‘autonomous’ development such as India and South Korea. Globalization and neo-liberal market-led development theories, in more recent decades, further challenge the model. Yet, in many ways, it could be argued that the model of economic dualism is not incompatible with neo-liberal market economics, since the Global North remains the major beneficiary of the accumulation of surplus value and capital accumulation in the Global South.

In sum, as a theoretical tool, the model of economic dualism sheds light on the complex nature and dynamics of development and, as I now argue, provides a valuable analytical tool for examining the underlying structural conditions of the HDN.²

How, then, does this theory, predicted on the contention of economic development as dependent and controlled by advanced economies, help us to explore and understand the political economy of the development-led nexus and the countervailing interests of the Global North and the main refugee-impacted economies?

The View from the Metropole—the Global ‘North’

In promoting ‘development’ and the HDN for refugees and refugee-impacted countries, northern stakeholders—donor countries, multilateral agencies, humanitarian and development NGOs—are, I contend, replicating the model of dualistic economic development and dependency elaborated by Frank and others some decades ago. This is advanced through economic, socio-economic and wider political processes.

In terms of the *economic rationale*, the HDN, as we have seen, attempts to connect humanitarian relief operations to wider economic developmental objectives. This makes sense by maximizing the utility and better harnessing the productive assets of refugees—their human capital, entrepreneurial experience and potential, labour and skills—thereby supporting local economic growth and development. Furthermore, injecting cash into aid-delivery systems through CBTs renders refugees as market actors, directly co-opting them into local economies as consumers and producers and, ultimately, the global economy. Whilst there are overlaps with the neo-liberal argument, a core-periphery analysis argues that the advantage for investors in these development-led strategies to tackle refugee crises is to capture rent—that is, to extract economic surplus from refugee-impacted countries that have the comparative advantage of cheap labour and other production costs. To this extent, it mirrors the wider aspirations of the globalization of development by the post-industrial ‘North’. These benefits are an unstated but significant by-product of the strong donor push for the right to work for refugees, whilst at the same time ensuring that containment policies keep them as producers and consumers at a distance.

Diverse modes of engagement by northern, ‘metropole’ actors (donor countries, inter-governmentals and NGOs), described in the first part of this article, illustrate how they are defining the development policy space in which the centre-periphery model of dependency is being articulated through development-led strategies: the GCR; CRRF; the 3RP; the Jordan and Ethiopian Compacts for employment generation and concessionary trading arrangements with the European Union; concessionary loans to offset fiscal stress; the expanding role of the World Bank and the EIB; the increasing allocation of European Union Trust Funds for development projects that have a migration-control element.

Yet, in practice, the ‘definition’ of development being implemented in the HDN is remarkably narrow, largely focused on employment generation for sustainable livelihoods, supported by minimal infrastructure provision and, selectively, reducing fiscal stress. This ‘monoculture’ of development ignores the complex and wide array of socio-economic variables that actually comprise ‘development’ and, by constructing employment as an outlier of this wider conceptualization of development, fails to integrate this into the national economic-development plans and strategies of the impacted countries.

Indeed, even if successful in its own terms—for example, the Jordan Compact aims to create 200,000 new jobs in ‘decent work’ (to use the International Labour Organization terminology) for refugees and the host population (over an indeterminate period)—there are wider issues at stake. Interventions such as these will barely tackle the enormous informal labour markets that dominate the ‘Global South’, inflated by the arrival of refugees. For example, in two countries now participating in refugee-development ‘compacts’, informal employment represented 44 per cent of total employment in the Jordanian economy in 2013 (UNDP 2013: 32), when the Syrian refugee population was only half the current total, and 22.8 per cent of the Ethiopian labour force in 2013 (Yared *et al.* 2016). Indeed, expansion of the two-tier economy—the informal sector by spontaneous growth, through refugees and the formal sector by exogenous investment—further serves the interests of the metropole by consolidating low-wage production costs in these countries.

As discussed above, market-led development praxis and the role of private-sector entrepreneurs and the business sector in refugee assistance are expanding. The escalating costs of humanitarian relief, and the massive shortfalls in public funds for ‘Global South’ development as a whole, provide part of the economic rationale that underpins the accelerating ‘privatization’ of humanitarian assistance and development investment (United Nations 2017, 2018); as noted above, the private sector is already a major humanitarian stakeholder (Development Initiatives 2018). As a UNHCR website on private sector engagement notes:

the private sector plays a pivotal role in providing opportunities for refugees. From employment and business opportunities to providing critical goods and services, refugees’ livelihoods are very closely linked to private enterprise (UNHCR 2019).

However, a stronger rationale lies in the substantial surplus of investment capital in the Global North and associated low yields and returns contrast with conditions in the Global South, including ‘refugee economies’, which offer higher potential returns for private-sector liquid capital, albeit with higher risks (World Commission 2019b: 34–35).

Alongside their pro bono/corporate social-responsibility role and as outsourced sub-contractors and service providers, the private sector is increasingly a proactive, commercial/entrepreneurial actor in disasters and refugee situations. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that almost 30 per cent—some \$3 billion of the \$13.34 billion earmarked for the Haiti relief effort to 2020—has come from private-sector resources (NBC 2015), whilst IKEA has committed almost \$200 million since 2010 in cash and in-kind donations to UNHCR programmes (UNHCR 2018). On its website, the Urban Institute (2019) lists more than 70 global corporate entities as service providers and manufacturers with links to refugee agencies, for example the pharmaceutical company Novartis is partnered with the ICRC in providing medical diagnostics, Grundfos, a Danish manufacturer of water-supply

machinery, is linked with the Danish Refugee Council and the UNHCR in developing water-supply solutions for refugee settlements, whilst Ericsson, amongst other mobile-phone companies, is developing technologies for mobile-based refugee-family-reconnection programmes. Alongside many small-scale entrepreneurs designing other commercially viable ‘technologies’ of refugee assistance, these are the entry points for market-driven, not needs-based, provision.

Yet, as the World Commission report also notes, many investment opportunities remain unfilled: this calls for ‘available public funds [to] be strategically directed to the creation of conditions in which a larger volume of private capital would flow’ (World Commission 2019b: 34). Public investment is needed to support the extraction of surplus value by corporate interests: this is what we see taking place with the increasing involvement of international banking institutions such as the World Bank and the EIB in refugee-impacted economies.

This accelerating transformation of refugee economies from public welfare to private space again resonates with neo-liberal agendas. But, from the perspective of the theory of economic dualism, the shifting balance from public- to private-sector entities enables the increasing penetration of the ‘refugee market’ by global corporates and foreign direct investment, especially given the relative scarcity of local-investment capacity.

These processes thereby reinforce the dependency of peripheral, refugee-impacted economies on the surplus investment capacity of metropolitan capital power, whilst constraining the potential to create endogenous capital (de Soto 2000: 219–242). Although national and local private-sector entrepreneurs (as well as refugee entrepreneurs) may benefit from the new commercial opportunities and might also link to the value chains of more established international and global companies, the more likely scenario predicted by the model of economic dualism is that they will be crowded out by more powerful international entities seeking supernormal profits in high-risk locations (Boyer and DuPont 2016: 37). Significantly here, all the entries on the Urban Initiatives website are Global North companies.

The metropole-periphery, dual-economy model also helps to explain the *socio-economic rationale* of development-led responses to refugee crises. Forced displacement reverses development progress: for example, amongst the spillover effects of the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese GDP is estimated to have contracted by 2.9 per cent per annum during the 2012–14 period (World Bank 2013). More generally, conflict and violence in fragile states are estimated to have caused global economic losses to the order of \$14.3 trillion—the equivalent of the combined economies of Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom (Martínez-Solimán 2017).

Recognizing these consequences, protecting many decades of heavy aid, development and private investment originating from the metropole becomes an important objective. The increasing supply of soft and concessionary loans to offset fiscal stress and further promote the economic incorporation of

refugee-impacted countries evidence this trend. The fact that it is middle-income countries like Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon that are ever more impacted reinforces the imperative of protecting these economies and their regional and the global economic significance, whilst subordinating their wider potential.

Moreover, at the same time, expanding (and protecting) investment and promoting sustainable livelihoods may serve to reduce tensions between refugees and hosts, and thus prevent further social destabilization and threats to investment in quasi-fragile states. Yet, it is also plausible to argue, in this context, that these strategies and the cash-based programming that partly underpin livelihood policies are, in their own way, dependency-creating instruments just as much as traditional methods of providing humanitarian assistance for refugees. To this extent, the socio-economic rationale further reinforces the model of dependency and thus dualism.

The economic and socio-economic rationale for development-led interventions are complemented by a wider *political agenda*. In particular, the socio-economic rationale segues to political objectives.

On the one hand, providing refugees with sustainable livelihoods could arguably be claimed to avert disaffection and radicalization whilst addressing some of the socio-economic grievances that might have led to conflict and displacement in the first place.

On the other hand, and more significantly, despite the disputed evidence that development reduces the likelihood of out-migration, nevertheless, it is implicitly conceived in the Global North as an instrument for refugee containment in regions of origin. Together with the policies to externalize Europe's borders such as migration partnerships (Crawley and Blitz 2018) and other instruments such as the refugee compacts in Jordan and Ethiopia, the securitization of migration thus purports to offer economic empowerment for impacted countries and refugees, whilst at same time disempowering the claims of refugees to wider mobility, protection and asylum. In this way, containment policies mediate the metropole's own development (and political) strategies by securing surplus labour and the extraction of an economic surplus while simultaneously reinforcing a dependent periphery; at the same time, containment protects the metropole from the perceived negative consequences of onward refugee migration.

However, the roll-out of development-led approaches highlights a paradox in the application of the model of economic dualism as an explanatory theory.

In line with analysis of the economic impacts of migration flows as whole (Ratha and Shaw 2007), it is plausible to assume that, from a *global* perspective, the greatest aggregate economic benefits would actually accrue by encouraging the south-to-north flow of refugees. South-north displacement would likely result in higher productivity gains, significantly higher individual income gains and substantial gains for the source countries mainly through remittances. Indigenous capital and labour in the core, complemented by

refugee inputs, would also likely achieve gains. Some negative externalities would partially offset these significantly enhanced gains to global aggregate welfare, for example indigenous workers and refugees competing in the same labour markets, the costs of unsettled refugees and short-term negative public-sector costs in the Global North destinations. The latter would be partly offset by the reduced public-sector costs of the ‘refugee burden’ in the Global South countries.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, refugee containment in the Global South remains a dominant political objective of Global North countries. In terms of global aggregates, containment consigns refugees to comparatively low-productivity economies where they make a comparatively smaller contribution to their host country and have lower individual net welfare gains and lower aggregate capacity for remittances. Overall, these outcomes of in-region, development-led responses to refugee displacement are likely to reduce aggregate *global*-welfare gains. Yet, they still maximize *regional* economic gains for the metropole by creating market conditions that reduce production costs and thus increase the scope for extracting surplus production. In economic terms, this is the trade-off that the core is prepared to bear because of its policies of refugee containment at the periphery.

In conclusion, the argument here is that the transition from humanitarian to development-led responses to protracted refugee crises promotes the creation and capture of rent articulated by the Global North through imposing new forms of dependency on the refugee-impacted Global South. The metropole is incorporating the periphery whilst ensuring that it does indeed remain dependent, subordinated and ‘contained’. In this way, the general conditions of the model of dualistic economic development and subordination are being replicated but in the more specific environment of refugee-impacted economies.

The View from the Periphery—the ‘Empire’ Fights Back

From the perspective of the South—the refugee-impacted countries at the periphery—the model of economic dualism is one of inevitable co-optation into the political economy of the HDN even whilst resisting its basic tenets—an oppositional political economy of the HDN.

In these countries, in opposition to the metropole, the endogenous response to mass refugee influx has always been aimed at narrowing policy space for refugee development, not about promoting development, sustainability and resilience or incorporating refugees into a global economy—even if the countries themselves have been co-opted by wider structural adjustment policies over recent decades. It is about the temporariness of refugee displacement and preventing, as far as possible, sustainable livelihoods and resilience in the host countries. Inter alia, the negative impacts of the right to work on their labour markets, and wider access to housing markets and public services, for example, are the major concern.

The empire is fighting back against its subordinated role. It has some power, although, overall, it has limited weapons in its armoury. At the periphery, there is evidence of a ‘rentier’ economy emerging in which both impacted and especially transit countries are instrumentalizing their situation by playing ‘refugee burden’ or ‘securitization’ as the principle cards in their hands.

On the one hand, the impacted countries are resistant to development-led strategies such as the right to work for refugees, promoted by many donor countries and, as we have seen, an integral part of the CRRF and GCR. Their concern is that employment for refugees paves the way for marginalizing their own labour force—refugees accepting lower wages and worse working conditions—and that economic inclusion will lead to de facto longer-term integration of refugees. These potential outcomes have the attendant risks of negative impacts on already pressurized development strategies and, in particular, their fragile and unstable labour markets.

Host countries have therefore sought to influence a policy environment that sustains humanitarian assistance and basic services for refugees, thereby ensuring refugee dependency on international stakeholders, underpinning the temporariness of their displacement and thus minimizing the potential for integration. The implicit risk of onward refugee movement to the Global North, without such assistance, lends added weight to the demands of impacted countries to offset the humanitarian costs. The controversial €6 billion 2016 EU–Turkey agreement is the most obvious example; but it is by no means alone, as periodic threats by Kenya to repatriate Somali refugees, for example, illustrate. Thus, whilst the model of economic dualism would hypothesize that the Global North donors should maximize economic inclusion (e.g. rights to work, freedom of movement in the host country and property ownership), in order to maximize extraction of productivity gains and secure refugee containment, in practice, inclusion policies have to align with the political realities of the host countries. In other words, the metropole has to trade off some productivity gains by maintaining a ‘humanitarian’ role that reduces the socio-economic vulnerabilities of both the refugees and their host communities. This yields little, if any, economic return.

On the other hand, the empire has also been fighting back more proactively by playing the ‘refugee-burden’ card of responsibility-sharing. This is now writ large in the GCR. Although the metropole has been careful to avoid getting trapped into the precise metrics of responsibility-sharing, nevertheless, there are some pragmatic advances. Donors now acknowledge that the fiscal stress and public-sector disequilibria caused by large-scale refugee influxes should be mediated, not least to protect the development gains from heavy investment by these same donors. One example is the soft and concessionary loan facility from the World Bank through the IDA-18/IDA19 refugee sub-window—especially significant, as we have seen, for middle-income countries such as Jordan. The loans aim to cover some of the direct costs of refugee impacts and longer-term debt relief and development investment. Another

example is donor acceptance that humanitarian and development assistance (e.g. job creation through the Compacts) should be invested in both refugee *and* host communities. By appropriating assistance in this way, the periphery can capture development gains that would otherwise only accrue to refugees.

But these gains are double-edged. One consequence of concessionary financing is increased long-term debt repayment, which will keep the periphery indebted to the metropole, thereby further incorporating them into a dualistic world economy. Limited ‘debt’ relief, by reducing fiscal stress and sustaining ‘investment’ in humanitarian channels, offsets some of the refugee burden, but is unsustainable in the long term and almost totally donor-driven. Is this really responsibility-sharing? In any case, modest improvements to public services, such as education and health care for refugees, will also improve labour productivity, thus augmenting surplus profits to be extracted.

At the periphery, transit countries and countries of origin of irregular migration are also instrumentalizing their situation vis-à-vis the metropole by playing the ‘securitization card’, although, again, not entirely to their advantage. Migration and readmission ‘partnerships’, whether bilateral such as between Italy and Libya or between the European Union and transit and origin countries such as Mali, Niger, Ethiopia and Nigeria, are now a standard tool of European Union migration securitization and the externalization of border control. In return for strengthening border management to contain irregular migration, and prevent smuggling and trafficking, these countries receive modest development assistance, but this is insufficient to address the structural weaknesses of their economies. Ironically, also, tackling irregular migration actually undermines a significant, albeit immoral, livelihood strategy in some of the transit countries; and it leaves these countries with the legacy of trapped migrants further swelling their informal labour markets and thereby depressing the economic wellbeing of the national population.

Of course, the analysis elaborated in this article follows the classic Global North and Global South dialectic and terminology in explaining the metropole theory and its application to the HDN. Recent discussion in refugee studies has introduced the development discourse of South–South, ‘decolonized’ alliances to situations of refugee displacement (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2018). As yet, it is too early to discern whether this new axis for development strategies can challenge the metropole-periphery model discussed in this article and strengthen southern autonomy.

Conclusion

For the metropole, development-led responses to refugee displacement are consistent with the precepts of the model of dualistic economic development. A small but not insignificant outlier of resources at the periphery—refugees and refugee-impacted states—offers new opportunities for capitalist penetration, articulated from the centre, to extract an economic surplus and incorporate these peripheral states in a subordinate and dependent relationship.

A utilitarian, and increasingly market-based, model of humanitarian assistance echoes wider processes of economic globalization that, despite recent populist push-back, remain ascendant and support the argument of capitalist penetration. At the same time, these dynamics serve more focused political objectives—not particularly successfully—of refugee containment in the Global South in an era when global mobility is in the ascendant.

Using different strategies, the countries at the periphery are instrumentalizing their position and interests. Host and transit states are exploiting the newly emerging geopolitical dynamics precipitated by refugee displacement (and international migration more generally) as the means to extract economic gains whilst trying to minimize both the negative impacts of refugees and the dependency and subordination that is the corollary of development and humanitarian assistance. However, despite their opposition to what they perceive to be creeping international policies for refugee inclusion and de facto local settlement—that is, one of the three durable solutions to refugee displacement—the empire may still pay a heavy price as the metropole imposes its interlocking agendas of development dependency and containment.

Beyond the immediate propositions of this article, the intention has been to use the lens of development theory to widen and deepen debate about the meaning of development in the context of the HDN and the ‘New Way of Working’. It proposes one approach by which we can begin to interrogate the structural determinants at play, locating the development-led paradigm of refugee assistance in the rich discourse on development theory and the political economy of development, thereby providing an explanatory rather than a descriptive analysis of the emerging paradigm of refugee. Further, it hopefully directs attention to the shaping policies in ways that more closely align with the development needs and strategies of the most heavily refugee-impacted countries in the Global South, whilst at the same time opening debate on other ways in which the development-led paradigm can be theorized, for example using a Foucauldian lens of governmentality and development, or neo-liberal development theories or, indeed, post-colonial south-south axes of development.

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2. En passant, there are remarkable parallels between the metropole-periphery model of economic development and Chimni's seminal article (Chimni 1998); he theorized the refugee regime as a humanitarian/containment model applied by advanced 'imperial powers' that subordinated the main impacted countries to carrying the 'refugee burden' and dependency.

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