



UNIVERSITY OF
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REFUGEE
STUDIES
CENTRE

Resettlement Research: Past, Present and Future

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8000 Syrian resettlement quota



...did they make the right decision?

Guiding Question

- Assuming our aim is to allocate scarce resources to protect and assist refugees, what can research tell us about the role of resettlement?

Structure

- Competing Alternatives
- Myths in Policy Debates
- The Functions of Resettlement
- Existing Research and its Gaps
- Future Resettlement Research

Contrasting approaches?

Less than 70,000 Syrians
resettled (2011-2015)



More than 1.6 million Indochinese
resettled (1975-1996)



In-country v Resettlement...or alternatives? Are they realistic?

The “Efficiency” Argument...again

Western states spend annually around \$10 billion on less than half a million asylum seekers, most of whom are not in need of international protection. By contrast, the UNHCR supports 12 million refugees and five million internally displaced persons in some of the poorest countries in the world on a budget of only \$900 million.

- Caroline Flint MP, 2003

Hathaway (1996): “Common but differentiated responsibility-sharing”

Betts (2006): “What does efficiency mean in the global refugee regime?”

Mythical Causal Claims

“Pull factor”: resettlement attracts migrants to host countries in the region

“Substitution”: humanitarian assistance is a substitute good for resettlement

“Efficiency”: resettlement is most costly than protection in the region

“See saw effect”: resettlement reduces spontaneous arrival asylum beyond regions of origin

“Norm erosion”: without resettlement, the norms of the refugee regime will be undermined

The Functions of Resettlement

What are we trying to achieve?
Does resettlement actually fulfill those objectives?

Function	Testable Hypothesis
1) Solidarity	It affects host state behaviour
2) Protection	It reaches the most vulnerable
3) Strategic Use	It unlocks other durable solutions
4) Public understanding	It leads to greater public support
5) Mass influx	It averts <i>refoulement</i> by host states

Existing Research

- **Resettlement policy** (Van Selm 2003, 2004, 2014)
- **Integration of resettled refugees** (Bevelender et al 2009; Valenta and Bunar 2010; Connor 2010; Beaman 2011)
- **Cultural dimensions of resettlement** (Horst 2006)

Research Gap 1: Politics

- The “Resettlement industry”
- The power and interests that underpin resettlement
- Global (e.g. Geneva), national (e.g. DC) , and local (e.g. Minnesota)



Research Gap 2: Economics

- Explaining variation in economic outcomes for resettled refugees?
- Building on Connor (2010) and Beaman (2011)
- Exploring economic trajectories from region to resettlement



Research Gap 3: Anthropology

- Refugee choice to seek resettlement?
- Refugee experience in the resettlement process?
- Interaction of resettlement staff and refugees



Research Gap 4: Ethics

- *Consequentialism*: resource allocation and efficiency? (Betts 2006)
- *Deontology*: proximity v distance? (Gibney 2000; Cottingham 2000)
- *Virtue*: making judgments in context?

A Research Programme?

- Mixed methods and multidisciplinary
- Multi-sited fieldwork across the “resettlement arch” (asylum state to resettlement state)
- Include sites of resettlement politics