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Philadelphia and Its Iraqi Refugees: Lessons from the Northeast

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Philadelphia and Its Iraqi Refugees: Lessons from the Northeast

Abstract

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 produced millions of refugees, some of which were relocated to the United States. City planners need to consider refugees' adaptation and movement within the United States and the impacts of migration on their communities. What can refugee communities do for urban revitalization, and what can urban communities contribute to refugees' resettlement success? These questions are answered in a case study of Iraqi refugees in Philadelphia using quantitative data from stakeholder agencies and geographic information system (GIS) data. Interviews with Philadelphia refugee resettlement stakeholders is incorporated with news reports and scholarship to paint a full picture of refugee resettlement in Philadelphia. The major finding of this study is that the Iraqi refugee community of Philadelphia is dispersed, and its neighborhood is extremely multicultural with no single ethnic character. Thus, the Iraqi refugees in Philadelphia are not provided with the full benefits of an enclave, and are also left without long-term institutional support or substantial community organizations, despite being vulnerable at many levels. Philadelphia is a Legacy City: an old, industrial city suffering from population decline. This paper proposes that investment in centralized data keeping and accountability, research, and community-building would not only serve the Iraqi refugees themselves, but their contributions to this Legacy City in need of revitalization could advance the city's potential to re-emerge as an immigrant gateway, with manifold benefits to Philadelphia itself.

Keywords

Iraq, refugees, resettlement, revitalization, Philadelphia, Northeast, northeast Philadelphia, legacy, immigration, global neighborhood, migration, secondary migration, Humanities, Social Sciences, Near Eastern Language and Civilizations, Urban Studies, Heather J. Sharkey, Sharkey, Heather J

Disciplines

Human Geography | Islamic World and Near East History | Near Eastern Languages and Societies | Political History | Urban Studies and Planning

Comments

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Philadelphia and Its Iraqi Refugees: Lessons from the Northeast

Angela Ross Perfetti
Advisor: Dr. Heather J. Sharkey

A SENIOR THESIS SUBMITTED FOR HONORS IN THE MODERN MIDDLE
EASTERN STUDIES MAJOR

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MODERN MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
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Introduction

When I worked for a refugee resettlement agency in Philadelphia in the summer of 2015, I noticed that most of our Middle Eastern refugees hailed from northeast Philadelphia. A refugee wellness clinic in Olney (upper North Philadelphia) that I visited several times during the 2015-16 academic year saw patients primarily from Iraq. Yet, when I mentioned Iraqi refugees living in northeast Philadelphia to other Philadelphia residents, my comments were often met with surprise and confusion. There seemed to be limited public awareness that refugees from Iraq were being resettled in northeast Philadelphia. This thesis examines this community – considering who its members were, how they came to Philadelphia, and what implications their residence in Philadelphia had for the city and for the refugee community itself. It studies these questions in the context of systems of refugee resettlement and urban immigration. I argue that Iraqi refugees could be an important source of revitalization for northeast Philadelphia, but only if the city invests in tangible community-building efforts that attract, support, and keep refugees and immigrants in the city.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 produced multiple millions of refugees. Yet few scholars or journalists have studied the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in the United States, despite the fact that the United States gave at least a tentative acknowledgement of their complicity in creating the refugee crisis by offering special visas to some Iraqis.¹ Since 2011, the Syrian refugee crisis has overshadowed the ongoing Iraqi refugee crisis. Thus, the experiences and struggles of Iraqi refugees have been invisible to most Americans. Likewise, city planners have not paid much attention to migrant adaptation and movement within the United States, nor to the impacts of migration on their

¹Boustany, Nora, and Joshua Partlow, “U.S. Agrees to Resettle Refugees from Iraq.”

communities.² But Philadelphia planners need to consider what refugee communities can do for urban revitalization, and similarly, stakeholders in refugee resettlement should consider the influence of Philadelphia's communities on the success of resettled refugees.

This thesis proposes to answer several questions. How did northeast Philadelphia serve the needs of resettled Iraqi refugees after 2003? Are Iraqi refugees staying or leaving? Is Philadelphia poised to re-emerge as an immigrant gateway, and what does resettlement have to do with that? How does resettlement contribute to urban revitalization, and what does that mean for northeast Philadelphia? These questions are answered using quantitative data from Pennsylvania state agencies, resettlement agencies, and city-level geographic information system (GIS) data. Qualitative data from interviews with Philadelphia refugee resettlement stakeholders is incorporated with news reports and scholarship to paint a full picture of refugee resettlement in Philadelphia. This thesis elucidates the links between immigration, refugee resettlement, and urban revitalization to explore the practices and implications of Iraqi refugee resettlement in northeast Philadelphia.

The major finding of this study is the following: the Iraqi refugee community of Philadelphia is dispersed, and its "neighborhood," such as it is, is extremely multicultural and even "global," having many immigrant groups and no single ethnic character. No clear Arabic-speaking or Iraqi enclave has formed. Thus, the Iraqi refugees in Philadelphia are not provided with the benefits of an enclave, and are also left without long-term institutional support or substantial community organizations, despite being vulnerable at many levels. Philadelphia is an old, industrial city suffering from population decline, making it a "Legacy City." As a "Legacy City," Philadelphia used to attract

² Vitiello, "The Migrant Metropolis and American Planning," 245.

large-scale immigration, but no longer attracts newcomers in such large numbers today. This paper proposes that investment in centralized data keeping and accountability, research, and community-building would not only serve the Iraqi refugees themselves, but their contributions to this Legacy City in need of revitalization could advance the city's potential to re-emerge as an immigrant gateway, with manifold benefits to Philadelphia itself, not least of which is the cultural richness that comes from hosting diverse populations.

I begin telling the tale of Philadelphia's Iraqi refugees by giving an overview of global refugee affairs, followed by a description of the Iraqi refugee crisis from 2003 to 2015. Then, I connect refugee issues to Philadelphia by describing the situation of refugee resettlement in the city. I give a brief history of immigration and resettlement to Philadelphia, with a focus on northeast Philadelphia as an immigrant community and receiving community for Iraqi refugees. I evaluate the assets and drawbacks of the Northeast as a site for resettlement. I conclude by discussing how refugee resettlement could shape Philadelphia as a re-emerging gateway for 21st century American immigration. If Philadelphia is able to mobilize to meet the needs of Iraqi refugees, they could become a source of urban revitalization and contribute to Philadelphia's re-emergence as an urban immigrant destination.

1. The world's refugees come to the United States

a. What does it mean to be a refugee?

When United Nations General Assembly gathered for the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it defined a “refugee.” International law continues to recognize this definition of a refugee as a person who...

*... owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*³

Temporal and geographic limitations specific to World War II refugees originally framed this clause, but these were removed in 1967. The United Nations distinguishes a refugee from an asylum-seeker, identifying the latter as someone who claims to be a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated by authorities (today, this is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, hereon referred to as the UNHCR). The United States is the largest recipient of refugees in the world today.⁴ There are currently 267,222 refugees and 224,508 asylum-seekers living in the United States,⁵ but the global refugee crisis is much larger. As of 2015, the UNHCR counts and to some extent monitors an estimated 15.1 million refugees around the world.⁶

The definition of refugee is fundamentally a legal one. There is no essential category of refugee person beyond that, nor a distinct “refugee” psychological condition.⁷ Refugees are an extremely heterogeneous category. There is ongoing debate about

³ UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 14.

⁴ UNHCR, “Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement,” 3.

⁵ UNHCR “2015 Subregional Operations Profile.”

⁶ UNHCR, “2014 Global Trends Report.”

⁷ Malkki, “Refugees and Exile,” 495.

whether refugees are significantly different from immigrants, and whether refugees and immigrants should be examined together or separately. In the United States, many of the same variables predict the economic outcomes for refugees and immigrants. Refugees and immigrants both adapt to their new environment as household units, with women often performing the role of expanding social networks and economic arenas. The principle point of difference is in their relationship to the state. In the United States, refugees (but not immigrants) are able to receive public benefits upon arrival, though programs stress early self-sufficiency. These services may temporarily provide an alternative to entering big labor markets and ethnic enclaves.⁸ While I focus on refugees in this investigation, I will place refugee resettlement in the context of immigration broadly. I will address the overlap between refugees and immigrants, and their connections to one another.

b. Who are the world's refugees?

Refugees come from many countries all over the world. Some of these refugees will end up coming to the U.S. to live permanently.

⁸ Hein, "Refugees, Immigrants, and the State," 53-55.

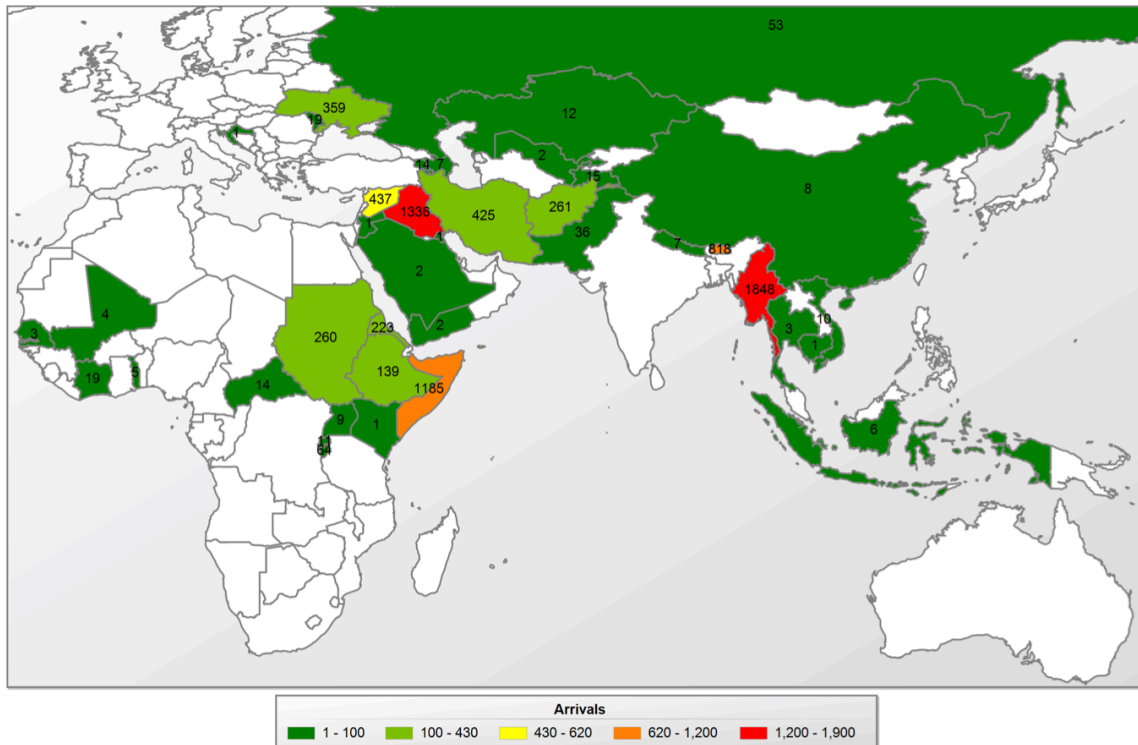


Figure 1: Country of Nationality for Refugees Accepted to U.S.A. Oct. 1 - Nov. 30 2015⁹

There are three durable options available for refugees who are outside of their home country. The first is repatriation to the country from which they fled. This is an option if the threat that caused the person(s) to leave has been removed, and the country has committed to accepting those who have left. Because this happens very rarely, the most common solution is local integration into the country to which they fled (the “host” country). Resettlement in a third country, the last option, is considered when neither repatriation nor integration into the host country are viable options. Less than 1% of refugees worldwide were resettled in a third country in 2014.¹⁰ This was less than 10% of refugees whom the UNHCR identified to be in need of resettlement to a third country.¹¹

⁹ Image produced by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration’s Refugee Processing Center.

¹⁰ Gov’t of the United States of America, “United States of America,” in *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, 3.

¹¹ Betts, Loescher, and Milner, *UNHCR: The politics and practice of refugee protection into the 21st century*. 89.

In fiscal year (FY) 2015, the United States resettled 69,933 refugees and in FY 2013 (the most recent data available) granted asylum status to 25,199 people.¹² In framing refugee resettlement in terms of the foreign-born geography of the U.S., it is important to realize that the number of refugees is dwarfed by non-refugee immigration. Over 4 million total immigrants arrived in the United States in 2015, compared to less than 70,000 refugees.¹³ This number excludes all those who come to the United States temporarily (“non-immigrants”).

c. Which refugees have been resettled in the United States?

The first thing that refugees have to do in order to qualify for resettlement is to leave their country of origin. Upon presenting themselves to the relevant national/international entities, they must prove that they are a refugee, i.e. that they have a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Then, they must be identified by these agencies as a person of special concern.

The priority areas for resettlement to the United States include:

- I. People at risk in the countries of first asylum, vulnerable populations, or those in danger of refoulement (the rendering of a victimized person to their persecutor), as identified by the UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or an accredited non-governmental organization.

¹² Zong and Batalova, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States.”

¹³ Camarota and Zeigler, “Immigrant Population Hits Record 42.1 Million in Second Quarter of 2015.”

II. Persons from the former Soviet Union, Cuba, ethnic minorities in Burma, and Bhutanese in Nepal. This category includes Iraqis who are associated with the United States (typically employees of U.S.-contracted organizations).

III. Family of someone already admitted to the U.S.¹⁴

The idea behind the “family” priority is that these refugees have “built-in” social networks and housing, and therefore are less likely to become reliant on welfare and social services, which is perceived as an extra cost for resettlement.¹⁵ Refugees may be denied admission if they are deemed a threat to public health, have a criminal record, or pose a security threat.¹⁶

d. Iraqi refugees

There have been several groups of recent Iraqi émigrés. In the 1980s, Iraqis left the country to escape the war with Iran. In the early 1990s, the number of people leaving increased due to the Gulf War. The rest of the decade was marked by the rule of Saddam Hussein, whose persecution of religious minorities caused an exodus of Shi’a Muslims in particular.¹⁷ What spurred the current humanitarian crisis was the invasion of Iraq by U.S. and allied forces in 2003. Paying no heed to humanitarian warnings about an imminent crisis, the invasion of Iraq caused the displacement of more than 2 million refugees, as well 2.7 million internally displaced: one out of every six Iraqis.¹⁸

Most Iraqi refugees who left during the 2003 conflict went to Syria (between 1.2 and 1.4 million). Half a million went to Jordan, and many others went to Saudi Arabia,

¹⁴ Gov’t of the United States of America, “United States of America,” in *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, 3-4.

¹⁵ Fernando Chang-Muy (professor of refugee law) in discussion with the author, February 2016.

¹⁶ Gov’t of the United States of America, “United States of America,” in *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, 3-4.

¹⁷ Jamil, Nassar-McMillan, and Lambert, “Immigration and Attendant Psychological Sequelae,” 199.

¹⁸ Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees*, 1.

other Gulf States, Egypt, and Iran. The first to leave were the most well educated, as they had the most resources to support emigration, whereas the vulnerable and poor stayed behind. By 2006, the refugee movement encompassed all religions and sects.¹⁹ Until that time, the United States paid little attention to the refugee crisis. The approach was to “pretend it is not there and hopefully the problem will go away.”²⁰ In February 2006, the bombing of a mosque and subsequent surge in sectarian violence caused an uptick in the number of displaced Iraqis, resulting in increased concern about their status.²¹ Pressure from within Congress and a call for action from the United Kingdom resulted in a shift in the attitude of the U.S. Government. In 2008, Congress signed a law creating 5,000 special immigrant visas (SIVs) for Iraqis who were U.S. government employees or contractors, though some members of Congress and human rights groups have criticized this as a token gesture.²² From 2006 to 2009, the United States admitted 34,470 Iraqi refugees under the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), and 4,634 SIVs were issued.²³ The comparison that many proponents of larger-scale refugee resettlement in the United States make is that the U.S. government gave resettlement visas to more than 1 million Vietnamese refugees.²⁴ Since 2011, most of the Iraqis resettled to Philadelphia have come from Syria, as the ongoing civil war there has put their lives in jeopardy. They represent diverse ethnic groups and faiths: a combination of different Christian sects, and Sunni and Shi’a Muslims.²⁵

¹⁹ Ibid, 5.

²⁰ Ibid, 110.

²¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Iraqi Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa Holders Face Challenges Resettling in the United States and Obtaining U.S. Government Employment*, GAO-10-274 (Washington D.C., March 2010), 1, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-274>.

²² Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees*, 111-12.

²³ Ibid, 5.

²⁴ Ibid, 113.

²⁵ McWilliams and Bonet, “Refugees in the City,” 423.

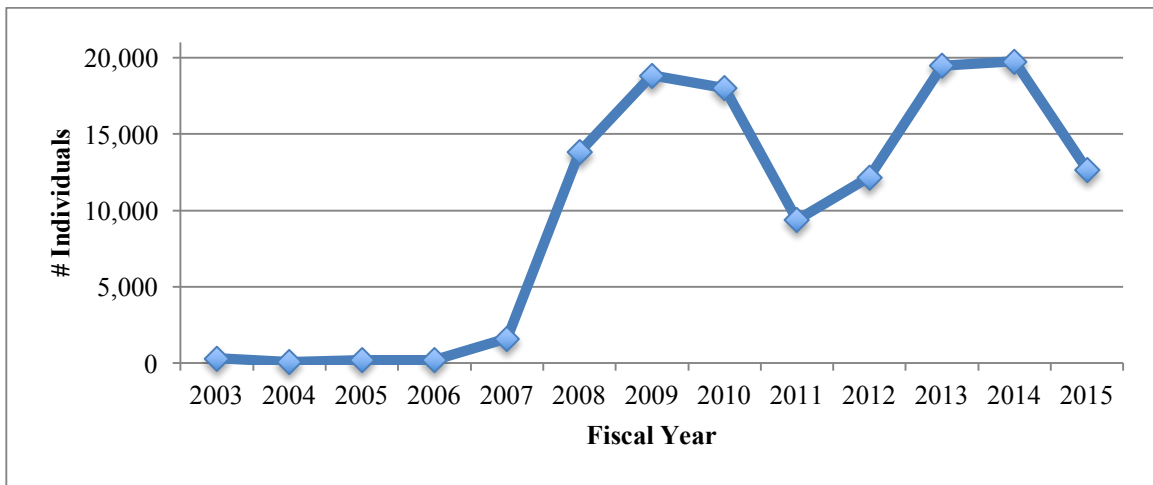


Figure 2: Total refugee admissions from Iraq.²⁶

The number of Iraqi refugees living dispersed around the U.S. now totals over 127,000.²⁷ This research paper is focused on what happens after Iraqi refugees come to one particular city, Philadelphia, and begin their lives anew.

Refugees face a variety of challenges when they are resettled in a third country. Sociocultural adjustment and inadequate understandings between the new arrivals and host communities are a strain on refugee families. Psychological traumas and limited language proficiency are often barriers to integration (Segal and Mayadas, 563). Iraqi refugees are more likely than Iraqi immigrants to be unemployed, despite often having high levels of education, and even after taking into consideration pre-migration and professional experiences.²⁸ Low-skilled jobs are often hard to find. Most federal agencies require that employees are U.S. citizens and obtain background investigations. Many skilled Arabic translation positions also require a security clearance, which is extremely difficult for refugees to obtain, and the background checks that were done by the U.S.

²⁶ Data from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “Refugee Arrivals Historical Summary.”

²⁷ See Figure 2.

²⁸ Jamil, et. al., “Promoters and Barriers to Work,” 19.

mission in Iraq in order to hire or contract Iraqis are not a sufficient substitute. The resettlement agencies that support refugees in finding employment are extraordinarily overburdened and only hold contracts with refugee clients for three months, leaving the bulk of support on the communities of resettlement.²⁹ This is a reason for special focus on Iraqi refugees over immigrants.

²⁹ United States Government Accountability Office. “Iraqi Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa Holders Face Challenges Resettling in the United States and Obtaining U.S. Government Employment.” Report to congressional committees, Washington D.C., March 2010, 11-16.

2. The world's refugees come to Philadelphia

The process of deciding resettlement locations is essentially random. Representatives from the American resettlement nonprofits gather around a table in New York City every year. The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) presents the group with the total number of persons of each nationality who need to be resettled. Each agency offers to take refugees based on their financial and human resource capacity to host them. There is no official preference given for employment opportunity, access to services, or ethnic composition. The only calculated decision is to send those with family to the location where their family lives. The refugees who come to Philadelphia either have family in Philadelphia, or were selected randomly from the vast pool of refugees who are resettled in the U.S. every year.³⁰ The refugees themselves have no part in this decision-making process. This is an old pattern in refugee resettlement. A report from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in 2000 noted that Vietnamese refugees who were resettled in the late 1970s and their descendants living in Philadelphia years later had no idea how it was that they came to live in this city.³¹

Not only is the process essentially random, but it is also extraordinarily bureaucratic and elusive. Getting data about which type of refugees were being resettled where was nearly impossible for me. This data is theoretically kept by the voluntary agencies that serve refugees (“resettlement agencies” or VOLAGs), but with 350 VOLAG offices around the country, this data is not centralized and certainly not easily accessible.³² While trying to understand where refugees were being resettled nationally, I contacted ten organizations that could be keeping track of refugee resettlement in

³⁰ Fernando Chang-Muy (professor of refugee law) in discussion with the author, February 2016.

³¹ Lin, Jennifer. “In Philadelphia, Refugees Found New Life, New Challenges, New Pain.”

³² Nezer, “Resettlement at Risk,” 6.

Philadelphia. These were the Department of Human Services, Philadelphia Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs Office, Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, City of Philadelphia Department of Records, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Bureau of Population, Migration, and Refugees, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Not one of these agencies could tell me which refugees had been coming to Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program, a State and Federally-funded NGO, was able to provide data on how many refugees were sent to Philadelphia every year starting in 2003, based on country of origin. They were unable to provide information about which of Philadelphia’s three VOLAGs took these refugees, and were not able to provide information about the communities where these refugees were settled. Within Philadelphia, the VOLAGs determine where refugees will resettle.³³

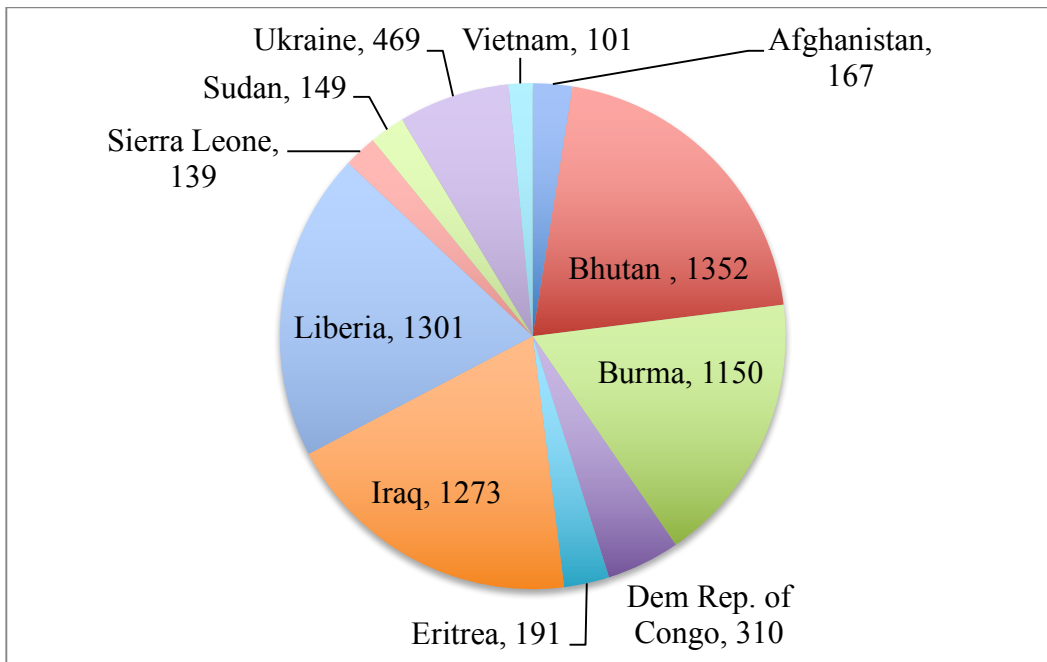


Figure 3. Refugee Nationalities Arriving in Philadelphia, 2003-2015, (number of persons >100)³⁴

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ From the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program.

The largest nationality represented among refugees who were resettled in Philadelphia from 2003-2015 was Bhutanese, according to the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program. Closely following were Liberian, Iraqi, and Burmese. A myriad of other countries were also represented, including others not listed.

Staff from a resettlement agency meets refugees when they arrive in Philadelphia. There are nine resettlement agencies in the United States that hold contracts with the Department of State. They place refugees in almost two hundred communities across the country. They also provide assistance to refugees, from shelter and food to assistance applying for a Social Security card and enrolling in school. The U.S. Department of State's Reception and Placement program ends at three months, and most of these services become unavailable at that time.³⁵ In this way, the American resettlement program emphasizes early independence from public support and benefits, compared to the systems of other nations that resettle refugees.³⁶ Refugees are left on their own to navigate their new homes very quickly.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Migration, Population, and Refugees. "The Reception and Placement Program."

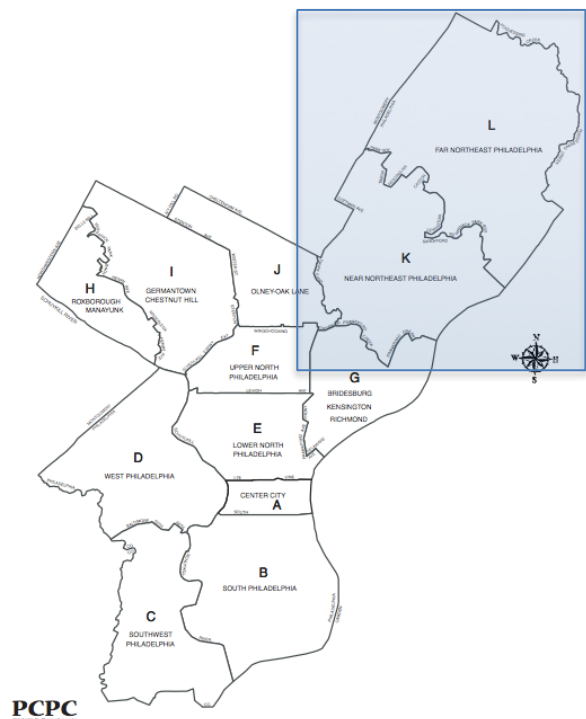
³⁶ Colic-Peisker and Tilbury. "'Active' and 'Passive' Resettlement," 80.

3. Refugees in northeast Philadelphia

While interning at a large refugee resettlement VOLAG in Philadelphia, I learned that a substantial number, if not all, of the Iraqi refugees coming to Philadelphia were resettled in the same neighborhood in the Northeast. And yet, there seemed to be little common awareness of this community. This section discusses northeast Philadelphia: its geography, history of immigration, and current refugee population.

a. Northeast Philadelphia

Northeast Philadelphia is a municipally defined region within Philadelphia. It is the section of the city that branches northeast along the Delaware River.



PCPC
Figure 4. Map of the Municipal Districts of Philadelphia.³⁷

Northeast Philadelphia is divided into two sections: near northeast Philadelphia and far northeast Philadelphia, labeled in the map above as K and J, respectively. Most of

³⁷ From the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, “The Political and Community Service Boundaries of Philadelphia.” 21.

the Iraqi refugee population lives in the near northeast section. This area of Philadelphia developed after World War II, much later than much of the rest of city. Factories north of Kensington between Erie and Huntington Park, stretching east from 5th street to the strips along Aramingo and Frankford in Port Richmond, were an attraction for immigrants and Philadelphians moving to the Northeast.³⁸ Land use maps from the mid-20th century (Figure 5) show the development of industry (purple) along the Delaware River in the near Northeast. A sprawling residential area (yellow/orange) branched out Westward from the riverside factories. These land use records also reveal that the Northeast was slow to develop. A significant portion of the land in the near Northeast was not used at all (35% in 1944). The principle development in the next decade was residential.³⁹

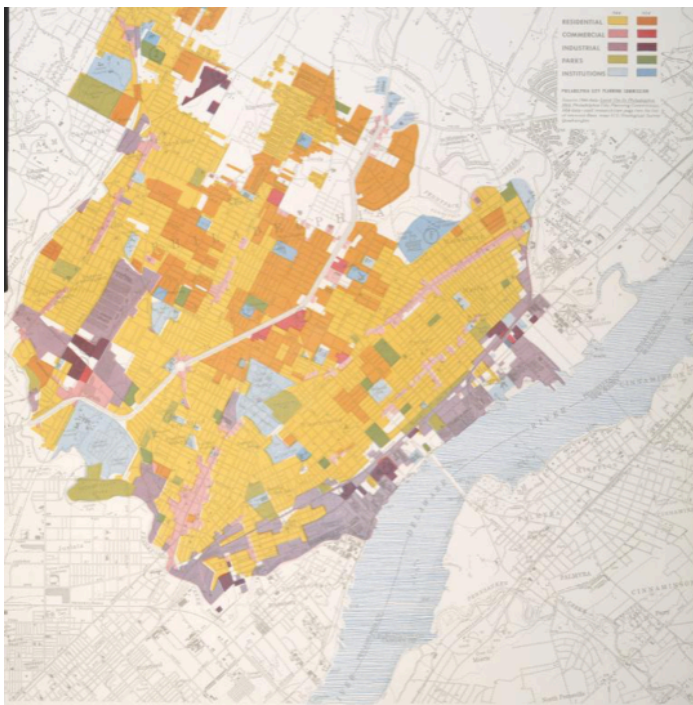


Figure 5. near Northeast, Land Use in Philadelphia, 1944-1954.⁴⁰

³⁸ Goode, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia*, 38-9.

³⁹ Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding*, 32.

⁴⁰ From the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *Land Use in Philadelphia, 1944-1954*, 31.

The Northeast promised home ownership. As Philadelphia's upwardly mobile working class flocked to newer neighborhoods from older urban neighborhoods, the Northeast quickly became homogenously white.⁴¹ Both the near and far Northeast are historically white neighborhoods. In fact, this was a critically important part of the Northeast's identity for the majority of the 20th century. Descendants of old immigrants in the Northeast started a movement to secede from the city of Philadelphia in 1983, after the city elected its first black mayor. The Northeast encouraged immigration from Eastern Europe to defend its racial make-up. Two of the immigrant-serving agencies that supported these immigrants are still in operation today,⁴² but have not shifted their mission to serve the larger variety of immigrants and refugees who come to the Northeast in the 21st century.⁴³

Today, northeast Philadelphia fits definitions of "suburban" in many ways. It is farther away from center city Philadelphia than Cherry Hill, NJ, and Roxborough, PA, despite being within the municipal boundaries of Philadelphia. It also fits the physical definition of suburbs: a large area of primarily residential neighborhoods with a low-density population,⁴⁴ shown in Figures 6, 7 and 8.

⁴¹ Stephen G. Kid "Design of Markets: Social Division and the Progressive Design of Northeast Philadelphia, 1900-1960" (dissertation, The George Washington University, 2002), 3-18.

⁴² Dominic Vitiello (professor of Urban Studies) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

⁴³ McWilliams and Bonet, "Refugees in the City," 432.

⁴⁴ Forsyth, "Defining Suburbs," 273.

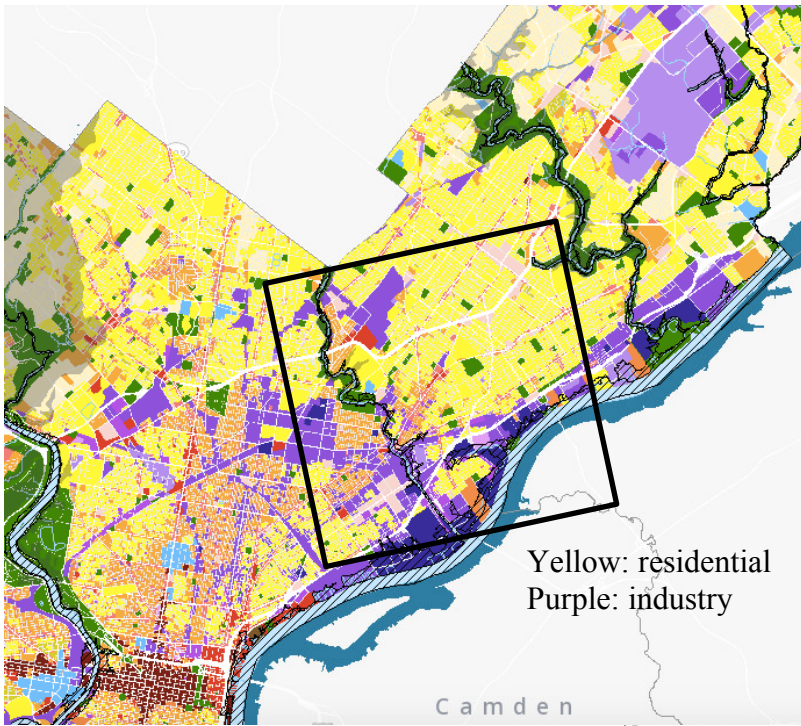


Figure 6. Zoning of near Northeast Philadelphia⁴⁵

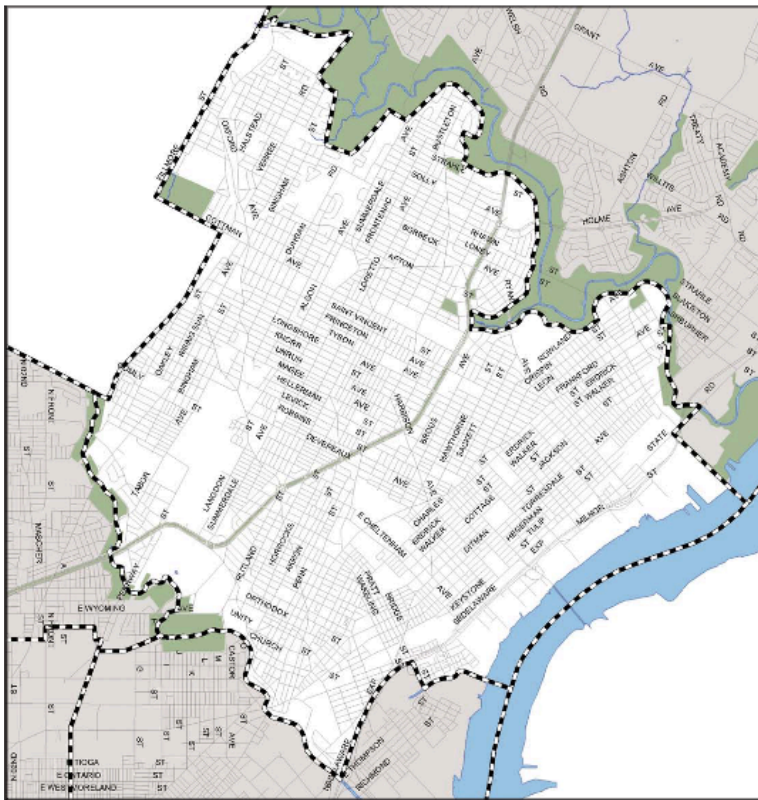


Figure 7. Street map of near Northeast Philadelphia.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ From the City of Philadelphia.



Figure 8. Street view of near Northeast neighborhood (© Google Maps, June 2015)

It is notable that the Northeast is absent from the majority of archival city-planning reports. It seems likely that this is because northeast Philadelphia did not fit the criteria for “city” planning—it is and has always been very much on the periphery of the geography and consciousness of Philadelphia.

b. Immigration to Northeast Philadelphia

From the birth of the city, Philadelphia and the greater Delaware Valley has been a refuge for those fleeing from persecution. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it became home to English, Huguenot, and German migrants fleeing their homeland. In the 1800s, the Irish potato famine and wars in central Europe drove more people to seek sanctuary in Philadelphia. Later, Jews and Armenians came to Philadelphia in search of refuge. Immigrants of these earlier eras establish mutual-aid organizations to help incoming refugees and immigrants in the Delaware Valley – organizations that persisted and evolved into either volunteer agencies (VOLAGs) or ethnic social groups.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ From the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, “The Political and Community Service Boundaries of Philadelphia.” 84.

⁴⁷ Singer, Vitiello, Katz, and Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway*, 10.

Philadelphia is categorized as a *former immigrant gateway*, a city that used to attract immigrants in large numbers in the early 1900s, but no longer does. Other cities in this category include Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. A narrative of decline has underscored literature about these urban centers: “impersonal, transitory, segmented,” with physical spaces that are “dead, impotent, declining, [or] irrelevant.”⁴⁸ In part due to urban decline, immigrants are increasingly bypassing the inner city and moving straight to the suburbs. Now, more immigrants are living in suburbs than in cities. In 1910, 84% of metro Philadelphia’s foreign-born lived within the municipal boundaries of the city. By 2006, that number plummeted to 35%.⁴⁹ The emerging immigrant gateways are lower-density and rapidly expanding cities.⁵⁰

This holds true for refugees, as well; leading refugee destinations have shifted away from the traditional immigrant gateways to other metropolitan areas such as Seattle, Atlanta, and Portland.⁵¹ However, there are exceptions to this rule, and Philadelphia is one of them. As of 2006, Philadelphia has the largest and fastest growing immigrant population among its peer metropolitan areas. The vast majority of its foreign-born population arrived since the 1990s.⁵²

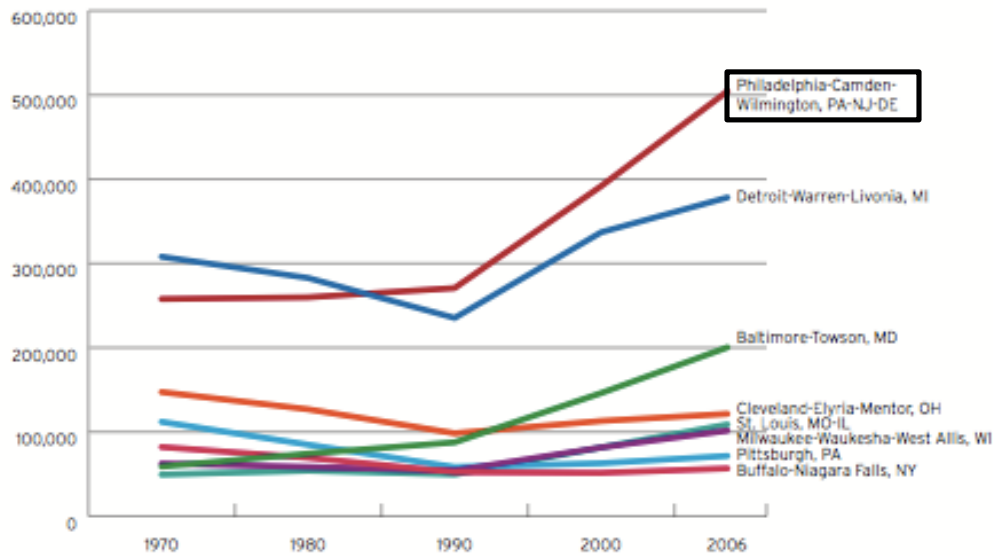
⁴⁸ Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*, 5.

⁴⁹ Katz, Breighton, Amseterdam, and Chowkwanyun, “Immigration and the New Metropolitan Geography,” 527.

⁵⁰ Singer, Vitiello, Katz, and Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway*, 6-25.

⁵¹ Singer and Wilson, *From ‘There’ to ‘Here,’* 1.

⁵² Singer, Vitiello, Katz, and Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway*, 1-5.



Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. Census decennial and American Community Survey data

Figure 9. Foreign-born population of former immigrant gateways, 1970-2006⁵³

Not only are immigrants arriving in large numbers, but they are also making enormous contributions to the city. Nearly 75% of Philadelphia’s labor force growth between 2000-2008 was attributable to immigrants, compared to just 36% in the 1990s.⁵⁴ The Northeast has ultimately seen a radical change in demography as a result of this recent immigration. Northeast Philadelphia has been attracting a large volume of new immigrants from a wide variety of countries, with a 90.9% increase in immigration in the Olney/Oxford/Juniata Park/Feltonville area⁵⁵ and a 64.4% increase in the far Northeast between 1990-2000.⁵⁶

The immigrant communities of northeast Philadelphia that have been explored in literature include Puerto Ricans, Poles, and Koreans.⁵⁷ In the near Northeast, Iraqi

⁵³ From Singer, Vitiello, Katz, and Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway*, 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁵ The area of current Iraqi refugee resettlement.

⁵⁶ Patuskus and Ceffalio. “Recent Trends in Immigration to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Who came and where do they live?” (report, University of Pennsylvania Fels Institute of Government, August 2004), 21-22.

⁵⁷ Goode, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia*, 50-59.

refugees are living amidst refugees and immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Palestine, and North Africa.⁵⁸ Of those who moved to the Olney/Oxford/Juniata Park/Feltonville area in the 10 years from 1990-2000, 44% were Asian (this includes Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, Koreans, Cambodians and Filipino, though one should note the ambiguity of the umbrella term “Asian” with respect to Arabs and Middle Easterners writ large; there are huge debates about the uses of “Asian” vs. “White” and their respective implications in Arab-American communities). 33% were Latin American, (Dominican, Columbian, Haitian, and smaller numbers of Mexicans, Brazilians, and Guatemalans). 19% of the foreign-born were European, mostly Eastern European, though they lived predominantly further northeast. Nearly 70% of the immigration to the Far Northeast (Somerton, Bustleton, and Rhawnhurst) was still from Eastern Europe.⁵⁹ Near northeast Philadelphia (especially the Mayfair/Oxford Circle area) is now one of Philadelphia’s most diverse neighborhoods, though the far northeast remains predominantly white/Eastern European.⁶⁰

The population of Arabs in Northeast Philadelphia has grown by 68% between 2000 and 2010, and is mostly from the Palestinian West Bank and Iraq. They have opened storefronts in the strip of Bustleton Ave. between Unruh and Tyson Streets in near northeast Philadelphia, sometimes referred to as Oxford Circle.⁶¹ Palestinian immigration to Philadelphia began in the 1950s and 1960s and has continued since that time. They maintain close ties within their community. Feltonville, an area close to but distinct from Oxford circle, has been a Palestinian ethnic enclave, though many

⁵⁸ McWilliams and Bonet, “Refugees in the City,” 426.

⁵⁹ Patuskay and Ceffalio. “Recent Trends in Immigration to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Who came and where do they live?” (report, University of Pennsylvania Fels Institute of Government, August 2004), 26-7.

⁶⁰ The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Philadelphia: State of the City*, 12-13.

⁶¹ Khan, “MIDEAST PHILLY: Arab-owned businesses changing the face of one part of the Northeast.”

Palestinians are moving into the Oxford circle area. Many work in the service sector or as small business owners—at grocery stores or gas stations. They are also represented in professions, especially medicine and engineering.⁶² Iraqi refugees have joined Palestinian, as well as Egyptian and other North African nationals in their new neighborhood.⁶³

Because there is no consistent data collection of the numbers of Iraqi refugees resettled in Philadelphia, it is no surprise that there is minimal information about where they live. I requested data from the Philadelphia resettlement agencies, and was able to access a database of the zip codes of each Iraqi refugee resettled by one of the Philadelphia resettlement agencies. That data is represented in Figure 10.

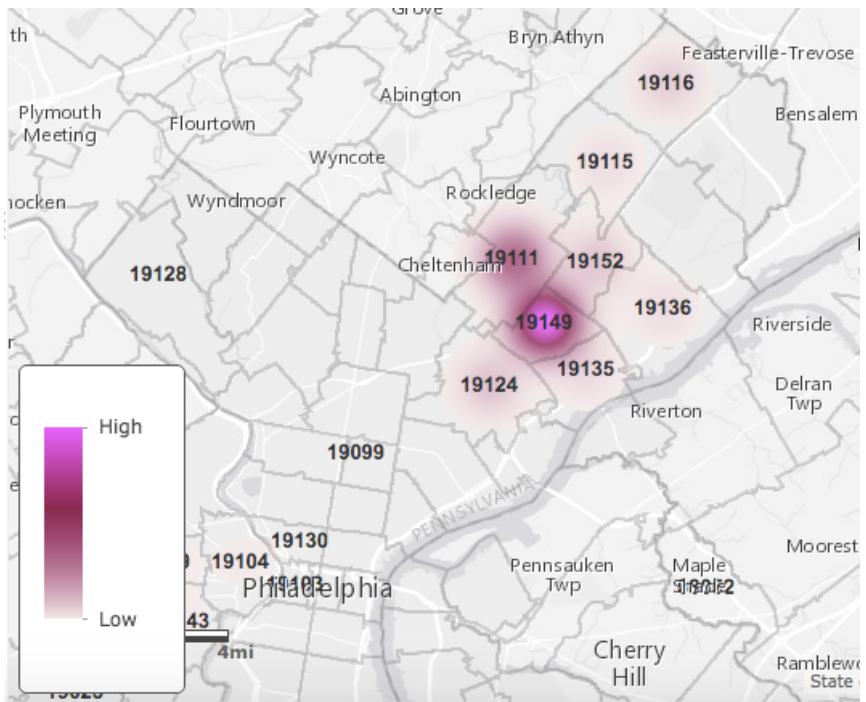


Figure 10. Iraqi Refugees Resettled⁶⁴

⁶² Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, *Immigrant Philadelphia: from Cobblestone Streets to Korean Soap Operas*, 128.

⁶³ McWilliams and Bonet, “Refugees in the City,” 423.

⁶⁴ Data from Nationalities Service Center, Philadelphia PA. Map produced by ArcGis®.

This figure has a few limitations. One, it does not include all Iraqi refugees in the Philadelphia area, as it is only from one refugee resettlement agency. Data was also not collected consistently within this agency (131 out of 671 data points were missing). The map produced by this resettlement agency can be compared to a map produced by the Philadelphia Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs Office, which shows the density of Arabic speakers with limited English language ability, can be used as a proxy to identify the neighborhoods where Iraqi refugees are likely to be living.

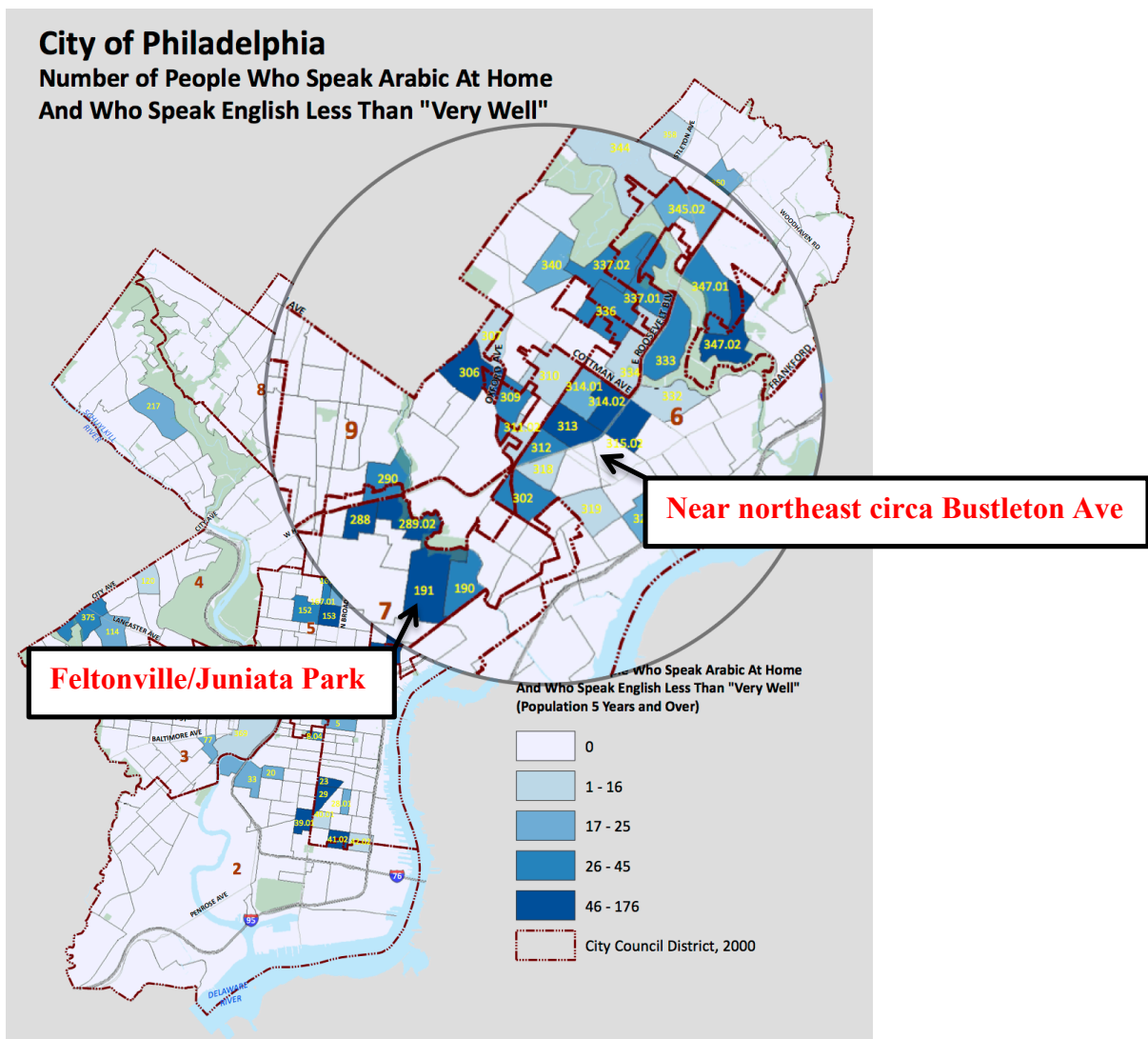


Figure 11. Arabic-Speakers GIS 2007-2011 ACS 5 Year Estimate⁶⁵

⁶⁵ From the Philadelphia Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs Office

There are limitations to this data set as well. Figure 11 does not differentiate between Iraqis and other Arabic-speakers, nor between immigrants and refugees. Further, it does not account at all for bilingual refugees, of which there are a non-negligible number, especially because working for the U.S. government is a priority area for resettlement. However, stakeholders in refugee resettlement have confirmed that the neighborhoods identified in in Figures 10 and 11 are indeed the sites of Iraqi refugee resettlement. Specifically, these are the high-density area labeled 313 and the areas surrounding it roughly correspond to the 19111 and 19149 zip codes in Figure 10,⁶⁶ adjacent to Tacony. The 190 and 191 areas correspond to Feltonville (zip code 19124), where some Iraqi refugees have gone in the past. Purportedly, Feltonville is a worsening neighborhood, with rising crime and unemployment, and many of the Palestinian immigrants have since left. As a result, recent resettlement and immigration has been occurring more so in the near Northeast.⁶⁷ In 2012, an estimate of 700 Iraqi refugees living in Northeast Philadelphia appeared in the *Northeast Times*, reported by an Iraqi refugee resident.⁶⁸ In 2013, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* gave an estimate of 800.⁶⁹

c. Why are Iraqi refugees placed in northeast Philadelphia?

According to data kept by the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program, 1,273 Iraqi refugees have come to Philadelphia since 2003.⁷⁰ Philadelphia's VOLAGs have placed the vast majority, if not all, of these refugees in near northeast Philadelphia.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Loftus, "Celebrate Iraqi Culture at Museum Exhibit."

⁶⁷ Marwan Kreidie (Director of Philadelphia Arab-American Development Corps) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

⁶⁸ Loftus, "Celebrate Iraqi Culture at Museum Exhibit."

⁶⁹ Steele, "Iraqi Brothers' Fates Here Show Successes and Pitfalls."

⁷⁰ This number refers to the number of refugees that US accepted vis-à-vis the UNHCR, and does not account for refugees that came as immigrants or asylees.

⁷¹ Loftus, "A Warm Welcome."

Operating under the assumption that informal networks of support from within pre-existing refugee communities is of critical importance to successful resettlement,⁷² at least one resettlement agency has made an effort to concentrate Iraqis in a single location.⁷³ The Palestinian immigrants aforementioned became the receiving community for the first Iraqi refugees.⁷⁴ The resettlement of Iraqis among previous Arabic-speaking immigrants was a conscious choice made by various stakeholders, including VOLAGs and an Arab American grassroots organization. Palestinians were able to provide cultural resources for these first Iraqi refugees.⁷⁵

From a practical standpoint, the federal funding available to refugees upon arrival in the US is very limited. Thus the choice of resettlement location revolves to an extent around rental prices. Near northeast Philadelphia has relatively low rental prices, demonstrated by Figure 12.

⁷² Mott, "African Refugee Resettlement in the US," 25.

⁷³ Marwan Kreidie (Director of Philadelphia Arab-American Development Corps) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

⁷⁴ Vitiello, "The Politics of Place in Immigrant and Receiving Communities," 102.

⁷⁵ Julia McWilliams (researcher) in discussion with the author, January 2016.

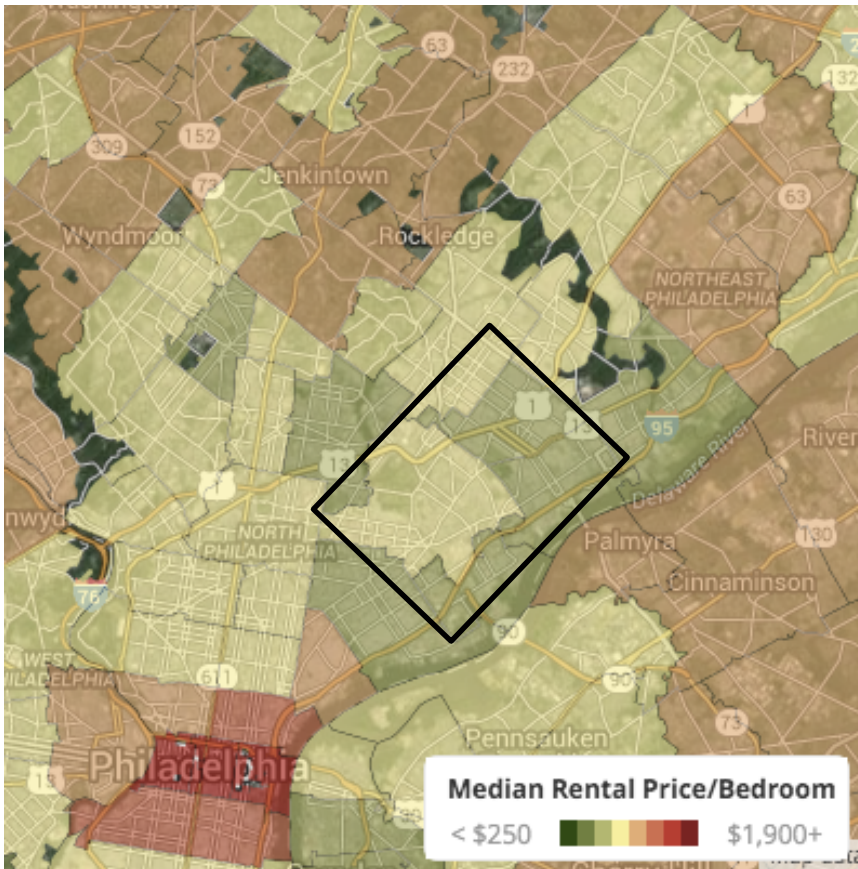


Figure 12. Median Rental Price GIS⁷⁶

While the near northeast is a sensible place for resettlement from a practical standpoint, with large housing units available for a low cost and some previous Arab-American presence, it is also teeming with unemployment. Iraqi refugees have reported that it is challenging to find work.⁷⁷ While no employment data is currently available for these refugees, it is likely that this is the reality for many Iraqis in the Northeast, given that nation-wide, Iraqi refugee men have employment rates lower than native-born men and Iraqi families are in the lowest brackets for household income among refugee groups living in the United States.⁷⁸ However, the fact that the employment rate for Iraqi

⁷⁶ From Trulia. Accessed April 4, 2016. http://www.trulia.com/home_prices/Pennsylvania/Philadelphia-heat_map/

⁷⁷ Kase, "Iraq and a Hard Place."

⁷⁸ Capps, et al., *The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees*, 16-21.

refugees in Philadelphia is unknown is yet another call for centralized accountability for refugee data-keeping.

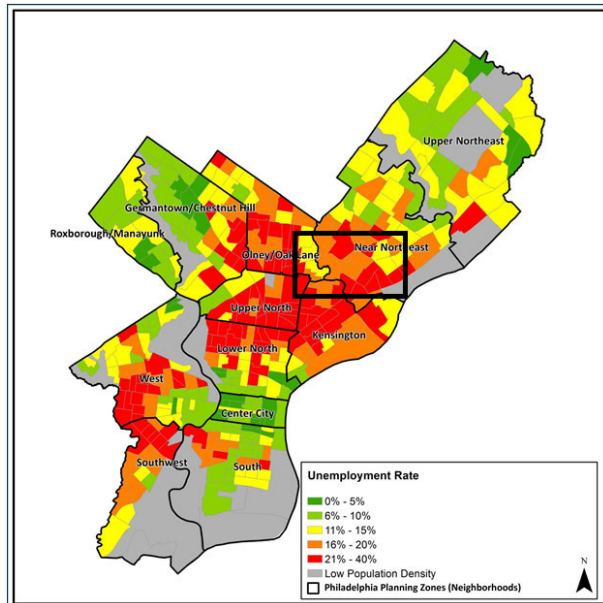


Figure 13. Unemployment Rate GIS 2009-2013⁷⁹

Apart from unemployment is the issue of crime. The Juniata Park/Feltonville area ranks #3 out of Philadelphia’s 22 districts for violent crime. Oxford circle does not experience quite the same dramatically high crime rate, but it is still ranked 11/22, with 834 reported violent crimes from 2011-12.⁸⁰ On the other hand, this area is within the catchment of Northeast High School, the only high school in the city where Arabic is taught.⁸¹ This is a principle attraction for the Arab Americans living in the Northeast.⁸²

⁷⁹ From Philadelphia Works. Accessed April 4, 2016. <http://www.philaworks.org/workforce-trends-data/philadelphias-labor-force>

⁸⁰ The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Philadelphia: State of the City*, 25.

⁸¹ Vitiello, “The Politics of Place in Immigrant and Receiving Communities,” 102.

⁸² Marwan Kreidie (Director of Philadelphia Arab-American Development Corps) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

4. Thinking long-term: Philadelphia & refugee futures.

a. The Northeast as a Resettlement Site

The Northeast matters for refugees. Decades of research demonstrate the primacy of place in refugee integration into their communities of resettlement.⁸³ Globalization has ushered in an era of interconnectedness that seems, at least on the surface, to diminish the relevance of physical place. Despite this narrative, Robert J Sampson's research has shown that "neighborhood effects" still reign strong. He defines these effects as a collection of wide-ranging social outcomes that are differentiated by neighborhood. While cities are spatially liberated by globalization, their character remains rooted in place, and place remains prominent in determining, in broad terms, how well people will do in virtually every sense, from health to altruism and mobility.⁸⁴ In a comparative study of northeast and south Philadelphia, Julia Ann McWilliams and Sally Wesley Bonet illuminate the impact of these "neighborhood effects" on refugees' experiences of resettlement, and consequently their ability to transition to and navigate their new homes.⁸⁵ Even the physical structures of neighborhoods (homes, schools, parks, and libraries) impact resettlement, potentially promoting healing and renewal.⁸⁶

Aihwa Ong describes a process of "self-making" / "being made" into citizen-subject as refugees navigate these and other institutions. The environment in which

⁸³ Sampson and Gifford, "Place-making, Settlement and Well-being: The Therapeutic Landscapes of Recently Arrived Youth with Refugee Backgrounds," 116.

⁸⁴ Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*, 3-6.

⁸⁵ McWilliams and Bonet, "Refugees in the City."

⁸⁶ Renaud, "An Analysis of Burmese and Iraqi Resettlement Location and Assimilation in a Midsized City: Implications for Educational and Other Community Leaders" (dissertation, Western Kentucky University, 2011), 23.

refugees resettle has immense power in shaping their lives as new Americans.⁸⁷ Val Colic-Peisker and Farida Tilbury identified two roles that resettled refugees conform to after resettlement: “active” (achievers/consumers) and “passive” (endurers/victims). These authors encourage practices that lead to “active” resettlement: integration into “normal lives” through inclusion in the economic and social structures of the host society, including employment.⁸⁸ A report from New Zealand emphasizes employment as both a means and marker for successful resettlement, and a principle area of focus for stakeholders in successful integration.⁸⁹ Education and faith-based supports also play a large role in shaping the resettlement process.⁹⁰ A community’s ability to facilitate active resettlement and provide employment opportunities is critical to successful resettlement.

Yet there are more influences to consider. Singer and Wilson identify three factors that influence the ability of a community to be a successful site for resettlement. First, the size of the city influences to what extent services can be focused on refugees. While larger cities have diverse populations and existing services infrastructures, refugees who need targeted services risk getting swept up in the larger immigrant mix. Second, local labor markets influence employment opportunities for refugees. Places with lower unemployment rates and a high demand for workers (often because of declining native-born populations) are more ideal for resettlement. Third, “the fundamentals”- health care access, housing, neighborhoods, and schools- play a part in ensuring successful resettlement.⁹¹ These community characteristics play a determining role in resettlement. While some studies have shown that the biggest predictor of resettlement

⁸⁷ Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding*, 3-21.

⁸⁸ Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, “‘Active’ and ‘Passive’ Resettlement,” 81.

⁸⁹ Searle, et al. *New Land, New Life*, xiv.

⁹⁰ Buck, *Educated for Change?*; Ives, Sinha, and Cnaan, “Who Is Welcoming the Stranger?”

⁹¹ Singer and Wilson, *From ‘There’ to ‘Here,’* 18.

outcomes are the demographic characteristics of the refugees themselves,⁹² the impact of communities on resettlement cannot be denied, especially when VOLAGs lack the resources to support refugees in the long-term.⁹³

The Northeast fits some, but not all of these qualifications. With respect to refugee-serving institutions, the Northeast's history of immigration would theoretically be an asset via institutions that help incoming refugees. Yet Northeast Philadelphia has virtually no refugee-serving organizations serving Arabic-speakers. The only existing organizations in the city are too far for Northeasterners to access easily. Iraqis reported frustration as a result of lack of support in the Northeast.⁹⁴

I see that Iraqis really suffer. There is nowhere for them to go, even for something as simple as help with reading a piece of mail or filling out an application. I get so much mail, more than I know what to do with and I don't even bother opening it! It means nothing to me. And it's not just me, I have a friend, he called me yesterday and he was literally crying with me over the phone. He is having the same problems that we have: no health insurance, no rent help, no way to learn the language, no one to help him make sense of the mail he receives or even to help him fill out a simple application.⁹⁵

Previous immigrants from other ethnic and national communities have not necessarily helped the new Iraqi refugees. The only explicitly refugee-serving organization in Northeast Philadelphia is focused on Eastern European refugees, and has not shifted its mission to serve Iraqis.⁹⁶ These were the institutions that were established to maintain the Northeast's racial homogeneity in the mid 20th-century.

When I walked in [to the English class], everyone stared at me. The teacher seemed very surprised to see me. I was too embarrassed to walk out, so I sat down. But in the class, I felt out of place. I was the only Iraqi, the only Arab, the

⁹² Tripodi, "Micro and Macro Determinants of Refugee Economic Status," 33.

⁹³ Ives, Sinha, and Cnaan, "Who Is Welcoming the Stranger?" 77.

⁹⁴ McWilliams and Bonet, "Refugees in the City," 422-428.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 427.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 431.

*only one who was not Russian, and of course the only one wearing a hijab (a veil). I never went back.*⁹⁷

With respect to employment, the Northeast also *probably* fails to meet the criteria for a successful site for resettlement discussed previously, though more data collection is required to quantitatively understand unemployment among Iraqis and other refugees living in Philadelphia. From news reports and qualitative accounts, unemployment seems to be a problem. A news reporter, highlighting the trials and tribulations of refugees, told the story of an Iraqi refugee living in northeast Philadelphia who, a year after arrival, is unemployed, behind on bills, and facing eviction.⁹⁸ In light of these shortcomings, can Iraqis support each other in their new community?

b. Ethnic Enclave

In discussing the geography of urban immigration, we run into the concept of an enclave. The term “enclave” has traditionally been used to describe racial or ethnic minority groups living in self-contained neighborhoods or ghettos. This can be expanded to any group of people living in such a space who share a significant commonality, such as the Castro district of San Francisco, which has historically been populated predominantly by gay men.⁹⁹ Immigrants tend to produce institutions and social structures, which become “ethnic enclaves, ethnic economies, and ethnic niches.” These places in turn support new generations of immigrants.¹⁰⁰ New immigrants go to the places

⁹⁷ Ibid, 427.

⁹⁸ Steele, “Iraqi Brothers’ Fates Here Show Successes and Pitfalls.”

⁹⁹ Abrahamson, *Urban enclaves: Identity and place in America*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Waldinger, *Strangers at the Gates: New Immigrants in Urban America*, 17.

where their family, friends, and compatriots have previously settled, thus continuing the life of these immigrant networks.¹⁰¹

Singer, et al., propose that ethnic enclaves have dual characteristics of *stability* vis-à-vis infrastructure that “institutionalizes” the immigrant experience, and *flux*, as new immigrants arrive and others move away to find better opportunities.¹⁰² Businesspeople in enclaves often remain connected to the affairs of their homeland, and offer a special opportunity for newer immigrants or refugees because of shared culture and language.¹⁰³ In a case study of African refugees, Tamar Mott found that lack of prior refugee resettlement by refugees with the “same background” (in an enclave or not) creates high rates of secondary migration to places where those networks do exist.¹⁰⁴ The most famous case of large-scale secondary migration was of the Hmong people in the late 1970s. The Laotian Hmong were resettled throughout the U.S. After resettlement, many migrated to Minnesota to join their tribal leaders, who had been placed there by chance.¹⁰⁵

Northeast Philadelphia is not an Arab enclave. It is, however, “*enclave(s)*.”¹⁰⁶ More accurately, it is what we could call a global neighborhood: characterized by the disappearance of an all-white enclave and the emergence of a multicultural one, the diversity within categories of “white” in the Northeast notwithstanding. These are “neighborhoods where the simple place categories of predominantly white, predominantly black, or racially mixed are no longer adequate.”¹⁰⁷ They often form as a

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁰² Singer, Vitiello, Katz, and Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway*, 5.

¹⁰³ Abrahamson, *Urban enclaves: Identity and place in America*, 139.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 6-7.

¹⁰⁵ Vang, *Hmong in Minnesota*, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Dominic Vitiello (professor of Urban Studies) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Logan and Zhang “Global Neighborhoods,” 1069.

“buffer zone” between white and black areas,¹⁰⁸ in this case, the far Northeast and central/upper north Philadelphia, respectively. One of the reasons that near northeastern Philadelphia has failed to morph into an enclave for Iraqis or Middle Eastern immigrants generally is that there is a low-density of those immigrants with respect to the total immigrant number of this extremely multicultural neighborhood, defying traditional models of invasion-succession¹⁰⁹ and homogenous enclaves.

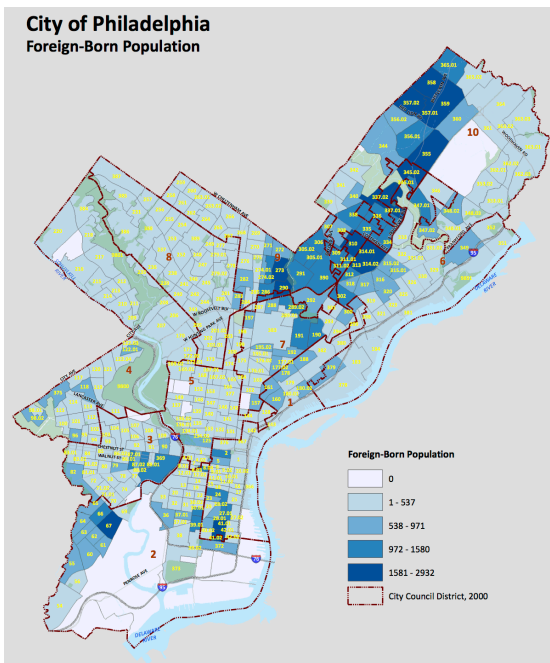


Figure 14. Total foreign-born GIS

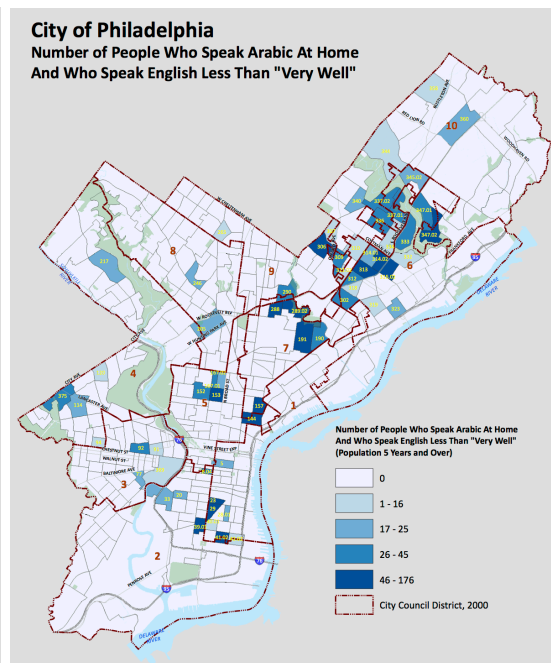


Figure 11. Arabic-speaking GIS¹¹⁰

By these numbers, in any given census block, the total Arabic-speaking population would not constitute a majority of the total foreign-born population. Photographs of Arab businesses along a main street in the near Northeast demonstrate extraordinary multiculturalism, wherein Arab storefronts are sprinkled around East Asian businesses (see Figures 15a & b).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 1069-1109.

¹⁰⁹The invasion-succession model describes one group of people growing to dominate a particular territory or place.

¹¹⁰ Figs. 14 & 15 from the Philadelphia Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs Office.



Figure 15a. Street view of near Northeast main street (© Google Maps, June 2015)



Figure 15b. Street view of near Northeast main street (© Google Maps, June 2015)

A local news reporter interviewed the owner of Al-Amana Market. “Greek, Albanian, Arab, Pakistani, Indian, [Bangladeshi], mostly foreigners,’ Raja said about his customers.”¹¹¹

Not only is the Arabic-speaking population of northeast Philadelphia diffuse, it is also not safe to assume that Iraqis would feel a sense of communal solidarity with one another, or with the pre-existing Arabic-speaking communities. Iraq itself is a relatively new nation, encompassing massive amounts of ethnic and religious diversity. Some Iraqi nationals, such as Kurds, may not even consider themselves “Iraqi.” Aside from the ambiguity of the national label of “Iraqi” is the issue of disparity between different waves

¹¹¹ Khan, “MIDEAST PHILLY: Arab-owned businesses changing the face of one part of the Northeast.”

of Iraqi immigrants. While older immigrants build networks and institutions that attract and support newer ones, tensions often exist between “insiders” with established links in the immigrant community, and new arrivals.¹¹² There are steep class differences between the earlier and later waves of refugees;¹¹³ the recent refugees belong to lower social classes than previous Iraqi immigrants and refugees.¹¹⁴ The earlier waves of Iraqi émigrés from the 1980s and 1990s are also significantly different from recent refugees in terms of their response to resettlement. For example, research shows that their psychological health is significantly different, and use distinct acculturation strategies.¹¹⁵

“I am a U.S. citizen...went to university in the U.S. ...I don’t have anything in common with these new Iraqi refugees...they are different.”¹¹⁶

Apart from tensions generated by gradations of acculturation and time spent in the U.S., most of the Philadelphia Arab American community is Christian or Sunni, so religious differences may be a boundary to community-making, as most Iraqis who are being resettled currently now are Shi’a.¹¹⁷

One possible way to look at the lack of community among Iraqi refugees is re-imagining the population as a heterolocal community. “Heterolocalism” describes how people will often live in one place, work in another, and access services in yet another place. It can apply to an ethnic community that maintains close ties despite low-density geographical sprawl,¹¹⁸ as is the case with Iraqi refugees in the Northeast. However, heterolocalism is typically a phenomenon observed in more privileged communities, who

¹¹² Goode, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia*, 38-9.

¹¹³ McWilliams and Bonet, “Refugees in the City,” 423.

¹¹⁴ Julia McWilliams (researcher) in discussion with the author, January 2016.

¹¹⁵ Jamil, Nassar-McMillan, and Lambert, “Immigration and Attendant Psychological Sequelae,” 199.

¹¹⁶ McAfee, “Identity-Making and 'Home,’” (thesis, University of Oregon, 2012), 56.

¹¹⁷ Marwan Kreidie (Director of Philadelphia Arab-American Development Corps) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

¹¹⁸ Zelinsky and Lee, “Heterolocalism,” 289.

have access to newer technologies of transportation and communication.¹¹⁹ For this community, heterolocalism seems like an unlikely alternative to traditional enclave-building, which involves physical spaces and on-the-ground community.

c. Secondary Migration

By 2013-14, there should have been more than 930-1,171 Iraqi refugees in Philadelphia, according to data kept but the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program. By subtracting the number of refugees reported by witnesses to be living in the Northeast in 2013-14 (i.e. refugees in the Northeast) from the number of refugees that the Pennsylvania Refugee Resettlement Program reports (i.e. refugees that originally moved to the Northeast), an estimate of the number of Iraqi refugees leaving the Northeast is at least over 100, up to almost 500 refugees. Results from a study done in Bowling Green, Ohio showed that the majority of Iraqis who resettled there, subsequently left.¹²⁰ Until very recently, Iraqi refugees may have been more able to re-migrate within the United States, since they historically had higher literacy rates and English skills than many other refugee groups.¹²¹

Why do refugees leave the initial site of resettlement? Mott's case study showed that pull factors for secondary migration include a strong network of voluntary agencies (VOLAGs), the location of family or friends, or an ethnic enclave.¹²² Neither the VOLAGs nor any other public agency has been invested in community engagement, and the burden of building intercultural awareness has often been left to individuals and

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Renaud, "An Analysis of Burmese and Iraqi Resettlement Location and Assimilation in a Midsized City: Implications for Educational and Other Community Leaders" (dissertation, Western Kentucky University, 2011), 116.

¹²¹ Ghareeb, Ranard, and Tutunji, *Refugees from Iraq*, 29-32.

¹²² Mott, "African Refugee Resettlement in the US," 25.

community organizations, which is very ad-hoc.¹²³ The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is a federal office that oversees refugee resettlement at the national level. The ORR “preferred communities” program places the emphasis of support, not on host communities, but on the service organizations that operate within them.¹²⁴ ORR acknowledges secondary migration as a natural part of resettlement, but identifies only pull factors: better employment opportunities, relatives and friends, or a more congenial climate.¹²⁵

Push factors have been identified in literature about northeast Philadelphia specifically. In interviews with investigators, refugee participants and VOLAG staff indicated that the geographical spread of northeast Philadelphia was a barrier to accessing services after the three-month contract that refugee clients have with their VOLAG. They identified a need for a sustained institutional presence in the Northeast.¹²⁶ Without this institutional presence, ample opportunity for employment, or substantial community, Iraqis may be choosing to leave northeast Philadelphia.

Until 2009, the two states with the largest populations of Iraqi refugees were California and Michigan, which had over 5,000 each.¹²⁷ If secondary migration has been happening, the most probable destination for Iraqis would be Dearborn, Michigan.¹²⁸ Considered the “Arab Capital of North America,” Dearborn is a true ethnic enclave, with more than 4,000 Iraqi refugees currently living there. In Dearborn, 60-70% of refugees

¹²³ Lugar, “Abandoned upon arrival,” 6.

¹²⁴ Office of Refugee Resettlement, *Annual Report to Congress, FY 2013*, 44.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹²⁶ McWilliams and Bonet, “Refugees in the City,” 433-4.

¹²⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Iraqi Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa Holders Face Challenges Resettling in the United States and Obtaining U.S. Government Employment*, GAO-10-274 (Washington D.C., March 2010), 10, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-274>.

¹²⁸ Marwan Kreidie (Director of Philadelphia Arab-American Development Corps) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

found employment within 3-6 months of their arrival in 2015.¹²⁹ There, Iraqis are likely to find support from pre-existing networks of Iraqis and other Arab immigrants. The second possible destination for secondary migration is return to Iraq. A news article reported,

*...some [refugees] have even returned to Iraq rather than continue in difficult conditions in the U.S. "Some families go back to Baghdad," she says. "Is it safe?" asks Enas. "No. That's why they left in the first place. But they're desperate."*¹³⁰

Return to Iraq, if unsafe, is a threat both to the wellbeing of refugees and antithetical to the goals of safe resettlement. Further research is required to track Iraqi refugees long-term, including their subsequent migrations. While it is not known how much secondary migration is occurring, if the Northeast fails to meet the needs of Iraqi refugees, secondary migration threatens to deplete the Iraqi refugee population, if it has not done so already.

¹²⁹ Crowder, "Starting over in Dearborn, Michigan: The Arab capital of North America."

¹³⁰ Kase, "Iraq and a Hard Place."

5. Conclusion: Philadelphia as a re-emerging immigration gateway?

Due to its old industrial history and modern population decline, Philadelphia is classified as a “Legacy City:” an industrial powerhouse that has declined since the mid-twentieth century. Legacy cities such as Philadelphia have long been in-search of methods for revitalization. One way to achieve this is through immigration.¹³¹ Though refugees only constitute a small portion of overall immigration, they have a disproportionately large impact on changing the foreign-born population of metropolitan areas. By sponsoring further immigration, refugees have a multiplier effect on the foreign-born population of their communities. This is called a *migration chain*. Refugees, and the immigrants that accompany them through migratory chains, can revitalize neighborhoods by opening businesses and restoring houses.¹³² Refugees have transformative power in restoring declining legacy cities.

While Philadelphia may have an accelerating rate of immigration compared to other former immigrant gateways, it is still not attracting many immigrants compared to cities like New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C., and even smaller cities such as Boston. Immigration in Philadelphia’s suburbs, such as Montgomery and Delaware counties, has outpaced the city’s immigrant growth.¹³³ Philadelphia still sees net population loss to other metro areas, leading to an overall pattern of outward migration.¹³⁴ Promoting refugee resettlement would help to offset this pattern. In a *New York Times* opinion piece, David D. Laitin, professor of political science and co-director of the Immigration and Integration Policy Lab at Stanford University, and Marc Jahr,

¹³¹ Segal, and Mayadas, “Assessment of Issues Facing Immigrant and Refugee Families,” 31.

¹³² von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*, 209; Singer and Wilson, *From ‘There’ to ‘Here,’* 1.

¹³³ Singer, Vitiello, Katz, and Park, *Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway*, 1.

¹³⁴ Florida, “Two Very Different Types of Migrations Are Driving Growth in U.S. Cities.”

former president of the New York City Housing Development Corporation, used this logic to argue that Syrian refugees should be recruited to Detroit.¹³⁵ Highlighting the success and contributions of previous Arab immigrants and refugees in Detroit, the authors argue that Syrian refugees could make up for Detroit's massive population loss and contribute to the city's struggling economy. Utica, New York, is a more extreme case. Utica's population declined from 100,000 to 60,000 in the mid-20th century. Refugee resettlement in the latter portion of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century is cited as the primary reason for its revitalization.¹³⁶ Refugees remain a huge economic force in Utica, opening businesses and renovating forsaken homes and storefronts.¹³⁷ Iraqi refugees have the potential to add volume and diversity to labor, culture, and revitalization in Philadelphia. Yet, "Little Baghdad is still more an idea than a tangible community."¹³⁸

Philadelphia should do more for its Iraqi refugees. Not only because its revitalization hinges, in part, upon its ability to attract immigrants and refugees, but also because the city has a time-honored tradition of accepting persecuted peoples, relating to its reputation as a haven of "Brotherly Love" and the model of tolerance set by its Quaker founder, William Penn. Northeast Philadelphia has contributed to this tradition by welcoming Eastern European immigrants and refugees. Now, the Northeast has an opportunity to extend the welcome mat to others seeking refuge. However, high unemployment and crime rates potentially challenge its ability to be a successful

¹³⁵ Laitin and Jahr, "Let Syrians Settle Detroit."

¹³⁶ "Refugees Spur Urban Renewal."

¹³⁷ Hartman, Susan. "A New Life for Refugees, and the City They Adopted."

¹³⁸ Kase, "Iraq and a Hard Place," 8.

resettlement site. Changing these conditions warrants investment from the City of Philadelphia.

The decentralized and ephemeral support provided by refugee resettlement agencies is not enough support Iraqi refugees in the long-term. Three individual, federally funded resettlement agencies use their own staff, budget, and systems to support refugee clients. Philadelphia's lack of coordination makes it difficult to assess refugee affairs.

The radical transition from high levels of institutional accountability and social support to independence after three months makes it very difficult to track long-term refugee health, residence, and employment. Unless serious institutional infrastructure is built to support Iraqi refugees at the local level, Iraqis will continue to face barriers to community building. Philadelphia is facing an opportunity for revitalization in refugee resettlement, and even to re-emerge as a gateway for new immigration. But if the neighborhoods where resettlement is occurring do not set refugees and immigrants up for success, neither Philadelphia nor the communities themselves benefit, and Philadelphia runs the risk of losing its refugees to secondary migration. Rigorous research is required to evaluate the specific needs of this community, and tangible investment from the city is required to meet these needs. If these steps are taken, Iraqis may add substantially to the multicultural fabric of the city, attracting more newcomers in the process.

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