

REFUGEES' ROLES
in **RESOLVING**
DISPLACEMENT
and **BUILDING PEACE**

Beyond Beneficiaries

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From Roots to Rhizomes

Mapping Rhizomatic Strategies in the Sahrawi and Palestinian Protracted Refugee Situations

Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh

The international community's three mandated durable solutions (local integration, resettlement, and repatriation) have proven inadequate to address the protection needs and rights of people living in protracted displacement situations, and alternative modes of analyzing and responding to these situations are constantly being explored and tested. These include models of South-South humanitarianism developed by state and nonstate actors from the Global South who are positioned on the margins of the hegemonic international humanitarian regime and by refugees through refugee-refugee humanitarianism (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015a; 2016b).¹

Many critics of the mainstream durable solutions framework take issue with its underlying sedentarist assumptions, including the widespread view that being "fixed" to a particular soil or territory is both "natural" and desirable and, thus, that "rerooting" displaced individuals, families, and communities is necessary to provide an anchor to end refugees' liminality and insecurity and to reconstitute the "national order of things" (Malkki 1995b). A concomitant process pathologizes displaced people by equating "uprootedness" with losing one's bearing or moral compass and with being on the threshold of death, whether social, physical, political, or existential (Malkki 1995a, 33). Liisa Malkki develops this line of argumentation through a critical analysis of arborescent and arbolescent metaphors inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2013), among others. In arguing for new ways of mapping out the relationship between refugees and different spaces (and places) and in line with the broader poststructuralist and postcolonial framework guiding

her analysis, Malkki shows how we can go beyond naturalized assumptions that have come to be “taken for granted.”

In this chapter I explore Malkki’s critique in more detail and extend her approach to displacement using Deleuze and Guattari’s (2013, 1–27) concept of the rhizome. Unlike the vertical model of the root providing an anchor and succor to a plant, a rhizome is a network of subterranean lines that extend horizontally, sporadically erupting to the surface to create new shoots while the lines continue both to expand and interconnect. This chapter asks whether developing a rhizomatic analysis (a “rhizoanalysis”) can prove fruitful when attempting to map out alternatives—or even challenges—to the three “rooted” and “rerooting” durable solutions.

The chapter’s main aim is to examine what a rhizoanalysis of protracted displacement might entail (or produce), highlighting the extent to which “thinking through” rhizomes challenges us to develop alternative conceptualizations of “solutions” to refugees’ problems.² While “solutions” are often viewed as providing an endpoint for refugees’ liminality, a rhizome, by definition, has “no beginning or end; it is always in the middle” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 26). Rhizoanalysis thus prompts us to trace and to analyze the ways in which refugees negotiate the process of always being “in the middle” of displacement.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. Part one explores the application of rhizoanalysis to protracted displacement settings. Part two examines whether rhizomatic strategies can provide refugees with a means to navigate protracted displacement on a combination of individual, family, and collective levels. It does so through the case studies of two long-standing displacement situations in which the traditional durable solutions are out of reach for a clear majority of refugees. In particular, I examine Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees’ experiences of leaving their refugee home-camps in southwest Algeria and Lebanon to complete their primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level studies in Cuba and Libya and of subsequently leaving Cuba and Libya (under different circumstances) to live and work in their home-camps upon graduation. The discussions and analysis presented below are informed by my multi-sited ethnographic research since 2005 with and about Sahrawi refugees in Cuba and in the desert-based Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria, Libya, Syria, and Spain, and with Palestinians educated in Cuba and Libya and currently based in seven urban refugee camps across Lebanon.³

The South-South educational migration programs underpinning both of these case studies are particularly informative. Although the Cuban and Libyan initiatives implemented from the 1970s to the early-2010s officially aimed to maximize refugees’ “self-sufficiency” in protracted displacement contexts, they ultimately perpetuated different forms of dependence on

externally provided aid and provided few guarantees against the possibility of refugees' imminent rejection and expulsion. In such cases, where refugees are always already at risk of renewed displacement, models of providing "solutions" clearly require reconceptualization beyond the scope of traditional frameworks. With this in mind, the chapter examines the extent to which educational (and postgraduation) migration could be seen as tracing lines for refugees to develop rhizomatic strategies that transcend the modes of action (and boundaries) established by international agencies such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). *Inter alia*, it considers whether educational migration enables individuals and families to achieve legal or socioeconomic self-sufficiency (i.e., providing key opportunities for growth for the refugee self at the micro or meso levels) if not political self-determination through modes of refugee-refugee solidarity that help refugees navigate new and overlapping processes of displacement in shared spaces of dispossession (Fiddian-Qasmieh 2015a; cf. Landau, chapter 8, this volume).

Through this focus on rhizomes, the chapter simultaneously echoes and critiques discussions pertaining to "mobility" as a fourth durable solution (Long 2014), highlighting the relevance of mobile, translocal, and transnational frameworks for increasing refugee self-sufficiency on different scales, and stressing the challenges and dangers that arise through participation in migration processes. Crucially, the processes and routes taken to seek protection and self-sufficiency often expose refugees to new or renewed forms of violence or dispossession. This suggests the need to reconceptualize "solutions" as intermediate, multidirectional, and fluctuating processes that enable refugees to negotiate and manage constantly evolving disequilibrium rather than as events or statuses to be resolutely achieved. Rhizoanalysis offers one way of imagining and evaluating alternative modes of responding to processes of protracted and overlapping displacement. I conclude that while rhizomatic strategies may facilitate the development of important individual and familial approaches to building meaningful lives in displacement, these strategies are (by definition) unable to lead to "solutions," durable or otherwise.

Refugees and Rhizoanalysis

The empirical and analytical distinctions between roots and rhizomes underpin Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) retheorization and critique of diverse modes of analysis and action. Roots draw nutrients up from the soil to the plant such that an uprooted plant or a plant with broken roots will ultimately die unless rerooted in the right soil at the right time (i.e., a specific

spatiotemporal context). In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari celebrate—or, some decry, romanticize—the seemingly limitless adaptability of rhizomes, which sustain, recreate, and redefine life and living through horizontal subterranean “lines” characterized by multiple connections and multiplications. Sporadic eruptions create new shoots in new places, thereby changing the rhizome’s very “nature as it expands its connections” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 7); at the same time, a rhizome “may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines” (8). In this way, a rhizome is always in a process of becoming: it is “a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing” and is characterized by “a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again” (21).

The concept of the rhizome enables us to consider the conditions under which refugees may develop and implement strategies and modes of adaptability and flexibility in diverse “shattering” processes, an exercise guided by Deleuze and Guattari’s proposition that we “reverse the orientation of our thinking, from a verticalist imaginary where things are grounded and rooted to the metaphor of the endless and limitless ‘plateau’” (Navaro-Yashin 2009, 13). Such a reversal of thinking—rhizoanalysis—redirects analysis away from identifying stable meanings of interactions to mapping possibilities produced through interactions” (Lowry 2013, 26), including interactions produced by, and producing, instability and overlapping processes of displacement.

By examining how rhizomatic rather than rooted approaches might help us reconsider the future of displaced people in contexts of increasingly protracted and overlapping contexts of displacement, I do not mean to imply that refugees do not have an attachment to different places, nor do I propose that political solutions should not be developed that lay the foundations for refugees to have the right to return in safety and dignity to places to which they feel a strong attachment.⁴

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari remind us of this coexistence—rather than duality—and mutually constitutive relationship between territorialization and deterritorialization: “Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which is it stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 8–9). The conceptualization of territorialized, segmentary lines of a rhizome “constantly flee[ing]” and “explod[ing]” into deterritorialized lines of flight that are essential constitutive parts of the rhizome is relevant to my reflection on contexts of protracted displacement that are characterized by simultaneous or overlapping displacements.

Deleuze and Guattari's (2013, 581–82) concepts of “territoriality” and “deterritoriality” are idiosyncratic and not necessarily consistent with many refugee studies scholars’ usage of these concepts. However, some refugee scholars have implicitly endorsed key empirical and theoretical features of Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual distinction. For example, in explaining the relationship between territory, “terrain,” and displacement, David Turton is careful to note that “when I speak of attachment to territory . . . I use the word ‘territory’ in the sense of an actually occupied ‘terrain,’ *from which the members of the group in question always see themselves as potentially in danger of being displaced*, rather than in the sense of an ‘ancestral homeland’ with which they have a ‘natural’ link and from which they see themselves as having become unnaturally ‘uprooted’” (Turton 1999, 421, emphasis added). As with Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between “territoriality” and “deterritoriality,” Turton’s assertion reminds us that being displaced should not (only) be defined in terms of having been forcibly removed from a nurturing homeland but as the perpetual risk of being displaced from a broader terrain across which one has multiple and yet at times paradoxical attachments and affinities. In light of the specific focus of this chapter and book on rethinking durable solutions, it is particularly noteworthy that such a risk of ongoing displacement clearly resonates not only with refugees’ experiences within their region of displacement but also in the places typically conceptualized as providing the solution to displacement.

Indeed, as I have discussed elsewhere regarding Palestinians in Europe (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016c), even when holding “a” citizenship and thus having officially secured a durable “solution,” many Palestinians continue to be on, or to embody, what I refer to as “the threshold of statelessness” (also see Qasmiyeh 2014). In effect, Palestinians’ experiences of nationality have been fraught with insecurity, rather than offering security, whether in the context of the Middle East—where Palestinians who held Jordanian nationality have repeatedly been stripped of their nationality and rendered stateless once again (Wilcke 2010)—or in Europe. Even when not directly experienced, a process of “traveling fear” (following Said 1983; see also Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013) characterizes many experiences of “holding” a European nationality.

For instance, Marwa—a thirty-year-old born in a camp in Syria—referred to the constant fear of being stripped of her Swedish nationality, a fear that has traveled with her from the Middle East to Europe: “The fear becomes part of your identity because wherever you go, you are not fully accepted. Sweden can today be the perfect partner but still there is a fear that this relationship can change and end” (interview, Sweden, 2014; cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016c). The potential for expulsion from the country that has granted you nationality while hosting you as a guest was also stressed by

thirty-three-year-old Swedish citizen Faisal, who was born in a camp in Lebanon; he was concerned that there was no “guarantee that the next president or government will not do the same thing as previous governments. . . . Palestinians probably think that Sweden can one day have a racist government and can deport them” (interview, Sweden, 2014; cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016c).

Such fears and insecurities are inherent to the geopolitical context of “durable solutions,” which is always subject to ongoing shifts that continue to demonize and both figuratively and physically expel refugees from diverse national, regional, and international spaces. Indeed, for many refugees, the experience of displacement is best understood within the framework of a rhizome that has “no beginning or end; it is always in the middle between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 26), a middle “from which it grows and which it overflows,” where the rhizome is “composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion” (22). When viewed through this analytical lens, refugees are always already in the middle of displacement, never at the beginning or at the end. Recognizing that there is no “end” to “the refugee cycle” (Black and Koser 1999) does not undermine the significance of developing lines of segmentation and deterritorialization to continue life and living. Rather, it encourages us to examine protracted displacement from the perspective of an “always already” middle that focuses on “proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 27) in order to identify rather than reify a sense of liminality that is often overlooked and to recognize the dual processes of territorialization and deterritorialization that characterize protracted displacement. To recognize that there are multiple attachments to multiple “plateaux” is to recognize that with each eruption into a line of flight, the rhizome itself changes and continues its process of becoming rather than reaching a (re)solution.

In effect, strong attachments to “certain places and territories” evidently characterize experiences of protracted displacement on an empirical level, including the Sahrawi and Palestinian cases below. In these instances, as I argue elsewhere, there is not only a strong attachment to the historic homeland (Western Sahara and Palestine, respectively) but also strong notions of attachment to home-camps and diverse urban hosting environments—even if such forms of attachment are ambivalent in nature, simultaneously attractive and yet repulsive (i.e., see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, 2019; Qasmiyeh and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013; Gabiam and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2017). These multiple forms of attachment and the recognition that refugees, like rhizomes, “can act at a distance, come or return a long time after, but always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity” (Deleuze and Guat-

tari 2013, 16) require us to develop an alternative conceptualization of the modes through which refugees seek out and implement strategies to determine their own futures in contexts of ongoing and overlapping displacement.

Having briefly outlined this conceptual framework, I now examine the extent to which international scholarships and educational migration programs have created opportunities for Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees—as individuals, families, communities, and members of nations-in-waiting—to develop rhizomatic strategies that enable them to adapt to ongoing shifts, challenges, and opportunities in the context of multiple “eruptions” across time and space. I begin by offering a brief overview of UNHCR’s approach to the relationship between higher education and “solutions” in protracted displacement contexts. I then examine Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees’ experiences of leaving their refugee camp homes to study in Cuba and Libya free of charge with the understanding that they will return to work in their home-camps—and therefore support their communities—upon graduation.

Refugees’ Educational Migration and Self-Sufficiency

It is widely recognized that “refugees often see the education of their children as a principal way of ensuring a better future” (Dryden-Peterson 2003, 1). Complementing its intrinsic and existential value, education is often seen as enhancing refugees’ access to one of the three traditional durable solutions (UNHCR 2007) and to successful postconflict nation building (UNESCO 2011). For instance, educational access and outcomes are identified as indicators of refugees’ local integration in their host countries (Ager and Strang 2008), and education is increasingly recognized as facilitating the development of refugees’ self-reliance. As a programmatic approach and as a key indicator of successful local integration, “self-reliance” is defined by UNHCR as referring to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern, and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian/external assistance” (UNHCR 2006, 1). Elsewhere, the UN defines “self-reliance” much more narrowly as “providing . . . a professional qualification geared towards future employment” (UNHCR 2007, 7).

UNHCR has sought to measure the success of higher education programs for refugees through a limited number of studies by examining refugee-graduates’ professional and economic “self-reliance” and their contributions both to their refugee community pending a durable solution and their country of origin upon repatriation (i.e., UNHCR 2007, 8). However, quantitative snapshots of successful outcomes should be reevaluated through a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of refugees’ experiences of such initiatives. These reevaluations must be sensitive to the spatial and temporal

delimitations of “success”: for example, the early return of DAFI graduates to Afghanistan and their subsequent role in civil administration was viewed by UNHCR as a sign of the programs’ success (see Morlang and Stolte 2008, cited in Dryden-Peterson 2011, 52). However, the UNHCR study did not account for ongoing displacement within and from Afghanistan during their initial evaluation, and it did not anticipate displacement beyond the study’s own narrow time frame. To do so would require us to consider how success and self-sufficiency can be conceptualized in contexts of overlapping displacement and ongoing precarity. Such analyses must also acknowledge that there are diverse understandings of self-reliance beyond institutionalized definitions. Indeed, the relationship between higher education and self-reliance depends on whose definition (e.g., professional, economic, political) and which level (i.e., individual, familial, collective, or national) is prioritized, why, and to what effect.

The potential to promote professional self-sufficiency on Sahrawi and Palestinian students’ home-camps via educational migration has been particularly significant in light of infrastructural limitations in both the desert-based Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria and the urban Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and given these camps’ dependence on externally provided humanitarian and political aid. However, while the promotion of self-sufficiency has long been officially espoused both by Cuba and Libya and by the Sahrawis’ and Palestinians’ political representatives (including the Polisario Front and the Palestine Liberation Organization, respectively), a core question I have explored through my multi-sited ethnographic research is how these and other educational migration programs have actually been experienced and navigated by individuals and communities both during their studies abroad and upon return to their home-camps (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2015b).

Educational Migration and Navigating Rhizomatic Refugee “Maps”

In the context of this chapter, I read the broader South–South educational migration programs that have provided support to Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees as one dimension of a rhizomatic map that Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees use to navigate their protracted displacement landscapes while their respective quests for national self-determination or any meaningful durable solution remain on the distant horizon.⁵ This rhizomatic map—which is constantly changing in light of (inter alia) geopolitical and diplomatic shifts—encompasses a broader set of lines and connections, including refugees’ homelands (the Western Sahara and Palestine, respectively), home-

camps (the Sahrawi refugee camp complex in southwest Algeria and Palestinian refugee camps and informal settlements across Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the Occupied Palestinian Territories), and other “host-home” spaces across both the Global South and Global North (see also Gabiam and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2017). In this context, while a diasporic reading would prioritize refugees’ connections (emotional, physical, existential, political) with their homeland as their common “root,” a rhizomatic reading allows/requires us to acknowledge the multiple origins underpinning refugees’ identities and diverse strategies alike (Maalouf 2008). As I have argued elsewhere (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013, 2019; Qasmiyeh and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013; Gabiam and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2017), refugee camps are not merely “reservoirs of memory” of the homeland but are themselves spaces of belonging and longing; they are both a symptom of displacement and an “original” space and space of origin when viewed from the “middle” of displacement. In the next section, I examine to what extent certain lines of movement between the Sahrawi and Palestinian refugee camps and Cuba and Libya have provided a form of “rhizomatic strategy” for refugees.

Sahrawi-Palestinian-Cuban Lines of Movement

From 1975 onward, thousands of Sahrawi children as young as six years old left their refugee camp homes to study in Libya. Between 1977 and the early 2000s an estimated four thousand Sahrawi refugees left the camps at the age of (approximately) eleven to complete their primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level studies in Cuba.⁶ As a result, both countries play a prominent role in Sahrawi children’s imaginary landscapes and futures, and each country has arguably become part of “the Sahrawi rhizome.” Out of forty-six seven- to twelve-year-old Sahrawi children interviewed in 2005 (Crivello and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010), sixteen reported that family members including their parents, siblings, uncles/aunts, or cousins had studied in Cuba; thirteen, in Libya. Seven children directly expressed their desire to study in Cuba in the near future, while six children indicated their intention to study in Libya (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b). The expectation of retracing their relatives’ lines of movement by traveling to Cuba or Libya to study has long permeated children’s desires for the future. Indeed, educational migration to Cuba can be understood as a key rhizomatic strategy for the children and adolescents who left their home-camps to spend long periods living and studying in the Cuba, where they “enjoy[ed] equal educational opportunities as well as slightly more advantageous treatment in terms of material and health support provided in Cuban schools” (UNHCR 2005, 5). Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees’ temporary “local integration,” while impermanent, was nonethe-

less “durable,” typically lasting between ten and eighteen years before their return to their home-camps.

However, as some interviewees pointed out, prolonged periods of separation from family members (often during formative years of childhood), caused considerable anguish, leading to the emergence (eruption) of a new problem, and in turn requiring a new line of flight. Thus, while educational migration to Cuba and Libya provided spaces and opportunity for growth, these were also spaces imbued with a sense of loss, especially for youth who longed to return “home” to the camps. This longing was itself characterized simultaneously by attraction and repulsion: the desire to rejoin their families and to work for the benefit of their entire refugee community—also an official aim of the Cuban educational migration program—was countered by the anticipation of the complex social, humanitarian, political, and security situations “at home.” Cuban-educated Sahrawi returnees in particular experienced a wide range of difficulties upon their return to the camps, including alienation from family members, marginalization for perceived violations of key cultural and religious norms while in Cuba, and different forms of discrimination on the basis of linguistic differences and unfamiliarity with the camps’ sociocultural and religious norms.

Nonetheless, upon graduation from Cuban universities, all Sahrawi and Palestinian students did indeed return to their respective home-camps. In the Sahrawi context, a large proportion of Cuban-educated returnees currently occupy positions of authority in the camps, with one member of the Sahrawi camp-based political leadership (the Polisario Front) estimating that in the mid-2000s, around two thousand Cuban-trained Sahrawis occupied the most important political, social, administrative, and professional roles in the refugee camps, including as doctors and nurses (ACN 2006). Sahrawis who completed undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations on the Western Sahara conflict (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014) accrued the necessary political and linguistic training to work in Sahrawi institutions (where Spanish and Arabic are the official languages) and to represent the Sahrawi “cause” in the camps and in the Sahrawi state-in-exile’s diplomatic missions around the world. As the “official face” of the Sahrawi camp-based political establishment, and as the main point of contact for thousands of Spanish-speaking visitors who travel to the camps both to express their solidarity and deliver humanitarian aid every year, these graduates in essence embody the benefits of Cuba’s educational migration program, demonstrating the high degree of professional self-sufficiency that parallels the camps’ material dependence on externally provided assistance (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2009; 2014).

However, while female graduates have typically remained within the camps to work, increasing numbers of male graduates from Cuba have emi-

grated to Spain to seek opportunities in professions unavailable in the camps.⁷ Concurrently, an increase in paid jobs resulting from the arrival of foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) after the declaration of a cease-fire in the early 1990s has also led to the phenomenon of emigration referred to by the camp-based National Union of Sahrawi Women as “a cancer devouring the Sahrawi [refugee] body” (Arabic document on file with author, author’s translation). The emergence of opportunities for paid employment with NGOs in the camps (as opposed to “voluntary” and unremunerated work for the Sahrawi state-in-exile, as had previously been the case) has reinforced socioeconomic inequalities between camp inhabitants. Many graduates who are unable to obtain NGO or Polisario jobs, as well as many who *have* secured such positions, decide to leave the camps in order to send remittances to their families from Spain. Ironically, medical training designed to ensure self-sufficiency and to combat the legacies of Spanish colonialism has led ever-increasing numbers of Cuban-trained refugee doctors to leave the camps to work in the former colonial state, thereby increasing the presence of Sahrawi doctors in Spain while decreasing numbers of doctors in the camps. As a result, more Spanish doctors now travel to the camps to treat Sahrawi patients there via *comisiones médicas* (medical commissions). In response, in the 2000s the Cuban government rescinded scholarships for Sahrawi youth, contributing (along with broader geopolitical shifts) to a rupture in this line of movement and thereby ending Sahrawi refugee youth’s participation in Cuba’s South-South educational migration program.

Such a rupture not only changes the structure and directionalities of the Sahrawi rhizome, with existing and new lines of flight continuing to grow or erupt across time and space. It also exposes a tension that evidently exists between securing individual and family-based self-sufficiency through onward migration to Spain and ensuring that the refugee camps are locally managed with minimal interventions from non-Sahrawi humanitarians.

Any adequate evaluation of the success of the Cuban-Sahrawi educational migration system must consider many points of view over time, including retrospective evaluations of the transnational program from the perspectives of Sahrawis, Cubarais, and non-Sahrawis alike. However, certain long-term implications of prioritizing individual and family-based self-sufficiency appear to be clear: future generations of Sahrawi children and youth will no longer be able to complete their secondary and tertiary educations in Cuba. Nonetheless, irrespective of the *actual* end of this program, Cuba’s educational legacy will continue to play a significant role both in Sahrawi refugees’ imaginary landscapes and in sociopolitical frameworks in the camps in the foreseeable future.

While the Cuban-Sahrawi connection has now ended, Cuba’s educa-

tion program for Palestinian refugees has taken on an intergenerational dimension. Indeed, Palestinian refugee camps across the Middle East are now home to a relatively large number of Palestinian–Cuban families,⁸ and Palestinian–Cuban youth have reportedly been prioritized for the scholarship program since the early 2000s. These youth embody overlapping legal and political statuses even as they navigate and (re)create new and interconnecting rhizomatic lines of movement: they are simultaneously Cuban citizens and Palestinian refugees while, ideologically, it is assumed (if not desired) that they should be, become, and remain “revolutionaries” both at “home” and “away.”

Palestinian graduates of Cuban universities interviewed in seven urban refugee camps in Lebanon agreed that the clear majority of Palestinian refugees had returned upon graduation “to serve our people.” As with interviews conducted in Cuba and in the Sahrawi camps, the specializations offered through the scholarship program (in particular, gynecology, internal medicine, obstetrics, and pediatrics) were perceived to be “perfect” to enhance the medical self-sufficiency of the Palestinian camps and to meet the Cuban goal of benefiting the “local community.” Interviewees’ responses reproduced Cuba’s official justification for the educational migration program almost verbatim. However, despite this stated desire, interviewees such as Ahmed stressed that “although Palestinians did decide to return to the camps, Lebanese legislation vis-à-vis Palestinians and the bad economic situation in Lebanon forced some Palestinians to leave the camps.”⁹ Indeed, although not necessarily successful, some graduates have attempted to leave the Palestinian camps because of the precarious socioeconomic conditions and discriminatory laws faced by Palestinians in Lebanon. Despite limited opportunities for employment within the camps, it is illegal for Palestinian refugees to seek work outside of the camps in at least twenty-five professions, including as doctors and engineers (Hanafi and Tiltnes 2009; also see Qasmiyeh and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). Thus, while structural conditions within the camps, in Lebanon more broadly, and in the international arena writ large ensure that the majority of Cuban-educated Palestinians continue to work within the camps so that Palestinian refugees are, indeed, the direct beneficiaries of the education program, the absence of legal avenues to migrate to the European Union prevents Palestinian graduates (so far) from following in Sahrawi graduates’ footsteps.

Nonetheless, returning to and remaining in the refugee camps in Lebanon does not necessarily mean that Palestinian refugees’ individual and collective needs have been met by these graduates in the way envisaged by Cuba. On the one hand, while they are not administratively “independent” or self-sufficient in the way that the Sahrawi camps are run (with international

support) by the Sahrawi's political leadership (the Polisario Front and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic), the Palestinian refugee camps are nonetheless independent spaces beyond Lebanese jurisdiction. For example, medical centers are not directly controlled by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); rather, it is UNRWA and related NGOs that provide medical, educational, and other social services and who manage key camp infrastructure. On the other hand, although the Cuban education system has not enabled the development of self-sufficient camps on a collective level, Palestinian graduates have clearly benefited on an individual and, arguably, familial level. Indeed, all but one of the graduates interviewed as part of my research hold professional jobs as doctors, engineers, and lab technicians (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b). Importantly, however, not all graduates embody the Cuban aim of providing self-sufficient health care as envisaged by Cuba. While many graduates have been employed by UNRWA, others have established their own private medical clinics within the camps. The emergence of camp-based private clinics has in effect been instigated (and in many ways monopolized) by Cuban-educated Palestinians not employed by UNRWA. These graduates have thus taken a further step toward *individual* professional and socioeconomic self-sufficiency despite Cuba's official policy of offering scholarships to students to maximize professional "work that would be directed toward the national good and national development rather than the individual's upward mobility" (Bredlid 2013, 158).

In this context, it is evident that "the Sahrawi rhizome" or "the Palestinian rhizome" does not necessarily develop in isolation. Thus, it is essential in rhizomatic analyses to trace how, why, where, and when refugees' lines of movement intersect and connect with those of "other" refugees' (i.e., the Sahrawi-Cuban-Palestinian rhizome), which may tie back to one another to change the very nature and directionality of the rhizome(s) (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a, 2016b; on the Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian rhizome, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2019). These intersections highlight the importance of examining refugee-refugee relationality (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a). In the context of the discussion above, they also highlight the extent to which Lebanese and European Union policies have blocked the eruption of new lines of flight and movement outside of the confines of the Palestinian camps, arguably influencing the multiplication of lines of movement and contact within and between the camps. At the same time/place, UNRWA and other UN agencies and NGOs have "erupted" into the camps in ways that intersect with, block, and redirect particular lines of movement and action within, across, and beyond "the Palestinian rhizome." These "external" actors' own lines of movement intersect with and thus constitute the nature, growth, and directionalities of the Palestinian rhizome and the ways in which

Palestinians' rhizomatic strategies that aim to address individual, familial, and collective priorities can develop across time and space.

Mapping Sahrawi-Libyan-Palestinian Rhizomes

Until the 1980s, Libya offered scholarships for Sahrawi children as young as six to travel to Libya and later supported the education of older Sahrawi children and adolescents from the 1990s until 2011. Although Libya offered few scholarships to Palestinian refugees, a series of broader policies facilitated the South-South migration of tens of thousands of Palestinian students and workers to Libya, who in turn became part of an extensive and well-established Libyan-Palestinian community. Unlike the formal scholarships institutionalized by Muammar Gaddafi for Sahrawi refugees, Palestinians' migration to form part of Libya's transnational "eduscape" can perhaps be best conceptualized as a process of "self-service" insofar as Palestinians were encouraged to "help themselves" by migrating to Libya (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b, 6).¹⁰

Providing Palestinians with access to the Libyan labor market and national education system alike were notable policies in light of the broader regional insecurity faced by Palestinians, including discrimination, occupation, wars, and expulsions that have affected Palestinians across North Africa, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf.¹¹ Such experiences remind us that throughout the region Palestinians continue to face violence and precarious conditions in spite of declarations of support for Pan-Arabism in general and the Palestinian cause and people in particular.¹² This is a theme I return to in more detail below, after providing a brief reflection on Sahrawi and Palestinian students' experiences of traveling to study or work in Libya.

Importantly while Cuban-educated Sahrawis' experiences of alienation, discrimination, and marginalization are typically paralleled by high degrees of professional visibility and political audibility in the Sahrawi camps, Libyan-educated Sahrawis have in many ways remained on the margins in the camps following their return. A number of high-profile Sahrawi figures have, of course, studied in Libya (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014), and yet Libyan-educated Sahrawi in the camps repeatedly informed me that refugees who had been educated in Libya and spoke only Arabic were rarely interviewed or listened to by Western visitors to the camps. This draws attention to the fact that attending school in Libya enabled/required Sahrawi children and youth to study in Modern Standard Arabic (Fus-ha) in addition to learning the Libyan dialect, with a view to either continuing their studies in Libya or following further lines of movement via educational migration within the region (i.e., to study in Algeria or Syria). These students could speak and understand

multiple dialects of Arabic but were effectively monolingual upon their return to the camps and therefore had fewer opportunities to engage directly with European and North American visitors, NGOs, or researchers than their bilingual or trilingual counterparts. In turn, they had fewer opportunities to access professional employment with NGOs in the camps, to share their experiences with non-Sahrawi visitors, or to pursue onward migration to Spain.

Indeed, educational migration to Libya has not enhanced the professional or political self-sufficiency of the Sahrawi or Palestinian home-camps to the same degree as the Cuban scholarship system. On the one hand, within Libya, Palestinian refugee migrants who engaged in paid employment were not only self-sufficient but were often even prosperous and thus were able to support the socioeconomic well-being of their families in the refugee camps in Lebanon and elsewhere by sending remittances from Libya. On the other hand, however, the self-sufficiency of those Palestinians who studied and taught in Libya has not “traveled” with them upon their return to their home-camps in Lebanon. Indeed, the relatively poor employment outcomes experienced by these Palestinians following their return to Lebanon are all the more noticeable given that many of my interviewees had worked as teachers in Libyan schools during their time in North Africa. Hence, the program promoted an inverse form of self-sufficiency: Palestinian teachers enhanced Libya’s educational self-sufficiency but were ultimately unable to support themselves upon their return to the camps in Lebanon.

Also paradoxical, and in contrast with the Cuban state’s intergenerational support for Palestinians, Gaddafi sporadically implemented discriminatory policies, variously constituting Palestinians as part of the Libyan Self or as the quintessential Other including uneven mechanisms for the allocation of course subjects, (reportedly) banning Palestinians from starting university in the first term, and excluding Palestinians from undertaking specific courses at all (in particular, medicine or engineering) in order to strengthen his position vis-à-vis Libyan citizens (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b). More dramatically, and linking back to the concepts of “lines of flight” and overlapping displacements outlined above, on at least three major occasions Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees faced mass expulsion from Libya on Gaddafi’s orders, including in the 1980s and 1990s when Gaddafi’s political relations with the Polisario and with the PLO were particularly fraught as well as, more recently, as a result of the 2011 Libyan uprising. These instances demonstrate that, even if a form of “self-reliance” in Libya had been secured via educational or labor migration, such rhizomatic strategies can be characterized by new and renewed forms of vulnerability to violence and displacement. For instance, as a means of protesting the PLO’s signing of the Oslo Accords, in September 1995 Gaddafi expelled an estimated thirty thousand Palestinian refugees

from Libya. This was justified by Gaddafi as an effort to support the Palestinians, to “try to secure their return to Gaza and Jericho. If Israel would not let them in, while Egypt does not allow them to pass through its territories, then I shall set a great camp [Al-Awda Camp] for them on the Egyptian-Libyan borders [Salloum border]” (Gaddafi, quoted by Sirhan in *Al-Majdal* 2010, 46).¹³ In this notable example, individuals, families, and communities were simultaneously forcibly displaced and rendered immobile in sacrifice for the greater good: to force “the” durable solution of Palestinians’ right to return to Palestine.

Subsequently, the outbreak of the 2011 Libyan war affected an estimated 100 Palestinian refugee scholarship holders and over 50,000–70,000 Palestinians who were working and studying in Libya at the time, as well as over 900 Sahrawi secondary- and tertiary-level students (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b). By the first week of March, the Palestinian ambassador in Tripoli announced that all 104 Palestinian refugee scholarship holders had been “evacuated” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b), while the broader members of the Palestinian community in Libya experienced both mass-conflict-induced displacement and enforced immobility. Several thousand Palestinians were left “stranded” on the Libyan-Egyptian border, including at the Salloum crossing, where Gaddafi had created Al-Awda Camp in 1995. The eventual closure of Al-Awda Camp may have temporarily suppressed the “Palestinian” camp, a “shoot” that Gaddafi had forced to the surface of the Libyan-Egyptian border in the 1990s; however, a new line of flight in 2011 led to a camp’s re-eruption in the same place at another time. This re-eruption reconnected both the new border camp and the trace of Al-Awda Camp to an ever-evolving Palestinian rhizome that is constituted through a multiplication of (current, past, future) places and spaces. The camp(s) for Palestinian refugees on the Salloum border were clearly not “solutions” for the people displaced and forcibly emplaced by the conflict in that country; simultaneously, it is clear that the “erasure” or “closure” of a camp at a particular time does not mark its end since traces remain, even as camps *in potentia*.

In contrast, refugees’ home-camps have often been conceptualized and positioned as points of origin to which Palestinians and Sahrawi could and should be returned from the conflict in Libya as a “solution” to their ongoing precariousness within and on the borders of that country. In the Sahrawi case, on March 5, 2011, the Sahrawi minister of education, Mariem Salek Hmada, asserted that “all the Sahrawi students in Libya, including girls, arrived safe and healthy in the Sahrawi refugee camps. . . . The students have been repatriated under good conditions and without incident” (El-Hafed 2011). The “repatriation” of Sahrawi children from Libya to the refugee camps in (and by) Algeria highlights the fact that camps are neither merely points of depar-

ture in the Sahrawi rhizome nor places from which solutions must be sought; rather, the camps in Algeria have been positioned as the Sahrawi “home” and a point of “origin.” Although return to the refugee camp–origin in such a context may well have been a “solution” for these Sahrawi adolescents, it was far from a durable solution as traditionally understood. Nonetheless, in the context of the collapse of the Libyan component of “the Sahrawi rhizome” and the Sahrawis’ inability to return to the “original” *patria* (the Western Saharan homeland), such lines of flight to this “origin” demonstrate the rhizomatic nature of Sahrawi protracted displacement: rather than follow a linear process (displacement–protraction–solution), Sahrawi refugees, like so many others, are always already in the middle of displacement, where the camp is simultaneously the space of refuge and of danger, a point of origin and of departure, neither fully one nor the other.¹⁴ This experience of simultaneity has regularly been expressed by Palestinians during my ongoing research in North Lebanon’s Baddawi refugee camp. Formerly based in besieged (and now destroyed) camps and cities such as Yarmouk in Damascus, these refugees repeatedly indicated that, in fleeing Syria to Lebanon, they “arrived in the camp” and just “passed through Lebanon” (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a, 2016b, 2019). Having crossed the Syrian-Lebanese border, my interlocutors explained that they had traveled directly to and arrived in Baddawi camp, where “established” refugee-residents offered them shelter, food, and clothes.¹⁵ Baddawi refugee camp was identified as their intended destination point from the very outset of their journey(s), through which they retraced the lines of movement and segmentation that constitute Palestinian refugees’ rhizomatic maps from their “original” home-camps in Syria to “solutions” in other Palestinians’ home-camps.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argue that Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees’ educational migration to Cuba and Libya can be conceptualized as one of many rhizomatic strategies embodied and enacted by refugees who are “always and already” in the middle of displacement. As such, these scholarship programs are one dimension of an ever-changing rhizomatic map that Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees use to navigate their protracted displacement landscapes while their respective quests for national self-determination remain on the distant horizon.

These educational migration programs were intentionally designed with the expectation of maximizing refugees’ self-sufficiency on individual, collective, and national levels, including by fomenting diverse professional opportunities for refugees’ self-reliance in their home-camps. As the case studies

explored above demonstrate, although rhizomatic strategies potentially constitute a form of temporally and spatially bounded “middling solution,” such processes can and do also create new ruptures and shocks that are themselves constitutive of Sahrawi and Palestinian experiences of protracted displacement. In essence, whether living in protracted home-camps, studying in (un)welcoming host states, or experiencing overlapping and new processes of displacement resulting from new and ongoing conflicts, Sahrawi and Palestinian refugees draw on rhizomatic strategies to (re)trace multidirectional lines of flight as a means of managing—and trying to thrive within, across, and beyond—constantly evolving disequilibrium.

I argue that a rhizomatic approach encourages us to identify and explore the ways in which refugees develop means both to stay alive and to develop meaningful lives for themselves and others through complex lines of movement across diverse spaces and places to which they are variously attached and yet from which their expulsion is always already imminent. While displacement is primarily a non-camp experience around the world, the Sahrawi and Palestinian cases explored here show that the experience of displacement often includes camps (past, present, and future) that serve as spaces of origin, departure, transit, and destination.

Furthermore, I suggest that, in precarious contexts, rhizomatic strategies can both provide the means for refugees to negotiate the uncertainties of life on individual, familial, and collective levels (i.e., within refugees’ respective home-camps) and to support Other (or Self-Other) refugees who flee in search of safety (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a, 2016b). In this sense, Palestinian and Sahrawi refugees’ ever-changing rhizomatic maps provide and develop lines of movement through which refugees can or must develop forms of refugee-refugee solidarity in contexts of overlapping processes of displacement in shared spaces of dispossession, even when such rhizomatic strategies cannot and should not, be conceptualized as “durable solutions”: the “return” or journey to the home-camp is a middling solution at best, and refugees always already embody a traveling fear of expulsion from different home and host spaces alike.

Notes

1. On the hegemonic features of the refugee regime and related discourse, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2015b, 1–4, 18, 82–89).

2. For critiques and counter readings of rhizoanalysis, see Gedalof (2000) and Navaro-Yashin (2009).

3. For a related discussion, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2019).

4. Malkki’s critique of the sedentarist bias/basis of the traditional durable solutions

through this mode of analysis has in turn itself been subject to counter critiques, with Kibreab (1999), for instance, arguing that Malkki reifies an artificial deterritorialization of refugees' identity; in his critique he thus highlights a range of empirical "facts" that demonstrate the various forms of attachment that refugees have to their country of origin. Nonetheless, Stepputat disagrees with Kibreab's critique precisely by drawing attention to the significance of Malkki's intervention on both empirical and theoretical grounds. He argues that the need to denaturalize the links that we take for granted is entirely consistent with the acknowledgment that "displacement and migration are often accompanied by the development of a strong notion of attachment to certain places or territories" (Stepputat 1999, 418). In her own words, Malkki's approach does "not deny the importance of place in the construction of identities" (Malkki 1992, 38). Indeed, what is essential is to "examine how power works through the organization and conceptualization of space and movement" (Stepputat 1999, 416), and a rhizomatic analysis requires us to "simultaneously challenge and redefine locatedness," not deny the significance of locatedness (Gedalo 2000).

5. In the Sahrawi context, these South-South programs enabled, or even required, children as young as six to leave their refugee camp homes to complete their primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level studies in countries including Cuba and Libya but also Algeria, the former-USSR, Mexico, Syria, and Venezuela.

6. Accurate figures do not exist of the total number of Sahrawi or Palestinian students who have studied in Libya or Cuba (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b). According to a Polisario representative who studied in Cuba, in 2003 there were "2,000 students in Libya, 3,000 in Algeria, and 1,400 in Cuba" (Coggan 2003). On the recruitment strategies underpinning the Sahrawi and Palestinian educational migration programs, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2015b).

7. On the gendered dynamics of these educational-migration programs, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014, 2015b).

8. These families are the result of relationships that began in Cuba when (primarily male) Palestinian students married (primarily female) Cuban nationals during their studies.

9. Interview in Lebanon, 2014; cited in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2015b).

10. I use the term "eduscape" in line with the application of Appadurai's analytic of "-scapes" (which he applies to info-, techno-, finance-, media-, and ideo-scapes) within the context of transnational education studies. See Madge, Raghuram, and Naxolo (2014).

11. Regarding access, Palestinians were exempted from visa requirements to enter and remain in Libya. On the benefits of these programs accrued by Libya, see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2015b).

12. On official and popular forms of "hostipitality" (following Derrida 2000a, 2000b), a term that recognizes that "hospitality inherently bears its own opposition, the ever-present possibility of hostility towards the Other who has, at one time, been welcomed at the threshold," see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016b) and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2016).

13. The name of the "great camp," Mukhayyam Al-Awda (the Return Camp)—

which Gaddafi established in September 1995 on the Salloum border between Libya and Egypt—clearly highlights the Palestinian right of return, as enshrined in UN Resolutions 194 and 3236.

14. Indeed, the then “unprecedented” violence in Libya in 2011 clearly demonstrates the ongoing vulnerability faced by Palestinians in the region, for whom the parallel processes of conflict-induced displacement and immobility could be conceived as part of an ongoing Nakba (catastrophe). While Sahrawi students’ return to their home-camps was the “clear” solution to their vulnerability in Libya, seeking a path to safety for Palestinian refugees proved to be particularly complex. Jordan ultimately evacuated Palestinian scholarship-holders alongside their own citizens, even if these refugees did not hold Jordanian travel documents and had never lived in Jordan (see *Ma’an* 2011). These students included Palestinians who had formerly been resident in Syria, which as early as June 2011 had witnessed Syrian forces attacking Palestinian refugee camps in Yarmouk, Hama, and Latakia (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015b).

15. It is notable that those Palestinians who had studied or taught in Cuba and Libya are now among the established refugees who are hosting refugees displaced by the ongoing conflict in Syria in camps across Lebanon (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016a, 2016b, 2019).

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