

Forum: General Assembly

Issue: Initiating discourse on the question of mass refugee immigration and conservation of culture in host countries

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Introduction

As a result of disputes and violence against tribes, religions, and ethnicities, masses of humans migrate from their home countries to another geographical location. As a refugee, one is feared of being persecuted for identifying with a certain social, political, or religious group. The anxiety surrounding their safety drives them to flee their homes and seek safety anywhere they can find it. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 68% of people that are displaced across more than one border come from five countries: Afghanistan, Venezuela, Syria, Myanmar, and South Sudan.

While Turkey has hosted more refugees than any other country in the last ten years, it is Lebanon that has opened its borders to the largest number of immigrants as a proportion of the total population, with a staggering 1.5 million refugees. This is closely followed by Jordan in second place, and Nauru in third place. Even though arriving in these host countries might seem more secure and sheltered to refugees, the act of immigration often comes with many challenges. Aside from language barriers, struggles to find employment, lack of education, and insufficient access to health and medical care, disapproval of the host countries' natives seems to create an additional burden.

As the number of refugees increased steadily in many European countries throughout the past decade, more groups within receiving countries began protesting the rising acceptance of fleeing immigrants. For example, with help of a poll for the Handelsblatt, Germany, observed that in 2015, scarcely 12% of citizens believe that the efforts to accept and integrate refugees will turn out to be successful. This highlights that large amounts of the population are dissatisfied with politicians' decisions to be welcoming towards those that seek safety in Germany. This is just one among many other countries in which the act of opening borders to refugees isn't accepted by the general population. Reasons for this disapproval can be drawn back to mainly one reason. Residents of host countries are worried about the loss of national culture and tradition, as more nonnative people join the population.

Conserving the culture of refugee hosting countries is an urgent matter as there are multiple trends that have been observed as refugee seekers immigrate to countries in which they are not native. One example is the falling involvement in collective gatherings and cultural events/organizations. According to Springer Open, the increased diversity that comes with hosting refugees leads to a decrease in the native population's willingness to participate in formal and informal social networks. This means, people participate less in community organizations and formal collective activities, but also engage less with friends and other relationships. In order to avoid a potential disconnect between a host country and its culture, discourse between nations is to be initiated.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

One that has fled from the risk of experiencing violence, conflict, or persecution due to holding membership of a particular race, ethnicity, religion, political party, or social group is referred to as a refugee. Often, they flee with little to no possession and seek safety anywhere they can. Refugees are protected by international law.

Immigration

Immigration is the act of receiving citizenship or permanent residency of a country where one is not native. In the past, the process of immigration often resulted in diverse and multicultural societies.

Conservation of Cultural Heritage

Conserving cultural heritage can be defined as steps taken to ensure an extension in the existence of physical and cultural characteristics of a place or an object. This takes place in order to uphold the value of the cultural heritage and make sure that its life will continue.

Formal Social Networks

Formal Social Networks are sets of relationships that are developed and maintained with professional and traditional interest, to share assets and assistance. These are networks in a professional context in which refugees can rely on for help.

Informal Social Networks

Informal Social Networks are webs of relationships that mirror the availability of individuals to make use of financial aid, social support, and emotional help outside of their household. These are familiar and less formal networks which refugees can rely on for help.

Background Information

To comprehend the extent to which this issue affects citizens of host nations, it is essential to know the percentages of host countries' populations that are made up of refuge seekers. As discussed before, Lebanon contains the largest amount of refugees per capita. An astonishing 19.5% of the Lebanese population is made up of refugees. In Jordan the amount of displaced people owns up to 10.5 % of the population. Nauru's and Turkey's population contains at least 5% of refugees. Last year, almost 130000 refugees arrived on the European borders. Being aware of the growing proportions of refugees that make up hosting nations, primarily in Africa and Europe, leads one to realize that hosting nations face increasing confrontation with nonnative cultures and norms. Citizens of nations that receive masses of refugees are progressively concerned about the conservation of their own culture when the population faces having to integrate thousands of people from other cultures. Especially countries that are geographically far apart from the country they host are frequently familiar with extremely different customs and norms, such as Syria and Sweden. Differences in religion, language, eating habits, and social structure are especially apparent.

Cities with quarters under foreign dominance

With masses of refugees being integrated into countries that are willing to host them, it doesn't come as a surprise that streets and whole quarters start being dominated by cultures other than the native one. In 2015, Germany received 1.1 million refuge seekers, of which 10,000 of them were placed in Berlin, in November exclusively. With extensive amounts of refugees being distributed across Germany's and other countries' large cities, it is natural that the communities of nonnatives arriving in those countries begin forming their own quarters and sections within cities. At the end of the year 2019, out of around 300000 citizens of the Berlin quarter "Neukölln", over 150000 people were foreigners and immigrants, making it Berlin's second most diverse quarter. Natives in Berlin and specifically "Neukölln" are frustrated about the observation that the quarter cannot be considered German anymore from their point of view. According to TAZ magazine, "Neukölln" is characterized through having predominantly Arabic restaurants and food stores, having communication happen in mainly English and Arabic, and having schools with student bodies that are made up of around 97% of people with migration backgrounds. This causes many Germans to feel as if their native culture is at risk of being eradicated over the next years as more refugees will be introduced to their large cities with the attempt of integrating them.

Difficulties of integration in predominantly foreign quarters

Refugees seek refuge in places where they will be safe and where they will most likely be treated in humane ways. Refugees do not flee to countries where they are fascinated by the culture or

population. Some of them don't plan to stay in their host country permanently. Therefore, if refugees arrive in cities and discover quarters where they can communicate in their mother tongue and live among people of the same nationality, there is no motivation for them to attempt to learn German and integrate into the German society. As the proportion of foreigners in Germany is growing, less people will be able to communicate in the native language, causing it to be less and less important in its own country.

Schools with predominant foreign employees

With 1.4 % of foreign teachers out of about 680.000 German teachers in total, Berlin contains the largest number of teachers who migrated to Germany. This percentage has experienced a growth of over 60% over the last ten years. An exceptional quantity of these employed teachers has come to Germany through more or less recent escapes from their native countries. With foreign teachers educating the future generations of Germany, a lack of knowledge or connection to and of the German culture might result in generations of students who are less appreciative and informed about native traditions, holidays, and historical events. While teachers with refugee background mostly speak proficient German, it is natural that they will not communicate as much knowledge and understanding of German culture as German teachers, leading to a contribution of risk of losing German culture.

Lack of participation and knowledge of celebrations

If Germany is still utilized as an example of a host country receiving masses of refugees for integration purposes each year, it is important to discuss the fact that in most cases, refugees are not aware of national celebration and do not participate in them. Since 2014, most asylum seekers in Germany have been from Syria, a predominantly Muslim country. Besides that, most other nations that seek refuge in Germany come from Muslim countries as well. From 2011 to 2015, the number of Muslims increased from 57% to 73 %. Due to the refugees' religious affiliations, Christian holidays that have great importance in the host country such as Christmas, Easter, or All Saint's Day are not celebrated or acknowledged by them. In cities that have large refugee communities, such as Berlin, many citizens will not participate in these events because it doesn't align with their beliefs. It is crucial to maintain German culture through celebrating these festivals and not risking losing parts of the native customs.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Federal Republic of Germany

With 1.06 million refugees by the end of 2018 in Germany, the host country received masses of refugee seekers that were distributed across larger towns. As mentioned above, larger cities began to

develop communities of foreigners with refugee backgrounds. The formation of groups of nonnative Germans with common religious beliefs and languages spoken, there is an increasing number of refugees that don't attempt to learn the language or comprehend the native celebrations and customs.

Kingdom of Sweden

Since 2018, Sweden has welcomed around 5000 refugees quota per year. As a primarily Christian country, the host nation opens its border for refuge seekers from countries of Muslim origin. Besides religion, there are also differences in language, customs, and norms between refugees and Swedish citizens. To overcome those, Sweden made sure to implement publicly funded integration programs that include language lessons and education of cultural practices. However, there is growing public backlash against the integration of refugees.

French Republic

In 2020, France acted as a host nation over 430000 refugees, an increase of 6.91 % from 2019. The most practiced religion in France is Christianity, which is also different to the mainly Muslim refugee population. Many refugees are being distributed across France's larger cities as well. Especially Paris is putting in a lot of effort to provide refugees with language courses and vocational training.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UN Refugee Agency is a global non – profit organization that strives to save and protect rights and lives of refugees and people that were displaced forcibly. Its head quarter is in Geneva, Switzerland and it was founded in 1950. It helps refugees to navigate from their native countries to a new nonnative country in which they hope to seek safety.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The UNESCO World Heritage Center is a UN organization whose aim is to protect cultural and natural heritage as sources of history legacy and inspiration from the past. It is embodied in a treaty referred to as the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural heritage. It has been effective since 1975.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
2015	2015 being the peak of the European migrant crisis, 1.3 million Syrians requested asylum in Europe

2015	Around 2.7 million Afghan refugees fled to Europe, Pakistan, and Iran. 33000 Iraqi refugees were registered with the UNHCR in 2015.
2015	Swedish survey by the Eurobarometer brings to light that 61% of Swedes believe that refugees worsen the crime problems.
2016	Out of the refugees that had arrived in Germany throughout the course of the refugee crisis, only 17% spoke English at this point.
2016	Sweden demonstrates success with its two-year integration program for refugees with 39% of men and 26% of women being part of the workforce
2018	At the of the year, over 450,000 German refugees were still not integrated into the labour market and 372,000 were still underemployed.
2018	In Sweden, two months after the. 018 general election, 17.5% went to. He Sweden democrats-an anti- immigration party.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events.

- The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 protocol, December 14th, 1950, A/RES/429

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Raising Awareness

Within numerous European host countries, there have been citizens that have attempted to raise awareness through expressing their concerns with the integration of refuge seekers by participating in riots or social media movements. For example, In Germany, January 2016, mass far right riots took place to protest the acceptance of more refugees. The participants reasoned their strong opinion with the impression that the culture and belief of refugees was too different from their own, especially when it comes to women's rights and religious practices. This was followed by Merkel's famous call to encourage Germans that they should welcome more refuge seekers. Another example includes a mass of protestors in September 2020 that took place in Dover, Great Britain. The main argument that the violent rioters kept bringing up throughout the protest was that due to the religious affiliations of refugees, Great Britain would face danger because of the cultural difference.

Attempts to Bring Host Countries' Cultures Closer to Refugees

The opposite reaction to the threat of losing culture as more refugees join host nations was demonstrated by countries like France and Sweden, where refugees were encouraged to or even forced to join programs that would bring them closer to the country's native language and cultural norms. In Sweden, refugee seekers participate in a ten-week course where they learn basic language skills and knowledge about native customs. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to gain help in terms of finding employment. The programs have turned out to be quite successful. In France, refugees are also part of a course where language basics and skills to find employment are discussed. It is assumed that the courses will help bring refugees closer to the culture of their host country, which in turn might also preserve the native culture.

Possible Solutions

Introduction of Host Country's Holidays and Celebrations through Activities in Refugee Homes

It is true that due to differing religions and large geographical distance, refugees often lack knowledge and sensitivity of national celebrations. This may lead to a larger increase in conflicts between native citizens and the refugees in host countries. To avoid this, refugees living in asylum homes or organized refugee homes could be introduced to their host country's national holidays through fun and lighthearted activities. For example, during the Christmas season, which is primarily celebrated by Christians, refugees could be introduced to the holidays by baking seasonal native goods or watching seasonal movies. This might help them understand the importance of the holiday and make them more understanding of its customs. Additionally, it will help preserve host countries' culture.

Regular Language Tests

Language is an essential aspect of culture, and it is important to help refugees learn at least basic skills of their host country's language, in order to encourage the continuation of communication in that language and helping refugees integrate in the workforce. To make it mandatory for refugees to learn at least some parts of the language, their arrival in the host country might take place with the condition of taking part in language courses for at least six months to ensure that they are willing to integrate. Learning the language could be supported by employing teachers in refugee housing where the host country's language will be taught in groups.

Distribution of Refugees Across Smaller Cities

It has been noticed that the distribution of refugees across larger cities isn't the most effective when it comes to preserving the culture of host countries. This is because in larger cities, especially host countries' capital cities, the masses of refugees are large to the extent where they will begin forming communities, in which they speak their own languages and practice their own native customs. In order to avoid this, refugees should be distributed more across smaller cities and towns in which they will be forced to integrate more into German speaking communities, simply because there will be smaller amounts of refugees from the same nation.

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