Chapter 3

Depoliticizing Refugees

How a Western World's Favorite Intellectual and Political Game Takes Place and Its Alternatives

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Since 2015, the world has been witnessing a significant rise in refugee[1] movements and the institutional reactions of the EU and other national states to control migration. During this period, countless refugees have lost their lives, been detained in camps, have been physically attacked by security forces and extreme right-wing groups, and to this day they suffer social and physical confinement in the countries they find themselves in. All these have raised a plethora of issues in social sciences and everyday discourse. In the area of critical thought, however, one question seems to rise above many others; and that is "why don't refugees fight back?" This chapter aims at unravelling this question by discussing the issue of refugee depoliticization both at a theoretical and an empirical level.

The challenge in answering this question is that a series of other ones have to be addressed first in order to reach a meaningful conclusion. Questions such as: What does depoliticization mean? Who defines what is political and what is not? Does depoliticization occur naturally or is it part of a strategy of subjugation? If the latter is the case, how does this strategy work and is it actually successful? In other words, do refugees indeed not fight back or do we lack the theoretical and methodological tools to observe and understand their actions? In our effort to answer these questions, this chapter will first examine the often-problematic theoretical assumptions behind depoliticization, including definitional aspects of the political in the twenty-first century. It will then focus on the overall efforts of refugee management to depoliticize the refugee experience, as well as refugee resistance, which is an essential aspect of political action that can undermine much of the assumptions behind

the depoliticization process. Lastly, it will suggest more appropriate conceptual frameworks for understanding the complex nature of refugee political agency.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

What we call the phenomenon of "refugee depoliticization" is essentially a way of politically neutralizing refugees that operates and manifests itself both at the level of daily interaction and at the level of scientific analysis. In other words, depoliticization appears as the combined result of daily conceptual frames of individual and collective life forms and specific scientific conceptualizations which, at the level of the study of motivations of individual behavior and collective action, form a strong perception (and prediction) of subject's inability to behave and act in terms of individual and / or collective emancipation.

But let's see how we can look at the process of depoliticizing refugees. The questions that arise at this point are: How can we substantiate its existence? Is it possible to detect the existence of this process in systematic practices that openly support depoliticization as a positive value and goal to be achieved? Consequently, is it possible to recognize it in explicit cultural framings that openly support the "need" to depoliticize these people? Certainly not! The history of marginalized groups rarely provides examples of such an explicit goal of a system of power to marginalize and make these groups invisible. Only in extreme cases of totalitarian regimes do we encounter such cases of cultural marginalization and explicit social degradation of various groups.

In fact, evaluations of the behavior of marginalized people are often expressed indirectly, assimilated into the negative context of positive assertions which concern (and address) socially integrated people. Indeed, scientific sociological study often derives its analytical categories from social phenomena that are close to the formal organization of society. This means that most of these refer to social groups which, in one way or another, are associated with conceptions such as "nation state," "political system," "work," "gender relations," "capitalist economy," and so on. The most informal social groups that are neither related to these concepts nor can be studied with the same conceptual tools (for example, using the reverse examples, "refugee status," "pre-political identities," "nomadisms," "nongender identities," "solidarity economies," and so on), are either completely ignored or (even worse) considered from a point of view which makes them "social anomalies." Anomalies are evident in the prevailing definitions of social problems not because they are explicitly included in these definitions but for the exact opposite reason. They are not included in the definitions, but

are "there," half-hidden in what is more implied than in what is explicitly stated. In the dynamics of the logical mechanism of this way of thinking, if one speaks of phenomena of individual and collective action that do not fit the conditions under which the prevailing definitions are structured then one necessarily speaks of "anomalies."

This way, we may say that for the western countries (at least) contemporary refugees are an "anomaly" mainly because of a strongly deductive view in which two main approaches play a decisive role. The former is the one analyzed in the second part of the chapter as the medically framed practice of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), while the latter is of sociological origin. Precisely, as we will see below, its central feature derives from a theory of social transformation and its causal correlation between social modernization and evolution of social values inspiring human agency. From this deduction, a relevant—and for us unacceptable—hypothesis would be that people not affected by the former causal correlation are not considered to be able to claim their emancipation. Instead, we use critical thinking to confute these approaches.

Let us then look briefly at the basic correlation between social progress, transformation of values, and individual and social action that modernization theory establishes. Social modernization theory as an essential condition of depoliticization.

The accuracy of the theory of modernization certainly depends—as in any case of theoretical formulation—on whether we accept the basic assumptions and definitions it formulates about the phenomena it approaches. Thus, if indeed the ways of people's involvement in common affairs is determined by the institutionally defined channels of the political process as they are shaped in the "developed" Western democracies, we have no reason to challenge this theory. Nor do we have reason to question it if indeed the agency within society is absolutely determined by social values that belong exclusively to those societies and especially to the people in those societies who have full access to the distribution and use of material resources.

To put it bluntly, we have no reason to question the validity of the theory of social modernization iif, at the collective level, human participation in common affairs is indeed performed at the limits of the formal political process and iif, at the level of individual behavior, human choices take place under the overwhelming weight of social values that are inherent in socioeconomically developed societies and, therefore, do not concern other societies except to a marginal degree.

The depoliticization of refugees fits in with a particular assumption of the theories of social movements that began in the 1970s (namely, *Resource Mobilization Theory* and *New Social Movements Theory*), starting with Inglehart's general thesis concerning value change in Western societies. Inglehart

(1977) emphasizes that critical parameters for the emergence of post-material demands of the new social movements are the profound changes in the values of Western societies and the resulting socialization conditions of members of the middle class. Thus, it attaches crucial importance to psychological processes that are activated through the socialization of middle-class offspring and accompany the values that fit into the social profiles included in it (Inglehart 1990). The general assumption of the "values shift" is the existence of a "a society affluent in individual resources," that for the first time in history entails Western publics prone to values shifting from a sizable emphasis on material wellbeing and existential security toward a larger emphasis on the quality of life (Etzioni 2004).

At the core of this reasoning lies a "scarcity hypothesis," according to which sustenance and physical security are the basic requirements for survival. Consequently, people, when in conditions of scarcity, give the highest priority to materialistic goals. Welzel, Inglehart and Klingemann (2003, 347) argue that "survival strategies may constitute a Hobbesian "homo homini lupo" [*sic*] situation in which outsiders are distrusted as hostile competitors for scarce resources;" whereas, under conditions of prosperity, they become more likely to emphasize post-materialist goals. From this point of view, the shift from materialist demands (material security, sustenance, and consumerism) to post-materialist ones (self-expression, personal autonomy, democracy, gender equality, and environmentalism) seems easy. The causal and unilinear interconnection between socioeconomic development, value change, and change in political institutions gives rise to an overall societal change in such a way that "socioeconomic development, rising emancipative values, and democratization constitute a coherent syndrome of social progress" (ibid., 370). Moreover, in the view of the authors, this syndrome simultaneously reflects a revised theory of social modernization, a predictable model of social change, and an irrefutable process of human development.

One would think that such a modernization theory would be better supported in the late twentieth century, in which Western societies have indeed experienced a general and continuous economic growth accompanied by an improvement in living conditions. But the same persistence is observed today, when we receive the reassuring confirmation that modernization theory is still in full force. For instance, last year Welzel reaffirmed the correctness of modernization theory, arguing that economic growth continues to produce "cognitive mobilization" (expanding levels of education, information, and travel), thus enhancing human knowledge, awareness, and intelligence that inspire people to act expressively and reject received authority and wisdom (Welzel 2021). This way, the causal interconnection between economic development and value change and liberal democracy motivates the whole system to highly

progress through an anthropological type of improvement that renders people more aware, intelligent, and politicized.

Of course, as mentioned above, this mechanical reasoning about human development has serious implications for who it predicts may be potential bearers of social and political consciousness. Whether "cognitive mobilization" alone can guarantee the democratization of people's consciences and whether travels, education, and information are the only prerequisites for politicization are questions strongly contested in recent sociological debate. In fact, such a hypothesis seems purely deductive from modernization theory that is self-affirming rather than being tested based on modern historical experience. Let us look at some criticisms leveled against this theory.

Firstly, it is clearly an evolutionary theory of social and human development, which in an absolute way makes the variation of values an exclusive function of technological development and economic growth. Inglehart and his collaborators are fully aware of that, when they affirm: "Social change of this accumulative type is evolutionary in the sense that it is self-driven: it needs no central coordinator with a master plan to merge the adaptations of many people into a collective trend when the 'invisible hand' of the adaptive logic does the job" (Welzel and Inglehart 2010, 44). This is also a clearly structuralist-functionalist method to link cultural production (and change) to human behavior. Inglehart and Welzel effortlessly adopt the parsonian approach, in which the change of values "take place" in the cultural subsystem as an automatic adaptation of cultural data to the "objective" improvement of material conditions and quality of life. In turn, this change, through socialization, changes the behavioral standards of people, making them more demanding in matters of material needs. Thus, the cultural subsystem maintains its supremacy as a central and quasi self-established subsystem, the social subsystem adapts to the objective changes of the cultural, and the personality subsystem simply passively accepts to become the carrier of new behaviors and actions.

However, the interconnection between social transformation, cultural values, and human action cannot be considered completely spontaneous and automatic, in the logic that powerful and impersonal mechanisms undertake to adapt developments in one subsystem based on the elements of the other. On the contrary, between modernizing reforms and social actions, there are structured interests and/or interests that are struggling to be structured, articulated needs and/or needs that are struggling to be articulated. Therefore, this correlation follows a logic of heated disagreement, conflict, and compromise of interests, highlighting and/or hiding emerging needs. In other words, it follows the logic of collective actors involved in the process of transforming society, sometimes by opening spaces for social expression and recognition of emerging needs that challenge established powers, sometimes

by consolidating institutional practices aimed at maintaining older forms of power or establishing new forms of power that guarantee social supremacy, and other times by doing all the above.

To be fair, we do not claim that modernization theory is wrong in all its dimensions. Apparently, in Western societies, a selective relationship between economic development and the postmaterialist formation of human character that leads to democratic practices can indeed be observed. This relationship, however, should be considered as a partial trend of society and not as a historical law. Not only, as we point out below, in the sense that economic development and postmaterialist conceptual frames can, under the right circumstances, lead as well to antidemocratic practices, but also, in the sense that the development of democratic policies and attitudes can be consolidated in contexts of life and action in which people are not necessarily linked by a high standard of living and achievement of materialistic values. Therefore, we argue that, on one side, this relationship can at best be considered a trend that must be considered along with other factors, and, on the other, there are other "ways" of individual integration into democracy besides "cognitive mobility," consequently, there are other ways as well to gain democratic political consciousness.

Secondly, assuming an absolute causal relationship between the rise of postmaterialism and the rise of cosmopolitanism and democracy is extremely problematic if we consider that nowadays we often see social attitudes that demonstrate the separation of these two variables. For example, we are increasingly witnessing phenomena that show that authoritarian policies and attitudes of all kinds, from the abolition of welfare spending and the restriction of freedom of speech to the expulsion of immigrants, are supported by bearers of postmaterialist values, that is, by people with high "cognitive mobilization." In other words, at the level of practical support for the value frameworks that supposedly belong to the developed Western democracies, we observe a "selective sensitivity," a "value opportunism" that leads subjects to sometimes support democratic and cosmopolitan practices and sometimes to adopt antidemocratic and authoritarian attitudes.

Such a hybrid fusion of contradictory behavioral data is characteristic of the postmodern cultural condition iitself, in which the constant and daily conflict between different cultural models of representation of reality often leads to a mix of corresponding behavioral motivations and sources of meaning of action. In other words, there is a lack of a strong unifying principle at the cultural level capable of subjecting individuals to uniform rules for the regulation of social life (Touraine 1997). The complexity of post-industrial society causes the fragmentation of cultural experience, so that on the horizon of the life of the individual or group, alternate attitudes and choices ranging from instrumental to expressive action, from discipline to freedom, from values of

success to those of coexistence. Inner complexity of the social actors and plurality of orientations are the constant traits of postmodernity (Melucci 1996).

Postmodern society favors neither absolute clarity of intentions nor absolute clarity of outcome in the choices made (Melucci 2000). If we consider that individual and collective actions tend to move steadily along a continuum that extends between the pole of the social system and the pole of subjective freedom, then we can say that individual behavior and collective action are characterized by a structural ambiguity, by a constant effort to reconcile at the level of individual and collective choices elements of the binary cultural structure (Touraine 1997). In this frame, it would be impossible to ignore new social inequalities originating from the unequal way in which resources and potentialities of individuals to think of themselves are distributed. In postmodernity, as Melucci points out (1996, 93), a "cultural deprivation" arises, " . . . as the destruction of traditional cultures is replaced only by marginalization or by dependent consumption, and as the imposition of lifestyles which no longer provide individuals with the cultural bases for their self-identification."

This means that the ability of people to deal with the problems of their lives is not automatically increased by the fact that in their societies there are plenty of available resources but is determined by the capability to first access these resources and then be able to use them to overcome systemic manipulations in the construction of meanings and instead give meaning in a socially autonomous way to these problems. Otherwise, if the mere existence of knowledge resources and the simple access to them could guarantee "human development" that leads to democratic politicization, we would either not be able to explain widespread contemporary social phenomena such as discrimination, intolerance, islamophobia,[2] racism, marginalization, and social exclusion, or we would be forced to attribute them exclusively and conveniently to the attitudes of a "not well-educated crowd."

Moreover, the very idea of the mutual exclusion of different and rigidly "historicized" types of values makes modernization theory extremely problematic in understanding the complexity of human agency. In this way, hence, we are not able to conceive either why we often encounter empirical cases of coexistence of the two types of needs or how the two respective basic action orientations are combined with each other, thus giving each other complex compositions (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 70). And of course, we cannot understand how the constant search of modern actors for a reflective identity that belongs to the postmaterialist priorities is combined with aspirations and demands that have a material character.

But the hypothesis of social complexity that we invoke here makes the theoretical assumption of an automatic social modernization with simple and unilinear sequential determinations between technological-economic development, value change, and democratic and cosmopolitan social attitudes

extremely simplistic from another point of view as well. If it is true that value change does not always and necessarily require the possession of a multiplicity of resources, it is also true that in postmodern society the multiplicity of resources does not necessarily lead to postmaterialist claims. In this light, it has been observed that postmodern consumerism and conspicuous consumption are constantly raising new human needs and desires for material goods and services, rather than leading to a declining appreciation of material values (Haller 2002).

Thirdly, the big problem with this analysis is that, following a deterministic and mechanistic view of the evolution of values, it does not consider that values associated with behavioral motivations can change in relation to collective action processes as well and not exclusively based on individual characteristics of people. Collective emancipation processes, either in Western countries or in developing countries, show this evidently. New social movements theories of the past tried to explain the rise of unconventional forms of collective action for the time by referring to Inglehart's theorem of a "prosper and secure society." Thus, both *Resource Mobilization Theory* and *New Social Movements Theory* openly assumed that the new social movements of the 1970s were resource managers in societies whose people dispose of plentiful individual resources. That is, in societies that have largely met the material needs of most of the population and, therefore, allow the emergence of organized collective claims of a postmaterialist nature.[3]

However, contemporary collective action experiences in both western "developed" and "peripheral" countries show that the theoretical reduction of the postmaterialist orientations of movements to a supposedly general state of affluence and ensuring basic living conditions is not empirically acceptable. This finding can be substantiated by reference to two recent types of social movements experiences. The first type includes many movements within the social formations of "peripheral" countries that are far from the reality of the "affluent society" of rich western countries. Indeed, assuming that the achievement of nonmaterial resources (values of dignity, solidarity, equality, autonomy, and democracy) becomes important for organizing collective actions only in postmodern societies of affluence, then how do we explain the emergence in Latin America of collective subjects (Zapatistas, piqueteros, movimiento sin tierra, etc.) who explicitly target such resources? That is, how can we explain in such a theoretical frame the fact that movements that set the goals of dignity, equality, and solidarity at the core of their action have been formed for at least twenty years in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, and elsewhere, where the consolidation of the "affluent society" as a precondition of "postmaterialist needs" is an unknown reality?

It seems, therefore, that the theoretical consolidation of historical "laws" into older research experiences has crystallized rigid theoretical "models"

that prove to be too restrictive for today's research needs. For example, the New Social Movements Theory eventually created a narrow Eurocentric theoretical tradition that prevented scholars who followed it from seeing that postmaterialist movements also appeared in Latin American countries that had not reached the postindustrial stage of development (Vahabzadeh 2003). This basic weakness raises a critical question about the validity of a pervasive west-centric approach to capitalism and movements criticized mainly by Latin American scholars (e.g., Zibechi 2010) and scholars who use theoretical approaches based on conceptual tools such as "world-system," "geoculture," and "world hegemony" (Wallerstein 2007, 2014; Amin 1999; Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1989). Moreover, this question also includes an inference regarding the relationship between "human development theories" and social differentiation acceptance. Speaking about how privileges are ideologically institutionalized, just as white supremacy is based on the belief that its privileges are legitimate, so is western-centric (and especially Eurocentric) supremacy legitimizing its privileges "as the result of socialization in the culture of a "free" society that values individualism, hard work, and free expression" (Jackson 2018, 181).

Another type of social movements experience that denies a mechanical reduction of post-materially oriented collective actors to situations of abundant resources concerns experiences within the very social formations that characterize "western-type development" with expanded resources and corresponding satisfaction of basic material needs. Indeed, recent phenomena of collective actions such as the *Indignados* in Spain, the *Aganaktismenoi* in Greece, but also the *Occupy Wall Street* in the USA have shown that the postmaterialist claims of the movements (with the prominent defense of democracy and dignity) remain a critical component of their action, even under conditions of rapidly expanding poverty and exclusion, even in situations where for the first time since World War II material claims for basic rights (food, housing, insurance, education, etc.) return to the social forefront. We, therefore, have at least two historical experiences of collective actors that seem to challenge the automatic and causal relationship between affluent society and post-materially oriented subjects. These are the experiences of Latin American movements from the 1990s to the present and the experiences of social movements in the European South (at least) from 2011 onward.

Inglehart's legacy (and consequently the work of *World Values Survey*) has also been severely criticized for its research methodology of comparative analysis. Especially, the division of the world into "cultural zones" containing "poor nations with traditional values," "middle-income nations with modern values," and "rich nations with postmodern values" is considered inconsistent and not very respectful of the criterion of the distinction between macro and micro levels of analysis. On this, for example, Haller sees Englehart's

conception of values as vague and lacking clarity. As he notes: “Inglehart’s ‘values’ consist of rather heterogeneous items in substantive terms; they do not measure specific values, value orientations, or normative prescriptions” (Haller 2002, 144).

Summing up so far, we believe that in their extensive application, modernization theories do not offer reliable tools for understanding the conditions for shaping human agency in all cultural contexts globally, either individually or collectively. Regarding the more specific issue that concerns us here, namely the possibility or not of refugees to develop political consciousness and action, we are convinced that such theories provide the basis for tacit but strong anthropological assumptions and cultural tendencies that reject this possibility. Indirectly but clearly, advocates of modernization theories deny refugees the postmaterialist “luxury” of achieving a democratic political consciousness and an emancipatory attitude. This is exactly the meaning of categorical assertions, such as: “When life is a constant threat to suffer, people place less emphasis on agency; only when life becomes an opportunity to thrive, do people begin to value agency very highly” (Welzel and Inglehart 2010, 44). Or, as well: “Survival is such a basic human goal that when it is uncertain, one’s entire life strategy is shaped by the struggle to survive” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 23).

In the next part of the chapter, we will focus more on showing that, although refugees’ lives are “constant threats to suffer,” refugees may, under the right circumstances, act individually and collectively in political and emancipative ways. But to do this, we must first unshackle democratic politics from theoretical contexts that interpret it as primarily the product of processes activated by political elites kept accountable by virtue of the public pressure exerted by people having strong emancipative values (Welzel, Inglehart, R., and Klingemann 2003), and, instead, place it where it deserves.

WHAT IS POLITICS AND WHAT IS DEPOLITICIZATION?

But what do we mean by “depoliticization of refugees”? We will give, for the purposes of the discussion, a basic definition. We define the depoliticization of refugees as a tendency to systematically remove them from the context of the perception of political action as a more or less organized collective effort to influence the power relations that are shaping their living conditions. This removal from the scene of the refugees as real social actors makes them an undifferentiated mass of individuals completely disoriented in the context of societies that are radically different from those they come from, and consequently makes them invisible individuals of “suspended” social qualities. In

this frame, refugee status constitutes a gray area of politics in which refugees are at best entitled to humanitarian treatment, but do not in themselves constitute political beings. As Rancière puts it: "If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him as the bearer of signs of politicity, by not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as discourse" (Rancière 2010, 38).

Correspondingly, the concept of politics is defined as the ability of a group of people to intervene, with more or less organized collective efforts, both by influencing the decision-making processes that shape their daily living conditions, and by pushing the boundaries of the political process to include new actors, thus challenging the political status quo. Therefore, "political action" is the practical exercise of this individual and most influential, collective capacity. Following Rancière (ibid., 27), politics, instead of the exercise of power, is "a specific mode of action that is enacted by a specific subject and that has its own proper rationality. It is the political relationship that makes it possible to conceive of the subject of politics, not the other way round".

Obviously, such a definition goes far beyond placing politics exclusively within institutional boundaries of the modern state. It is part of a critical conception that captures politics in broader terms and argues that politics exists within and outside the institutional boundaries of the modern state and takes place in every corner of human existence (Modebadze 2010, 44). In this frame, politics is manifested as a multidimensional reality including the functioning of institutions such as laws, moral rules, corporate and collective bodies, but at the same time it also includes individuals, subcultures, and hybrid identities that challenge the idea of politics as a monolithic phenomenon (Axford 1997). Moreover, this broad view of politics helps to change the negative image of it, especially among young people.

In this light, we can say that there are two different ways of establishing power relations, i.e., politics as exclusion and politics as inclusion. The first strictly produces the conditions of reproduction of both the structured groups of society and the power relations between them. A certain degree of flexibility of this system lies in the ability it offers to social groups to potentially modify some of the power relations on a case-by-case basis, gaining or losing points in the overall power game. Thus, in this version, a group may gain concessions from others in terms of material reward, social acceptance, and cultural recognition, or otherwise it may lose some of its rights. In any case, however, it will remain an institutionally accepted holder of the opportunity to participate in the general negotiation of rights and interests that takes place in society. This version of politics is exclusive to the extent that it rejects any other logic of participating in the game of power. In other words, it excludes the existence of new entrants, considering any potential one as an "outsider" or an "intruder."

The second way of set-up power relations, namely politics as inclusion, is the deliberate interruption of the usual activities of ruling and being ruled; it is politics as a "disruptive activity" of the politics as regular order of ruling and being ruled. Moments of resistance to this order or rupture in it literally create a fully competitive situation in which those involved refuse to both rule and be ruled (Alexander 2014, 292–295). This version of politics is inclusive not in the sense that it allows newcomers to participate in the conventional power game, but because it constitutes a breach in it. In other words, it establishes a fully antagonistic relationship with it for one basic reason: simultaneous participation in both versions of politics is impossible, since in the first version there are mainly the structured interest groups that participate by ruling and being ruled, while in the second participate only those subjects who refuse to rule and be ruled.

In the words of Rancière (2010, 36), "two ways of counting the parts of the community exist. The first counts real parts only—actual groups defined by differences in birth, and by the different functions, places, and interests that make up the social body to the exclusion of every supplement. The second, 'in addition' to this, counts a part of those without part. I call the first the police and the second politics." In this light, if in the first version participation is predetermined based on institutionally provided procedures for the selection of those who can participate, only in the second is there an authentic participation based on a process of "subjectivation". On the matter, Rancière states (2007, 61): "Genuine participation is the invention of that unpredictable subject which momentarily occupies the street, the invention of a moment born of nothing but democracy itself." So, if the police order is a hierarchically distributed regime, then politics is a merely "disruptive force" (Chambers 2011) that, by rupturing sensorial, conceptual, and aesthetic divisions created by the police between the audible and inaudible, the visible and the invisible, "opens up a radical space where those that have been uncounted by the police become visible and audible" (Lewis 2012, 61).

In other words, when distinctive attributes of the police order, that lie at the heart of social life and define the spaces, places, and modalities of visibility, audibility, and so on, are challenged by the politics of disruption, it follows a basic reconfiguration of the given perceptual forms of the police order, a reconfiguration that disputes the institutionalized social hierarchies, allotted roles, and aesthetic partitioning and organization of the sensible (Lewis 2012). Thus, politics always presupposes a "political dissensus" within a community. Dissensus does not concern a conflict between groups with opposite economic interests or a confrontation about interests and values, but it is a struggle "between those who set themselves as able to manage social interests and those who are supposed to be only able to reproduce their life" (Rancière 2011, 2). Therefore, dissensus became the "essence of politics,"

not as a confrontation between interests or opinions, but as a political demonstration making visible that which had no reason to be seen and placing one world in another (Rancière 2010, 38). In this sense, social emancipation could only occur in sporadic reappearances of equality through disturbances in the established system of social inequalities belonging to the police order.

The only bearers of this "'capacity" are subjects born by "subjectivation," those who have no name, who remain invisible and inaudible and, for this reason, they can penetrate the police order by implementing the universal equality as the universal presupposition of politics, against the false harmony of the police. When politics breaks the symbolic constitution of the social made by the police order, a sensorial revolt that allows for a new political action is taking place. Rancière avoids a reification of these actors; he refuses to see them as predefined groups based on stable social attributes (minorities, poor people, proletariat, etc.) and he rather defines them "methodologically," that is, as the supplementary part of every account of the population,[4] or as the subjects that put into question the boundary separating the political from the nonpolitical, or "separating who are born for politics from those who are born for the 'bare' life of economic and social necessity" (Rancière 2011, 3).

This theoretical construction of the French philosopher could be used to critically approach the standpoint that proposes the "depoliticization of refugees" as the proper way to conceive refugee's state of being and, consequently, to fully understand the political struggles of refugees in Western countries.[5] According to Rancière, the reinstatement of the "Rights of Man" in the case of refugees can be implemented in a dissensual stage of action on which the initial inscription of the rights is put to the test. In this sense, by practically invoking these rights (e.g., through collective claiming practices), clandestine immigrants in transit zones in wealthy countries or populations in refugee camps can construct a dissensus against the rejection of rights and, consequently, really have these rights. Accordingly, if de-politicization of the refugees is part of a consensus process underlying continual shrinkage of political space, then the refugees' dissensual action creates the conditions for the enlargement of the political space and at the same time the politicization of the refugee status (Rancière 2010, 71–72).

In this context, "depoliticization" means the conceptually arbitrary removal of political agency from the horizon of the refugee's life. It is the denial of his ability to articulate a political discourse, that is, a discourse which both manifests a deep dissent against the regime's perception of politics as a property of "competent" groups, and claims rights for people who do not hold rights because, due to the lack of the necessary political "property", they are not institutionally entitled to possess any.

But we can also see in cases of public and mass mobilizations how refugees act, through culturally challenging the "meaning systems" on which the

power structure is based, to transform this structure in which they are embedded, thus highlighting the essence of political action as we have previously defined it. Monforte and Dufour (2012), analyzing in a comparative way the marches by undocumented migrants in three different countries (France, Germany, and Canada-Quebec), demonstrate that whatever the specifics of the national context in which migrants mobilize, their actions are always triggering a process of emancipation from state power. It is shown that during these marches undocumented migrants produce critical resources for sustainable collective action, such as empowerment (cognitive effect), pride (emotional effect) and solidarities (relational effect) (ibid.). These resources signify a politicization of migrants' presence in the public space, a creation of autonomous and visible spaces of life, and a redefinition of power relations through withdrawing from the power structure dominating their lives.

Referring to the cognitive, emotional, and relational resources of the mobilization phenomena, in the final part of our chapter, we will briefly explain what, in our opinion are the most important theoretical tools that help in understanding and explaining the collective actions of refugees. But first, we will focus on how exactly depoliticization occurs. The latter is not simply a theoretical bias—as crucial as this aspect might be—but it is mainly a structural imperative forced upon refugees by the ruling class, which aims at concealing and individualizing the reasons behind the suffering of those on the move.

REFUGEE DEPOLITICIZATION AS A SUBJUGATION STRATEGY

After theoretically exploring the concept of depoliticization of refugees, it is important to highlight the specific ways in which this process takes place. To approach this issue, one must trace these steps from a macro-institutional level to the micro-analysis in the lived experiences of refugees.

MACRO-LEVEL

The undermining of the refugee as a political subject is anything but new. One could say that depoliticization is indeed inscribed in the corpus of the institutional understanding of the term "refugee." Or to put it more accurately, the legal definition of refugees has tasked itself with concealing the specific interests of the ruling class in the context of global capitalism. Ever since the signing of the 1951 *Geneva Convention*, the *United Nations High Council for Refugees* (UNHCR) has played an active role in the American–Soviet

antagonism,[6] by determining who is a refugee in a manner that would embarrass socialist states and facilitate defections to the West.

The *Convention*, utilizing the key word "persecution," adopted a classically liberal approach that privileged the protection of refugees based on violations of political and civil rights (FitzGerald and Arar 2018). This worked to the advantage of Western countries, given the violation of these rights by communist states which were dealing in this manner with their "dangerous classes" (Shearer 1998). On the other hand, the undesirables in the West were dealt with mainly through the undermining of life chances and fundamental social rights. Hence, the latter were not included as a basis of protection in the *Convention*, as this would compromise the rhetoric of laissez-faire liberalism.

A similarly crucial political aspect of the *Convention* is its individualist focus. The current refugee regime was spawned by the imperatives of the ideological conflict between the West and the Soviet Union. Consequently, the prevailing image of the refugee in the 1950s and 1960s was that of the liberal (usually male), accomplished individual whose value system could not be tolerated by authoritarianism. These individual attributes were to be evaluated, according to International Law, and celebrated in order to create a willingness in Western countries to resettle asylum seekers and accept them into society (Johnson 2011).

However, this strongly ideological narrative will change dramatically, as the effects of capitalist development in the Global South were felt in the 1970s and 1980s. War, poverty, and hunger became the prevailing characteristics of entire regions, and the refugee regime had to adapt itself to something that was never part of its architecture, namely, the social devastation exerted upon millions of people as a result of global economic forces (Delgado Wise 2021). Unfortunately for refugees, however, in this new era the goal will not be the acceptance of the newly arrived in countries of the West.

Instead, the focus will be on managing the movement of countless people in ways that could perpetuate Western insulation from the consequences of its economic growth. The political and economic involvement of the West in the countries from which refugees are fleeing is concealed and the causes behind their movement are abstracted. Thus, European states can "wash their hands" of this problem and the rare acceptance of refugees on their soil would be attributed to their magnanimity rather than culpability. The United Nations' publication, *The State of the World's Refugees* demarcates that in a clear fashion, by locating the perceived historical differences of the populations and, interestingly enough, by preestablishing the motives of those on the move:

> These refugees were different in many ways from those envisaged in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. In most cases they were people who had fled their homes not because of a fear of persecution but because of war and violence

> related to the process of decolonization . . . Most of them did not seek to integrate in the country of asylum but wanted to repatriate when their own countries became independent or when the environment became more secure. Rather than dealing with individual refugees on a case-by-case basis, UNHCR now found itself dealing with mass flows of refugees (UNHCR 2000, 6).

MICRO-LEVEL

However, it is crucial to emphasize that the principle of concealment of the political is not simply an academic or institutional issue relating to debates in political economy or sociology of law. It permeates the architecture of the refugee regime from the macro-level to the micro-level and becomes crucially important for the lives of those living nowadays under the regime of European refugee management. On the micro-level, depoliticization takes place through a variety of ways.

One of the most obvious and daily experienced methods is the long waiting periods that refugees must endure in the camps under atrocious and dangerous conditions. The narrative of bureaucratic complications behind the wait appears *prima facie* benign but the goal of waiting, as extensive sociological research has shown (Schwartz 1974; Bourdieu 1998; Auyero 2011; Khosravi 2014), is nothing else than the control and pacification of those that linger. When one's own life and future depend on the outcome of a lengthy deliberation for an asylum granting decision, the mere seconds that pass aim at clearly establishing domination and deference towards those who deliberate. Needless to say, in the case of the refugee condition, waiting has the added value of concealing the political goal of the European Union, which is none other than deterring people from migrating by exposing them to the uncertainties of lengthy detentions in unbearable conditions (Xypolytas 2018).

The other—and for the purposes of this chapter—crucial way of depoliticizing the refugee experience is linked to the aforementioned architecture of the entire regime and involves the individualization of the refugee status. The "divide and rule" strategy becomes the quintessential tool of population control in a refugee camp setting. On the one hand, the extreme living conditions under confinement trigger animosities that generate suspicion and mistrust both amongst and within different nationalities. On the other, the individualist focus of the UN convention as well as the official discourse of EU member states concerning the limited number of people that can be granted asylum, engender competitive perceptions. In this context, a newly arrived person in the camp is dictated to perceive her/his fellow migrants not as a social group with common needs, interests and opponents, which is undoubtedly a crucial

aspect of political mobilization, but as competitors in a struggle to gain the "golden ticket" to European countries (Xypolytas 2019).

Having said the above, arguably the most prominent practical (and daily applied) method of depoliticizing the refugee experience is through the medicalization of suffering, which is exemplified in the widespread use of trauma in scientific discourse. Through this process, the social and political context within which suffering is situated is concealed, and in its place, one finds the individual's inability to cope with personal changes. This inability is being medically framed as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition that is understood as a dominant problem faced by many refugees. PTSD is indeed an acknowledged condition recognized by DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) of the *American Psychiatric Association* (APA). Having said that, the assumptions behind its use have been heavily criticized (Becker 1995; Hernandez 2002).

Although the literature on the criticisms of PTSD is indeed more than extensive (Becker 1995; Brown 1995; Lewis 1999), we will focus on specific aspects that are important for this analysis. A crucial starting point is that in psychiatric and psychological literature PTSD is already perceived as a depoliticizing label/diagnose (Martin-Baró 1989). The underlying principle in identifying this "condition" lies in acknowledging the severe mental consequences of a traumatizing event that is " . . . outside the range of usual human experience" (APA 1987, 250). The mental repetition of such events and the overwhelming fear of their reoccurrence is seen as a definite symptom. The implicit assumptions here are (a) that the events are uncommon and (b) that the sense of intense fear of them reoccurring is seen as a misunderstanding of the world and responding to it inappropriately as a result of a disorder (Burstow 2005).

But here is exactly where the depoliticizing nature of PTSD lies. There is a view that the world is a somewhat safe and benign place to which we mentally respond in a "healthy" manner. However, women, minorities, people in regions of the Global South, or refugees do not experience the world as a safe or benign place. It might be safe for the white, western, heterosexual, highly educated, able-bodied males that make up the majority of psychiatric associations that defined and utilize PTSD, but for countless social groups, the world is indeed dangerous and traumatizing. The feelings of safety or mental health that PTSD assumes are nothing more than the "editing out of such facets as the pervasiveness of war, the subjugation of women and children, everyday racist violence, religious intolerance, the frequency and unpredictability of natural disasters, the ever-present threat of sickness and death, and so on" (Burstow 2005, 435).

To experience trauma means the difficulty in editing out these aspects of life which are very real and present dimensions of existence. The depoliticizing

character of the PTSD label lies in its conscious effort to construct “mentally stable” and apolitical subjects who will not psychologically acknowledge or take into consideration the aforementioned realities. In this respect, in the field of psychology, the PTSD diagnosis suffers from the same inadequacies that characterize much of functionalist sociological literature, in which the centrality of social order conceals crucial social divisions (Dahrendorf 1968).

The refugee experience represents the biographical footprint of global capitalism, in which the interests of the ruling classes have shaped a violent and divided world. The vast majority of people in the Global South appear condemned to an existential reality of violence, hunger (or the clear threat of it) and the desperation of war. These realities force people to migrate and disrupt the illusions of peace and affluence that constitute an important imaginary of the Global North (Sloterdijk 2013). On the other hand, the power elites, much in the spirit of Ranciere’s analysis (2011), have clearly demarcated which groups are to exercise politics and which simply to reproduce their biological life. The medicalization of refugees’ suffering and the reduction of their lived experience of global capitalism to an individual mental disorder represents exactly this demarcation. The PTSD label conceals the social nature of the reasons behind refugee suffering and individualizes their problems. These are attributed to weak resilience, and the solution that is offered, for those whose eyes can no longer unsee the atrocious side of living with global capitalism, is nothing more than the universal remedy of chemical treatment through prescribed drug use.

This depoliticization process that aims at pacifying refugees is reinforced daily in the field, but the actors engaging in it are more varied than one would expect. Intuitively, it makes perfect sense for the management of a refugee camp in a Greek island, for example, to be interested in the pacification of the refugee subject, since this would contribute to the unhindered function of the camp. However, as was previously stated, depoliticization is endemic to even definitional aspects of the refugee condition. The construction of the destitute, vulnerable, and helpless subject is integral in the process of ascribing the much-needed refugee status (Otieno 2015). It is within this context that organizations and social workers that express—vocally, practically, and often unconditionally—solidarity to refugees end up reinforcing depoliticization.

In their effort to ensure that refugees gain asylum or a temporary residence permit, solidarity organizations try to boost the main asylum granting criterion, which is none other than the one of vulnerability. This does not mean that the claims are somehow fraudulent—an absurd argument taking into consideration the conditions in the Global South from which people are fleeing—but it is essential that the appearance of the individual refugee subject is one of helplessness and at the complete mercy of the authorities (Ticktin 2016). This construction of vulnerability, however, is crucial in generating a

particular social role that goes well beyond the needs of the asylum interview. It reinforces the image of the apolitical, helpless individual subject whose claims, if they are to be successful, have to be mediated through Western experts. The latter, regardless of their positionality (asylum officers, NGO lawyers, or social workers), appear as the only agents through which refugees can achieve the betterment of their individual condition.

Within this context, the idea of collective action can appear futile. The refugee condition and future can be divorced from their social preconditions and become an individual issue. Furthermore, the refugees' future will depend on their relation to western organizations or individuals and not on their collective consciousness or actions. Thus, engaging in collective action can degrade into representing an irrelevant practice since the problem, and its possible solution, will appear to rest only within one person and their immediate social relationships and actions.

REFUGEE RESISTANCE

So, does this gloomy picture represent the future of refugees and their relation to the political? Hardly. The aforementioned analysis represents the macro and micro structural constraints set upon the refugees, but it is far from becoming a concrete reality condemning them in a perpetual future of individualization and subjugation. This would imply the inability of the observer (a) to appreciate the various acts of resistance that inform the everyday refugee experience and (b) realize the potential that this resistance can indeed hold.

The idea of complete and total domination over the weak or "powerless" is an idea that by now holds little to no validity in sociology (Scott 1985, 1992; Hollander and Einwohner 2004). Instead, power relations are to be understood in their complexity, acknowledging the actions and perceptions of both groups in question. In the case of the refugee condition, much of the academic critical analysis focuses on the goals and practices of European economic and political elites. Although this intuitively makes sense, as condemnation is by definition a quintessential aspect of any critical or radical analysis, this can render the refugee subjects powerless and feeds on the scientific bias that was presented in the beginning of this chapter.

So, what constitutes refugee resistance? To answer this question fully would be way beyond the scope and confines of this particular analysis. But very briefly, one could separate it into overt and hidden forms of refugee resistance. Overt forms are far easier to identify as they involve visible collective action in various European countries, taking place in both camps as well as public spaces. These various acts in no way represent isolated

events of little significance. To suggest that would wildly underestimate the numbers of these events (Rosenberger et al. 2018), the refugee subjectivities involved and shaped within them (Monoforte and Doufour 2013), and would almost certainly be an example of "bad science" since it would be grossly disregarding ample data in order to pursue a predetermined line of argumentation.

However, hidden forms of resistance have a greater sociological importance as they paint a picture of opposition which is far more generalized, albeit subtle in its expression. In order to illustrate this further, perhaps it is worth giving certain examples. A quite common one involves not accepting services provided in a camp setting. Refugees might refuse to take part in activities of the camp, even if they appear as benevolent, such as language learning for their children, as a form of resistance towards any provision given within this setting (Xypolytas 2019). Similarly, not accepting food that is provided in the camp, even though refugees' resources are extremely scarce, has also been associated with resisting the totalitarian context in which people find themselves (Cantelli and Shringarpure 2020).

In both these examples, refugee subjects appear fully aware of the implications behind their social position and refuse to legitimize it, since they perceive themselves more as captives and less as asylum claimants. One might argue that this form of resistance is not actively undermining refugee management and would even deteriorate refugees' condition given that refusing the meager provisions of the camp would only worsen the effects of their confinement.[7] However, regardless of the outcome of resistance, the perception of the subject concerning its domination is present and this cannot be analytically underestimated.

There are, however, situations where refugees are actively trying to undermine their confinement and the overall European migration policy. This is the case of rumors starting inside a camp about a group being granted or not being granted asylum that would result in upheavals and even riots (Xypolytas 2019). These are not random events but issues of profound sociological significance, as Scott explains in his analysis of resistance (1992). Rumors are powerful forms of anonymous communication that have, in several moments in history, ignited major uprisings. The anonymity of the transmitter of the initial message is essential in a perceived context of subjugation and control and ". . . as a rumour travels, it is altered in a fashion that brings it more closely into line with the hopes, fears, and worldview of those who hear it and retell it" (Scott 1992, 145). The result is often a confirmation of the worst fears of the refugees and that translates into immediate actions of unrest. So, instead of being viewed as isolated events in the everyday camp experience, rumors are actually powerful tools of disruption in the struggle against refugee incarceration.

The aforementioned examples of resistance are indeed important in the sense that they emphasize political acts that *do* take place at the moment within the confined spaces of refugee management. But what happens with the acts that *can* or *might* take place? Indeed, social sciences are not well known for their predictive abilities (Rosenberg 2016), but there are strong indications that one cannot leave unnoticed. One of those is the further authoritarian turn in refugee management and the various violent acts perpetrated against people who try to cross borders by state forces. Pushbacks, refugee abductions, beatings, or even execution-style shootings, such as the ones in Morocco on the 24th of June 2022, have become a new unbearable reality of refugee management. This radical change in migration control can be analyzed exclusively in terms of rising levels of oppression against refugees.

However, focusing solely on this aspect underestimates the refugee attitudes that are generated by meeting this level of state violence. The latter is as much a sign of rising refugee criminalization as it is a clear demarcation of an opponent against which refugees can make a stand. After all, clearly establishing the opponent is an essential aspect for political consciousness building and mobilization (Melucci 1996). Especially for the younger generation of refugees who have not yet witnessed or been accustomed to this level of state violence, rising authoritarianism can easily act as a catalyst for political awareness and action. This represents an actual contingency that should definitely be taken into account when analyzing the relation of refugees with the political.

Unavoidably, the aforementioned leads to a conclusion which suggests that crucial developments in the refugee condition have not been given the proper attention by social scientists. This appears to be the result of a theoretical and methodological ailment that many analyses often suffer from, which is none other than the inability to appreciate the values, beliefs, and potentialities of the subjects in question. Dominant and influential macro-level refugee analyses, regardless of their focus on domination, integration, or overall migration policies, cannot account for or explain the actions of refugees themselves and the meaning that is associated and generated in the process. After all, as a scientist, not giving a voice to the subject can give the false perception that the subject is indeed voiceless (Thompson 2000).

The result of this, in the case of conservative or functionalist analyses, would be evolutionary theoretical schemata of modernization which, much in the spirit of Inglehart's theory, would detect natural and insurmountable impediments in refugee politicization because of juvenile or even pubescent social characteristics of refugees that are yet to move into political "adulthood". In the case of critical or radical analyses, a picture of complete and total domination can often be painted where refugees simply succumb to the

goals of migration policies and management. Their political consciousness is smothered in individualization and their depoliticization is almost complete. Yet both fail to see profound political acts that are taking place, which require a certain level of political consciousness as well as transform refugee subjectivities in the process. By restricting the analysis of political action in almost geometrical theoretical shapes, dominant macro approaches may stay true to their theoretical foundations but will fail to see the processes of resisting migration control and the enormous effects these could have on refugee subjectivities.

After all, as E.P. Thompson (1963) rightly suggested, collective political subjects are the long result of formulation processes. One cannot simply project their present state in the past and assume that this has always been so. Even in the case of the ultimate collective political subject, the working class, as late as in the 18th century in England, repression would not allow direct political statements from the lower classes and instead, ". . . the expression of political sympathies was often oblique, symbolic, and too indefinite to incur persecution" (Thompson 1975, 200). It would be scientifically unwise to predetermine either refugees' depoliticization or the specific steps their politicization should take in order to fully manifest itself in the eyes of skeptical social scientists.

THEORETICAL TOOLS FOR EXPLAINING REFUGEES' AGENCY

In explaining collective action, Western theories of social movements very often overemphasize some specific factors regarding mobilized collectivities, such as "organizational strength," "mobilizing structures," "resources control," "political opportunities," "social embeddedness," and "group efficacy," thus disregarding other factors that have less conspicuous or blatant character. Furthermore, they manifest a clear tendency to conceive of collective action phenomena mainly as protest mobilizations, thus devaluing forms of action that cannot be classified precisely as protest. We argue that, especially in the case of refugees, these two conceptualizations must be avoided. The study of refugee's agency should follow a different methodology and exploit different key concepts compared to mobilization studies of other, more socially embedded, groups. So, let's very briefly look at these two points.

Collective actions in the case of refugees, as in any other case of agency, come every time in forms of expression that correspond to the formation of suitable collective identities. "Collective identity" (CI) is a concept that has received much elaboration in the context of various theorizing about contemporary social movements, yet it is too often used in a very approximate

way. In our opinion, if we consider that a strong process of mutual influence between the European *New Social Movements Theory* and the American *Resource Mobilization Theory* begins to take place mainly from the 1980s onwards,[8] it is correct to say that since then CI begins to appear in many analyses of movements, but more as a theoretically "due" reference to it than as a movement-determining reality. In other words, very often references to CI are made not so much because characteristics of movements that are central to understanding the forms of coexistence of their members and the forms of collective action chosen each time are sought in it, but rather because of a theoretical "concession" towards a culturalist perspective on social movements that gradually acquired intellectual and academic prestige throughout.

In this sense, CI has rather been "assimilated" by the strong theoretical context of RMT and Political Opportunity Structure, and this process is clearly captured in the theoretical treatment of the concept of CI. In fact, many analyses present it as a complementary emotional parameter to instrumental motivations, namely they place it on the axis of an emotional state that, in order to create collective action, simply compensates for a relative lack of resources and opportunities. However, the concept of CI is actually much richer and more complex than it appears in that context. In effect, CI could give researchers the ability to conceive collective action of refugees as emanating from possibilities of agency which are relatively independent of external "resources," "opportunities" and "social values" provided by the sociocultural environment.

In the theorization of Alberto Melucci, the concept of CI is absolutely necessary to understand how meaning is produced in collective action and how individuals and groups become active subjects by making sense of their action (Melucci 1996, 69–70). In his words, "Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place" (ibid., 70). CI then is a construction with strong communicative and interactive characteristics which, by activating forceful relationships between participants, gives meaning to itself through cognitive tools and emotional investment. Therefore, actors involved in the construction of a collective identity tend to define in a common way their orientations of action.

But this process is not always linear and peaceful, as modernization theories claim. Compared to previous periods, it presupposes an overcoming of fixed perceptions and a break with the rules that regulated the relevant behaviors. Social movements, according to Ralf Turner (1969, 391), become possible when significant groups of people revise their view of the social misfortune they are experiencing, seeing it as unjust and intolerable and thus ceasing to ask for the goodwill of others and demanding their rights from others. In

other words, the collective identity of a social movement is constituted at the moment when an interactive and collectively grounded radical revision of views, behaviors, and attitudes formed and consolidated in previous periods and which were characterized by submission, cooperation, obedience, or indifference occurs. This is exactly the case of refugee's radical agency.

The form of participation and interaction in a collective identity is different each time because it depends on the cognitive, emotional, and relational data that individual and collective subjects introduce into the collective identity under construction. These data are formed through and during interaction processes and presuppose both individual autonomy and the collective attempt to give common answers to questions that from a social point of view are factual, important, and urgent. To understand how and to what extent the above data can influence the formation of CI, we need to think about the relationship between macrostructural processes and "micro" data of daily social interaction. Even if we accept the idea of a powerful presence of macrostructural data in our lives (social, economic, political, and educational development, development of values and so on), we cannot easily accept that these data are not influenced by "micro-factors" of everyday life (embedded personal conceptions of justice, experienced forms of solidarity, symbolic interactions and mutual recognition of actors, ways of intersubjective communication and so on). From the point of view of social psychology, Henri Tajfel observes in this regard that sociopsychological variables enter with their own dynamics into the causal spiral of the formation of intergroup behaviors. According to Tajfel, sociopsychological variables exert feedback on macrostructural processes. That is, while these variables are determined by earlier social, economic, and political processes, they then acquire in turn an autonomous function that allows them to divert in one direction or another the subsequent functioning of those processes (Tajfel 1974, 65). Hence, it is extremely simplistic to picture a one-way correlation between macrostructural dynamics and individual characteristics of life, meaning that the former affects the latter without the latter having the ability to feedback, resist, or overturn. In fact, we could say that CI is the living proof of how and to what extent the collective action of oppressed people can react on oppressors and conditions of oppression.

Specifically, individuals and groups within the movement derive from their participation in the CI the sense that: (a) they shape a shared cognitive and meaningful framework for approaching reality; (b) they form a common orientation of action based on dynamic interactions and communications; and (c) coexist in an emotional context of solidarity that, when needed, compensates for deficient cognitive and relational resources for action (Melucci 1996, 70–71). This way of subjects connecting to collective action, or rather this way of acceding to the collective level of agency through CI, presupposes

certain fundamental changes at the personal level of formation of the subjects' sociopsychological characteristics. Two very critical of these characteristics appear to be self-determination and autonomy, both embedded in a continuous process of empowerment. According to Drury and Reicher (2005, 51), this process emerges as an enduring outcome of collective action and consists in the "confidence in one's ability to challenge existing relations of domination, typically accompanied by positive affect." Thus, empowerment arises as a positive social-psychological transformation when collective action serves the participants to realize their social identity in direct confrontation with the power of dominant outgroups (ibid.).

But what does "group efficacy" mean when we talk about mobilized refugees? How could we define "successful" action in the case of refugees and how is it is subjectively experienced by them? The answer must be formulated not based on external and systemically measurable evaluation criteria but by assigning emphatic importance to sociocultural and emotional factors that are activated when subjects perceive themselves capable of reshaping the world of injustice that surrounds them. Indeed, dynamics of social transformation involved in the empowerment process are clear inasmuch as it is related to a sense of self-confidence that allows subjects to feel capable of reshaping the social world by challenging existing relations of dominance (Drury and Reicher 2009, 708). This is exactly the "measure" of "success" of refugees' collective action.

Unlike the concept of empowerment, the concept of "mere efficacy," understood as an account of subjective power based essentially on rational calculation, does not capture important experiential aspects of subjects' lives. Empowerment is the experiential outcome of an action oriented to the construction of a CI that transcends the statuses that the system assigns to refugees. This transcendence that expresses a new social identity compared to the one the system had ascribed to them presupposes that subjects involved in the construction of CI: (a) come to consider differently the conditions of their trapped lives; (b) develop corresponding emotions and attitudes suitable to generate practices of resistance; and (c) produce networks of active relationships with each other and with other allies based on dynamic interactions and communications. This way, "success" can only occur "if and when such action is successful in the specific sense that it serves to realize (or objectify) participants' social identity (and hence their definition of legitimate practice) in the world, over against the power of dominant out-groups" (Drury and Reicher 2009, 716).

If empowerment produced by collective action is expressed as the realization of the possibility to construct a new social identity of the subjects, then "that empowerment is not reducible to the experience of success" (Drury and Reicher 2005, 35). Then "effectiveness" indicates the degree to which

subjects become actors utilizing a relative but significant autonomy to give meaning to their life circumstances in a revised way in relation to the past. This revision is of a "holistic type" that is, it involves a complex rationalization that synthesizes elements from different sources: rational calculus, moral principles and beliefs, emotional needs, and traditional understandings.[9] In other words, refugees (like other social subjects) do not join active collectivities because they see them as mere tools to achieve goals, but mainly because within them they form a personal identity that generally satisfies basic self-fulfillment expectations that are related to sociocultural and emotional parameters of life.

Even when refugees make claims of a material nature (concerning food, accommodation, etc.), we must consider that these claims are grounded in a moral cultural field, and specifically in the field of moral emotions.[10] In fact, there is a common and erroneous viewpoint that considers that material and nonmaterial criteria of action are mutually exclusive. However, their relationship is not set up in these terms. A correct understanding would be to distinguish their difference and, at the same time, recognize the methodological superiority of nonmaterial motivations, in the sense that they constantly constitute the meaningful frameworks of material motivations as well. This means that a collective actor perceives a material claim not by itself, not so much referring to economic interest, but only if it fits with the actor's structured conception about just claims. Therefore, the nonmaterial idea of justice defines the material idea of the particular claim and makes (or not) the goal claimable. This is precisely the basis of the argument with which E. P. Thomson (1971) explains the food riots of the "common people" in England in the eighteenth century.

Essentially, the above findings tell us that even if we rationally identify people's desires and motivations that underlie their behaviors, it is impossible to ground that rationality in the narrow framework of a materially oriented action. Such a perception was essentially established as a distorted self-understanding of Western subjects (therefore, it was very easily possible to apply it to refugees as well), through their forced conversion to the utilitarian way of thinking (Polanyi 2014), which was mainly spread through the rational choice theory and the homo oeconomicus pattern. However, human rationality is a complex one and combines material and sociocultural parameters (emotions, values, traditions, habits, aesthetics, symbolisms, etc.) in terms of a sought-after sociality that seems to decisively influence the search for a behavioral satisfaction of the deepest subjective needs formed in the context of social interactions.

Refugees, like other social subjects of postmodernity, constantly and actively participate in the construction of their identity, literally carrying out a continuous work of "identification" during which they develop a

continuous, inventive, and contradictory search for the unity of the person. This work on the self is based on the individual's participation in groups, on their placement in dynamic systems of relationships that offer intersubjective recognition of the individual's' "uniqueness" through collective processes that include value, meaning, and symbolic parameters. The mutual determination of individual and collective identity in movements takes place with dense actions of a deep communicative character and meaningful content: interactions, displacements, disagreements, agreements, negotiations, and innovations are forms that these communicative and meaningful actions take on a case-by-case basis.

And this leads us to the second theoretical tool for explaining refugees' agency. In order for the CI building processes to take place through action, they must find the appropriate "organizational frameworks." Given the living conditions of the refugees, it is not reasonable to seek to find in their collective actions forms of mobilization that resemble those of the more socially integrated groups. Indeed, the weak legal status of refugees, their usual isolation from the wider social environment and from each other, the extreme family vulnerability that characterizes them, and so on, all these conditions contribute to the fact that their collective actions are usually of small numerical scope, short-lived, and disconnected from wider cycles of protest. Naturally, obliged to adapt to such circumstances, refugees must find and utilize appropriate organizational forms. Small networks are the most appropriate organizational form of the collective action of refugees. The term "small networks" refers to an intensive process of communication, an ongoing discourse that serves as the "structure" of the movement, substituting for the structural dynamics of a typical movement organization.

"Outside of public institutions, identity work within small circles of like-minded people is critical to sustaining "'abeyance structures" during periods of limited political opportunities" (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 297). "Abeyance structures," then, are those free spaces that enable communication processes and serve as the "structure" of the movement. The lack of formal organizational structures of a movement and their replacement by informal networks of relationships that construct the meaning upon which CI is built is an issue that has consistently emerged in the study of movements for at least the last three decades. The terms Melucci uses to describe the dynamic construction of collective identity through meaningful and solidarity practices, such as "invisible networks of everyday life" (Melucci 2000, 45) or "communication and exchange networks" (Melucci 1996, 113), are characteristic. According to Melucci, hidden networks (solidarity circles) and mobilization resources are constantly present in communities mobilized to respond to an emergency. These networks and resources do not arise just when they manifest themselves; instead, they were already in place before that (ibid., 376).

To put it another way, "abeyance structures" serve to maintain a CI in contexts in which large and strong organizational structures are absent or impossible to build,[11] and thus emergent forms of collective action organize practices of survival and reproduction of the identity through cultural processing and diffusion of key ideas. This is the meaning of direct democratic and anarchist practices of cultural diffusion, which aim to recreate community bonds in conditions of oppression and suppression. Indeed, this recreation is a central concern of daily circles of communication that are part of urban movements, such as social centers, neighborhood committees, park occupations, alternative cafes, and submerged networks in general. Similarly, it is within respectively shaped "abeyance structures" that refugee agency can and often does take place.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we attempted an initial exploration of the concept of refugee depoliticization. Rather than accepting this as a concrete reality, our analysis pointed towards certain conceptual biases that fail to acknowledge existing political agency, since the latter is mistakenly perceived as a luxury afforded almost exclusively by socially integrated groups of the Global North. Rather than reproducing these essentialist and evolutionary arguments coming from modernization theories, we suggest a closer examination of refugees' social action at both the individual and collective level. This investigation contradicts modernization paradigms and instead unveils a rich and growing microcosm of resistance that defies and undermines elaborate subjugation and domination strategies. After all, the success of the latter is never guaranteed, and neither do these strategies stay unchallenged or unchanged. Their dynamic nature is linked to refugee resistance in the ongoing struggle for freedom of movement and social justice in a wildly unequal globe.

NOTES

1. For the purposes of this chapter, we are not utilizing the UNHCR definition for refugees. As will be pointed in the second part, this definition does not aim at protecting those on the move but represents a legal framework for safeguarding the interests of the Western ruling classes. Instead, we understand refugees as people who are indefinitely forced to move outside their own communities because of a variety of crises—produced mostly by structural interventions of external forces—that critically undermine their rights.

2. In a very characteristic way, Leonie Jackson, analyzing the Eurocentric self-understanding in the construction of the modern European identity in clear opposition to Islam, asserts that: "The dominant discourses adopted worked to represent Muslims as monolithically opposed to whichever value was being nationally championed, and the superior values of the enlightened Europeans were instrumentalized as disciplinary tools in an authoritarian discourse that demanded Muslims shed their cultural impediments to modernity" (Jackson 2018, 138).

3. As early as the 1980s, Claus Offe criticized the way Inglehart interpreted the emergence of new social movements in developed countries as an outcome of changing values. Describing this interpretation as "highly unspecific," Offe challenged Inglehart's unilinear sequential determination, arguing that "the supposedly predominant need for self-actualization could equally well lead to new and unconventional, but entirely private, life-styles and consumptions patterns rather than to new politics" (Offe 1987, 85). So, referring to these movements, he concludes that "Inglehart's explanation clearly cannot account for their hypothetical significance; it needs to be amended by a less psychologizing interpretation" (ibid.).

4. "Politics exists as a deviation from this normal order of things. It is this anomaly that is expressed in the nature of political subjects, which are not social groups but rather forms of inscription that (ac)count for the unaccounted" (Rancière 2010, 35). And "A political subject is not a group of interests or of ideas, but the operator of a particular dispositif of subjectivation and litigation through which politics comes into existence" (ibid., 39).

5. Such an example of the use of this theoretical perspective to empirically analyze refugee's agency in Greece can be found in Karaliotas and Kapsalis 2020. For an overall view of the self-organized refugee housing projects in Greece and especially building squats and occupied camps, see Tsavdaroglou et al. 2019)

6. The term American—Soviet antagonism is preferred to what is often characterized as 'Cold War'. The latter is considered as a particularly Eurocentric term, since it clearly underplays the extreme violence and destruction that took place during this period in countries of the global periphery such as Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, and many others.

7. In the sociological analysis of resistance, this is a rather familiar discussion that was sparked by Paul Willis's *Learning to Labor* (1981) and the cyclical nature of his argument, since the resistance of subjects would lead to exactly the same outcome they were resisting against in the first place.

8. According to Stekelenburg and Klandermans (1997, 889–-890), "In the 1980s it became clear that instrumental reasoning is not a sufficient reason to participate in protest. Increasingly, the significance of collective identity as a factor stimulating participation in protest was emphasized." For a similar approach, see also Polleta and Jasper 2001.

9. In our own perception, this complex rationalization combines all the well-known four ideal types of social action conceptualized by Max Weber: goal-rational social action, value-rational social action, affective social action, and traditional social action.

10. Moral emotions involve "feelings of approval and disapproval based on moral intuitions and principles, as well as the satisfactions we feel when we do the right (or

wrong) thing, but also when we feel the right (or wrong) thing, such as compassion for the unfortunate or indignation over injustice” (Jasper, 2011, 287).

11. As a recent movement report from Germany notes: “Activists often engage in submerged and less visible forms of mobilizations than protests to resist and transform the isolation that refugees experience in camps. For example, self-organized groups of refugees often organize outreach initiatives in camps in view of raising the awareness of refugees on their rights and promoting their political mobilization” (Perolini 2020, 221).

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