STUDIES

ACTA HUMANA • 2014/Special 9–23.

New Minorities: Tracing the *Tolerated Other* from Silence to Speech

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This article discusses the asylum practices in Hungary by looking at the asylum seekers' road from struggling to express their claims to the point of achieving the quality and recognition to speak. I focus on the particular manifestations, meaning and interpretations of their voice. Drawing on the role of language turned into agency and power, at times into protest, I argue that the asylum seekers go through a process of imposed voicelessness by a set of actors, spaces and institutions pertaining to the asylum system. They can overcome this silence when they make themselves heard, listened to and understood outside the space of control and detention, when they reach political subjectivity and when they efface the limits between aliens/non aliens and between nationals/citizens.

Keywords: *asylum seekers, refugees, political voice, alienation, subjectivity, speech.*

Introduction

This article is an excerpt of my Master's Thesis in Sociology and Social Anthropology, submitted to Central European University Budapest (2010). My aim was to make an anthropological inquiry into the strategies, laws, spaces and actions that constitute Hungary's policy vis-à-vis asylum seekers and an attempt to trace the narrative of becoming a refugee.

I develop two parallel trajectories: the articulation and resonance of the asylum seekers' voice within the camp and outside it, and the responses offered by the system. The latter, which officials in charge of pre-asylum detention camps perceive as generous, is premised on a preliminary image of asylum seekers as potential criminals, producing an asylum recognition process that leaves claimants with minimum access to opportunities for a decent life outside the camp.

An essential component of the asylum seekers' struggle to gain voice in the process is language. It is through language that the asylum seeker has to establish credibility in the asylum process. Language is the only tool for applicants to convey unspeakable experiences of torture and extreme hardship. I argue that the articulations made by claimants in the detention camp, read as protests, are contingent on the constraints imposed on them by camp life. I will trace these protests as they evolve into a manifestly more political voice as those who are

eventually granted refugee status move to urban spaces. The newly acquired ability to make oneself heard distinguishes the alienation characterizing the status of refugee from the status of a citizen.

My hypothesis is that the asylum procedure in place is meant to silence asylum seekers. In turn, the language of the asylum applicants is interpreted as a text about protest. The end product of the asylum procedure is a strong pattern of structural exclusion.

I am going to test this hypothesis in light of the theories on the interpretation of language (Butler, 1997), on refugees' political voice (Malkki, 1996; Nyers, 206), and on citizenship (Soysal, 1998).

My overall argument is that Hungary's asylum system embodies an ambivalent, love-hate logic governing the processing of claims. This process leads to granting a third protection status: the tolerated status (in Hungarian: *befogadott*) more frequently than granting the other two statuses: refugee status and beneficiary of subsidiary protection. The tolerated status is a detrimental category which deprives the beneficiaries from a series of rights that would enable them to acquire citizenship.

Chapter 1. Interdisciplinary approaches in asylum and refugees research. "Waves" of migrants and refugees: ways of conceiving and controlling them

Migration, asylum and refugee topics have marked the recent agenda of research in various academic fields, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, international relations, human rights and legal studies. Although migration and forced migration in particular does not suppose a brand new matter of concern for academics and practitioners, it is mainly the research done in the past decades which allocated time, interest and established new directions about how to tackle the issue of asylum within and outside academia.

The paradigms of asylum and refugees must be addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective, I argue, as means for achieving a better understanding of these issues but also in order to shape a more efficient way of addressing the gap between theory and fieldwork, between concepts and findings.

The recent changes in the world system – the decolonization process, the conflicts in the third world, the so-called war on terror – have resulted in a new migratory phenomenon: refugees fleeing from the conflict areas of Africa, Asia and South America to European countries since the 1970s. Defined as "new refugees" (Joly and Cohen 1989), they are distinguished from the previous ones through cultural and ethnical characteristics which are very different from their host countries.

Additionally, it has been argued that the defensive political agenda of European and American states is built upon the fear that the bureaucratic and economic apparatus can no longer sustain the asylum system which has been "abused" by migrants with no legally justified claims to international protection. Thus, the "abusive claimants" (Rudge 1997: 68) are perceived by the states as a threat, an uncontrolla-

ble force, draining the welfare system and producing tension in local communities. Rudge (1997) also highlights that this response towards illegal asylum applications is understandable in our times of economic recession and high unemployment. These observations, with particular reference to Western European countries and their political agenda, are valid, to a certain extent, in Hungary's case nowadays, as it shall be argued in the analytical sections of this article.

In another interesting approach towards asylum, Philip Marfleet poses the refugees' question in the global context of migration, racism, politics, and world development. He argues that there has been a shift in global refugee "trends". Initially "Ambassadors" (1940s – 1960s) – forced migrants, males, skilled and educated, fleeing from communist Eastern European states to Western democracies – they are now the "New Invisible" refugees (1970s, 1980s and onwards), preponderantly women and children, fleeing from vulnerable regions of the Third World, for reasons of hunger, economic collapse, state repression and civil conflict (Marfleet, 2006: 151).

Furthermore Marfleet helps us understand why refugees are perceived and depicted as aliens to Western culture: *aliénage* is a condition of people who are rejected because of their fundamental difference vis-à-vis the host society. The European Union harmonized legislation on immigration, the intensification of racism in Europe, the aggressive campaigns against immigrants in Western European *democracies,* the crisis of regional economies since the 1980s, have negatively shaped the attitudes toward migrants, implicitly towards refugees, in Marfleet's opinion. In the light of popular racism supported by populist radical-right-wing parties – like the Jobbik in Hungary, that "won 14.7 percent of the vote in Hungary in the June European elections, giving it three seats in Strasbourg" (Leigh, EU Observer, October, 26, 2009) – the *difference* is perceived as essentially biological. The hope for *ethnic affinity* towards the refugees is hence dramatically reduced in the "new Europe" and in Hungary as well.

Gibney gives three main reasons for refugees as global threats. First, their volume – in case of mass influx – is seen as a threat. Secondly, their character is often reduced to the image of "bearers" of the instability, insecurity, violence of their own states. The third reason refers to their anonymity: states, governments, local authorities do not know too much about their background, their identity and, thus, their intentions. I consider relevant for my analysis of the Hungarian asylum practices to add another element to Gibney's three-fold theory: welfare chauvinism as the dominant political discourse that associates Roma people in Hungary with migrants, including refugees, and incriminates them on racial basis.[1]

The critical approach towards refugees' politics, delineated by Peter Nyers (2006), is a central argument for my analysis of the refugee's road from silence to speech within the Hungarian Asylum System, with particular reference to those actions that express political voice and agency.

1 Thank you to Robert Balogh for the development of this argument

Nyers makes use of the concept "state of exception" and "state of emergency" for understanding how both sovereign power and refugee identity are constituted. His analysis of the refugee concept looks at the way in which "qualities of speechlessness, invisibility and emptiness onto the (non) political body of the refugee" (2006: XVI) structure and order refugee identity. The "politics of being a refugee" (2006: XV) is, thus, the core element of the concept of "refugeeness", seen as a social construction or a site of struggle: "a continual process of identity construction" (2006: XV).

A crucial element of the analysis emerges from the fact that refugees are nowadays treated as a "crisis", or an "emergency" (Nyers, 2006) because they do not fit into the picture of a sovereign territorial state, they are not sedentary persons, they have no reserved place in the state's affairs, in a nutshell: they are not citizens. "Instead, qualities of invisibility, voicelessness, and victimhood are allocated with the effect of effacing the political subjectivity of the refugee" (Nyers, 2006: XV).

Providing political voice to refugees has become a matter of concern for intergovernmental organizations in the past decade, Nyers emphasizes. He thus points to Oxfam, the international humanitarian aid organization, whose project: "Listening to the Displaced" (2000) aimed at empowering people whose voices were not taken into consideration when decisions regarding their life were made. Nevertheless, this report has been criticized by academics – Prem Kumar Rajaram (2002), for the lack of self-reflexivity in choosing which voices were to be heard and for the misrepresentation of refugees' concerns, thus having nothing more than a financial impact.

Nyers concludes, however, by offering a positive perspective towards refugees' activism and political organization. He underlines refugees' actions like the Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants which travels to forty-four German cities in order to support and promote political expression, or the forty-five thousand Guatemalan refugees, in southern Mexico, who organized a Permanent Commission and elected its members to represent them when negotiating the terms of return with UNHCR, in 1986. They have thus "actively resisted multilateral solutions to their plight that treated them as passive, voiceless, agentless victims" (Nyers, 2006: 129).

Refugees were fundamentally seen as a new phenomenon in Hungary, prior to 1980s there were no laws regulating refugees, no organizations dealing with refugees. According to Maryellen Fullerton et al (1995), there have been two waves of refugees between the 1980s and 1995: the first came from Romania, in the late 1980s and in 1991, following the fall of the communist regime – around 50.000 people. The second wave began in June 1991 and largely came from former Yugoslavia, with 70.000 people arriving in Hungary in a two year period (Fullerton et al 1995).

A more recent analysis of the refugees' issues (Nagy, 2002) identifies four periods of forced migration. While the first two phases are identical with those identified by Fullerton et al (1995), the third phase is the relatively calm half decade until 1998 and coincides with the arrival of asylum seekers from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yugoslavia, about 17.000 refugees in all. The fourth phase goes from 1998 to 2000, when the number of asylum seekers to be dealt with by the Hungarian refugee system multiplied and the dominant groups come from non-European territories like Afghanistan,

Iraq, Bangladesh, Algeria and Sierra Leone. What this shows is that Hungary has become part of "the global refugee scene and therefore has to seek responses which are adequate to the character of this development." (Nagy 2002:10). Furthermore, there is a fear of becoming the responsible state for the recognition and integration of too many refugees, continues Nagy. This fear led to the introduction of restrictive techniques in procedural law regarding asylum seekers and refugees.

The Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum was adopted by Parliament on 25 June 2007 and promulgated by the Official Gazette on 29 June 2007.[2] Under the new Act the Hungarian authorities enacted new legislation to bring the rules governing asylum procedures in Hungary into line with EU harmonization requirements (ECRI Report on Hungary, 2008).

The Asylum Act, chapter III, IV and V state the criteria for granting recognition to asylum seekers, via one of the three legal protection statuses: refugee status, subsidiary and complementary protection (for *en-masse* refugees), tolerated status. One particular aspect of critique (Gyulai, 2009) refers to the tertiary status, *tolerated status.*

The beneficiaries of *tolerated status* enjoy minimum protection against extradition, but still face crucial obstacles that bar their access to an independent life outside the camp, with reasonable employment and access to social services. For instance, they are provided with "humanitarian residence permit *(humanitarius tartozkodasi engedely)*" (Gyulai, 2009: 24), instead of an identity card, which has to be renewed every year. This will further lead to longer bureaucratic procedures in acquiring a work permit, thus, new impediments for entering the labour market. For them, reaching full citizenship takes, on average, five years longer than it takes for those who hold the status of refugees or that of subsidiary protection, who are entitled to full citizenship after only three years of continuous stay in Hungary (Gyulai, 2009).

The Hungarian Asylum practices follow the EU Directives, reflecting a global shift from permanent to temporary and other forms of protection, decided according to national standards. "The tolerated status therefore reflects Hungary's *non-refoulement* obligations under international law" (Gyulai, 2009: 24).

Chapter 2. Research design and methodology

The main methodological strategy I have chosen for the research period, January - April 2010, was ethnography. This qualitative approach enabled me to analyze the asylum procedure, with focus on the asylum applicants' voice inside two reception camps in Hungary and during several actions and meetings with recognized refugees in Budapest.

Entering the field was a difficult process, particularly because of the nature of the field itself: the reception camps in Hungary are under the control of the Hungarian State, via the Office for Immigration and Nationality (*Menekültügyi Igazgatóság*

2 Source for the online English version of the Asylum Act: the Office of Immigration and Nationality (BÁH)

Ellátási és *Integrációs Osztály* or *BÁH*). No strangers are allowed to enter the camps, without permission from the Immigration Office. I contacted one of the BÁH officers whom I met personally at a Seminar on Migration, Security and Human Dimension at CEU. The exchange of emails with the officer and an official letter submitted to the Head of BÁH lead to the approval of my entry request to the Debrecen camp. Since language was one of my concerns, I was allowed and advised by the BÁH officer to be accompanied by a Hungarian interpreter who spoke English, in the Debrecen camp, and by an interpreter who spoke Russian, in the Bicske camp.

I have conducted some of the semi-structured interviews in the Debrecen camp in English: with the head of the social workers and the individual responsible for European Projects. For the other interviews, with the Status Determination Officers, the Director of the camp, the psychologist and one of the social workers, I was assisted by the Hungarian interpreter. When interviewing the asylum applicants in the Debrecen camp I used French, English and Romanian, the latter in the case of a lady coming from Ethiopia, who had spent five years in Bucharest prior to her arrival to Hungary.

Since the particular conditions of the Debrecen camp do not reserve space for a one-to-one interview setting, I mainly conducted group interviews with the asylum applicants. The ethnographic study in the pre-integration camp in Bicske relied, on the one hand, on the interviews with the camp inhabitants and with the officials. On the other hand, I used the method of participant observation in the camp during the day-time (08h00 – 16h00). This method enabled me to better understand the refugees' experience in the living space of the camp. Thus, my interpreter and I had lunch with some of the interviewees, played with the children, helped them with the cleaning and walked with them from the camp to the railway station.

I have also used the ethnographic method of participant observation during several meetings with recognized refugees in Budapest. These type of actions that I participated in made a crucial contribution to my argument about refugees' political voice, discussed in the analytical part of the article.

My first contact with a group of recognized refugees outside the space of the camp took place at Tüzraktér, Budapest, in January 2010. The Tüzraktér event started with a film screening about refugees in Greece and it was followed by a discussion with several refugees about their experience in Hungary (Figure 1). I thus got to know refugees from Iran, Afghanistan, Nigeria and some of the participants at the protests inside the Debrecen camp, in June 2008.

Secondly, I participated in the Iranian Refugees' March in Budapest, March 10, 2010, organized with the support of Amnesty International. The participants also signed an Open Letter that asked the Hungarian authorities and the representatives of the European Commission in Hungary to stop the deportation of Iranian political refugees in Hungary.

Thirdly, I was a participant observer at a meeting at Ráday Szalon, in Budapest, where two Iranian asylum applicants spoke about the political situation, human rights violation and persecution in Iran that forced them to flee the country

Some of the limitations in regards to the methodology refer to the language impediments, especially in the Debrecen camp, where out of forty nationalities I could speak only to those who knew English, French, Romanian or Hungarian. I was, nevertheless, able to listen to many voices, from several countries: Cameron, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Ethiopia and Guinea. In the Bicske camp I interviewed persons from Palestine, Lebanon, Georgia and Afghanistan who were granted a protection status. I also tried to maintain a gender balance in conducting the interviews, which was, again, more difficult in the Debrecen camp where the majority of the inhabitants are males.

Figure 1. Tüzraktér: Documentary Film and Discussion with refugees in Hungary

Source: http://lmv.hu/node/4864

Chapter 3. Voice, birds, heralds and cats

The line of argument of this section points to the various meanings and interpretations of an asylum applicant's voice in his/her process of "becoming-refugee" (Nyers, 2006: XV). By "voice" in this section I refer to Judith Butler's (1997) theory of language conceived as speech, agency and utterance, but also language acting "against us", thus producing linguistic injury or "hate speech" (1997:2).

The type of injurious speech in which certain words might wound and produce offensive representations has, in her view, a direct application in the fixity of one's name: "being called a name one is given a certain possibility for social existence" (Butler, 1997:2). I thus assert that the social existence of a refugee is a conditional calling into social existence by an *Other*, be it the Border Police Officer who apprehends the illegal migrants, the Eligibility Officer in the Debrecen camp or the Judge at the Metropolitan Court in Budapest who decides on granting the protection status or not, at

the end of a long and sometimes exhausting process of recognition, that goes through exclusion many times. Exclusion from social services during the asylum procedure has been acknowledged, for instance, by the inhabitants of Debrecen camp who did not have access to the office of Menedék social workers because they were not recognized as *befogadott* (tolerated status)[3].

Another meaning of language identified by Butler and relevant for my analysis of the refugees' voice refers to the peculiar relationship that language has with the body: "if language can sustain the body, it can also threaten its existence" (Butler, 1997: 5). According to Ellen Scarry's original idea expressed in *The Body in Pain* (1985) and cited by Butler, the body's pain ca not be expressed in language, therefore "one of the injurious consequences of torture is that the one tortured loses the ability to document in language the event of torture" (Butler 1997: 5). In other words "what we don't speak about doesn't hurt" (Interview with Lilla Hardi, psychologist at the Cordelia Foundation for the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Torture, March 18, 2010)[4].

I highlight this particular aspect of language by referring to the refugees' stories of torture as understood and depicted by the psychologists from the Cordelia Foundation. The work of both the psychologists from Cordelia Foundation and the Eligibility Officers in the Debrecen camp, though with very different outcomes, is to listen to the applicants' stories about painful experiences that forced them to flee their home countries. While the Cordelia team offers counseling to the sufferers of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), which is a psychological scar on tortured persons, the Officers conducting the status interviews have the task of deciding upon "survivable subjects" in accordance with their ability to document in speech their trauma. The diagnosis made by the Cordelia Foundation psychologists however does not influence very much the eligibility procedure, according to Ms Hardi.

Furthermore I argue that the refugees' voice can be understood as language conveyed into a "living thing" (Butler, 1997:6) imagined as a bird, which has the ability to say the unspeakable story of a refugee. In her book *Oppressive Language* (1993) Toni Morrison, cited by Butler (1997), gives a parable in which language itself is figured as a "living thing":

> [I]n the parable young children play a cruel joke and ask a blind woman to guess whether the bird that is in their hands is living or dead. The blind woman responds by refusing and displacing the question: "I don't know…but what I do know is that it is in your hands (Morrison, 1985:11 in Butler, 1997:6).

The figure of the woman in the parable is interpreted as a "practiced writer" and the bird as language: "she [the woman] thinks of language partly as a system, partly as a living thing over which one has control, but mostly as agency – as an act with

3 Group interview with asylum applicants from Cameron and Nigeria, March 17, 2010

4 The Cordelia team is composed of psychiatrists, psychologists, verbal and non-verbal therapists and social workers whose work is based on the principle of mobility between the three refugee camps in Hungary

consequences." (Butler, 1997:6). Butler then points to Morrison's parable when she claims that agency is perceived as a figure for language and language as a figure of agency: "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives" (Morrison, 1985: 22 in Butler, 1997:6).

Juxtaposing Morisson's parable with one of the non-verbal therapies used by the Cordelia psychologists during the counseling of the victims of torture, I underline how language can metamorphose as a means of survival and self-protection. The applicant/patient does this by dealing with the trauma and the counseling is meant to open up the person and help her communicate with the family who is left home by an act of non–speech, conveying fears, affection and hopes that ca not be told to anyone else in the camp as an effect of the trauma she has been going through. I further state that the herald bird takes away all the unpronounceable burden of pain, freeing the person's soul. On her way "home" the bird sent by the asylum applicant-patient of the Cordelia Foundation therapy group may live or die, like the bird-language in the hands of the children interpreted by the blind woman. Nonetheless what matters in the alienated space of the camp is the transfer of pain and human affection from the traumatized person to the voiceless omen in the process of healing.

By using the interpretation offered by Butler to language as agency, and mirrored in Morrison's parable, I stress the entanglement of meanings and power that refugee' words, hence voice, have in and over their lives when words are converted into hearings during the asylum determination cases. Consequently I argue that the bird-therapy used by Cordelia psychologists and the bird-language parable in Buttler's example reflect a sort of a "detained language" belonging to those asylum applicants whose utterance is first silenced by the acts of torture they were subjected to and they have no way of expressing it apart from the imaginary bird-herald sent home. Secondly, their voice, a "living thing", is transfigured into the hearings, thus "the hands" of the *Other* whose power gives the "measure of their lives" by determining their status as refugees or other protected or rejected persons.

Conversely, a mutual understanding of language and its meaning that I was witnessing during my fieldwork is reflected in the setting of the Bicske camp, particularly in the situation when the son of a Lebanese family was playing with the girl of a Vietnamese family with no exchange of words. Surprised by the situation, I asked one of the camp inhabitants whom I have also interviewed: "How do the kids understand each other, what language do they speak?" and I got the following answer: "The children's language". This argument was reiterated the second day I spent in the camp, while I was taking notes on the bench in front of the camp's 'restaurant', with my interpreter. We were amazed to see the same eight year old little Lebanese boy walking towards the gates of the camp hand in hand with the same three year old Vietnamese girl he had been playing with the previous day. After a few steps, his older brother joined them and he started carrying the little girl in his arms.

All in all, a recognizably warmer atmosphere was predominant in the Bicske camp, where there were also many cats, exhibiting a more accessible and friendly image of

the place. The interviewees spoke more freely about their experience and their concerns. The access itself was granted in a more facile way and the reception officers checked our documents with less scrutiny.

By highlighting the differences between the two camps, Debrecen and Bicske, particularly the use of "children's language" and the presence of friendly cats, my purpose is to portray how the meaning of language and time fuses with the space that the asylum applicants are delimited by.

On a parallel level, the racialization of the asylum applicants and recognized refugees is another important element of the asylum practices in both the Debrecen and Bicske camp.[5] The association of asylum seekers with Roma in Hungary is part of the political discourse that I referred to in the previous chapter in terms of welfare chauvinism. Scholars like Suvendrini Perera (2002) have argued about the racialization of asylum seekers, refugees and inhabitants of detention camps in Australia, building on Agamben's (1997) essay about the space of the camp that overlaps the invocation of national security and an implicit racial difference. Perera points to this practice that originates in older forms of racism but has now been coupled with current reconfigurations of citizenhood and denationalization.

Liz Fekete (2001) identifies the incrimination and incarceration of asylum seekers with "xeno-racism", a mixture of old and new forms of racism: "Jews under Nazism, Blacks under slavery, 'Natives' under colonialism, were similarly dehumanized, held to hold mass characteristics which justified exploitation, victimization and, in the last, genocide." (Fekete 2001: 6 in Perera, 2002).

Chapter 4. When does the voice become political? Can the alien become the citizen?

In this section I move from the issue of voice as a matter of credibility in the asylum procedure and as an action of protest against the confinement of the camp towards the meaning of voice as political rights, defining the citizen and never the refugee.

Liisa Malkki's (1996) emphasis on the process of "dehistoricization" of the refugees signals the difficulties in approaching this category of displaced people as historical actors rather than simply as "mute victims". She further claims that "in abstracting their predicaments from specific political, historical, cultural contexts - humanitarian practices tend to silence refugees" (Malkki, 1996:378).

In her line of argument the refugees "are being rendered speechless" (Malkki, 1996:392) by national and international organizations. Also "this is where the question of *voice* - the ability to establish narrative authority over one's own circumstances and future, and, also, the ability to claim an audience" (Malkki, 1996:393) comes into the analysis.

5 Thank you to Professor Prem Kumar Rajaram for his suggestions on this argument

The voice of refugees defined in these terms resonates, to a certain extent, with Balibar's understanding of citizenship: "in its strict sense as the full exercise of political rights and in its broad sense as cultural initiative or effective presence in the public space (the capacity to be ‚listened to' there)" (Balibar, 1988:724 in Malkki, 1996:400).

For Malkki, the process of dehistoricization of refugees is inevitably linked to a project of depoliticization: "for to speak about the past […] was to speak about politics. This could not be encouraged by the camp administrators; political activism and refugee status were mutually exclusive here, as in international refugee law more generally" (Malkki, 1996: 385)

Using a similar logic, Peter Nyers (2006) stresses the political challenges posed by the refugee-identity concept, stating that the relationship between the two dimensions: identity and political subjectivity is not oppositional, rather [it] can be described as an 'inclusive-exclusion': "refugees are included in the discourse of 'normality' and 'order' only by virtue of the exclusion from the normal identities and ordered spaces of the sovereign state" (Nyers, 2006: XI). He then explores the politics of the refugees' representational practices in comparing the status of a refugee to that of a citizen.

Juxtaposing Malkki's argument with Peter Nyers' approach, I argue that refugees' voice has "an effective presence in the public space" (Balibar, 1998) and it gains political subjectivity. That means that refugees speak about their history and the politics which produce displaced people only when they are no more spatially and temporally subjected to the space of the camp, but they can rely on already existing communities of recognized refugees who act and communicate with various institutions and power holding actors in society.

The action of the Iranian refugees marching in Budapest, on March 10th 2010 is the case that I make reference to as a supportive argument. During the march I also got the flier in Hungarian about a future event involving Iranian refugees, on March 17, 2010 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Flier distributed during the Iranian refugees' march in Budapest, March 10th 2010

I affirm that the meaning of the refugees' voice presented above can be attached to what Nyers (2006) offers as an opened perspective regarding refugees' activism, especially in the Northern countries which have been traditionally asylum seekers' destinations. For instance in Germany (1998) and Australia (2002) large caravans are organized, like the Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants which travels to 44 German cities to support political expression and activity, or the Woomera Caravan, a movement for making refugees' political and cultural practices known in Australia.

If the case of the Iranian refugees' march in Budapest is understood as activism and voice turned into political action, I further argue that this type of action underlines a sort of "cultural" form of citizenship, as suggested by Bulibar (1988), which relies on the ability "to be listened to". Yet it cannot be overlapped with full-citizenship or "full exercise of political rights", as the right to vote "shows how inclusion in a community of equals is connected with the individual right to make autonomous contributions and take personal positions on issues" (Habermas, 1999: 242). Nevertheless, my point is that the march of the Iranian refugees enabled them to freely speak about the past and to speak about politics in the public space, something that "could not be encouraged by the camp administrators; political activism and refugee status were mutually exclusive here [in the camp]" (Malkki, 1996: 385). The move from speechlessness to political voice is thus meaningful, marking off the release of the conditionality of space.

I further pose the question of political voice as inherently intertwined with the claim to citizenship, an argument previously stated by Malkki (1996) and Nyers (2006). Citizenship as such has been debated and analyzed in many ways, in particular with reference to the borders of the political community and space: "those excluded by EU citizenship schemes, mainly third country nationals and undocumented migrants in the EU, become claimants of rights and pose challenges to the boundaries of political community and political space envisaged by the EU." (Caglar and Rajaram, 2008)

Therefore, if politics conceived as a "citizen's practice" (Habermas, 1999, 243) has entitled so far only "man and citizen [to be] political subjects" (Ranciere, 2004: 303 in Rajaram, 2007: 280), I here refer to the transnational migrants and refugees as actors that constitute the crucial challenge to the current form of citizenship, bounded to a nation-state and to a particular territory. Since a paradigmatic shift has emerged in the reorganization of politics, the border between inclusion and exclusion as categories allocated to citizens and aliens needs to be reinvented: "as rights have come to be predicated on residency, not citizen status, the distinction between 'citizen' and 'alien' has eroded "(Jacobson 1996: 9 in Vink 2005: 5)

Moving one step further, I point to the post-national model of membership offered by Soysal (1998) that questions the limits of European and national citizenship. If national citizenship is seen as "a last bastion of sovereignty" (Brubaker, 1992: 180 in Vink 2005: 5) and a "transnational system of citizenship"[6] emerges within EU borders,

6 Irina Molodikova, 1st Seminar on "Migration, Security and Human Dimension in the EU Borderland", at CEU, Febr.11, 2010

broader questions arise like: does the EU citizenship create "transnational rights" for other categories of people like refugees?

Conclusion

This article has examined how the asylum seekers in Hungary assert their claims during the refugee recognition process from stages of voicelessness to speech. My aim was to show that the variations of their speechlessness, interpreted through language, is transformed into protests and culminates in political voice manifested in urban open spaces.

I tried to prove that the Hungarian asylum system responds to the asylum seekers' claims following a double logic. On the one hand, there is an acclaimed generosity on behalf of the asylum officers for accepting the applicants in the asylum procedure and in the camps. On the other hand, the asylum seekers are seen as sources of violence and a threat, eventually being granted a detrimental, *tolerated status* that hinders their acquisition of rights similar to a citizen.

This study was not meant to focus on the political discourses in Hungary that deas with immigration and racism. Nevertheless, it had touched on the issue of racialization of the asylum seekers, whose image is often associated by the political parties with marginal groups, mostly the Roma. The argument was not discussed at large in this article but it is a relevant field for new questions and approaches towards refugees and migration.

At the same time, due to space and other types of constraints, I have not discussed the issue around the contested existence of the Debrecen camp which has an economic dimension. This could be an important factor in the future structure of asylum in Hungary, particularly as there are links between the interpretation of the asylum seekers' voice and protests and political environment. Moreover, this can lead to broader questions about the justification of camps in the EU and viable alternatives to these spaces of detention. I finally state that this kind of inquiries opens the road for further research.

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