Introduction to the Issue

Encountering Hospitality and Hostility

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This introductory article to the inaugural issue of *Migration and Society* reflects on the complex and often contradictory nature of migration encounters by focusing on diverse dynamics of hospitality and hostility towards migrants around the world and in different historical contexts. Discourses, practices, and policies of hospitality and hostility towards migrants and refugees raise urgent moral, ethical, political, and social questions. Hospitality and hostility are interlinked, yet seemingly contradictory concepts and processes, as also acknowledged by earlier writers, including Derrida, who coined the term *hostipitality*. Drawing on Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's work and on feminist scholars of care, we argue for the need to trace alternative modes of thought and action that transcend and resist the fatalistic invocations of *hostipitality*. This requires an unpacking of the categories of host and guest, taking us from universalizing claims and the taxonomy of host-guest relations to the messiness of everyday life and its potential for care, generosity, and recognition in encounters.

■ **KEYWORDS:** crisis, encounters, ethics of care, hospitality, hostility, migrants, solidarity, refugees

Migration touches, and has always touched, the lives of people across the globe. This includes those migrating, their families, kin groups, descendants, friends, and communities; those aspiring to migrate, but who are unable to do so whether for familial, financial, legal, security, or other reasons; those fostering, facilitating, or constraining the migration of others (including those embedded within the “migration industries” [Cranston et al. 2018]); and those living in sites of departure, transit, and (non-)arrival. Migration is, in all its heterogeneity, a multidirectional process that is intrinsically related to diverse forms of encounters: with and between different people and objects, places and spaces, temporalities and materialities, beliefs and desires, and sociocultural and political systems.

In this inaugural issue of *Migration and Society*, we reflect on the complex and often contradictory nature of such encounters by focusing on diverse dynamics of hospitality and hostility towards migrants around the world and in different historical contexts.

Our contributors examine questions that are at the core of diverse encounters, including how and why different actors have responded to the actual, prospective, and imagined arrival of migrants across time and space. This includes analysis of the responses and reactions of frontline workers and civil society and faith-based actors to the claims on and to hospitality by migrants and refugees (Isayev; Wagner; Dennler; Challinor; Wilkinson); how migrants and refugees have experienced and responded to different, and at times overlapping, processes of

hospitality and hostility in sites of transit and settlement, including those joining established diasporas and transnational communities (Daley, Kamata and Singo; Daskalaki and Leivaditi; Brennan); the politics and the poetics of hospitality and hostility towards migrants in different spaces (see especially contributions to our People and Places; Reflections; and Creative Encounters sections later in the issue); and questions of how, why, and with what effects diverse media have represented processes of migration, such that some groups have been rendered (hyper) visible and audible, while others have become invisible, inaudible, and silenced (Rosen and Crafter). Finally, by including contributions that examine past dynamics of hospitality and hostility alongside or in relation to contemporary ones, we aim—in line with the journal's aim more broadly—to highlight the significance of historical resonances, continuities, and discontinuities with the current moment. This is particularly important in the context of our inaugural theme, given the extent to which the “European refugee crisis” has predominantly been framed through a lens of historical and geographical exceptionalism, but also in our vision for *Migration and Society* moving forward.

Discourses, practices, and policies of hospitality and hostility towards migrants and refugees raise urgent moral, ethical, political, and social questions—processes and questions, as Elena Isayev reminds us in her article, which themselves have such long histories that they are simultaneously imperative and pressing for the “here and now” and yet are equally “timeless” in many ways. In seeking to answer such questions, we can benefit from empirically and theoretically grounded scholarship showing the social embeddedness, nuances, and ambiguities of situated practices of hospitality and hostility. Resisting the largely myopic, ahistorical, and isolationist responses that governments and media have developed to migrant arrivals in the global North, our inaugural volume includes critical reflections that aim to situate current practices in a deeper and wider historical and geographical context. This helps open up the possibility of imagining and embodying “the otherwise,” that is, “forms of life that are at odds with dominant, and dominating, modes of being” (Povinelli 2011: 1), most clearly manifested in the special roundtable section debating the utopian/dystopian vision of “Refugia” (Nick Van Hear; Veronique Barbelet and Christina Bennett; and Helma Lutz).

As examined throughout the contributions in this volume, and indeed in our own work elsewhere (Berg forthcoming; Berg and Nowicka forthcoming; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2018), hospitality and hostility are closely interlinked, yet seemingly contradictory concepts and processes. Hospitality, it has been argued, is always conditional, and includes within it the potential for hostility and vice versa; both imply “the possibility of the other” (Selwyn 2000: 20). Indeed, Jacques Derrida famously argued that hospitality is a word of “a troubled and troubling origin, a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it” (Derrida 2000: 3), by which he refers to hostility. To capture this constitutive duality, he coined the term *hostipitality* (Derrida 2000).

The lens of hostipitality has been applied to diverse contexts of displacement, including in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's ongoing research into local community responses to displacement from Syria in the contexts of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2018).¹ In her research, she has drawn on the concept of hostipitality to examine the nature of encounters not solely between refugees and citizens, but also between different groups of refugees in Lebanon, including Palestinian refugees who have lived in Baddawi refugee camp in Lebanon since the 1950s and who have been “hosting” people displaced from Syria since 2012. In effect, as Yousif M. Qasmiyeh (2016) posits with reference to this case,

Refugees ask other refugees, who are we to come to you and who are you to come to us?
Nobody answers. Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Kurds share the camp, the same-different

camp, the camp of a camp. They have all come to re-originate the beginning with their own hands and feet.

In these encounters, including in situations such as Baddawi characterized by intense precarity and overlapping displacement, it has been argued that the inherent conditionality of hospitality is underpinned by the paradox that to offer welcome is “always already” to have the power to delimit the space or place that is being offered to the other (Derrida 2000; Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000). The resulting hierarchies and tensions towards “new arrivals” have often been presented not only as common, but also potentially as *inescapable*.

And yet, as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh argues (2016), hostility and rejection are not inevitable. Rather, it is imperative to trace and examine alternative modes of thought and action that transcend and resist the fatalistic invocations of hostipitality. Exploring such approaches, including frameworks for supporting the development of sustainable “welcoming communities” for refugees and migrants (Bucklaschuk 2015), appears essential for further analysis both in theory and practice, as the articles in this volume also abundantly illustrate.

Writing in the late 1970s, an earlier theorist of hospitality, the anthropologist Julian Pitt-Rivers, similarly argued that the “law of hospitality,” that is, the “problem of how to deal with strangers” (2012: 501), is “founded upon ambivalence” and contains within it a conflict that cannot be eliminated (2012: 513). It can however be put in a state of suspension, as he illustrates through empirical examples from a range of sources, ancient and modern, and from different cultural contexts. Pitt-Rivers thus moves from the universal “law” of hospitality to its differently expressed “codes” that vary according to social and cultural context. Ann-Christin Wagner, in her article in this issue, takes her cue from Pitt-Rivers’ approach and argues that “successful hospitality renders the stranger’s threat harmless, through intricate choreographies and imposing spatial boundaries.” In other words, to understand the relationship between hospitality and hostility, we need to pay close attention to the spatiality, temporality, and texture of social relations.

As soon as we start thinking about hospitality and hostility as embodied and enacted practices grounded in particular spatio-temporal contexts, a series of further questions arises: Who has or assumes the right to act as host, in what contexts, and on what social grounds? Who is recognized as guest, and who is turned away, by whom, and on what grounds? To answer these, we need to consider issues of gender, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, citizenship, and legal status, among others. It equally becomes essential to explore the justifications or motivations that guide those showing hospitality and hostility; here questions of faith and/or universalist vs particularist orientations are likely to be important (see also Wilkinson, this volume). In essence, we need to think of relationships and social actors, of power and hierarchies, but also of agency and, as part of this, diverse modes of resistance.

Beyond Hostipitality

Moving from the largely European roots—in disciplinary, theoretical, and to a large extent empirical senses—of Derrida’s and Pitt-Rivers’ conceptualizations of hospitality, it is also worth reflecting on cognate concepts in other social and cultural contexts. Hence, as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh (2018) note with reference to the hosting of refugees in “neighboring” countries in the Middle East, “Qur’anicallly and according to the Sunnah, the term neighbor has a clear spatial and moral reading that is defined, reaffirmed and demarcated by proximity, neighborhood and charity.” Simultaneously, however, they argue that when we view the term “neighbor” through its various usages in Arabic throughout history, we find that the concept

can invoke antagonism, antonyms, as well as organic clashes with the overarching religious canon. A clear example of this schism of interpretation is embodied in the very definition of the term “neighbor” offered in *Lisan Al-Arab*, the authoritative and encyclopaedic Arabic dictionary:

The one whose house is next to yours, the stranger, the partner, the beneficiary, the ally, the supporter, the spouse, the intimate parts, the house that is closer to the coast, the good, the bad, the hypocrite, the changeable, the kind. (Translation by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh)

It is essential to bear this ambivalence and semantic (and functional) rupture in mind, in addition to re-viewing Derrida’s conceptualization of hostipitality and Pitt-Rivers’ analysis of the law of hospitality, as we continue to carefully examine the nature of diverse encounters—past, present, and future—in equally diverse contexts of migration and (im)mobility.

Hence, far from taking identities and identifiers for granted, we must continue to ask who comes to be seen as our neighbors and kin and therefore deserving others? Who is seen as the stranger, and by whom? What does this entail, when, why, and where? When, why, how, and by whom do strangers come to be seen as threats/undeserving others? What are the politics and the poetics of hospitality and hostility, and what can and should socially engaged scholars and practitioners do in times and spaces that are characterized by hostility and, some might say, a lack of humanity towards migrants and people on the move?

As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh has argued elsewhere (2016), in light of the limitations and dangers of fatalistic readings of hostipitality, a more productive theoretical lens may ultimately be that of Jean-Luc Nancy’s “being together” and “being with” (Nancy 2000). In essence, in light of the “everyday geographies” and “quiet politics of belonging” that characterize ordinary encounters, and ordinary modes of being in the world (Askins 2015), the conceptual and practical challenges that emerge in encounters between hosts and strangers include recognizing the realities of, and potential for, refugees, migrants, and hosts (whether citizens or refugees/migrants themselves) both “being with” and “being together.” This would require an unpacking of the very categories of host and guest, thus taking us from universalizing claims and the taxonomy of host–guest relations to the messiness of everyday life and its potential for care, generosity, and recognition in encounters.

As feminist scholars have long argued, care is a universal human experience and a basic human need; equally, the ability to care for others is a fundamental human capacity (see, e.g., Held 2006). Importantly, Nira Yuval-Davis asserts that “the ethics of care” is “a necessary element of social and political solidarity, *but cannot guarantee it*” (2011: 8; emphasis added). It is, of course, essential to remain attentive to the realities of structural inequalities and power imbalances (for instance, in the carer–cared for relationship) that can act as barriers to different forms of solidarity (as also argued by Yuval-Davis 2011). Nonetheless, repositioning the focus of enquiry, and examining the nature and potentialities of encounters between hosts and strangers, the self and the other, through the optic of a feminist ethics of care, a focus on refugee–refugee relationality, and/or Nancy’s “being with” and “being together,” may lead us into more hopeful, solidary, and productive ways of studying dynamics of hospitality and hostility, and ultimately of different ways of encountering, studying, and theorizing migration itself.

Outline of Articles

The articles and short pieces included in this issue, all engage with, challenge, refine, and add theoretical and empirical nuance to past and present processes of hospitality and hostility in

the world, via interventions that reflect on academic research, political, and cultural action and activism, and utopian/dystopian imaginings.

The opening article, by Elena Isayev, provides a *longue durée* perspective on processes of hospitality and hostility, and reflects on the extent to which hospitality can be seen as the measure of society. Her article is followed by Patricia Daley, Ng'wanza Kata and Leiyo Singo's article, which traces the sense of "ontological (in)security" experienced by former Burundian refugees in Tanzania, even following acquisition of legal citizenship in that country. The article traces the strategies for securing belonging adopted by former refugees. Ann-Christin Wagner, in her article, examines the nature and implications of so-called "house visits," a practice used by an Evangelical grassroots organization, active in Jordan. When the organization's European volunteers visit Syrian refugees, they effectively impose a need for Syrians to perform "suffering." By transgressing locally-embedded social and cultural norms about guest behavior, the volunteers in turn reverse the power dynamics inherent in host-guest relations. The next article, by Ivi Daskalaki and Nadina Leivaditi, also explores host-guest relations, in this case relations between caretakers and unaccompanied refugee youths living in temporary accommodation on the Greek island of Lesbos. The article explores the agency of the young refugees when they (dis)engage with formal and informal educational opportunities, and their simultaneous position as temporary guests and as the subjects of discipline in their accommodation and in wider society.

Child migrants and refugees are also the subjects of Rachel Rosen and Sarah Crafter's article. They analyze media coverage of separated child migrants in three British tabloids, and examine the increasing contestation of the authenticity of separated children over time, as the "migration crisis" unfolded, and raise questions about the political consequences of framing hospitality in the name of "the child." Kathryn Tomko Dennler's article also deals with the UK context and explores how the legal consciousness of social workers influence what it means to be a "refused" asylum seeker, and with what consequences for service access. Her article thus raises questions about ideas of "deservingness," which in turn are explored in Elizabeth Challinor's article about refugee hospitality encounters in Portugal, a country relatively unaccustomed to hosting refugees. Challinor examines encounters between asylum seekers, refugees, voluntary hosting organizations, public services, faith actors, and volunteers. She shows the tensions that arise between imagined and actual practices of hospitality, charity-based and rights-based approaches, and between the different expectations of "hosts" and "guests" in these encounters in a context of austerity and labor-market insecurity for both refugees and those working for hosting institutions. Finally, Olivia J. Wilkinson's article focuses on hospitality and hostility between local faith actors and international humanitarian organizations around the world, and shows how local faith actors are sometimes marginalized and effectively lose their positions of host to international humanitarian actors, resulting in feelings of hostility.

Complementing the research articles, the pieces in our People and Places, and Reflections sections raise questions about the challenges and practices of solidarity, sanctuary, activism, and policy in cities such as Athens (see Komporozos-Athanasίου's interview with Lefteris Papagiannakis), in towns and cities "near and far" from the US border with Mexico (Brennan), and in "sanctuary cities" in Canada (Moffette and Ridgley). Abdo and Craven reflect on the challenges of making a small university campus in the US into a refugee sanctuary, while Vannini, Gomez, Carney, and Mitchell discuss lessons from collaborative, interdisciplinary research on sanctuary under the Trump presidency. Our Refugia roundtable (Van Hear; Barbelet and Bennett; Lutz) and contributions to our Creative Encounters section (Qasmiyeh; Kwek; Emami; Assaf and Clanchy) further invite and provoke us to think and reflect about the politics and the poetics of responding to displacement.

As a whole, the issue provides a rich and nuanced canvass of diverse migrant encounters and dynamics of hospitality and hostility across time and space, critically engaging with, and going beyond the hospitality framework, and asking questions about how we conceptualize and practice solidarity and sanctuary across borders.

NOTE

1. "Local Community Experiences of and Responses to Displacement from Syria: Views from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey." AHRC-ESRC Project Grant Ref: AH/P005438/1. See <https://refugeehosts.org/>.

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