"It's Being, Not Doing"

Hospitality and Hostility between Local Faith Actors and International Humanitarian Organizations in Refugee Response

Olivia J. Wilkinson

■ **ABSTRACT:** Local faith actors are deeply involved in assisting refugees around the world. Their place in refugee response, however, can be in parallel with and, at times, in disagreement with the efforts of international humanitarian organizations. Focusing on the interactions between local faith actors and refugees and local faith actors and international organizations, the lenses of hospitality and hostility are used to analyze the tensions between these types of actors. Through a review of the literature and interviews with 21 key informants, I show that processes of marginalization occur to the extent that local faith actors lose their positions of host to the dominance of the international humanitarian system, and feelings of hostility ensue. This demonstrates to international actors why they might be ill received and how they can approach partnerships with local faith actors in more diplomatic ways.

■ **KEYWORDS:** faith, hospitality, hostility, humanitarian, local, localization, refugee, religion

In the last two years, members of the international humanitarian system have channeled considerable energy into debating how they can more frequently partner with and fund local actors. The "localization debate" in humanitarian response pushes the focus from international organizations to local actors, including local faith actors (LFAs), such as civil society organizations affiliated to religious institutions. Indeed, in 2016, the United Nations Secretary General stated that aid should be "as local as possible, as international as necessary" (UNSG 2016). Yet local actors have always been at the forefront of humanitarian efforts for refugees, from immediate assistance to long-term integration, and have shown sustained hospitality through multiple displacements in contexts worldwide (Barnett 2011; Davey 2012: 3; Marfleet 2011). Nonetheless, localization faces many challenges based on the nuances of local contexts where hostility and hospitality are intertwined, and the true purpose of international humanitarian interest is questioned.

This article examines the notion of hospitality in relationships between refugees, LFAs, and international actors through Derrida's conceptualization of hospitality as inherently containing hostility (Derrida 2000: 14), through what he refers to as processes of *hostipitality*. He explains that to be "the hospitable host" one must lay a claim to the place in which the other is welcomed, but in so doing this claim of mastery over a place also puts limitations on the full extent to which the guest can be made to feel at home. The concepts of absolute and conditional hospitality

are respectively aligned with the Platonic ideal and then the distorted reality, with *hostipitality* manifesting from the conditions that humans place on the notion of hospitality. In essence, we experience conditional hospitality, a perverted form of absolute hospitality, in which laws laid out by the political and social have put boundaries on our process of extending welcome to others. Derrida argues that when we welcome the “foreigner” they are still somehow known to us; we ask questions to place them and understand their lineage and background, and we feel a duty to welcome or develop a pact of reciprocity in which we welcome another person, but they have reciprocal acts to perform. Absolute hospitality, on the other hand, without which conditional hospitality would not exist because it *aspires* to the absolute, is radically pure.

Derrida (in Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 25) asserts:

... the absolute or unconditional hospitality I would like to offer him or her presupposes a break with hospitality in the ordinary sense, with conditional hospitality, with the right to or pact of hospitality ... To put it in different terms, absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names.

Yet within the lived experience of conditional hospitality we move so far away from this idea of absolute inclusion that “exclusion and inclusion are inseparable in the same moment” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 81). Absolute hospitality is both heterogenous to conditional hospitality and inherently and irreducibly part of it. We thus enter a process of negotiation, aspiring to an absolute of inclusion yet working within conditions. Ultimately, this means that “this asymmetry between conditional and unconditional hospitality maintains an endless demand, since each event of welcoming the other can only fall short of the requirements of the unconditional law of unlimited hospitality” (Kakoliris 2015: 149). The host is constantly negotiating their limits of hospitality, as “what is required, according to Derrida, is a continuous ‘negotiation’ or ‘compromise,’ which one has always to invent, between the wish to have and retain a house or a country, and the renunciation of one’s mastery over it” (Kakoliris 2015: 149).

In this article, the concept of *hostipitality* is applied to local faith actors and international humanitarian actors, understanding that LFAs present *hostipitality* both in the direction of refugees arriving and also towards external actors entering their communities. Likewise, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are both guests (in their arrival in the location in which the LFAs and refugees are present) and hosts (in their relationship to local organizations in that they hold sovereignty over resources and can either welcome or push away others with fewer resources). The relationship between LFAs and INGOs is particularly examined to demonstrate that hostility is present within these interactions as international actors assert their power and dominance over LFAs across various domains of refugee response. This moves the debate away from local communities welcoming refugees as the other or strangers, and asks instead how INGOs arriving to assist refugees can also be strangers *and* masters in their interactions with local communities, and particularly local faith communities. The research points towards the need for greater self-reflection in the international policy process on localization around the complexity of local actors, including faith actors, and to better understand why international humanitarian organizations might be met with both hospitality and hostility.

This article is thus an exploration of current tensions in the broader localization policy debate relating to LFAs and refugees. The background for this article comes from a review of 168 publications from the academic and gray literature, which was completed as part of the scoping study

published by the Refugees and Forced Migration Learning Hub of the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) on Faith and Local Communities (Wilkinson and Ager 2017).¹ The focus of this article arises from 21 key informant interviews that were conducted following the literature review, as part of the same scoping study, with such interviews designed to cover areas in which the literature was sparse. The interviews were conducted by phone and Skype in all instances to enable the researchers (based in the US) to contact a wide group of interviewees around the world. Interviews were conducted over the summer of 2017 and lasted between one and two hours.

The sample was purposively drawn through snowball sampling to identify key informants, that is, staff members working on refugee response from humanitarian organizations, representing the range of local faith and secular actors and international faith and secular actors.² In line with the objectives of the scoping survey, the aim was to identify interviewees who could, in particular, speak about LFAs and refugee experience in the Global South. The range of interviewees had expertise vis-à-vis displacement in the following regions: the Middle East and North Africa, particularly Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq; the Balkans Route, particularly Serbia and Albania; Latin America, particularly Colombia; the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia and Ethiopia; the Sahel, particularly Mauritania and Chad; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Nepal; Thailand; Indonesia; Sri Lanka; and Italy. While some of these countries are situated in the Global North, the interview data has been analyzed to focus only on those examples from the Global South for the parameters of this article. This was chosen because the analysis of the literature demonstrated that more was written about refugee experiences in the Global North (Wilkinson and Ager 2017: 10), coupled with the focus on humanitarian localization and the significance of local actors from the Global South and their modes of practice within this discourse.

Local Faith Actors and Localization

This article associates religion with the “institutionalized system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural realm” and “faith as the human trust or belief in a transcendent reality” (Lunn 2009: 937). In order to draw a broader umbrella within which a variety of actors are recognized as linked to religious beliefs and practices, the term “faith” is also used in referring to faith-based organizations and local faith actors, instead of using the terms “religious organizations” or “religious actors,” which would confine the definition only to those groups that are directly and explicitly part of religious *institutions*. Local faith actors are also differentiated from international faith-based organizations (FBOs), which are not the focus of this article. LFAs represent a wide range of organizations, from relatively large national organizations to small groups of individuals, and individual religious leaders with different levels of power and religious affiliation across local and national levels.

The international humanitarian response to refugees is formulated around certain structures and norms, such as minimum standards for humanitarian response and the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA] 2010). Impartiality is, in particular, a key concern for many international actors in relation to LFAs. Impartiality refers to the principle to deliver assistance based on need alone, without discrimination on political, ethnic, religious, gender, nationality, or class grounds. Secular actors have regularly shown concern that LFAs will not be able to deliver assistance impartially, assuming that they will base their assistance on religious affiliation or the desire to proselytize instead (Kraft 2015; Wilkinson 2017).

However, to make international aid “as local as possible,” international actors are being encouraged to partner with all types of local actors, including LFAs. And yet, as already demon-

strated by the principle of impartiality, there are many points of tension in which a straightforward move towards localization has and will continue to meet barriers. This shows why the application of Derrida's ideas of hostility being inherent to hospitality is useful, notably because they convey the understanding that a desire to host and welcome others, including external international actors, does not preclude intertwined difficulties and disappointments leading to hostility.

Examining Local Faith Actors Responding for Refugees

LFAs have been, are, and will be involved in responding to refugees and displaced people. Yet there are also diverse pressure points, which exist because no religion is a monolith and a large variety of perspectives for and against refugees will be held by believers. As religiosity is manifested through cultural, social, political, and economic expressions of faith, LFAs are undeniably embedded in their contexts. This section examines the ways in which LFAs in the Global South have been showing hospitality towards refugees, while also recognizing points of complexity and hostility that emerge, particularly in intersection with the expectations of international humanitarian actors.

Places and Theologies of Place

LFAs have assets that can be immediately and swiftly deployed for refugee response—physically in terms of material and buildings, financially in terms of capital in the country, and in terms of personnel such as religious leaders, staff, and volunteers (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager 2013: 27). One of the most common ways in which religious institutions provide hospitality to refugees is the welcoming of refugees and displaced people into religious buildings to provide shelter. Within a long tradition of religious buildings used as sanctuary (Marfleet 2011), there are many modern examples in the Global South, including recent reports of 10,000 people sheltered in a Catholic church in Wau, South Sudan in 2017 (Glinski 2017).

Accessing areas in otherwise inaccessible regions through religious networks is a space of contested hospitality/hostility. One interviewee described this ability to access communities as a “theology of place,” in which the religious values in the local context are appreciated by others with power in the area and the place of the LFA in the community means they are both known by and know the people in that location (see also Refugee Hosts 2018). The notion of “place” suggests “home,” immobility, and long-term presence, linked also to the Derridean (2000: 14) notion of hospitality in that “home” denotes “sovereignty” over a place. This relates to potential differences about who can have a “theology of place” in a given area and who is excluded from the “place.” A more frequently stated advantage of LFAs in refugee response is that they know the context and have a longer-term presence in the area so that people trust them (Wilkinson 2015: 21), unlike external agencies with shorter-term and ad hoc projects that leave local actors in the lurch once they end (El Nakib and Ager 2015: 20). Yet within this discussion of long- and short-term response, the “theology of place” refocuses attention on how and when a place is associated with a local faith community to the extent that it becomes known by and of the people there.

Finding a sense of “place” in cities for people on the move is about developing strong ties to religious networks, which provide assistance and solidarity, but also about people asserting their agency within such networks. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), an interviewee

described how movable and mutable religious communities can be, moving with refugees and hosting layers of displacement. He noted examples of small and locally run mosques in locations where there would not have been mosques even 20 years previously—these had since been established due to the displacement of Muslims from other regions. Likewise, he explained that the movement of Christian populations had led to the founding of new churches, which then in turn hosted more newly displaced Christians, in a continuation of support and an example of displaced people hosting displaced people (also see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). In contrast to the examples of long-established churches sheltering thousands of refugees given above, these are networks of faith that become established in new “places” and move with their religious communities.

This interviewee also noted that for Protestant Christians in the DRC, denominational affiliation was not the definitive marker of acceptance into a new church community. The social aspect of church on Sundays predominated, and new denominational affiliations were acceptable if displaced people moved to a new area with a church from a different denomination. Indeed, as has also been shown with transnational religious networks in urban centers such as Johannesburg (Landau 2009) and Kampala (Lauterbach 2014), affiliation is mutable and moves with and as part of the agency of the displaced person. After multiple displacements, the laws that Derrida describes as controlling conditional hospitality are seen to dissolve somewhat. While the full extent to which this can happen is not clear, the example of refugees hosting refugees, and local faith communities hosting other local faith communities, points towards the negotiation of conditions for hospitality, adding to a picture of negotiation in which experiences of displacement lessen the breadth of conditions placed on hospitality.

This substantially relates to the work of Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh on “refugees hosting refugees,” which challenges the assumption of established communities of citizens alone hosting refugees (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). Her and her colleagues’ ongoing research in Baddawi camp, northern Lebanon, has shown how refugees from multiple countries and secondary and tertiary displacements—Syrian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Kurdish—assist each other, for example, with the provision of *iftar* food baskets to the most vulnerable in the community (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh in Wilkinson and Ager 2017). In an example from research in Baddawi camp, northern Lebanon, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif Qasmiyeh explain the complexity of a “theology of place” for refugees, in life and death:

The tombstones of the newest cemetery . . . now mark names, dates and places of origin that trace the longest journeys: “Born in Haifa in 1945 . . . died in Baddawi in July 2016. . . Palestinian from Syria. . .” The words of—and over—the dead mark the multiple states of refugeeness, the past, and the place. (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2017)

These rituals associated with death and burial relate to the mutability of a sense of place. Derrida speaks of Oedipus’s death in a foreign land, stating that the story “illustrates this strange experience of hospitality transgressed, through which you die abroad, and not always at all as you would have wanted” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 87). In dying in a place that is hidden and not his place of origin, Derrida describes Oedipus’s death “in a foreign land where, moreover, he has to remain hidden in his death,” the “becoming-foreign of the foreigner, the absolute of his becoming-foreign” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000: 113). In effect, death in a foreign land represents the absolute foreignness of the foreigner (cf. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh 2017; Refugee Hosts 2018).

Ultimately, these examples offer a nuanced insight into how LFAs respond to refugees. It disrupts the idea that there is an “original” LFA who is the provider or that there is only added benefit from a local faith response *because* of their long-term establishment in a place. Just as

refugees host refugees, displaced faith communities host displaced faith communities, forming new “theologies of place” and newly formed local faith communities and actors.

Tensions between Spiritual and Psychosocial Support

In response to the traumatic experiences of refugees, international humanitarian organizations organize psychosocial projects or add psychosocial aspects to their existing programs. There is now a standard for psychosocial programming that operates as an international level of practice (Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] 2010). In comparison, local faith communities address trauma by accompanying displaced people in their spiritual lives (i.e., those aspects of the individual relating to beliefs and experiences of the supernatural realm) through prayers and rituals, but also through the social capital of religious networks and relationships built up between those in a faith community, demonstrating hospitality towards refugees, but sometimes with conditions about what is included in their hospitality (keeping within certain religious traditions, placing restrictions on the extent of provision from the social capital of a network, etc.). There is ample evidence that faith plays a role in recovery from trauma (Ai et al. 2005; Chan et al. 2012; Fernando and Hebert 2011; Luhrmann 2013), and specifically trauma in displacement (Adedoyin et al. 2016; Brune et al. 2002; Kamya 2008; Kroo and Nagy 2011; McLellan 2015; Mekki-Berrada and Rousseau 2011; Sachs et al. 2008).

In refugee response, the humanitarian/psychosocial and the spiritual frequently exist in parallel. Several interviewees from international organizations and local organizations, secular and faith-based on both counts, spoke of the role of faith in helping refugees be resilient. Yet some of these interviewees noted that faith remains separate from their psychosocial work. International interviewees communicated their hesitation about the ways in which LFAs would undertake psychosocial programming, with fears about proselytization and conversion of vulnerable people, coupled with a lack of understanding from LFAs about psychosocial minimum standards and the advances of secular psychology. Their awareness of the conditions of hospitality from local faith communities towards refugees made these international actors hostile, in turn, to partnership with LFAs for psychosocial response.

The evidence showed that with rituals, particularly rituals related to death and dying, LFAs can be more attuned to refugee needs. An interviewee working with unaccompanied Afghan minors in Indonesia noted that the communal process of grieving is particularly important in building forms of social cohesion, but also in recognizing human dignity. Yet interviewees from international humanitarian organizations were not able to provide examples of the recognition of burial and support for grieving in refugee response. Previous evidence from displacement in the 1990s showed that the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) had been reluctant to provide burial shrouds for displaced Mozambicans (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager 2013: 30). One interviewee with extensive international experience across many countries noted that this was a gap in response. On the other hand, LFAs provided direct examples. In Lebanon, one interviewee, aside from their work in a national NGO but as part of their personal inclusion in a local faith community, recounted the experience of befriending Syrian refugees and becoming involved in the ritual surrounding death. The interviewee explained that the father of a Syrian family they knew had died. The family were unable to bury him in a nearby cemetery due to religious burial restrictions there and the cost. The interviewee's spouse, a Christian lay leader, assisted the adult children of the man, all Muslim, in finding a cemetery closer to the border and transporting the father there. They participated in ritual washing and prayed together at the burial. This was a moment of meaningful interfaith engagement between a member of a local faith community and refugees of another religion. Very clearly linking back to Derrida's notion

of foreignness in death, the man had to be “displaced” again, away from his family, to be buried. However, the act of hospitality shown by the interviewee’s spouse to his neighbors transcends cultural and social conditions in which religion plays a part in creating barriers (barring burial in a nearby cemetery). Even in death, the conditions of hospitality are negotiated with both positive (interfaith friendship and shared ritual practice) and negative outcomes (the hostility of the cemetery towards the “other”).

Humanitarian response pays attention to rituals surrounding burial when there is a pressure of need, such as the innovations around sensitization and culturally sensitive burial during the Ebola response (Featherstone 2015), when burial was a key aspect to limiting the spread of the disease. The question remains, however, as to how this aspect of refugee experience—the religious aspects of dying, death, burial, and grieving—is recognized within the broad psychosocial programming of humanitarian actors in refugee response. This initial evidence suggests that the international humanitarian community is not currently adequately involved in this and that LFAs can be providers of support in such circumstances.

In another area of tension, religious leaders were found to be a focal point of psychosocial/spiritual support, but international humanitarian organizations have been reluctant to integrate these trusted figures into their psychosocial programs. Religious leaders act as a focal point for spiritual support, both in their communication with their faith community *en masse* and in their person-to-person interactions with individuals. An international humanitarian interviewee noted that there was doubt from organizations about the capacity of local religious leaders to comply with psychosocial assistance standards, which would therefore limit the support they received from international actors. However, examples show that integrated psychosocial programs that recognize the role of the spiritual and psychological can be successful. Research from Kenya with internally displaced women following election violence in 2007–2008 details how priests had training in Christian counseling and experience in counseling people affected by trauma (Parsitau 2011: 497). This was seen to be a supplement to the therapeutic support offered by professional psychologists.

In turn, an interviewee in Nepal related the experience of providing psychosocial assistance to a group of Tibetan nuns who had been affected by the 2015 earthquake in the country. The nuns were used to living in an isolated monastery in the mountains and undertook much of their religious practice on their own. However, their monastery had been damaged by the earthquake and one of the nuns had been killed, and they were then moved to the capital city of Kathmandu while the monastery was being rebuilt. This new urban environment, their internal displacement from their rural monastery, their grief around the loss of their fellow nun, and the cramped quarters in which they were living in the city all compounded their suffering. Likewise, they had lived through a traumatic experience of being Tibetan refugees, many of whom had fled on foot, journeying through mountainous environments, inhospitable conditions, and in fear for their lives, when they were younger. These combined stressors contributed to the deterioration of their mental health. A program was instituted between psychologists, the religious leaders in the monastery, and the Buddhist denomination. The interviewee described that one advantage was that the religious leaders involved had had some experience of Western medicine and were open to the possibilities of working with psychologists. An integrated response was devised, which necessitated time and discussion spent between religious leaders and psychologists, but was ultimately a success. This example demonstrates the time and space needed for dialogue if partnership is to occur, but also the resulting payoff.

Likewise, an interviewee speaking of the DRC noted that local religious leaders and their congregants encourage recognition of the whole of the community in their psychosocial response. The interviewee described it as “holistic” and part of “two-way integration” that acknowledges

layers of displacement and layers of hosting. Local leaders do not only work with internally displaced persons (IDPs) or only with community hosts, but with the whole of their congregation, regardless of their host or hosted status. Another interviewee in Lebanon noted that local religious leaders naturally provide psychosocial support by focusing on relationship building as they represent a community bound together, not just by faith but by personal and social relationships. As they described it, “It’s the being, not the doing” that counts, referring to the relationships built (being) rather than large-scale humanitarian interventions (doing). They continued by explaining that this means “sitting with people, weeping and listening with them. That is overlooked in humanitarian busy-ness.”

While the disadvantages of a local faith response that does not comply with psychosocial minimum standards have been mentioned above, this perspective recognizes the disadvantages of the humanitarian minimum standards, which leave less space for this type of relationship building. Linking back to Derrida, it also shows that the limits of conditional hospitality can be stretched towards the more ideal and absolute hospitality, in which there is less difference made between the host and hosted, in the example from the DRC, or that the hospitality extended in “being” in relationship with your guest, as described in Lebanon, reaches towards a purer hospitality. Yet it must not be denied that the reality of other pressures (social, cultural, political, etc.) that might impinge on these relationships and put greater conditions on their hospitality. It must not be forgotten, for example, that relationships with a refugee from another religion are complexly negotiated and, while it must not be assumed that conversion is a primary or the only aim, it may be seen as part of the relationship-building process (Kraft 2015: 407). Derrida explores reciprocity in conditional host–guest relationships, which prompts us to analyze the place of religious belief and practice in the negotiation of reciprocity in any host–guest relationship.

Overall, the examples show that there is a way forward in which the combination of the spiritual and psychological in complementary modes of support can be of benefit. The examples also show that this will require extra training (such as the counseling training described by Damaris Parsitau) or extra time for dialogue (as with the case in Nepal). This extra commitment of time, money, and effort may be one of the most pervasive and difficult barriers to dismantle. Yet fears around compliance to minimum standards should not be a definitive barrier, and LFAs can be recognized as partners for psychosocial response.

Local Religious Actors in Interaction with the International Humanitarian System for Refugee Response

Forms of Existing Localization Aided by “Culture Brokers”

Localization can be aided by using “culture brokers” or intermediaries who smooth differences between international and local actors. Local–international partnerships mediated by religious structures and affiliations are a basis for the operations of many organizations with links to religious institutions. One interviewee who worked for a secular organization and had been involved in operations in Chad, Mauritania, and Niger particularly picked up on this point. He explained that he had worked with local Catholic churches in several contexts, and had found that church organizations were easily set up and that priests were able to organize associations or small NGOs. In his examples, these organizations were affiliated to Caritas. The recognition of the name “Caritas” helped these local organizations become more familiar to other secular actors. A Muslim himself, he did not see Muslim organizations in the same way. He thought that this was due to the way that identity was presented by different organizations. Although many of

the national NGOs in the countries in which he worked had employees who were all Muslim, a Muslim identity was not at the forefront of their organizational identity.

The role of Caritas as an intermediary in linking local churches to an international structure is noteworthy. On one hand, as above, it gives the local organization some "name recognition" that helps develop and sustain a feeling of familiarity and trust, which is necessary for effective partnerships. Interviewees described how their and other organizations were involved in acting as bridges between local and international actors. I will call these actors "culture brokers."³ For refugees around the world, the process of registration and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is a bureaucratic, intricate, and unfamiliar procedure in which the slightest misstep can set a displaced person back, in a clear example of the limits created in conditional hospitality. This is not only a case of displaced people, however, as the local organizations trying to support these people are also subject to the complexities of bureaucratic procedures. The compliance procedures needed to meet the demands of international funding puts a substantial burden on these organizations with limited resources. Returning to Derrida, the effects of conditional hospitality have meant that all those involved in the negotiation of hospitality are impacted. There are nuances to hosting, wherein LFAs are given the resources to host via international actors, who are then the ones creating the boundaries and laws of conditional hospitality.

This is where "culture brokers" can come in and negotiate the terms for hospitality. Two examples are of interest: the Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development (LSESD) and St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Egypt. Overall, these two examples demonstrate that there are layers of culture brokering needed—between displaced people and international systems (StARS) and between LFAs and international systems (LSESD). LSESD operates with local churches to act as a bridge between international partners and LFAs, with efforts scaled up in recent years in response to Syrian refugees arriving in Lebanon. An interviewee described their project cycle as one in which the interaction is initiated by an LFA that communicates to LSESD the needs in a particular area. Culture brokers are important for two reasons: they allow for a process in which the LFAs, rather than external actors, define needs; and they deconstruct a system in which top-down processes of funding are dictated by donor priorities. The interviewee explained, "so a church will recognize that children in the community don't have a school, so [we] work with the church to pitch to a donor, and help them with a proposal, and then help in between the donor and the church partners." This help comes in the form of navigating bureaucratic donor procedures, such as monitoring and reporting on the project, and aligning with humanitarian minimum standards. LSESD therefore offers an example of how national actors are already helping localization occur by linking with international actors to fund local initiatives to meet locally identified needs.

In Cairo, StARS "provides both adult and child educational programs, psychosocial services and legal aid for refugees" (Pacitto and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013: 21). While they are an organization local to Cairo, they attract international funding from organizations such as Church World Service. They are also part of the Cairo Refugee Assistance Network that bridges across LFAs to build relationships between organizations. Eighty-five percent of their staff are themselves refugees and the clear majority are also Muslim. An interviewee explained that they provide a space in which religious and national cultures are brokered across the 25 different nationalities represented by the refugees they serve. Proselytization is strictly forbidden, but religious expression is open and free. StARS' Resettlement Legal Aid Project helps refugees submit forms and navigate the process of interviews for RSD, then working with UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and resettlement countries to follow up on the progression of cases. As direct implementers, their model focuses more on being a cultural broker for displaced people themselves.

The existence of the Cairo Refugee Assistance Network, and another similar structure in Bangkok called the Bangkok Asylum Seekers and Refugee Assistance Network (BASRAN) (Larribeau and Broadhead 2014: 49), demonstrates how LFAs have already localized humanitarian response by creating their own local coordination structures. This is particularly noteworthy in comparison to reports from some interviewees and in other research that indicates the ways in which local actors are side-lined within international humanitarian structures so that they are not able to participate in coordination (El Nakib and Ager 2015: 16; Featherstone 2014; Ramalingam et al. 2013). This is one way in which LFAs experience hostility from the international humanitarian system.

From the large and widely recognized, such as Caritas Internationalis, to smaller, national organizations such as LSESD and StARS, the transnational structure represented by faith actors around the world has allowed for a form of localization with culture brokers to already be the *modus operandi* of many international faith-based organizations (while acknowledging that there are also many international FBOs that do not operate in this way).

To Identify as Religious or Not?

As suggested above, several interviewees mentioned that they did not partner with Muslim organizations in the same way that they partner with Christian organizations. This was not because of an explicitly hostile outlook towards Muslim organizations. Instead, they explained that Christian organizations were more visible because of certain structures and the ability to form NGOs. In essence, it was a question of visibility and familiarity. For example, Tahir Zaman, in research on Iraqi refugees in Damascus, found that:

International humanitarian organizations, including United Nations (UN) agencies, simply do not share a common “script” with local Islamic faith-based welfare service providers (Deneulin and Bano 2009). Instead, they find it easier to engage with churches that have transnational connections with other FBOs. As such, church organizations are better positioned to articulate their welfare activities in a secular frame than are their Muslim counterparts. (Zaman 2012: 135)

Indeed, an interviewee in the Horn of Africa noted that international humanitarian organizations do not have sufficient knowledge of Muslim organizations to form relationships or even recognize that these relationships are a possibility. This shows that INGOs offer a very limited form of hospitality to *certain* LFAs. Familiarity with Christian organizational structures has allowed local churches, with their associated social organizations and transnational linkages, to be more visible to external actors. In fact, it made them more likely to engage with secular actors, including organizations in Western Europe where secularity is dominant but church structures are still familiar. To the contrary, a lack of familiarity with Muslim organizational structures, or the fluidity thereof, leads to less visibility for these actors.

Likewise, this was also a matter of self-identification. As an interviewee in Egypt said, Christians and churches identify as faith-based more readily and comfortably than Muslims and mosques. The interviewee explained, “for mosques, it’s just what they do,” referring to the practice of zakat and zakat committees for the distribution of wealth in the community and provision for the poorest. In this sense, zakat is a built-in part of community response, but not an organization with which international actors can partner. The interviewee in the Horn of Africa also explained that Muslim identity and spirituality is not necessarily linked to a formation such as a congregation. While there are mosques and those that attend mosques form a type of community, the formalization of structures does not exist in the same way. For the interviewee, Mus-

lim spirituality is everywhere and not so readily tied to a location and the practice of religion as in a church, for example. This does not mean that a Muslim community will not welcome refugees because, as seen from the zakat example, there are other community structures at play that are used to mobilize the whole mass of the community towards providing for migrants and displaced people. To view hospitality from the outside as an international actor, therefore, it is clear that Muslim communities practice hospitality, but the exact methods are not necessarily visible for those who are not familiar with the cultural nuances of hospitality, because hospitality is a constantly negotiated space.

These differences in familiarity, visibility, and self-identification all lead towards the marginalization of certain LFAs. While it may be based on a lack of knowledge, some interviewees also brought up the possibility of institutional and individual bias against Muslim organizations affecting these interactions. The impact of countering violent extremism (CVE) measures has meant that some Muslim organizations have lost funding (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2016: 15). Research in Jordan found that this was a question for local faith communities there too, with a Sheikh involved in one local organization saying:

We have no problem in partnering with organizations. However, they would not like to partner with us. Let us not play games here. We are Islamists. They would not be looking for partnership with Islamists, would they? (El Nakib and Ager 2015: 22)

In contrast, another interviewee from West Africa stated that they did not think discriminatory practices are at play with donor relations regarding Muslim organizations. He understood that some donors might be worried about extremism, but this would not happen because the local organization would immediately lose all its funding if it occurred. This demonstrates the fine line that local organizations already walk to comply with international standards. While this is in no way making the case that connections to extremism should be allowed, it shows how quickly things could go wrong for local actors if there was a donor *perception* that linked them to extremist positions or high-risk contexts, even if such perceptions have been proven to be incorrect, as seen with the removal of Islamic Relief from HSBC banking (Mandhai 2016).

The complex reality of identity in relation to international partnerships and funding is too infrequently discussed, which is unsurprising given the awkwardness of these dissonances between actors and the potential revelation of underlying prejudice. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd contends with this in her analysis of international efforts on religious freedom. The dichotomy she observes between “good” religion and “bad” religion in international relations is demonstrated in donor partnership choices with LFAs. Shakman Hurd (2015: 26) argues that recognizing religion as an “international public good” has replaced a push towards secularization in international relations. However, this does not mean that there is a rush to partner with all faith actors. Instead, “according to this narrative good religion is to be restored to international relations and bad religion is to be reformed or disciplined through new partnerships for the public good” (Shakman Hurd 2015: 24). Instead, Shakman Hurd proposes the promotion of a more critical narrative that establishes the complex and interwoven elements of identity.

She explains how reductionist it is to mark something as “religious violence,” for example, when there is a web of competing variables leading to violence, such as resource scarcity and political difference (Shakman Hurd 2015: 115–116). Similarly, it is reductionist to mark many organizations as “faith-based,” “Muslim,” or “Christian,” when they are also potentially representing a range of interests, such as a focus on the environment, or an affiliation with a neighborhood within which a range of faiths are represented. It also shows that the fetishization of religious identity in international relations (Shakman Hurd 2015: 111) can work perversely to marginalize some (Muslim) actors over others (Christian). It complicates the picture to demon-

strate that it is not a question of the secular marginalization of *all* religious actors, but the organization of an international system that sanctions some forms of religion, to the detriment of others. Although I would not go as far as to say that religion has (yet) been fetishized in refugee response to the same extent that Shakman Hurd sees it in the international religious freedom arena, her work marks an important warning to humanitarian actors not to essentialize and fetishize religion in the localization agenda.

Shakman Hurd reminds us not to be caught up in an overly idealized or overly negative perception of the role that religion can play in international relations and, indeed, in refugee response: that religion is not prevalent enough, or that it is too prevalent, or that it has these defining characteristics that make it good or bad. Instead, it is a call to embrace complexity. A national NGO with all Muslim staff is navigating a range of pressures that relate to its identity and situation. It would not be constructive to focus on how “Muslim” it is or is not. Instead, by engaging with its complex identifying variables we can see how processes of marginalization might occur. As a local organization, from a certain region, with different compliance standards, and potentially with religious affiliations, there are layers of intersecting barriers leading to their marginalization in the international humanitarian system for refugee response. In recognizing the intersectional nature of these barriers, we can move towards a clearer picture of the hurdles that must be overcome in the localization agenda.

Conclusion

The quotation from the interview that I have included in the title of this article sums up much of the perceived difference between LFAs and international humanitarian organizations in refugee response. In “being” and not only “doing,” LFAs are closer to communities and act with this knowledge to change their “being with,” or accompanying, refugees. They demonstrate acts of committed and sustained hospitality, aspiring to Derrida’s notion of absolute hospitality but contending with the bounds of conditional hospitality, imposed either by themselves or others outside of the LFAs, such as national governments and international humanitarian donors. Their acts of hospitality are judged by the international humanitarian system and seen as discordant to international humanitarian standards and principles.

Conversely, in the view of local actors towards international humanitarian organizations, they are of and in a place, and are hosts in that place: hosts of refugees, and then hosts, of a sort, to the international humanitarian organizations. Yet their negotiated relationship, or lack of relationship, with international actors means they are turned from hosts into guests, guests of the international humanitarian system funding response from refugees. Several barriers to partnership between local and international actors lead to feelings of hostility towards welcoming these international actors: sense of place, tensions around minimum standards, such as with psychosocial response, a lack of recognition of existing localization, and issues with identity and bias. An analysis through the lens of *hostipitality* shows that LFAs have comprehensible fears of being turned from host to guest and losing their rights of sovereignty over where, when, and how they act as host to refugees.

This is not to say that humanitarian organizations are always and everywhere incorrect in their hesitations and reluctance, but instead to shine a light on why, in the course of the localization agenda, there is more at play than shifting financial structures. Behind the financing lie issues of power, hospitality, and hostility. Just as local organizations will welcome international organizations, not only because of their increased funding power and prestige but also because they are a symbol of international solidarity, they will find processes of marginalization

that leave them feeling hostile and resentful towards the external, international humanitarian organizations.

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■ **OLIVIA J. WILKINSON** is a sociologist of humanitarianism and religion. Her research interests focus on social and cultural capital in humanitarian contexts and the influence of secular and religious values in shaping humanitarian action. She works at the intersection of sociology of religion and international humanitarian/development studies. She is currently Director of Research at the JLI, with a PhD and Master’s in Humanitarian Action from Trinity College Dublin and Université catholique de Louvain respectively and a BA in Theology and Religious Studies from the University of Cambridge.

■ NOTES

1. The focus of the JLI Refugee Hub’s scoping survey was set out in an outline created on the basis of earlier studies conducted under the leadership of Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and is available at <https://refugee.jliflc.com/resources/refugee-hub-scoping-study-outline/> (last accessed 19 October 2018).
2. It is recognized that organizations cannot be easily categorized as faith-based or secular and that many operate in a highly negotiated middle ground. However, for the purposes of the sample, interviewees were characterized as broadly secular or broadly faith-based to ensure that a wide range of opinions was represented.
3. In humanitarian and disaster research, the term has been used elsewhere in an ethnography of a family in the USA coping with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (Browne 2015).

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