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Refugees in the Large Metropolis:
Sharing Welcome and Innovations
A comparative perspective on practices and challenges towards refugees’ welcoming in the cities of Paris and Berlin

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Introduction: Presentation of the Team, Client and Mission

The Evangelischer Kirchenkreis Berlin Nord-Ost (EKBNO) currently centralises 44 parishes in Berlin and Brandenburg, to which they provide counseling and coordinate some of their actions. With the increasing number of refugees in the country and in Berlin, they have developed their humanitarian actions on refugees welcome and help by employing concrete actions to achieve the goal, by managing shelters and a refugee fund, launching the refugee church, giving German classes, organising cultural events etc. The EKBNO has worked with public authorities and various organisations. If the first phase of welcoming refugees in Germany has been characterized by a global enthusiasm and a strong mobilisation of forces and volunteers, there is now a need to answer a set of challenges linked to refugees’ integration, which is why the EKBNO wants to find some inspiration with what is done elsewhere.

Our main contribution for the EKBNO is to provide some approaches based on social sciences to analyse the way they deal with the refugees situation, especially towards the issue of integration, linking the cultural level (diversity and multiculturalism) with the one of social empowerment. A main aspect of this project is also to enrich the networking opportunities of the client with organisations dealing with refugees inclusion in other metropolises, by identifying the innovative practices.

The main expectations from the teamwork concerning the EKBNO’s help for this project are thus to provide some documentation material about their actions toward refugees’ help, providing a comparative critical analysis of the situation towards cultural diversity and social insertion in Paris and Berlin, and eventually to grant them some contacts in the two metropolises.
II. Overview: The Refugee “Crisis” and its Management in Europe

1. General Context: The Refugee Status, the Humanitarian Situation and the Political Contexts

1.1. The Refugee Status: Geneva Convention and the Definition of a Refugee

Refugee, migrant, foreigner, stranger: these words appear so often in the public discourse and are used so much to define the other that one might struggle to define it. First, the refugees are part of a bigger group of people called “migrants”. A migrant is a person that moves from one place to another for any kind of motive. The move can be either intra-national (from one place to another in the same country) or inter-national (from one country to another). A refugee is a specific type of migrant with a legal status that is varying depending on the host country. The key historical moment in recognising the word “refugee” has been in 1951. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees made it possible to write the Geneva Convention and make it be signed by 145 states. It consecrates the rights of the refugees and asylum seekers. Every state that signed is meant to respect the rights of people falling into the categories of migrants with a special status defined.

The definition of a refugee given by the Geneva Convention is not very precise and gives space for national jurisdictions to interpret the refugee status. Thus for, the following table introduces the distinctions between the different existing terms: migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, referring to the legal framework, as stated by the UNCHR.¹

¹ UNHCR Report from July 2016 “UNHCR viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘migrant’ – Which is right?”
➢ **Migrant:** It refers to an individual that choose to move from his home country. The choice can be made because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but also because one wants to improve one’s life by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, other migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government. For individual governments, this distinction is important. Countries deal with migrants under their own immigration laws and processes.

➢ **Asylum Seeker:** An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed. Every year, around one million people seek asylum. National asylum systems are in place to determine who qualifies for international protection. However, during mass movements of refugees, usually as a result of conflict or violence, it is not always possible or necessary to conduct individual interviews with every asylum seeker who crosses a border. These groups are often called ‘prima facie’ refugees.

➢ **Refugee:** This term shall apply to any person owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. Anyone falling under this status have rights and duties going with it. One of the most fundamental principles laid down in international law is that refugees should not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom would be under threat. The protection of refugees has many aspects. These include safety from being returned to the dangers they have fled; access to asylum procedures that are fair and efficient; and measures to ensure that their basic human rights are respected to allow them to live in dignity and safety while helping them to find a longer-term solution. States bear the primary responsibility for this protection.
An important aspect to consider in the migration crisis is the control of borders. Most of the European countries are part of the Schengen space in which borders are opened between the countries part of it. Even though the terrorist attacks of the past ten years such as Paris serial attacks in November 2015, Brussels attacks in 2016, Berlin attack in December 2016, to name but a few, have made controls at the borders more present, the borders are porous. As a consequence, the pressure on the borders of Schengen space, where it ends, is very high. Mediterranean countries are the first to deal with this issue, with thousands of migrants trying to enter in the Schengen space by arriving on the coasts of Spain, Italy and Greece.

The majority of them cross the Mediterranean Sea in makeshift boats, risking their life to coast in Europe. Several of them die in the sea because of overloaded makeshift boats. To give an idea, the number of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea amounted to 1,600 people in April 2015. Millions of refugees are fleeing their country in search of a safer place where to live. Most of them come from the Middle-East. The latest data on the European refugee crisis is to be found in the Eurostat dataset of 2015. Based on that dataset, the country that counts the largest amount of refugees coming to Europe is Syria with around 360,000 first-time applicants for asylum in 2015. The second country of origin is Afghanistan with 180,000 first-time applicants and the third one is Iraq with 120,000 first-time applicants.

Considering the countries hosting the most refugees in Europe, based on that same dataset with the data available up to the year 2015, Germany comes first by far. It accepted in total 140,910 asylum claims while the two next countries, Sweden and Italy, accepted respectively only 32,215 and 29,615 claims. France is only the fourth country with 20,630 claims accepted. While only 292,540 refugees managed to get their asylum claim accepted in Europe for 1,321,560 asylum claims, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan carry most of the burden of the crisis, all hosting around 9 million refugees.

The large flux of refugees in the last years has been the major focus of public attention. The terrorist attacks that happened in the same period of time contributed to a fast growing atmosphere of xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe. It resulted in electoral gains for far-right parties (for example, the Front National in France and the Freiheitliche Partei in Austria) in many countries but also to the Brexit, result of a massive
anti-immigrant sentiment rooted in the United Kingdom. The refugees, considered as potential terrorists, have to face the backlash of Islamophobia that raised from the terrorist attacks, even if in most cases, these attacks have been mostly perpetrated by citizens born and raised in Europe that belong to the second generation of historical migration. Thus, a link between migrations, refugees and terrorism or insecurity seems to have strongly influenced the public opinion, maintained by some political discourses, either by nationalist far-right parties, considerably rising these last five years.

However, public opinion has been affected, to some extent, on the issues linked to the refugees’ struggle, by the mediatization of the data mentioned before and furthermore through the reactions following the publication of photographs. For instance, those of Aylan Kurdi who drowned while crossing borders in September 2015, highlighted the major impact that visual representations of refugee deaths at border crossings can have on public opinions and political will. Europe is facing a major humanitarian crisis but governments and public opinions have been denying it. It took strong and morbid events to arise consciousness.

Among European countries, the responses of governments of different nations also differ largely from country to country. The countries are impacted by the refugee crisis to different extents and they don’t have the same capacity to accommodate refugees. Countries like Hungary and Greece are located at the borders of European Union and face the biggest inflow of refugees. The Hungarian government has stirred up xenophobic sentiments against refugees. It established restrictive new laws making life difficult for asylum seekers and refugees. Anti-refugee rhetoric by decision makers becomes commonplace. In 2015, Hungary built a barrier on its border with Serbia and Croatia without the agreement of the European Union, aiming at preventing immigrants from entering illegally.

On the other hand, governments of countries like Germany and Sweden experience the highest number of Syrian asylum applications, and take initiative to cope with the crisis. In Germany, the vast majority of Syrians who apply for asylum are granted protection and subsidies. Furthermore, the Swedish Migration Board has announced that most Syrians who apply for asylum when they reach Sweden will automatically be granted a temporary residence permit for three years to ensure that refugees can live safely in the country until peace is back in Syria.
2. Public Action, Political Environment and Private Initiatives of Hosting and Integrating Refugees in France and Germany

2.1. France

French politics and policies on integration have very much focused on cultural and identity issues. The last five years, with the several terrorist attacks France has faced and the rise of the far-right party, the state of emergency that is still binding today has mainly contributed to abandon the reasoning that considers welcoming refugee as a duty of the wealthiest and safest parts of the world. Also considering the economic difficulties in the national job market, the arrival of refugees has not generated enthusiastic welcome from the French society, as they are perceived as a new charge and danger rather than a potential to enrich the country in any way. If this tendency is surely to be balanced by the emergence of multiple initiatives of hosting, help and integration that is developed below, but the informal settlements, camps and the congestion it has somehow created in the public space have also contributed to this pejorative image, assimilating refugees to poverty, insalubrity and disorder.

In France, the Ministry of Interior is in charge of immigration, asylum, welcome and guiding of foreigners. The main institution in charge of the asylum demands is the French Protection Office for Refugees and Stateless People (commonly known as OFPRA). The refugee status is determined by the OFPRA, based on the Geneva Convention (conventional asylum) and the French Constitutional law (constitutional asylum). Once recognised as such, a refugee obtains a residence card specifying his status, available for ten years and renewable.

Since 2015, asylum seekers no longer need an address in order to start the asylum process. As soon as they arrive in France, they must turn up in one of the platforms of Pre Reception of Asylum Seekers (PADA). These platforms are the points of first reception of all asylum seekers, even if one has the address of a friend or family that hosts them. There is at least one PADA in each region in France, sometimes more (one for each department in the Paris metropolitan region). However, these platforms are hardly accessible by migrants: the administrative congestion requires a long time out that generates crowds, black markets for appointments, often coming along with a significant lack of information and understanding of the administration that make them vulnerable.

Asylum seekers are entitled to benefit from the following social rights during all the administrative procedure: health insurance (allows you to access medical care),
accommodation (housing), monthly allowance (financial assistance each month), and bank account (called Livret A). But the length of proceedings, even to obtain the first appointments strongly limits the access to these rights.

Municipalities are mostly in charge of housing. Mayors are in charge of centralising the existing propositions and opportunities of housing, and to transmit it to the prefecture to ensure some access to one of the different categories of accommodations destined to asylum seekers: social housing, emergency accommodation or other. Paris centralises most of the asylum demands, when the second main city concerned by refugees is Calais, where migrants are mostly transiting, waiting for a departure to Great-Britain.

In these two cities, migrants often gather in informal settlements as housing is congested and frequent decisions are taken to dismantle camps, sometimes in harsh conditions, often by the police and with a great lack of information for the migrants living there.

From the development of non-public initiatives to host and integrate refugees, two main actors seem to prevail: from one hand, associations recognised by the government which is coping with their actions, that are often important structures with employees and regular funds (France Terre d’Asile, La Cimade, Emmaus…) and coming along with these, the mobilisation of civil society through the creation of groups of volunteering, either independent or small local, specific associations that work at their level and have integrated refugee help in their actions. However, they are confronted to the mayors, who have power at a certain extent through “arrêtés municipaux” (municipal authoritative texts) to decide on the help for refugees. For example, the mayor of Calais ruled an “arrêté municipal” in the beginning of March 2017 to forbid the distribution of food by associations to refugees. Citizens are also confronted to the power not only of mayors but also of justice because they hosted refugees.

These two categories mostly exert their efforts to daily issues faced by refugees in the host country; on health, administrative procedures, food, accommodation and the second ones managed to become strong social networks providing solidarity and crucial human links. Last years have also witnessed the rise of private initiatives, mostly start-ups linked to the issue of integration through professional and social insertion often relying on refugees’ specific skills and/or cultures.
2.2. Germany

The German government has pledged to accept as many as 800,000 refugees in 2015 from violence-racked countries, and potentially half a million more annually for several years to come. Besides altruism and moral duty, there is also a practical reason for Germany to carry out the welcoming programmes: the nation’s population is shrinking at an alarming rate, and it needs skilled and motivated people to add to its workforce and remain its economic growth.

In the German case, the right to asylum is codified in article 16a of the German Basic Law. It is granted to everyone who flees political persecution, generally admitted as it is state persecution. Applicants who are awarded political asylum or refugee status receive a three-year residence permit (*Aufenthaltserlaubnis*). After those initial three years, a settlement permit (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*) with no time limit is issued if the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees does not object.

In Germany, Federal Ministry of Interior is in charge of asylum, refugees, the labour market and the EU’s internal market. Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG) regulates the procedure for asylum seekers. Asylum seekers whom border authorities allow to enter the Federal Republic of Germany or who are found in the country without a residence permit are transferred to the nearest reception centre of the relevant state.

All asylum-seekers arriving in Germany are obliged to report to a state organisation when they arrive in Germany. They can do this as soon as they reach the border or soon after. Anyone already registered as seeking asylum on entry should report to the border authority. This authority then sends asylum-seekers to the closest reception centre. Anyone who does not make a request for asylum until they are in Germany can report to a security authority (such as the police), an immigration authority, a reception facility or directly to an arrival centre.

Refugees’ asylum application is submitted to the responsible branch of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) under Federal Ministry of Interior Affairs. Officers of the ministry examine asylum applications, comprising both the important personal interview, as well as the subsequent decision on the asylum applications. Asylum seekers receive a certificate of permission to reside which grants a preliminary right to stay in the Federal Republic of Germany during the asylum procedure.
The nature and amount of the benefits are regulated by the Asylum-Seekers’ Benefits Act (Asylbwerberleistungsgesetz). These include basic benefits for food, housing, heating, clothing, healthcare and personal hygiene, as well as household durables and consumables, benefits to cover personal daily requirements, benefits in case of sickness, pregnancy and birth, as well as individual benefits which depend on the individual case. However, there is criticism from FAIN Germany, which obliges the legislator to immediately introduce a revision of the Act, ensuring a dignified minimum existence for refugees the same as citizens and include refugees into the regular social security system.

Main actors in Germany

Before 2014 although hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan were flowing into the European Union, Germany long benefited from Dublin regulation. It holds that peripheral countries of Europe like Greece, Italy and Hungary must ensure that refugees remain where they first enter the EU. However, after Budapest incidents in 2014, Chancellor Merkel finally announced an open-door policy for Syrians fleeing the violence, resulting in a series of events that have had wide-ranging consequences not only for Germany, but also for Europe. More than one million, mostly Syrian asylum-seekers, entered Europe in 2015, about three times the number for 2014. The overwhelming majority of them went to Germany.

The prevailing emotion in Germany, in the first place, was not a populist outrage, but enthusiasm. A culture of welcoming thus pushed many Germans to welcome refugees and participate in the voluntary work. However, after numerous refugees arrived, the state’s capacity was far from enough to accommodate them and provide them daily
necessity, trainings and employment opportunities. Series of riots and terrorist attacks add to the controversy of Merkel's refugee policy. The policy started to slowly shift. Even before the New Year’s Eve attacks in Cologne, Merkel had begun saying that "we will noticeably reduce the number of refugees" entering Germany. The deal with Turkey is an example of the dirty "sealing-off" principle. Turkey is doing the job for Berlin by closing its own borders to both Syria and Greece, which has sharply cut the number of refugees entering Europe via Eastern routes, in exchange for the revival of financial aid, the promise of visa-free travel to much of the EU for Turkish citizens and accelerated EU membership talks.

Because of her refugee policy, Merkel’s supporting rate drastically declined and anti-Merkel parties are gaining more and more attention. The right-wing populist Alternative for Germany party (AfD), which wasn’t even polling at the 5 percent hurdle needed to land seats in parliament in August 2015, is now consistently over 10 percent. In the state Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, AfD has surpassed Merkel's CDU, becoming the second largest party in the state election, which is now a challenge for Chancellor Merkel and the entire country.

In February of 2017, Angela Merkel gathered the governors of Germany's states in the Chancellery to determine tougher deportation measures for rejected asylum seekers in the country, some of them have been living and working in Germany for years. The statement noted that a "greater national effort" was needed, thus there appears a stronger wave of the deportation. By the end of 2016, over 207,000 people were technically subject to deportation. Those who are mostly affected are Afghans as some part of Afghanistan is acclaimed to be “safe enough” to return rejected asylum seekers to. The deportation of migrants whose asylum applications has been rejected has become one of the most divisive political issues going into this year's federal election in Germany. It has prompted considerable resistance at the state level and the deportations are being handled in wildly different ways from state to state.
III. Comparative Study: Dealing with the Challenge of Welcoming Refugees in Paris and in Berlin. Which Place for the Refugees in the City?

In the last decade, the arrival of refugees in Europe has been increasing continuously particularly in the last five years with the rise of terrorism in the Middle-East and the civil war in Syria. A significant amount of them is seeking asylum, and most of them went through difficult experiences. European countries have to deal with this situation and respond to the presence of refugees. From a political point of view, some countries have open policies to welcome refugees while others are taking an anti-immigrant stand, trying to push refugees away. Of course, the last stand is raising a serious concern regarding the issues that today's world is facing. In a world where the refugees will be more and more numerous, particularly because of wars and because of climatic change, no country can close their borders without leaving the responsibility to other countries. It is the concern of everyone, be it individuals, associations, NGOs, public authorities.

Considering this context, one issue that has risen along with this project is precisely the used vocabulary to deal with it. Indeed, if talking about refugees seems to carry a general acceptance, it also refers to precise legal reality that is important to seize all the issues at stake concerning this report especially as the recognition of refugee status introduces duties from the hosting states. The definition box can be found at page.6, within the contextualization\(^3\).

In this logic, the word of integration carries heavy sense. Here, it is not used as taken for granted. Rather, the word is used in this work in a critical way. Integration is a process that allows an individual or a group of individuals to become a member of another, often wider group by adopting a set of values and norms from its social system. Thus, integration seems to require both a personal will and action to insert and adapt, and an integrating capacity of the society by respecting the differences and peculiarities of the individual.

From the fieldwork, two central aspects of integration have come out. First, there is a material and administrative aspect of integration. This is linked to Henri Lefebvre’s concept “right to the city”. Everyone living in a city has to be covering one’s basic

\(^3\) UNHCR Report from July 2016 “UNHCR viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘migrant’ – Which is right?”
needs. The access to water, food, decent housing and health facilities is important for refugees to be part of the city. It is about basic human rights that everyone is inherently entitled to. How do the answer to these needs transform the perception of this category of people as a bad feature of the city (especially in terms of hygiene within the public space) and then, for the society?. 4 The administrative aspect is also important as obtaining a legal status will allow refugees to be legally recognised as a citizen.

But this is not enough. Second, there is a social and cultural aspect. It is what many people call integration: knowing the language, integrating the local culture and customs, having a work and contributing to the society. Here, there is the question of which place to give to the refugees in the society. Different definitions of integration and citizenship are at stake here, and what is more precisely at the core of this paper is to provide a critical perspective on these concepts through the situations of refugees’ arrival in the metropolis of Paris and Berlin and precisely, to study how the interactions taking place between refugees and members of structures that aim to support them impact the process of integration.

The following work is based on different data collected during the first half of the year 2017, from January to June 2017. Before the fieldworks conducted in Paris and Berlin, there has been some preparative research on the situation of refugees in Europe and the handling of the situation - which has been extensively discussed in the previous part. A first fieldwork was conducted in Berlin during three days in end of March. This first fieldwork was mainly consisting of attendance to different events organised by organisations helping refugees and informal talks with organisers, volunteers, social workers and refugees. Some contacts were taken to prepare interviews that were conducted during the second field trip. This second and last fieldwork led in end of April was also the opportunity to attend other events and have more informal talks. The fieldwork in Paris started in mid-May and ended in the beginning of June. As in Berlin, it consisted of attendance to different events and interviews with organisers and volunteers of these organisations. Adding to these, interviews with different refugees and also some informal talks occurred. The following table gives details about who has been interviewed during the fieldwork and which organisations have been approached:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations approached in Paris</th>
<th>Persons interviewed (all names changed for anonymity)</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emmaüs solidarité</td>
<td>François</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarité Saint-Bernard (linked to the Eglise Saint-Bernard de la Chapelle)</td>
<td>Amandine</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau d’Accueil et d’Accompagnement des Migrants</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris d’Exil</td>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Organiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Omar</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Askar</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations approached in Berlin</th>
<th>Persons interviewed (all names changed for anonymity except Claudia)</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evangelisches Jugend-und- Fürsorgewerk</td>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KulturMarktHalle</td>
<td>Thomas, Ali</td>
<td>Organiser/volunteer, Refugee/organiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SozDia</td>
<td>Klemens</td>
<td>Organiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladies’ Meet</td>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>Organiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesellschaft für Projektmanagement</td>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>Organiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sankt-Simeon Kirche (Flüchtlingskirche)</td>
<td>Hussain</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
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<td>Kirchengemeinde Wartenberg</td>
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<td>Kirchengemeinde Nazareth</td>
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<td>Kirchengemeinde Niederschönhausen</td>
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</table>
3. Being a Refugee in Paris and Berlin

3.1. Beyond the Idea that Refugees is a Homogenous Social Group

As the two biggest countries in the European Union, Germany and France both play a very important role in the welcoming and integration of refugees. However, the situations differ largely on both sides of the Rhine, as in 2015 only 70,600 applications for asylum were filed in France (20 percent more than 2014), with 20,630 claims accepted, and compared to 441,800 in Germany and 140,910 asylum claims, 7 times the amount in France.

Germany’s statistics office has recorded the highest number of refugees in post war history. In 2015, 1.1 million refugees crossed the German border; Berlin received nearly 10,000 refugees in November alone, the peak month of that year. However, It must be assumed that the 2015 figures on people seeking refuge are affected by undercoverage which cannot be quantified because the registration authorities were unable to register all people seeking refuge in a timely manner. As a huge amount of asylum seekers come at the same time and go through the same trajectories, the heterogeneity among them might be underestimated by the public, media and even the actors who are mobilising.

However, it should be noted that although asylum seekers share more or less common experiences, they are not a single social group, the heterogeneity between refugees is no smaller than between any other social groups. The media excessively depict refugees in a stereotypical image, typically women in scarf. Furthermore, political discourse and daily conversation also have the trend to neglect the heterogeneity among refugees. The problem of picturing “refugee” always in a certain way is that we are likely to group them as the same people. As a consequence, some people systematically perceive refugees as Muslims, and the recent terrorist attacks in Europe, revendicated by ISIS, have had impacts on the image of refugees among common people.

The heterogeneity of the refugees has many dimensions. Ethnicity, nationality, and religion, differentiate refugees and sometimes we should intersect different dimensions so that we can understand better the complexity of the whole picture. When talking about the religions of the refugees, it is true that most of the refugees are Muslims, but not all of them. There are also Christian refugees from Iran, who came to seek asylum in Germany because they face oppression in their country. Among Muslims, there are Muslims of
different branches. Syrians and Afghans are mostly affiliated to Sunni, while Sudanese might be Sunni, Shia or Christians.

What is tricky is that the dominant religion in one country might not be as dominant among the group of refugees who came from that country. For example, many of Iranian refugees in Berlin are Christians while the majority of the Iranian population is Shia Muslim. The Iranian Christians were facing oppression in their own countries and as a consequence fled to Europe. Except that different religions and different branches of Islam differentiate refugees from each other, the intersection of religious affiliation and ethnicity also play a role. For example, a Syrian Sunni Muslim might not get along with an Afghan Sunni Muslim at all.

The heterogeneity of the refugees in terms of ethnicity and religion has a prominent impact on the social interaction between refugees. Refugees in the emergency housing and container villages form small groups according to their ethnicity and nationality. Due to the language barrier, interaction between groups is complicated. The worse is that there are conflicts happening in groups. According to Eva, a social worker who is working in a container village in Berlin, the typical conflicts would be between the Syrian refugees and Afghan refugees, and causes of the conflicts might be very trifling things, which escalate to anger and frustration.

Refugees from different ethnicity might be integrated into the existing immigrant communities in the cities like Berlin and Paris. For example, in Paris, the two Pakistani refugees are very close to the Indian immigrant community, partly due to the similarity of their languages (people who speak Urdu and Hindi can understand each other). They even found their temporary job of distributing flyers through their Indian friends. In the context of Berlin, Hussain told us that among his friends, many of them always go the Arabic neighbourhoods in Berlin, where they can hang out like back home, without speaking any German.

Although this helps refugees to be received quickly into the city life, however, it can become problematic when concerning long-term accommodation and integration, as it potentially generates and strengthens parallel societies within increasingly segregated urban neighborhoods. An analysis from 2010 by the German Federal Ministry for Traffic, Building, and Urban Development confirms that there were 1,500 boroughs in 550 municipalities hosting a disproportionate share of migrants, with more than half of these boroughs being located in major cities. As refugees also are likely to move into segregated urban neighbourhoods, with the difficulty of delivering public services into
the segregated neighbourhoods, problems with education, language, and social capital might accumulate.

Gender is another dimension that influence the behaviors of the refugees and reflecting the cultural and religious difference. Germany received more than 476,000 asylum applicants in 2015, and more than one million refugees arrived in the country. However, only about 31% of them are women. The society was not well-prepared for the massive influx—especially when it came to female refugees. Inside most refugee shelters, men’s and women’s toilets and showers weren’t separated. There were generally no private sleeping areas, and women who had experienced sexual assault or violence had very little access to support services and resources.5

3.2. An Experience of Common Obstacles at the Arrival and Integration

For international immigrants, to leave their hometown and resettle in a foreign country is far from being easy, with various obstacles concerning both tangible and intangible difficulties. For refugees who are forced to flee their countries because of the ravage of wars and political persecution, the situation is even more complicated with most of them having been through the cruellest human experience and seen the darkest side of humanity. A considerable number of them were severely traumatized after they had to leave their hometown and their relatives, and to search for a new life in an unknown place.

The obstacles can be classified into two types: the tangible difficulties, concerning the provision of daily needs, housing, and the complexity of administrative procedures; the intangible difficulties concerning the cultural and religious difference, the difficulties to be and the obstacles resulting from the psychological state of the refugees. Although these obstacles are more or less common experience for all refugees, it should be noted that a certain obstacle might be more relevant in one context than in the other, and the impacts of the obstacles for individuals vary largely due to the different ethnic, social, and education backgrounds. Moreover the different personalities of individuals also play a role in the integration process.

5http://time.com/4470714/germany-female-refugees/
On their arrival in Germany and France, after their years of dangerous journey, the first difficulties they face are related to their basic needs. The provision of food is no doubt essential for asylum seekers. From our field trips and interviews, it seems to be a problem well tackled both by Berlin and Paris. In Berlin, the provision of food is not mentioned as a problem by either the refugees or social workers. The refugees both in reception centres and container villages receive free food from the state, and when they have their apartment, they will receive a bit more subsidy for food and housing. Meanwhile in Paris, generally speaking, it is not a problem either, however, the situation differs between informal settlements and formal shelters. The refugees in formal shelters are provided food by the state, while refugees in informal settlements are taken care of by the NGOs, with some of them having cooperation with the state.

However, other basic needs of the refugees might not be tackled well enough. To be settled in a proper housing is what all refugees pressingly need, however, it is a goal that is very hard to be achieved, depending on chance as the housing provision is largely outnumbered by the number of applications. Furthermore, the waiting period for a proper accommodation can last for years. According to the national regulation in Germany, refugees should be firstly accommodated in the reception center for 6 months, after that they are supposed to be provided apartments as proper housing. However, many of the refugees cannot find an apartment after 6 months, especially in large cities. In Berlin, the municipality has developed some strategies to tackle the situation. For example, some of the refugees in Berlin moved to temporary container villages after the first 6 months, which are managed by NGOs and companies that are authorised by the local governments such as EJF (Evangelisches Jugend- und Fürsorgewerk).

The other big challenge for refugees when they are welcome on their arrival is the common experience of the complicated administrative procedures, which are hardly legible. In Paris, as soon as asylum seekers arrive in France, they must turn up in one of the platforms of Pre Reception of Asylum Seekers (PADA). However, these platforms are hardly accessible by refugees themselves: the administrative congestion requires a long waiting. As a result, it generates black markets for appointments and refugees are often rendered vulnerable as they face a significant lack of information and understanding of the administration.

Omar, a Syrian refugee who works in a restaurant in Paris, said: “Of course it has been helpful (to have relatives in Paris), especially when it came to administrative issues, to have someone ready to help you in this [...] he (my uncle) helped me to understand how it works. Well, that’s mostly because he speaks French so he could understand how to do. [...] I
made the demand one month after I arrived. I went to France Terre d’Asile, they helped me with that […] My case was very long. It took one year […] I struggled with the OFPRA, and there was actually no answer, they don’t give you any explanation. You just had to wait.”

They don’t see the point to have so long and so complicated procedures. The regulation that reject them from any kind of work, studies, makes them frustrated. Moreover, the papers are mostly in French in Paris, and German in Berlin. Refugees might not even know which papers they are doing. There is a huge need of social workers and volunteers who can help for translation.

In addition to the complexity and intrigue, one of the principle regulation targeting refugees, the Dublin Convention, is being widely criticised. According to Dublin regulation, the country in which the asylum seeker first applies for asylum is responsible for either accepting or rejecting the claim, and the seeker may not start again the process in another jurisdiction. When countries members of the EU found out some refugees have been registered somewhere else, they have the right to send them back to the country where their fingerprints were first documented. The concerns for the regulation include the use of detention to enforce transfers of asylum seekers from the state where they apply to the state deemed responsible, also known as Dublin transfers, the separation of families and the denial of an effective opportunity to appeal against transfers. The Dublin system also increases pressures on the external border regions of the EU, where the majority of asylum seekers enter the EU.

Askar, a Pakistani refugee in Paris, is facing the possible transfer under the Dublin regulation. He has been in Paris for 8 months and is on the process of learning French. But soon he will receive the result if he will be send back to Germany, where he did his fingerprints, or not. It doesn’t only mean that he would be apart from his friends he made and that the effort to learn French is in vain, but also has deeper meaning for him. A. seemed very worried and upset when talking about this: “I really don’t want to go to Germany, as in Germany it’s not possible to bring my families. I have my wife and children still in Pakistan, facing the danger of war and terrorism; I want to bring them here. But this Dublin is finished, they will be sent me back to Germany. And it’s the government’s decision, I have no choice but accept it.” Among State-led policies, the possibility of family reunion is an important matter to refugees, as many of them feel isolated in their experience of a new, foreign society.
Although still far from being successful in the provision of housing and the administrative procedures, the basic needs of the refugees are answered more or less. It is believed by many social workers that now the priorities start to shift to longer-term economic and social integration in Berlin, while Paris is a lagging behind.

Many more intangible obstacles are linked to the difficulty for refugees to be integrated into the German society: the difficulty to learn and use the language of the host society, the cultural and religious differences, the difficulties to have access to education and employment opportunities, the weakened social links and the symptoms of being traumatised and frustrated. The language is the first obstacle as almost all refugees we interviewed, both in Berlin and Paris, complained about learning a totally different new language, the same time facing the frustration of not being able to use it when it is concerned about daily necessity.

Furthermore, one of the biggest challenges for refugees is to get the opportunities for education and also for a proper work, through which they not only make a living, but also obtain the sense of fulfillment. As that according to the regulation, asylum seekers are not allowed to work or study until they obtain their asylum status. Asylum seekers are usually in the state of being too idle. In addition to this, the strict regulation of having an equivalent certificate for a certain profession and the difficult to get their former education and training recognised by the employers pose a big obstacle for refugees to continue what they want to do in their life, which is often what they had been doing back in their home countries.

Omar, a Syrian refugee in Paris, had a strong will to go back to do what he used to do as job before, but he encountered difficulties. "I had to wait for my status to find a job. During the time waiting for the status, I could have worked somewhere without papers but when you’re waiting for an asylum status it’s kind of tricky [...] Hopefully I got my status after 3 months and through a friend I found a job in a Lebanese restaurant with a proper contract. Actually I couldn’t attend to any formation before that [...] I think about leaving this job and find a way to get a loan to start a new business with some friends. All I’m waiting for is find a way to go back to my business. I’m really trying to find a way to do this project, I want to sell “traditional” clothes as I did before. [...] I guess I just have to be a bit more patient.”

Social link for refugees is considerably weak, and the common reality of being separated from their families have immense negative impacts on the psychological well-being of the refugees. This is especially a big issue as that the Muslim culture, which
many refugees are attached to, values the social links, especially family much more than German and French culture.

As Omar talked about friends and families in the interview: "My mother went to Istanbul, my brother to Paris as well. I managed to send her money and we have some family there too […] But it's hard to be split like this. My brother has his family, but I came alone. That was the hardest part to manage […] I started working with my father at 12. And working was always about family, I never called someone 'boss', never had any hierarchy, it's hard to get used to this […] Again, I don’t want to feel like complaining about my situation, but psychologically it's hard. I told you I come from a traditional city, family was at core of my life, even my work was about family."

Last but not least, refugees have the symptom of being traumatised because of the past experiences and frustrated because of all the above obstacles, both tangible and intangible, thus they lost the courage and motivation to make an effort to be part of the society. Hussain, a Syrian refugee in Berlin, has mentioned the hardship and frustration his friends have gone through: "It's something completely different, it's too difficult to get out the refugee house. They also have difficulty learning the language. Some of them they don't want to go out, they just sleeping, eating, smoking. They just gave up, they think they have no chance to have normal life again. But people just wait and wait. There are only two states left that they allowed refugees to bring their families to come. Many of them just sitting there, worrying for their wives and children."
4. How Are Paris and Berlin Dealing with the “Crisis”?

Yet to date, the main focus of European decision-makers has largely been on the immigration policies of host countries. As priorities are shifting to long-term economic and social integration, there is an equal, pressing need to focus on the role and actions of host cities. The reality is that refugees disproportionately settle in large cities, where they have better job prospects, more helps from the citizens and existing social connections. Ultimately, it is these cities, rather than national governments, that will really make a difference in accommodating and integrating new arrivals. The responsibilities these cities face are enormous: how to house, educate, train, and integrate individuals from different cultures, with different education levels. Both the municipality and the civil society are mobilised in the welcoming and integration of refugees.

4.1. Berlin

Germany is a distinctive federal Republic within which states and cities enjoy considerable powers and resources, and particular focus is placed on coordination between the federal and state levels. Therefore, each German federal state has the right to interpret national legislation on the issue of refugee welcoming and integration. Sometimes there is even tension between the central government and state government on the implementation of a certain legislation. For example, the new legislation to deport Afghan refugees is refused by Berlin (one of the 16 constituent states) to be implemented in the city.

Although Berlin has the political will to deal with the humanitarian challenge brought about by refugees, it was not well prepared and well organised in the first place. There was a big gap between the needs and the actual help that is provided by the authority when the refugee influx peaked. In this period, a huge number of volunteers were involved and compensated the disorganisation of the public actors.

NGOs, churches and associations of the civil society take up the role of local authorities to provide everyone in the city with the basic needs that one is entitled to. Normally, the state is supposed to play this role but it doesn’t have enough human resources. As Klemens, working for the NGO SozDia in the district of Berlin-Lichtenberg, says: “There were social welfare organisations which had experience with running shelters and working refugees but they had limits of capacities so the government started to set up
more and more shelters in very inappropriate places. And started looking for NGOs and companies to run these shelters.”

In Berlin, the enthusiasm of people was very high in the Summer of 2015 and welcoming parties were held along the year, when hundreds of thousands of refugees arrived in Germany with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel decision to have an open-doors policy towards refugees. Public authorities freed many sports halls in order to provide a temporary shelter for them. With the incapacity of social welfare organisations to cope with the massive arrival, NGOs and churches were requested by the administration to help. As Thomas highlighted, thousands of spontaneous volunteers entered in direct contact with refugees to give help as much as they could, from simple donations to administrative help, legal assistance and psychological support: “Pankow Hilft has more than 200/300 volunteers who still work continuously in these initiatives in the shelters, giving German lessons and different things. And, maybe at the peak there were some thousand, spontaneously. But, a lot of people were there five times or only brought things, clothes or whatever. Something like 3000/4000 people going to the shelters and supporting and now maybe just 20% of these people.”

Some districts saw the development of a good organisation. Pankow was amazingly organised, where a good combination of authorities and good relations between the public actors and private actors developed. The organisation of political institutions and the exchange between administration and volunteers is one example of good coordination. The BAMF represents the authority in charge at the state level. In the level of Berlin municipality, Hauslander Behaude is in charge of the issues related to refugees. Other public institutions such as an Agency for Work are also involved in the help. Furthermore, in these fields, there was considerable exchange of information between the administration and the volunteers, especially at the district level. Thomas, one of the supporters of refugees in Berlin, explained the change of situation in Berlin: “The BAMF has 5 times more employees than before. If you have a really bureaucratic system, you have to suddenly employ thousands of people. Of course, here it’s an extreme position. And they professionalised themselves of course. But on the everyday thing, where the refugee had to go to the office, as the over burdening of the administration, the volunteers came to help.”

Good coordination and cooperation between the public actors and private companies and associations also develops. The management of Tempohome shelter, located in Pankow district, represents good collaboration of the public and private actors. The shelter is managed by EJF, which is a private association, and their work is financed,
in close collaboration with the LAF. The funds come from the Stattenzentrum. The building of the containers is also financed by the public sector and the shelters were built by a construction companies. The shelter is composed of 64 units which have a capacity of 270 people in total. There are predominantly families in the shelter. In order to mix people and facilitate interaction between them, residents are separated as much as possible by nationalities. The daily life of the people living in the shelter is organised by the EJF. In Tempohome, there are 4 to 5 social workers. The EJF tried to grasp the whole picture by observations, interviews and daily conversation with refugees. Two of the social workers who can speak Arabic and Farsi are in charge of having direct conversation with the residents and to grasp information so that the organisation can cater to their pressing needs. The association also tries to have a whole picture by interviewing the residents every several months.

Tempohome shelter, Pankow district

The Protestant church plays a very important role that is independent from the public actor. It has been engaged in the welcoming and support of refugees since a long time. Notably it was very active in the Oranienplatz Movement in 2014. While the police
tried to evict refugees living there, students, church members and citizens protested and supported the refugees. Churches in Berlin accommodated over 100 people after the shelter in Oranienplatz was removed.

Church asylum is a distinct case in Germany. It is a form of temporary protection for refugees without a legal residence status who are facing deportation and would face unacceptable social hardship, torture or even death if forced to return to their country of origin. During the church asylum period, all relevant legal, social and humanitarian aspects would be re-examined by the authorities. Therefore, the refugees have a chance to get official asylum status after the re-examination. During the process, the parishes provide accommodation (living space, cooking and sanitary facilities), basic needs (food, clothing) and in certain cases medical services.

The Refugee Church is a church of Kreuzberg district established especially for helping the refugees. It helps and supports refugees mainly in two levels. First to improve the living situation of the refugees, with help from lawyers, doctors, psychiatrist. Second, it also organises social and cultural events such as international café, a swing project for men, open stages, with non-exclusive services at the church. Furthermore, multiculturalism and especially the diversity of religions are also addressed by the church, especially through the activities such as common faith talks, religious workshops.

4.2. Paris

In France, the two main cities in which welcoming refugees has become a major challenge are Calais and Paris. The second fieldwork we have conducted was focused on the second, as its features are more similar to Berlin. Especially Paris and Berlin both are cities of “stay”, which make the local public authorities, face a necessity to conduct long-length policies and to go beyond the challenge of emergency as in cities of transit, as Calais, from which migrants usually try to reach other destinations. Paris has nevertheless faced the rise of several informal settlements, known as “camps” mostly in popular districts in the North of the capital. These settlements gathered thousands of people, from Afghanistan, Soudan, Ethiopia, Erythrea, and so on... Health conditions led to a rise of diseases, especially epidemic of scabies and the physical impact on the urban landscape of Paris motivated decisions of systematic dismantlement. As shown by the map below, the shelters that opened to provide a housing alternative for evacuated refugees are far from the inner city of Paris, and for those who either came by groups, have started their asylum procedure or were benefiting from some support by a Parisian association, distance is highly problematic.
Migrants under the metro station of Staligrand, Paris XIXeme, 2016.

Referring to the official information communicated by the Parisian local government, the main policies implemented and the measures deployed to manage the welcoming of refugees mostly date back from June 2015. Since that time, Paris’ official position is to try to answer the needs of the most vulnerable exiles by mobilising its health centers, including maternal and child ones, and responding to primary health, food and shelter needs. In October 2015, the Paris Community Action Plan for Refugees was thus launched. It carries eighteen commitments, carried out by different actors and by the public authorities. Among these eighteen announced measures figure the creation of a specialised center for the reception of isolated women and women with children, recruitment of forty young people in civic service to accompany refugees, the participation of the City in making available land, allowing the opening by the State of new accommodation centers, a help provided to the City’s partners to carry out their missions regarding French learning devices, food distribution and so on. It also aims to encourage citizen mobilisation through the development of volunteer involvement through the dedicated platform “jemengage.paris” setting up a network of donations.

On the issue of accommodation and shelters, one of the main measures has been the opening of a reception center in the area of La Chapelle, in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. The humanitarian center, reserved for men alone, is managed by the association emmaüs solidarité and has 400 places. Its capacity was supposed to increase to 600 by the end of the year with the expectation to face between 50 and 80 daily arrivals. A day care center allows a pre-evaluation by the social workers of emmaüs solidarité and OFII (French Immigration and Integration Office). The center integrates a pole of care and allows the accommodation of migrants for a few days. The site is reserved for isolated men who can be accommodated on the site, where they are supposed to be able to stay for 5 to 10 days before being directed to other places, depending on their situation.

However, several difficulties have occurred, revealing the principal limits of the local government's answer. Firstly, concerning the lack of this type of housing infrastructure and the fact that the number of arrivals is actually much higher that what was planned by the City. This is also tied to the issue of official status of the migrants: as only asylum seekers can benefit from public support and considering the waiting times to obtain the OFPRA’s (French Office for Reception and Protection of Refugees and Stateless People) appointment that delivers the receipt, many of them can be in illegal situations for several months. Thus, the police presence around the shelter, and globally in places...
where migrants and asylum seekers mainly gather in informal settlements has risen as a very sensitive issue.

Furthermore, our fieldwork has stressed the gap between these announced measures and the reality on the ground, that seems to combine a fragile and sporadic political will from public authorities and a fairly fragmented fragmentation of the associative and supportive organizations network. These two reports articulate that it is precisely the failures and shortages in public policies which are leading to the emergence of associations from civil society. By looking more in details to the different structures actually present in Paris, we identified some important ones, mostly NGOs or charity foundations that are involved for a long time in refugees’ help or support to socially vulnerable populations, including Emmaüs, La Cimade, France Terre d’Asile and the Croix Rouge. Their actions are mostly directed towards material help, food distribution, but also the management of public shelters as these structures work with the state and the local government and administrative help.

Religious organisations tend to be less present than in Berlin, the most active one being the Catholic church Saint-Bernard, located in the 18th arrondissement, providing material help in food and clothing, but which has also recently initiated get-together

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breakfasts and French lessons on week-ends. Beside the action of this Church, we haven’t noticed a significant involvement of religious institutions, either Christians or Muslims. This lower level of participation of the Church, compared to Berlin, regarding the refugees’ issue is mainly explained by the construction of the French state, based on a strong separation with the Church, that implies a non-intervention from the religious sphere in the political and societal spheres. Nonetheless, many associations based on the religious principle of charity are active on the ground. Emmaüs, La Cimade and la Croix-Rouge have been founded on this principle, and some more recent Muslim affiliated organisms have emerged and are also involved in providing some material support, such as Islamic Relief which is present all over Europe and leads action worldwide, but also more local associations as Au Coeur de la Précarité.

Beside the actions of these structures, the Parisian network for refugees and migrants support has been strongly built through the presence of migrants on the public space and the dismantlement of informal settlements, without alternatives provided to the displaced people: this has led to the mobilisation of civil society through the making of collective action directly on the ground. This has itself noticeably extended the network of volunteers in Paris by the multiplication of supporting initiatives that do not initially belong to any of the organisations set out above. It is for instance what Amandine, a Parisian volunteer, explained to us about the way she started being involved with refugees: “At first sight, we just went out with what we had to give: food we cooked by our own, in our kitchens so in small quantities. We stayed out, day and night with people sleeping in the streets and tried to provide them what we could to answer primary needs.”

It thus appears that structures such as Paris d’Exil, the BAAM (Office of Welcome and Guidance for Migrants) have emerged specifically to answer the set of challenges brought by the arrival of migrants/refugees in Paris. The Timmy, where Amandine has also been involved, is for instance a collective initiative specifically providing support to isolated minors and the THOT school has been created to deliver French classes and other activities for refugees and asylum seekers with a possibility to graduate from their school. This meets the actions of other private initiatives, based on a promotion of innovations and the “start-up” model, such as SINGA and ENGAGE, which are more keen to provide support in terms of sensibilisation, events and professional insertion. However, the multiplication of initiatives, if certainly beneficial at some point, also brings its set of challenges since the aim is to reach an efficient, coordinate way to support refugees’ life in the city.
4.3. What the comparison tells us?

Indeed, what is firstly stressed by the comparative statement of the situations in these two metropolises is the role of the national and local governments, so of public authorities and its strong influence on the ground. The difference between the two concrete, material situations of refugees themselves and of the structures aiming to provide them any kind of support highly shows how the political will has determined through the policies implemented and the presence of public authorities in the management of this issue since the first months. Starting from this statement, one can understand that the synergies operating in each city are quite contrasted.

Indeed, a striking point for us during our fieldwork in Berlin was the great ability of different actors to meet on the issue of refugees, to exchange ideas and actively look for partnerships. As noticed by Clara, a Project Manager in Paris, the situation in France and Paris is hardly comparable, as she stressed the lack of knowledge about the actions of one another resulting from failures in communication, and even talks about some competition existing between the actors. And, if it has appeared necessary for us to focus on the structuration of these networks between the different actors involved in welcoming and supporting refugees, it is primarily due to its impact on the way volunteers work and are likely to position themselves towards their own activities in supporting refugees.

The exchange of information towards the actions led by each organization helps to identify good practices existing and allows creating partnerships that direct refugees to the most relevant organisations according to their needs. The strength of the Berlin context and its supporting structures has been illustrated in our two field-works, during which the issue of different practices have been discussed from the activities proposed to refugees, the internal operation of the organizations, the composition of their staffs, their ability to include refugees in their management, and this with a range of actors going from Protestant parishes to political foundations, as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, public shelters and individuals from the civil society developing their own projects.

This coordination implies a considerable amount of time and availability, and one of the main elements of explanation we found out by comparing the Parisian and Berliner networks is the professionalisation of the individuals involved in such projects. Indeed, in France, volunteers’ involvement is usually linked to their politicisation over a topic. It does not necessarily mean that their political opinion calls for a participation. But considering the context, it has occurred that a positioning towards public authorities is stronger than in Berlin, where the local government embraced sooner its role of
providing accommodation solutions. Thus for, Amandine and François’s commitment has been tied for a longer time to emergent situations, they were also already motivated by a more global vision towards a changing society.

François: “Let’s be optimistic, it will last between 9 months and 4 years. Then, the second time, for those who have received status, paradoxically they have less rights than the others. They do not have anymore possibility of public housing. They have to find somewhere to live. First objective, I want to have a very practical approach and to know realities. So I am going to be at the root level. And then, another objective in the medium-term. I want to have a global picture of what happens to migrants and to make policy proposals.”

Amandine: “At that time the BAAM did not exist. The guys (refugees) were expelled, we left for République (another location in Paris). We provided some furniture, blankets and food, went with them for medical visits and we began to learn how to manage the administrative part. This was with the Collectif Parisien de Soutien aux Exilés (today Paris d’Exil) that was founded. The BAAM was created later, and it has a diversified, let’s say more complete approach of the issue. But still, the core of the work is done for emergent situations, especially about the administrative aspect. ”

The critical perspective of collective structures from the civil society, of which Amandine is part have the difficulty to create a global, inclusive synergy. Existing partnerships with the city of Paris are mostly the prerogative of traditional, known associations. If this could be the result of some structural opposition to the State-led action, it is also primarily due to opposite perspectives towards the volunteers’ behaviours, the nature of support to be provided. The comparison thus tells us that the challenge at stake is the ability of supporting structures in Paris and Berlin to renew their approach by developing their ties with different organizations involved with refugees.

“One on the long run, the humanitarian dependence of the populations leads to the impossibility of really pushing the State to assume its responsibilities to act on a large scale.”

What is then enhanced by these common complications is precisely the different considerations towards the way to provide support. More than a strict matter of coordination, this comparison sparks a substantive discussion on volunteers’ and coordinators’ motivations and positioning. One first needs to identify these needs in order to respond to it, and avoid the logics of providing a systematic help designed by pre-established ideas of what are the refugees’ expectations.
5. Challenges of Interactions between Refugees and Supporters: A Look from Inside

5.1. A Gap between Refugees’ Expectations and What is Provided by the Structures?

The multiplication of initiatives has led to a broader range of proposed activities and ways to support refugees, especially according to the type of actors offering it. If all the organizations we have met are conscious about the necessity to address not only material needs but also to insert activities dedicated to create or reinforce social link. Again, this is possible in cases for which a minimum comfort situation has been secured, even if it is a temporary one supposed to lead to a more autonomous condition, as in shelters, churches hosting refugees. Two main dimensions towards the adequacy between the structures’ offer and the refugees’ expectations thus seem to appear: a first one linked to a lack of information and communication between refugees and the structures, the second from different priorities and interests in the integration process.

Taking the example of Tempohome, a specific space is allocated to activities in common with all the interested residents, that goes from simple common dinners to movie nights, sewing sessions, help for children’s homeworks and so on. But one of the main current concerns of the team running the shelter is about the little attendance of the residents. The issue is to identify their needs, to get to know what they want, how they aim to spend their free time. The difficulty to reach the refugees is one main obstacle, which points out that the material, administrative support at first sight and the first contact established between the local volunteers and the refugees lacks a more interactive dimension. The hobbies of the refugees are also asked in the interviews so that activities they like can be organised. Surprisingly the activities that are liked by the residents are usually not what the social workers thought about, the activities such as nail design, hair cutting, acupuncture are surprisingly popular. After knowing the needs of the refugees, information about training and job opportunities, sports courses and language courses is also given by the association catering to the needs of individuals. In Berlin, most of them have developed the concept of “get-together café, that we also found in the Saint-Bernard Catholic church in Paris, several organizations initiated the same, but that target refugees who are already quite fluent in speaking the local language, which is otherwise a strong barrier, as Eva noted: “The get together coffee is a good idea, however, when some of the refugees go there, they are isolated. Of course the idea is to interact, to communicate, if you
don't have the language, how can you have the conversation with your neighbours and everything. For them (some of the refugees), it didn't work out. So for the residents (in the shelter) who have been integrated in a way, for them it’s a cream on top. For the person who are isolated the most, who really need it, and I’m happy I can motivate them, they were like “no, no, no…”, it was good motivation, it worked out in the beginning, but then it’s… they were isolated.”

Some solutions have been thought, especially on the presence of eventual speakers of the refugees’ languages in the staff of the shelters. Tempohome has in this

Get-Together

Begegnungscafé KG Niederschönhausen, Berlin, Pankow

Café,
way initiated the “family guide” concept, where former residents, refugees themselves, go to meet and talk with the current residents to know more about their attempts, feelings and expectations, in order to frame and precise the way to manage their living conditions in the shelter.

This case is also an illustration of what does not work in such initiatives to get closer to refugees by deploying a more “bottom-up” approach, relying on affinities between refugees that have experienced common trajectories and can more easily communicate, as it has arisen safety and trust issues. As Eva mentioned: “We have the feel that they are consulting them in a wrong way, because they are in the camp for three or four hours, they can consult them on any kind of things. We don’t want them to give wrong consultations, some of the family guides themselves just came here one year for instance, some of them cannot speak proper German. So actually they are not the best prototypes for integration, and they are giving advice on how to integrate, kind of paradox. There is kind of fear from my boss that there might be some extremists who are volunteering. I like the ideas that it’s not a top-down approach, it’s same same (...). It can be very dangerous, because we have no clues what they are talking about. We are very sceptical now.”

There is here an uncertainty about the way to find a balance between the will to improve volunteers’ and organisers’ knowledge on the refugees’ expectations and a way to do it that corresponds to a certain vision of integration and avoids some potential risks. Except for the help in terms of everyday need, public actors are also involved in the help of the political education for the refugees, which is essential for them to understand the society. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung is a foundation politically affiliated to social democrats, but independent from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The foundation is financed by public funds and dedicated to maintain political pluralism. Its main focus of work is civil education, political education and political consultation. They have been providing democratic education in Arabic, Farsi and other languages to refugees. The sessions take the form of a game, in which the refugees play different roles such as police officers, refugees, politicians etc. Thus, refugees who undergo the program get to understand their rights and responsibilities, and how can they be active in the civil society, especially on the local bases. Moreover, the foundation enables them to meet local politicians. In these meetings they can give suggestions from the real decision makers. It is also beneficial for the politicians as well, since they can have direct interactions with the future constituencies and get to know their wishes. When talking about “integration”, it should be addressed that the asylum seekers are supposed to be German citizens rather than just “guests” who come and go, and they have to know the
democratic political system and the rights linked to their position as an asylum seeker, and in the future a German citizen. Therefore, the political education for refugees is essential for them to become an inseparable part of the society.

Furthermore, there is also a dimension tied to the cultural shift between refugees and locals, concerning which the interactions with volunteers represent at same time a direct confrontation with, nut also an opportunity to conciliate both. The Ladies’ Meet initiative was precisely based on a reflection towards the place to give to these differences between cultures and its social implications. When expectations are based on gender-based considerations, even if not necessarily explicitly asked to volunteers, the challenge to respond it overcomes the practical aspect and from asking how to do it, the structures willing to organize it have to address the reasons that lead them to reflect on their own convictions towards some notions structuring their societies and minds: what is gender equality? feminism?, etc...

On the attitude towards supporting structures, the main expectations from refugees then seem to take two different paths, rather a will of emancipation from the structures, that as we will see, can constitute a basis for their own involvement within it, as Hussain with GPM or Ali with the It can however also be a non-participation to initiatives that target them as refugees and actually, a will of emancipation from the social implications resulting from the perception of this status, as it is the case for Omar: “And about associations, I kind of prefer not to, it’s like asking for help to me. It’s mostly associations that help you for primary needs, but now I got my refugee status, my flat, what I’m gonna go ask for? Friends? (laugh)... All I’m waiting for is find a way to go back to my business.”

On the other hand, it also happens that some have built a relationship of a relatively strong dependency on volunteers, that at some point, has failed becoming a step in a process to feel more comfortable with the French or German society. Julia explains it in these words: “Also I think it’s good for the refugees, to be more involved and active. Because there were all these volunteers helping all the time. This is also an experience I’ve made a lot. The people expect you to help them for anything. Now they have shelters, health insurance, a telephone, they could do it by themselves but still many call me because they want me to go with them. Sometimes it is because they’re afraid not to speak correctly the language, sometimes just because they are shy. But you also have to say no, it is sometimes like this that you help the most. I don’t have to make your appointments, you can do it, its not so complicated. People must not stop doing stuffs on their own. We have to
balance between the supports we can offer, but to have in mind that we’re supporting because we want them to be part of the society.”

Thus, the frustration can emerge from both sides through different manifestations: the risk of burn-out for volunteers, and the maintenance in a dependent, sometimes alienating situation for refugees. Questioning the systematic humanitarian behaviour that easily leads to an over-solicitation of the staff from supporting structures is an emergent necessity, especially as it also has an exclusionary dimension, as it removes responsibility and the feeling of actually being an actor of your own integration, rather than adopt a passive behaviour that make refugees suffer their lives in Paris and Berlin. It is in this perspective that we aim to address the notion of empowerment.

5.2. Empowering Refugees: Which Challenges for the Supporters?

Taking up the role of the state and public authorities, all the different organisations helping refugees share a responsibility in defining what will be the relationship with refugees and what position should be taken in order to deal with everyday interactions. As many of the interviewees mentioned, refugees are not here for few weeks or months, they are here for an undefined period, that could last for many years or even decades if the situation is not ready to change in the home country. Whatever will be the situation, the presence of refugees requires to deal with positioning. From talks with organisers in Paris and in Berlin, the reflection on position of volunteers and social workers was a major turn in the direction taken by the initiatives.

In the wake of the increasing arrival of refugees in Paris and in Berlin since the beginning of the 2010s, the population of both of these cities had to react. Some of the people living in these cities decided to actively take part in help towards these populations. At the beginning, helping refugees was about responding to their basic needs by providing them different goods and services. This type of help was putting refugees in position of assisted and volunteers in position of assisting, making the way for many of the volunteers to feel like “saviors”.

It appears that the issue of dealing with politicized volunteers in a public shelter like Tempohome has also been stressed in Berlin with Eva, when it confronts to the social workers’ management of the place. There are tensions on the legitimacy and efficiency in supporting the refugees living in the shelter. “Yes there are some tensions, for example some people came to us and say, “why Abdula doesn’t have German class?” They blame us
as the reason of refugees not being integrated. But it might be that the refugees don’t want
to go to German class. We cannot take care of everyone, but it’s not always our fault. They
want to rescue the whole world, and they blame us why is this problematic.”

For Klemens, former manager of a shelter in Berlin-Lichtenberg, the whole
situation, with volunteers providing as much as they could and refugees not meeting their
expectations, led to an unhealthy environment for refugees, making it harder to go out of
the shelter: “The camps started developing into bubbles somehow. In the camps, you had
your room, your catering and in the really good camps, you had kind of everything (child
care, gym classes, many different offers) but everything inside the camps. Among some
camps management, it is still considered to be high quality if you have many cooperation
going on inside the camp. There is another strand of discussion which says that you have to
make sure that people go out of the camps and go to regular institutions, start working
outside. Now the discourse is rather changing towards the question of how to get people in
touch with the regular institutions, in the neighbourhood, which is more difficult of course.”

Initiatives were more scattered and volunteers were organised in (informal)
networks. Then, many organisers realised that giving material help was not enough. And
that this could easily lead to inactivity: Eva was one of the persons that realised it: Yeah,
that’s the problem, you think that it’s a big improvement that they have more privacy, a bit
more privacy, but on other hand, it is very difficult to contact them, also to observe and to
have a big picture. Sometimes they sleep the whole day in the room, and they are
depressed, but this is very hard to grasp. Yes finally they can sleep, not bothered by the
noise everything but for us it’s very difficult to get them out of the rooms.

Volunteers and social workers work out a way to better their practices. In the
Solidarité Saint-Bernard, a meeting is regularly organized by the Father of the Church
and people exchange on what they do and what could be done better. In the EJF, in
Berlin, a meeting with volunteers is held by the social workers every month to discuss
their experiences and difficulties, thus good practices can be continued and also
volunteers would feel their work is appreciated.

Particularly in Berlin, emphasis was put on learning the local language. There are
many German language courses which, when completed, provide a certificate that allows
refugees to integrate universities and undertake studies. Some refugees decide to invest
in doing a German course and then follow with studies while many others decide to find a
work after learning German. In Paris, many different NGOs propose French courses for
refugees, as the THOT school which has open its doors the last past year and offers to
refugees and asylum seekers the possibility to get graduated in French language.

The Solidarité Saint-Bernard, an NGO linked with the Church Saint-Bernard de la
Chapelle is proposing French lessons on Saturday and Sunday mornings with different
class levels. These lessons are taught by a team of volunteers. Moreover, the Solidarité
also organises a lot of cultural activities. As François, one of the volunteers, highlights, the
aim is for refugees to understand and integrate French culture: “We distribute food on
Saturday and Sunday to about 150 persons. And we tell them that they can follow French
class. Every Saturday and Sunday, we have about 140/150 people that follow these French
classes. [...] I also organise free visits of museums. I became an actor of the social field. So
you see the idea is not only to give food, clothes or French lessons but to help them integrate
French society and to understand our culture.”

If certain organisations have initiatives centered on more charity activities and are
not so much focused on building mutual exchange between refugees and locals, others
concentrate their initiatives on this aspect. They are clearly focusing on the refugees that
got a legal status. Social events, platforms of exchange, peer-to-peer programs, NGOs
propose various creative initiatives. A project coordinator, Clara, talks about the project
of their community, still being tested: “The project of the platform was born from collective
telligence session. [...] During this session came out the solution to create a platform, both
online and offline. There will be an online platform that will be a tool but not the heart of the
program. The heart of the program is to create an interface to help refugees in professional
insertion. The idea is also to have not only a mentoring program where the refugee is an a
position of helped but also to have a reversed mentoring. [...] There is really this idea of an
exchange and not a position of the helped and the helped.”

In Paris and in Berlin, these types of initiatives are interesting because they
change the way volunteers position themselves regarding refugees. The organisers
leading the NGOs at the heart of these initiatives are working towards a different
perception of them and the construction of more collaborative interactions, in win-win
logic. In Berlin, in some of the NGOs, refugees are completely part of the organisation,
being volunteer or even organiser. It is a way to empower refugees and make them
owner of a project.

One of the very successful initiatives is the KulturMarktHalle, mentioned earlier. The
initiative has been using an abandoned market hall in order to accommodate a
market during day time where refugees could sell vegetables, fruits, spices etc, and hold
art events in the evening. Thomas explains the idea of KulturMarktHalle in these words: “We thought this market hall was empty, let’s do something in there. The initial starting was to do cultural events for and with refugees. The cultural people had the first impulse. And then, we thought: ‘ok, great, because maybe people do not need so much art in the very first moment but they definitely need food and they definitely need things that they know from their countries. They are completely out of their countries but they can come here and continue having their food. So we said, ok, therefore there is a need, especially in Pankow, there are so many migrants. There was this idea to combine: to make it a market hall in the morning and to use in the afternoon as a performance square.’” The great thing about the KulturMarktHalle is that it addresses different levels of needs, the need of job opportunity and the need of entertainment and belongingness, both very essential for facilitating the integration process of the refugees.
Another very good example of innovative initiative is the Ladies Meet organized by Julia in a church of Berlin. The idea is to get people together and provide them space and opportunity to eat, chat and dance, thus creating social link between refugees. This has been a practice carried out by many organisations, however, the innovative and also the successful part is that the meeting is only for women and their children. This event was not in Julia’s initial plans, but during some ‘meet and eat’ event that she organised previously, she realised none of the women were dancing during the event. While asking them, they answered that they are not used to dance in front of and with men this way, that it was not their cultural habit.

The Ladies Meet went very well because the men were excluded and the women felt more comfortable to dance and share good time with each other. The event takes place in a building shared by several organisations. The women who attend the events are mainly Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians and Germans, some of them are involved in the organisation. The organiser said in the interview: “I realized in a way, including men (in the event) was actually excluding women. I wanted to make it possible for them to stay as they are and still feel as a part of the society. From my understanding, these women will never integrate, because they will be left out, pushed away so they will stay home […] It’s really hard to deal with this new life and expectations from tradition and family. So, somehow, it’s how I had this idea of Ladies Meet. We needed to make them feel that they have a network again, a possibility to ask people who are here for longer time how they cope with the situation.”

There are different initiatives in which refugees are entirely collaborators and they are worth mentioning. In Berlin, there are many and they already give some good results. A program offered by GPM, a big project management NGO in Germany, is providing refugees with project management skills by giving them the possibility to lead a project and be guided by professionals from the NGO. Claudia, involved in the project, explains one of the project that was led under the program: “It was the idea that we organised a big summer party for around 300 people. I trained them with methods and we worked together. For example, T. was a project leader for entertainment and music, on all the technical things. We made it together. How can we work together and learn together? Eating and cooking is something that put people together so you learn a lot from the other. It’s a good network here in Berlin.”

Dealing with alterity, with the Other, is a central aspect of the interactions between refugees and supporters. It is only by acknowledging the Other that the relationships are constructive and leading to a positive outcome. More than being collaborators, refugees
are considered as equals and as a wealth. Not only economically speaking but also culturally speaking. Sharing life stories, experiences, cultures and ideas is creating a strong bond and creating a space for refugees in the host society. This space is a big question to be tackled in the future. It is linked with questions of citizenship and integration. Here, the thoughts on the question are not the same among supporters. Even though they all agree on giving the possibility for refugees to study and/or find a work, and ultimately have a decent life, they don’t think of their future in the host society in the same way. Here are some varying positions:

Thomas stresses the problem of the openness of the host society to refugees. The way refugees are integrated into the local society is depending on how the locals define the place of refugees in the city. However, it is clear that it is a right of the human to have the possibility to stay and have a decent life if one cannot stay in one’s home country: “If they want to be part of the society, if they really want it, this is a question if we are opened to give them a part of the society. Then I think they should be part of the society. And the rest can go back. It is a right of the humanity if you cannot live in your home country that the other offers a possibility to stay and in the meantime something to eat, something to develop your life because it is not a period of ten weeks or a holiday.”

There is the central idea of time in integration. How long are refugees going to stay in the host country? It would be ambitious to say that this would happen in a very near future, except if a major turn happens in the home country. Time doesn’t play in favour of the return of the whole population of refugees to their country. The experiences that refugees lived also make them hardly able psychologically to return. François is very sure about that: “Will they go back to their country? My answer is no. From what I see, no. They have lived, they have gone through such difficult experience. It is even better to be in Europe, in a European country. We cannot receive them all but the tendency for them to come is huge. As long as you don’t want to go to England, you can find solutions. If they want to go to England, what do we do. It’s difficult to solve.”

The word integration, when mentioned during informal talks and interviews left most of the time a blank in the conversation, a discomfort or a long thought about it. Some interviewees even proposed a different word. Claudia proposed to use development in order to talk about interaction with the other that the refugee is: “We make development together in our societies. I have been married with a man from the Netherlands. We made the European integration here and I think I see no difference. I don’t think we have to make integration but development together. I think it’s difficult to talk about this in Europe now. I was in an event and we were talking about goals from the United Nations. And one goal was
to develop together, as partners. I don’t see a difference between India, China, Syria so I think development is a better word than integration.

At the end, what is integration? Nobody can clearly define it. Every one is critical of this word that has been heavily politicised. Why don’t we use different terms, have a different conception of this so-called integration? What about participation, development, coexistence, living together? These are different alternatives that question the relativity of integration and offer the possible for society to be different. There is still a long way for this and the question has to be essentially tackled by the whole society, including the state.
6. Conclusion

Refugees in Paris and in Berlin are not just a homogeneous group of people. They are from different countries, have different beliefs, different cultures and they especially don’t face the same difficulties in the host country. Those who are granted asylum have the possibility to have a decent and autonomous life while the asylum seekers are facing the fear of deportation and have to fulfill their basic needs. However, this doesn’t mean that refugees, those who are granted asylum, are not struggling with their daily life. In Paris and in Berlin, this means that you don’t get certain helps that you were getting as an asylum seekers and consequently have to find your way yourself.

While in Paris, the local authorities are not actively and directly involved in helping refugees, even if it is starting to change recently with the support to NGOs, the administration of Berlin is impacted by a national political will to help refugees and has to actively support the help to refugees. Nevertheless, this is not an easy task due to limited human resources. That’s where NGOs, churches and associations step over. In Paris, due to a different national context and a passive support from the local authorities, many associations of the civil society appeared, strongly mobilising and criticising how the municipality is dealing with the situation.

Along the existing initiatives to support refugees has emerged a set of issues that directly challenge the notion of integration prevailing in German and French societies. While answering to basic needs appears a necessity to think further, in terms of professional or educational insertion, it is not always secured and interrogates the role of public action, without whom the whole situation is compromised, as stated by comparing Paris and Berlin. From the lack of political will to acknowledge the refugee status, to the making of informal settlements or massive shelters these elements contribute to frame an image of refugees either as undesirable individuals, or depending from local people’s support. If surely needed, this support shall be considered not only as an answer to emergent situations, but as a real tool for refugees to gain in social emancipation and thus, be used as such. If this is not made easier with the difference of expectations between the refugees and the supporters, the notion of empowerment, which argues in favor of a participation of the target population, here the refugees, appears highly relevant to cope with the challenge of balancing between support and the road to autonomy, that only can lead to a strong, mutual feeling of insertion.
Refugees arriving in Europe face difficulties in finding their way into their host country. They have to face first legal requirements, administrative formalities so that they can stay. Then, they have to seek for information to get access to the basic needs and services. After that, they still need to enter into a long process of learning the language, get education and get to know the culture and the society that they want to integrate. The same goes with training and finding a job.

Through this benchmark, EKBNO could gain a better understanding of social media and social networks that aim at informing, providing and connecting the refugees. This part is providing basic information on around 20 applications/organisations. Then, it is giving a little bit more information on some applications/organisations selected over the field in which they specialise (information, service provision, connection). A few applications/organisations have been contacted and detailed information has been given on them.
7. Classification

The benchmark is classified with 5 categories that refer to different types of social media and applications. The classification is as follows:

**GOODS/SERVICES PROVISION**

Including all the applications and social media providing goods (food, clothes, blankets, cell phones, etc.) and/or services (legal advice, health care, flatshare) to the refugees.

**LANGUAGE/CULTURE/EDUCATION**

Range of initiatives that are related to language and culture learning and educative tools, essentially to favorize the social integration of refugees in “hosting” countries.

**INFORMATION**

Considering mainly websites that provide helpful information to the refugees on his/her host country or the country through which he/she is going.

**MAPS AND LISTING PLATFORMS**

About websites/apps that map and/or list the different NGOs, events and initiatives taking place. The data available are mainly for European and North American countries.

**SOCIAL LINKING**

Groups applications and websites helping refugees to connect between themselves and with locals.
Based in France, SINGA is an NGO creating opportunities for engagement and collaboration between refugees and the welcoming society. SINGA is mainly funded by participative financement (donations). They developed an app called “Comme à la maison” which aims at connecting refugees trying to find a temporary place to stay in and people that have a room to offer them. It was developed during the Hackathon Réfugiés Connectés, organised by SINGA in partnership with Simplon.co and MakeSense. It was launched in January 2015. The device can be used in France and starts to be used in Québec (Canada). The idea is to support living together, cultural enrichment and creation of jobs. Going beyond the concept of flatshare, it proposes an immersion of 3 to 12 months in a project of social and cultural insertion. Among the organisations supporting SINGA, there are notably France Terre d’Asile, the fondation free, VINCI, fondation EDF, UNHCR innovation and the French Government’s Department of Housing.


Contact: [contact@singa.fr](mailto:contact@singa.fr)
Refunite

Refunite is a nonprofit technology-based organisation whose mission is to reconnect refugee families across the globe with their missing loved ones. It empowers refugees and displaced people by searching for their loved ones and putting them in contact, whether through a mobile phone, a computer or one of its free help lines. It has projects in the following countries: Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Refunite has long-standing partnerships with Ericsson (a telecom equipment provider), various mobile network operators, and the United Nations. It has also partnered with Facebook’s Free Basics service, which has made access to Refunite’s platform for free in 14 countries. Refunite has partnered with the ad agency LDC to launch the #IMmigrant campaign in order to spread awareness of the current refugee crisis. The campaign provides a tool www.IMmigrant.im for people to create their own #IMmigrant image and through this, aims to make people realise how similar we all are, and to be proud of coming from and identifying with different countries and cultures.

Link for complementary information: https://refunite.org/

Contact: e-mail: info@refunite.org
**GiveNow**

GiveNow is an application for donation. It was developed by SmallSharpTools LLC and available in iOS and Android since March 2016. The application aims at responding to the daily life needs of refugees. The donors are connected to supporters who collect the donations and give them to refugee organisations. They just give their location and information about what they want to give and supporters will come to their place to take the donations and transport them to the refugee organisations. The application is limited to one organisation in Berlin for now but others can join. The app is in German and English.

Link for complementary information: [http://appsforrefugees.com/givenow/](http://appsforrefugees.com/givenow/)

**Calais Action**

Calais Action is a direct-giving aid and advocacy group registered as a charitable fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund. It collects donations from local communities around the world to offer support to refugees in Calais and Europe, and also raises awareness of the current migrant crisis. Libby Freeman established the group in August 2015 following her initial trip to Calais. She believes there is a real need to establish an organised giving network in the UK which can help support the growing crisis in Europe. Calais Action has been growing at an unprecedented rate and it now develops its group to support the donations coming in. It has raised £20,000 through volunteers, set up donation drops across the UK and created a global giving map which is being used internationally to track donations.

Link for complementary information: [https://www.facebook.com/calaisaction/](https://www.facebook.com/calaisaction/)
IdeasBox

Ideas Box is a project that has been developed by “Bibliothèques sans frontières” in 2007, along with UNHCR and the creator Philippe Starck. This “box” is actually a portable multimedia toolkit, that was born from this challenge to access to information, culture and education for refugee populations. The Ideas Box offers a variety of educational and entertaining contents made to stimulate the creativity of its users by providing tools to produce their own resources and shape the Box to their own image. For each deployment, the LWB team works in direct contact with in-country partners in order to identify the exact contents and equipments which correspond to the needs and the expectations of the populations (language, culture, geographical context, etc.). The Ideas Box has its own power source through the generator included. The project is supported by several organisms, both financially and operatively. Among these supports, we find the French government and some French cities or regions (les Yvelines, Marseilles, Calais, Nantes…), the US government, but also important companies as Sony and Google, as the project also won the Google Impact Challenge in 2015.

EduApp4Syria competition and its two winners: Antura and the Letters and Feed the Monster

EduApp4Syria is an international innovation competition initiated by Norway to develop an open source smartphone application that can help Syrian children learn how to read in Arabic and improve their psychosocial well-being. The EduApp4Syria seeks to take advantage of widespread smartphone availability for delivery of an engaging learning supplement for Syrian children. The two winners of the competition are Antura and the Letters and Feed the Monster, developed by international consortia led by Cologne Game Lab (Germany) and AppsFactory (Romania) respectively. Both apps are available for download on Google Play and App Store.

The games are relevant learning tools for these Syrian out-of-school children aged 5-10. Most of these children now still live in Syria and in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. The games can also be used for Syrian children in school in a country where they do not speak the language of instruction. Learning to read in Arabic can be helpful for these children’s ability to learn a second language.

The competition is in cooperation with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), the All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development, the mobile network operator Orange and the Inter-Agency Network for Emergency Education (INEE).

Link for complementary information: https://www.norad.no/eduapp4syria
Kiron is an NGO that enables access to higher education and learning through digital solution. It was created by Vincent Zimmer and Markus Kreßler after attending a refugee conference in the summer of 2014. With a core team based primarily in Berlin, Kiron’s team is made up of over 70 employees and a pool of 400 volunteers with diverse backgrounds from across the world. Kiron aims to provide refugees with free higher education and the opportunity to graduate with a university degree. The Kiron Educational Model combines its innovative academic model with a pedagogical approach that caters the needs of its students from very diverse backgrounds all over the world. Kiron follows a fully competency-based and learning-outcome oriented pedagogical approach that aims to provide a holistic study experience. Because it combines digital (synchronous-asynchronous) and traditional blending (online-offline). Kiron has 31 academic partners who support them in their mission, including Bard College Berlin, RWTHachen University, BAU international Berlin etc. Kiron is supported by Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Help Alliance, Bertelsmann Stiftung. Financially, Kiron have gotten donate from Stifterverban, Daimler Fonds, Infineon etc. Kiron can be accessed by two languages: English and French.

Link for complementary information: https://kiron.ngo/
ENGAGE is a community that wants to put human at the centre again by giving the possibility to everyone to engage concretely in making desirable presents happen. The community started in 2015 with its foundation by Jérôme Cohen, a French national. “ENGAGE with refugees” is a project that is part of the projects of the community. The first initiative of the project is the production of a book of recipes from seven refugees coming from seven different countries in the world. The experience of fleeing is also narrated by the refugees themselves in the book. It is aimed at opening the reader’s eye on different realities behind the word “refugee”. This project was very punctual and lasted only one month. The enthusiasm around this first initiative led to another project with a long-term vision. This project, still in the process of development, is the creation of a peer-to-peer platform to help refugees with certain skills develop them and be able to have a professional career in France. ENGAGE is based in France and is in partnership with La Tribune (media), emmaüs international, HY4ALL, AirLiquide and LedByHer among others. The community gathers people from many backgrounds, participates in the reinvention of new models, puts research at the center and is in an inclusive approach. ENGAGE works around publications and conference-actions.

Link for complementary information: http://engage.world/
RefuChat is an application which facilitates communication between volunteers or paramedics and refugees. It was developed by Chili Consult and launched in September 2015. The application is free and available on both Android and iOS. It provides the most useful phrases for communication and a live translation of written text and spoken text. RefuChat can be used everywhere in the world as long as the user is using one of the following languages: English, French, Spanish, German, Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Farsi.

Link for complementary information : http://www.refuchat.com/
Wefugees

"Wefugees - Community Without Borders" is an organisation aimed at helping refugees integrate into the community based in Berlin. Wefugees runs a platform which answers questions regarding the topic "settling down in Germany". It runs a website and a Facebook page. It improves the way of distributing information to solve the difficulties of refugees. Wefugees is a powerful tool that supports refugees' self-support and simplifies the work of supporters. The website provides an interactive Q&A platform, which is used by refugees, experts and residents, forming an online community where everyone shares information with everyone. Newcomers get information they need from Wefugees' Q&A platform: experts from refugee support services share their knowledge to a larger audience while providing valuable information about refugee issues, residents are empowered to participate in the integration of newcomers by providing answers and help to refugees and volunteers. It has partnership with Kiron, Aiden, workeer, social impact startup etc.

Contact: manager: henriette@wefugees.de

Link for complementary information: https://www.wefugees.de/k
Bureaucrazy is an application which a team of seven Syrian refugees are developing in Berlin, based on their own experience of incomprehension and struggle with the German administration. The aim is to provide a better/simplified understanding of German bureaucracy for refugees by explaining, for each appointment, what to do, where to go and what you need to take with you. The app has been developed at ReDI, a Berlin non-profit “school for digital integration” that teaches asylum seekers how to code. Bureaucrazy aims to combine three basic functions: a translation service that renders German official documents into Arabic and English, a multiple-choice decision tree for frequently encountered problems, and a mapping service that sends applicants to the right council office.

Link for complementary information: https://www.facebook.com/Bureaucrazy.de/
The Welcome App Germany offers refugees and asylum seekers all required information about Germany, general and legal advice as well as giving relevant contacts of public authorities. Information on education, integration, daily life, transportation, tourism is provided. The NGOs of migration counseling and integration help are introduced as well. The application can be used in 8 languages: Arabic, German, English, French, Russian, Farsi, Greek, and Turkish.

Link for complementary information: https://welcome-app-concept.de/en/
RefugeeMaps.org

This website is a map with the localisation of donations, events, local groups and fundraisers, information mainly available for Europe and North America. It was developed by PranMan and GeoMeteoMe and launched in September 2015. This map aims at helping the humanitarian network in coping with the refugee crisis by giving them the possibility to be more effective and efficient.

Link for complementary information: https://refugeemaps.org/
Appsforrefugees.com is a website that provides a list of applications that can be useful for refugees, refugee organisations, supporters, donators or any other person helping refugees in a way or another. The project is a beta. It is under development and is constantly adding apps in the website. It is composed mainly of applications available on Android or iOS but some of them are also available in other systems. The website is easy of use with different categorisations so the user can easily go through it: apps working offline, apps by topics, apps by region and apps for supporters. Short descriptions of the apps are given and also links to them. Many of the applications present in the list in annex are coming from this website. here are also mainstream applications that are useful for everyone, not only for refugees.

Link: [http://appsforrefugees.com/](http://appsforrefugees.com/)
URBAN REFUGEES is an international organisation with branches in Paris and New York City, and a pilot program underway in Malaysia to be completed in July 2017. It was created in 2012, with the aim of changing the way the world supports urban refugees. It started as a website, and quickly became a movement—as over 80 organisations from over 40 countries joined the cause. It has a network of 80 local and international NGOs supporting urban refugees in over 40 different countries. Its network aims to forge a global advocacy voice for more support to urban refugee populations and to facilitate the exchange of learning and best practices. Urban Refugee also works directly with refugee support groups to enhance their capacity to serve their communities, and achieve long-term sustainability. Financially, it is supported by UN Refugee Agency, Humanitarian Innovation Fund etc.

Link: http://urban-refugees.org/
Refoodgee

Refoodgee is an application developed by Memorado. The developer is a leader in brain-training apps and their apps count more than a 100 million of users over the world. Refoodgee is a free app which aims at bringing refugees and locals together for a cooking-and-eating activity. It was developed in September 2015 by a group of engineers working for Memorado in Germany. Both refugees and locals can use this app, registering either as a guest or as a host. They give some information about them and what they would like to cook. If an invitation is accepted, a connection is made by mail to plan the get-together.

Four of the applications in the benchmark list were developed by Memorado: “Refoodgee”, “WelcomeGuide”, “AllesKlar” and “GoGive”. It developed many applications for refugees in a project called #refugeeswelcome during the #hackweek15. The hack week 15 is a basically week during which engineers experiment, innovate and learn without interruption. The following web page talks more about this project: https://medium.com/@Memorado/memorado-hackweek-15-8d120a4fccbd#.hukb9a1by

Link(s) : https://www.facebook.com/refoodgees/, http://appsforrefugees.com/refoodgee/
V. Annex: Other applications and social media

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