Presentation Symposium

ORGANIZING AND ADMINISTRATION IN REFUGEE CRISES:
AVENUES FOR THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS AT THE INTERSECTION
BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND MIGRATION STUDIES

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The Emergence of Institutional Voids: Managing the Permanence of Transient Refugee Camps

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The adoption of evidence in a humanitarian emergency organization:
A practice repertoire perspective

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Potential Sponsor Divisions: Organization and Management Theory, Social Issues in Management and Public and Non-Profit Management Divisions
ABSTRACT

The link between management and refugee studies is still a relatively emerging and underexplored one (Mintzberg, 2001; Phillips and Hardy, 1997). Yet, connecting these two areas of research offers promising synergies for both fields. The recent European migration crisis points to the practical need for academic engagement across disciplines in this area. However, as the studies collected in this symposium proposal demonstrate, the highly dynamic and volatile contexts of refugee crises and humanitarian organisations also offer great potential for theoretical insights. This is particularly apposite when we think about the conference theme of ‘making organizations meaningful’. The symposium will highlight and discuss conceptual issues of humanitarian practice that in particular offer potential for contributions from management research as well as imply opportunities for practical implications. To accomplish this, each author draws on different organizational theories and distinct empirical contexts. These include issues surrounding (1) projects to standardize systems and metrics to evaluate humanitarian performance, (2) the implications of the current refugee crises for navigating institutional complexity, (3) the adoption and diffusion of evidence practices in humanitarian emergency contexts, and (4) entrepreneurial activity in refugee camps within the context of institutional voids.

Keywords: Refugee Crises, Valuation Practices, Institutional Logics, Administration, Meaningful Organizations, Humanitarian Practice
OVERVIEW OF SYMPOSIUM

Nearly sixty million people are displaced around the world today. This number represents the highest amount of refugees at any given point since World War II (UNHCR, 2015). The Syrian refugee crises alone has displaced more than ten million people, many of which are underage, causing a large scale prolonged humanitarian crisis. Many of Syria’s surrounding countries face considerable management challenges as a result, as public finances become strained and security concerns have to be balanced with administrative and human rights issues (Porges, 2014). The influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees into the European Union has also initiated fierce debates among member states on how to respond on a policy and administrative level. Data on decades of refugee crises around the world reveals that the average operating time of refugee camps from opening to closing lies at around 20 years, while the average stay of refugees in camps adds up to around 12 years (UNHCR, 2013). As generations of families live in camps, often under conditions of dependency and deprivation, a more sustainable and reflective approach to management techniques and governance is required. While the majority of camps are run through an informal assembly of loosely coupled public-private-non-for-profit partnerships, the basic management models through which these sites are run remains largely unchanged since the 1950s (Betts and Collier, 2015). In light of these issues, the management of the current refugee crisis has frequently been described as one of the defining challenges of our time. Yet there is a surprising paucity of research relating to management related issues in regards to problems and opportunities generated by forced migration and refugees (see Mintzberg, 2001).

The symposium’s four papers will explore key questions that individually and collectively can advance the contribution of organization and management scholarship to refugee studies to make organizations meaningful. To accomplish this, each author draws on different organizational
theories and distinct empirical contexts. These include issues surrounding (1) projects to standardize systems and metrics to evaluate humanitarian performance, (2) the implications of the current refugee crises for navigating institutional complexity, (3) the adoption and diffusion of evidence practices in humanitarian emergency contexts, and (4) entrepreneurial activity in refugee camps within the context of institutional voids.

**In the first paper,** Gatzweiler explores the question of how humanitarian evaluation systems can be designed to accommodate and mediate between diverse value criteria while remaining applicable to the highly uncertain and dynamic environment that commonly defines humanitarian practice. Informed by empirical research of management practices in large-scale refugee camps in Jordan, Gatzweiler’s study takes interest in the design and enactment of the most widely used performance evaluation system developed for humanitarian response operations: the Sphere Standards. The inter-disciplinary study focuses on theorizing how Sphere’s evaluation system is designed to allow for uncertainty and ambivalence and how this design contributes to fostering attitudes of anti-reductionism in humanitarian governance and decision-making. In particular, the paper explores the concept of heterarchical design (Lamont, 2012; Stark, 2009) and how it can be employed to facilitate users’ engagement with multiple valuation regimes without alienating certain value drivers in a preconceived fashion. It is argued that the concept of heterarchy provides a fruitful metaphor to further theorize the interrelationship between accounting, evaluation and organizing practices (Miller and Power, 2013: Czarniawska, 2009). To develop this argument, the research draws inspiration from recent productive synergies between the Sociology of Worth (SOW) (Stark, 2009) and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1999; Callon et al., 2007).

**In the second paper,** Reich and Amis contend that, while the availability of multiple institutional logics is widely acknowledged in institutional theory, explanations about how and why some logics
become more dominant and gain primacy over others remain limited. They argue that the recent visual and emotional turns in organizational studies provide us with an opportunity to increase our understanding in this area by allowing us to access the connections between micro-levels of interaction and macro-institutional change. They do so by analysing newspaper articles on the current migration crisis, specifically the discourse before and after the release of the image of three-year-old Syrian boy Alan Kurdi lying face-down and lifeless in the sea. Their data reveal that the discourse changed dramatically after the release of the image. This suggests that a change in logics may have taken place. Reich and Amis provide a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon by integrating the emotional and visual turns in institutional theory. They propose that the image of Alan Kurdi triggered empathy that not only changed the discourse on the migration crisis, but also had an institutional effect at a societal level. Based on this theorizing, they argue that the discourse prior to the picture reinforced the dominant logic, but that the subsequent image and verbal discourse collectively undermined the dominant logic resulting in a new logic coming to the fore. Thus, their work not only sheds light on what factors impact the dominance of one institutional logic over another, but also on the causes of deinstitutionalization. In doing so, the paper also attends to one of the blind spots in institutional theory more generally, namely how to link the macro- and micro-levels of institutions. Finally, they develop a theoretical explanation that helps to capture the evolving impact of the migration crisis across Europe.

The third paper by Frey and Barrett explores the adoption of evidence practices in extreme environments such as refugee crises (Barin Cruz et al. 2015; Mintzberg 2001). The literature significantly contributed to our understanding of the adoption of practices in consultancy firms (Orlikowski 2000), Fortune 500 companies (Jarzabkowski et al. 2012; Raffaelli and Glynn 2014) or Business Schools (Gehman et al. 2013). However we know less about practice adoption in
contexts where practices develop ‘exceptionally’ (Mintzberg 2001). Drawing on practice theory (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011; Giddens 1984) we analyze the empirical case of Global Aid, an international emergency organization operating in refugee crises currently promoting the use of evidence. Building on insights from a two-year qualitative study at both headquarters and field offices our findings disclose the adoption of evidence practices to assess population needs or to demonstrate results, however hardly when designing interventions. We explain this selective adoption of practices by referring to its embeddedness in, what we term, practice repertoires, and the salient organizational values, norms and power dynamics. We thereby explore the currently neglected meso-level dynamics between practices and structures (Vaara and Whittington 2012; Feldman and Orlikowski 2011) conceptualizing practice repertoire as a set of valid, legitimate and available practices facilitating social action in fast-paced and uncertain contexts and stabilizing practices globally across time and space. Additionally we contribute to studies on evidence by refocusing the literature’s attention from evidence strength (Briner et al. 2009; Rousseau 2006) to the complexity of practices for evidence use.

The fourth paper by de la Chaux explores how institutional voids, i.e. environments with unclear dominant norms and practices, emerge. Our study of entrepreneurial activity in refugee camps explains how actors manage environments in which their lived experiences diverge from prevailing norms and practices. Specifically, many refugees spend decades in camps yet dominant camp institutions continue to promote the assumption that camps are transient spaces. Although refugee camp entrepreneurship is illegal as it implies permanence, entrepreneurial activity is widespread among refugees and gives meaning to their life in a transient community. Analysis of entrepreneurial activity in refugee camps identifies three antecedents – paralysis, ambiguity and incongruence – that interrelate to constitute an institutional void regarding the assumed longevity
of the camps. This paper contributes to research on institutions by explaining how institutional voids emerge and speaks to practitioners and policy makers by discussing the implications of refugee camps’ temporal dynamics.
PROPOSED FORMAT OF SYMPOSIUM

Length: 90 min

Minutes 0 – 5: Welcome and Introduction by Professor Royston Greenwood

Minutes 5 – 53: Paper presentations

- The selective adoption of evidence practices in humanitarian emergency. Presented by Corinna Frey
- The current migration crisis and its lessons for institutional complexity – bringing the emotional and visual dimensions into focus. Presented by John Amis
- The Emergence of Institutional Voids: Managing the Permanence of Transient Refugee Camps Presented by Marlen de la Chaux

Minutes 53 – 68: Discussant

- Discussant: Professor Jerry Davis

Minutes 68 – 90: Open discussion
RELEVANCE TO DIVISIONS

This symposium is being submitted to the Organization and Management Theory, Social Issues in Management and Public and Non-Profit Management Divisions. Below we explain the relevance to each of these divisions.

Organization and Management Theory

The issues addressed in this symposium lie at the center of several theoretical interests of the Organization and Management Theory (OMT) division. A first area of shared interest between the symposium and OMT is the development of theories and methods that address multiple value criteria and principles, including dignity, sustainability and integrity. The symposium focuses on the theorization of the question of how humanitarian performance evaluation standards not only act as a norm carrier as they travel into the field but also how they facilitate the performativity of the eclectic and ever changing nature of humanitarian practice. A second area of overlapping interest with the OMT content domain relates to challenges of governance and control within contexts of institutional complexity. While refugee camps are inherently contested political spaces that are organized in the absence of formalized governance mechanisms, they offer a promising site within which theoretical issues of ‘institutional settlements’ can be explored and theorized. Settlements between conflicting institutional logics form a crucial element in the temporary stabilization of the otherwise highly disrupted setting of refugee crises.

Social Issues in Management

The symposium should also be of interest to members of the Social Issues in Management Division, particularly with respect to the question of how to construe and develop meaningful organizations and meaningful ways of organizing. In this way, our symposium also ties in with the overarching
theme of the Annual Meeting. As emphasized by the manager of one of the largest refugee settlements in the Middle East, refugee camps are becoming new cities of the world. The way these sites are built from the ground up and managed can have significant long-term impacts on economic, social and political developments in entire regions of the globe. Researching and re-thinking innovative administrative solutions for refugee camps, and the often informal ways of organizing that define these settlements, therefore offer significant potential not only in ethical but also in economic terms. Further, our focus on refugee and migration problems allows us to develop theoretical insights that will have broader relevance beyond the immediate empirical applications presented here.

**Public and Non-Profit Division**

This symposium should also be of interest to members of the Public and Non-Profit Division in several interrelated ways. Evaluating organizational performance and impact as well as navigating institutional complexity constitutes one of the central challenges for public and non-profit management. Conceptual issues surrounding both of these elements, evaluating performance and navigating complexity, are magnified in refugee settings. These settings are commonly defined by prolonged and large-scale public-private-non-profit partnerships in which it is difficult to analytically separate the activities and impact of organizational practices. Evaluation and other managerial information systems may hereby serve as mediating technologies between economic, political and social concerns within organizations, thereby facilitating decision-making, evidence-based-practices, reflection and compromise around competing institutional logics and value claims. All of these areas do not only form central concerns of the symposium but are also key areas of interest for the Division.
INDIVIDUAL PAPER ABSTRACTS

The adoption of evidence in a humanitarian emergency organization:
A practice repertoire perspective
Corinna Frey & Michael Barrett
University of Cambridge

Recent research has highlighted the difficulty in the adoption and diffusion of new practices to effectively respond to natural disasters, refugee crises or global development needs (Barin Cruz, Aguilar Delgado, Leca, & Gond, 2015; McKague, Zietsma, & Oliver, 2015; Zanello, Fu, Mohnen, & Ventresca, 2015). Most prominent are observations of the limited adoption of evidence practices in emergency organizations, hoped to improve how population needs are assessed, crises interventions designed or impact demonstrated (Bradt, 2009; Jones, 2012).

The literature so far has significantly contributed to our understanding of the (non-) diffusion and adoption of practices elaborating on new technology practices in consultancy firms (Cousins & Robey, 2005; Orlikowski, 2000), the development of coordination practices in FTSE 100 or Fortune 500 companies (Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Feldman, 2012; Raffaelli & Glynn, 2014) or value practices in Business Schools (Gehman, Trevino, & Garud, 2013). However we know less about the adoption of practices in extreme contexts, an environment in which practices are expected to develop exceptionally (Mintzberg, 2001). Taking the contextual embeddedness of practices seriously, our interest is to explore the adoption and diffusion of evidence practices in the context of such extreme operating environments, providing an opportunity for theoretical development based on unusual cases (Weick, 1993).

To better understand the adoption of new practices, we draw on a practice theory perspective (Cetina, Schatzki, & von Savigny, 2001; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini,
2013), in particular Giddens’ theoretical developments (Giddens, 1979, 1984), to recognize the reciprocal relation between daily activities and contextual structures. The conceptualization of practices as “those social actions that recursively produce and reproduce the structures that constrain and enable actions.” (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011: 1241; Reckwitz, 2002) emphasizes structures as both the medium as well as the outcome of practices, thereby enabling and constraining human agency and social conduct (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005). In addition, practice theory shifts our empirical focus from practitioners to practices and the daily activities of organizational members (Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2011, 2013). In particular, practice theory allows us to first conceptualize evidence use as social practice enacted on a daily basis and at the same time appreciating its embeddedness within the wider organizational context. Second, we introduce the concept of practice repertoire as a set of valid, legitimate and available practices which are selectively drawn on to facilitate social action in fast-paced, uncertain and emergent environments, and which simultaneously serve to stabilize practices globally across time and space.

Global Aid as an international emergency organization operating in refugee crises was chosen as case study for two reasons. First, since 2010 it has increasingly sought to respond to the ongoing quest in the sector for evidence use by promoting practices to explicitly apply information and data when assessing population needs, designing crises interventions or demonstrating results. Second, the organization is operating in a global high-risk and fast-paced environment being held accountable for life-saving activities during refugee crises worldwide.

We address our research question through a qualitative longitudinal in depth case study. The empirical material was collected over a period of 2 years including several different data collection phases (Table 1). Following a Grounded Theory approach this allowed us to oscillate between the empirical findings and emerging theoretical insights (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Locke, 1996). The analysis is based upon three sources, participant observation, interviews (formal and
informal) as well as archival materials (public and private). In line with practice theory the key source of information was an extended period of participant observation at both the organisation’s headquarters (4 months, part-time) as well as one country office in Kigali, Rwanda (3 months, full-time) getting familiar with the daily working practices, technologies, norms and values (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2007). In addition, 81 formal and 95 informal interviews were conducted as well as 98 public and 122 private archival documents reviewed. The data was analysed applying the Grounded Theory methodology of open, axial and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) to develop overarching theoretical themes.

Surprisingly, we find that Global Aid adopted evidence practices especially when assessing needs and demonstrating results, however hardly when designing crises interventions. We explain this selective adoption of evidence practices by referring to its embeddedness in its organizing structure mediated through what we term a practice repertoire. In particular, we refer to organizing structures such as values implying an explicit beneficiary focus and a prevailing sense of exceptionalism among staff members delimiting against other types of organisations, norms as the vertical cooperation with supervisors and a highly operational working style as well as power dynamics such as new funding requirements and the increasingly competitive humanitarian landscape. The practice repertoire refers to the different organization-wide sets of practices which are drawn on at various points over time. In our case study, we identified practice repertoires as including: ‘comprehensive needs assessment’ as well as a ‘results-based framework’ that facilitate and stabilize evidence practices to assess population needs or demonstrate results in this global emergency context. In detail, the organization’s needs assessment framework legitimizes certain daily evidence practices such as reaching out to the field to directly assess evidence on beneficiaries’ needs. This practice repertoire strongly aligns with organizational norms such as the exclusive focus on refugees as well as the operational working style, where being in the field is
considered more legitimate than sitting at one’s desk. In addition, the results-based framework enables local staff to systematically report evidence through pre-defined indicators and outputs. This practice repertoire is aligned with the new sector-wide funding requirements mainly introduced by private sector donors. However, interestingly no such practice repertoire was adopted that would legitimize and incentivize the application of best practices, lessons learnt or academic evidence when designing an intervention. The development of such a repertoire was constrained by the organization’s highly operational working style and sense of exceptionalism which disregards the analysis and use of research findings as well as a strong vertical hierarchy which delegitimizes information sharing amongst colleagues (Table 2).

Our study makes two specific contributions, referring to practice theory as well as the literature on evidence utilization. First, in highlighting the notion of practice repertoire as a set of valid, legitimate and available practices we contribute to a better understanding of the selective adoption of practices. Currently, practice scholars interested in the adoption of new practices are concerned that the embeddedness of these practices is yet to be fully explored, especially concerning the translation of structural properties into daily practices and vice versa for the emergence of practices (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Orlikowski, 2010; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). In exploring the meso-level dynamics (Stones, 2005) between daily practices and contextual structures we refer to practice repertoires, conceptualizing structure and practice at an intermediary ontological level. In particular we break down how i) a practice repertoire mediates the translation of structures into daily social conduct and how in turn ii) daily practices reinforce or alter structural properties through practice repertoires. In particular, i) we propose that organizational norms and values get inscribed into practice repertoires constituting a set of valid, legitimate and available practices which in turn legitimizes or de-legitimizes daily activities on the ground. ii) We further highlight that practice repertoires emerge by recursively building on existing daily practices and
that the manifestation of valid, legitimate and available practices as a repertoire in turn reinforces or alters organizational norms, values and power structures.

When adopting a new practice, practice repertoires as the intermediary between structures and daily practices are of specific relevance in contexts of extreme operating environments. This is first due to the fact that agents operating in an extremely uncertain and high risk environment need to be able to rely on a pre-defined repertoire of valid, legitimate and available practices that can be routinely and unconsciously applied, providing a sense of security in an unstable environment. Second, practice repertoires ensure that daily practices are linked across the different organizational field-offices, sub-offices and headquarters dealing with the emergency and thereby stabilizing the adoption of a practice globally across time and space.

As the specific focus of our study was on evidence practices we also contribute to studies on evidence-based management in organizations by refocusing the literature’s attention on the complexity of practices. So far the literature primarily examined the nature (Briner, Denyer, & Rousseau, 2009; Rousseau, 2006) or strength of evidence (Reay, Berta, & Kohn, 2009) and thereby neglected its daily use in practice (Gkeredakis et al., 2011). Our study radically shifts focus by questioning how evidence gets utilized, examining the contextual enactment of evidence practices in humanitarian emergencies. We thereby propose to conceptualize evidence use as a social practice shaped by and shaping organizational values, norms and power dynamics inscribed in and mediated through practice repertoires as sets of valid, legitimate and available practices dynamically selected in performing different forms of organizing over time.

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Standardization of performance evaluation metrics and systems in the humanitarian sector gained momentum as a key theme amongst practitioners following the 1994 Rwanda genocide. The widespread public perception of a futile and uncoordinated response to the refugee crisis revealed the damage humanitarians could cause by failing to deliver on the requirements of assistance and protection (Ramalingam et al. 2009; Barnett, 2011). Among the severe criticisms of the aid operation was the absence of any consistent, verifiable standards against which performance of humanitarian operations could be measured and evaluated across implementing agencies (JEEAR, 1996). While the scale and publicity of the reported malpractices in Rwanda was unprecedented, the management and policy challenges did not reveal uncommon or unique challenges in comparison to previous operations and remain timely in the governance of today’s refugee crises.

Systematic approaches that seek to monitor and measure humanitarian value face several key problems. Humanitarianism is an eclectic field of practice that is shaped by at least two interrelated currents. Firstly, humanitarian practice commonly takes place at the overlap of different areas of knowledge production. These include health sciences, accounting, politics, law and ethics (Rottenburg, 2009; Barnett, 2011). While humanitarian practice draws from the value criteria of all of these areas, it belongs to none. Secondly, within the context of the often chaotic, complex and fast-changing humanitarian environment, flexibility and adaptability form inherent requirements for the practical application of any humanitarian evaluation system (Ramalingam, 2013). A resulting implication of these two currents is that humanitarian value is inherently relational, contextual and emergent, rather than assuming a fixed and preconceived ontological
In light of the fluid nature of humanitarian value, standard setters face the challenge to conceive of a non-essentialist approach to evaluation systems, going beyond notions of representation.

Against this background, the paper explores the question of how humanitarian evaluation systems can be designed to accommodate and mediate between diverse value criteria while remaining applicable to the highly uncertain and dynamic environment that commonly defines humanitarian practice. Informed by empirical research of management practices in large-scale refugee camps in Jordan, the inter-disciplinary study takes interest in the design and enactment of the most widely used performance evaluation system developed for humanitarian response operations: The Sphere Standards. The paper focuses on theorizing how Sphere’s evaluation system is designed to allow for uncertainty and ambivalence and how this design contributes to fostering attitudes of anti-reductionism in humanitarian governance and decision-making. In particular, the paper explores the concept of heterarchical design (Lamont, 2012; Stark, 2009) and how it can be employed to facilitate users’ engagement with multiple valuation regimes without alienating certain value drivers in a preconceived fashion. Gehman et al. (2013, p.106) define heterarchies “as relations of interdependence wherein authority is distributed, accountability is lateral, monitoring is mutual, and justifications are multiple”. By focusing on the affordances that form part of Sphere’s performance evaluation format and method, the paper demonstrates how Sphere is developed according to heterarchical design principles and how this shapes managerial practices in a large scale refugee camp as heterarchy comes to be enacted. It is argued that the concept of heterarchy provides a fruitful metaphor to further theorize the interrelationship between accounting, evaluation and organizing practices (Miller and Power, 2013: Czarniawska, 2009).

Theoretically and conceptually, the paper draws from and contributes to the recent ‘practice turn’ in valuation studies (Stark, 2009; Kornberger et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2013). As stressed
by Gehman et al. (2013), notions of value and values have long been considered important to analyse and explain organizational activities. Yet current literature stops short of developing a dynamic understanding of valuation practices:

“This approach enables us to move from cognitive understandings of values as abstract principles and cultural understandings of values as symbolic artifacts to a performative understanding of values as situated in networks of practices” (Gehman et al., 2013, p.86).

Instead of conceptualizing value(s) as abstract principles or cultural artefacts, Gehman et al. highlight that what is valuable, why it is valued and how it is constructed and made identifiable requires an analytical focus on the practices through which values are performed. One important implication of this approach is a need to re-conceptualize the relationship between values work and organizational governance: “values practices emerge not as a kind of terra firma on which an organization's governance might rest, but as one more aspect of organizing that is itself in need of governance” (Gehman et al., 2013, p.106). Recent research by Stark (2009) and Antal et al. (2015) shows how such a form of value(s) governance can itself be an important factor for organizational resilience. Stark challenges the common contention that under conditions of uncertainty and ambiguity, stability of organizational values is a key criterion for success. Instead, organizational adaptability depends on the ability to keep multiple evaluation principles at play and exploit the resulting friction between them (Stark, 2009; Antal et al. 2015).

We contend that the recent ‘practice turn’ in valuation studies opens up new theoretical insights to investigate the conditions enabling and constraining the governance of heterarchies of value(s) (Stark, 2009; Lamont, 2012). Although valuation as a practice constitutes an emerging research field and has recently received some attention, previous studies have mainly focused on organizational routines, structures and rituals to theorize valuation practices (Gehman et al. 2013; Stark, 2009). This paper more explicitly focuses on the design and format of evaluation systems as
central cites in which notions of value are contested and mediated. As stressed by Chenhall *et al.* (2013:269): “accounts of performance are critical because it is in discussions over the different metrics, images and words that can be used to represent performance that the actual worth of things is frequently debated and contested”. In line with this argument, this paper focuses its attention on the devices and practices through which humanitarian value is constituted and governed.

**Methods**

The research problem is addressed through a qualitative study with empirical material collected over a fifteen-month period. The data collection involved visits to two refugee camps in Jordan (one week per camp) during which twenty semi-structured interviews as well as participant observations were carried out. Participants included refugee camp managers, engineers, evaluation officers and community organizers. Subsequent to the visits, follow-up interviews with several of the participants were conducted over a period of ten months. Furthermore, data collection included eight semi-structured interviews with Sphere standard setters and with current and former Sphere board members enabling the study to investigate the ‘thought-parcel’ behind its evaluation system. Finally, the research is informed by document analysis in relation to the development of Sphere’s format and evaluation reports as well as governance frameworks from the refugee camps. To enable theorization, the research was guided by a grounded theory approach permitting a shift back and forth between empirical data and theory in a triangulating manner (Corbin and Strauss, 1990)

**Findings**

The paper explores the concept of heterarchical design to capture three interlinked elements that make Sphere a performable technique attuned to the highly dynamic environments humanitarians have to commonly operate in. Firstly, the notion of heterarchy implies an evolving conceptualization of the notion of accounting classification, entailing a shift beyond the analysis
of the implications of ‘imperfect’ performance metrics towards a relational understanding of value (Stark, 2009; Jordan and Messner, 2012). By designing its performance evaluation system around heterarchical principles, Sphere promotes a method in which incompleteness does not constitute a flaw to be mitigated but it instead functions as a source for action and organizational reflection. As shown in the case study, rather than measuring stable value categories, the purpose of heterarchical systems is the formation of new value categories by associating the open evaluation dimensions in a multitude of ways based on contextual requirements. Secondly, building on these insights, we show how its design allowed Sphere’s performance evaluation system to serve as a type of non-digital search engine for the refugee camp managers. Our case study provides rich evidence of how the openness between the unranked elements of Sphere’s heterarchy of value(s) contributed to a search based on raising important questions rather than giving fixed and often unhelpful answers. Thirdly, the paper contends that the concept of heterarchy contributes to a theorization of accounting technologies following a procedural approach to valuation based on method rather than content (see Quattrone, 2015a, b). While Sphere is rich in content in the form of indicators, metrics, formulas, norms, guidance notes and performance dimensions, they serve a different purpose than taking the function of a data retrieval device, such as Burchell et al’s (1980) accounting answer machines. While the evaluation of outcomes and outputs remains an important element, searching for fruitful combinations of Sphere’s heterarchical performance dimensions helped the refugee camp managers not to simply retrieve information according to a pre-set formula but to invent new forms of associations, engagement and solutions for the camp (Quattrone, 2015a; Rocha, 2001).
The migration crisis and institutional complexity – bringing the emotional and visual dimensions into focus

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When looking at the discourse used by politicians in the UK to describe the migration crisis, “swarm of people”, “cockroaches” and “economic migrants” were common descriptors used from early- to mid-2015. Rather than speaking of a humanitarian crisis, political leaders preferred using terms like “immigration” and “events of this summer” when referring to the migration. The terms of the debate changed dramatically on September 2, 2015, when images of three-year-old Syrian Alan Kurdi lying face-down and lifeless in the sea populated newspapers and television screens. Immediately, people fleeing their home countries were termed as “refugees” and politicians started to speak of a “migration crisis”. Moreover, discourse became more humane and morally laden in general with political leaders talking about “moral responsibilities” and “efforts of solidarity”.

According to Lamin and Zaheer (2012: 56), “the media both influence and reflect societal values.” If so, this image had apparently resulted in a substantial shift in societal values, or institutional logics.

Institutional logics constitute “frames of reference that condition actors’ choices for sensemaking, the vocabulary they use to motivate action, and their sense of self and identity” (Thornton et al., 2012: 2). Here Thornton et al. (2012) build directly on Friedland and Alford’s (1991) conceptualization of society as an interinstitutional system, which is made up of multiple institutional orders operating at the societal, organizational and individual levels. As theorizing of institutional logics has developed, it has become apparent that institutional orders make multiple logics available to actors. Several scholars have provided evidence for this argument (Kraatz & Block, 2008; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Reay & Hinings, 2005; Scott, 2008). However, to date,
empirical research on institutional complexity is limited (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014) and explanations about how and why some logics become more dominant and gain primacy over others remain undertheorized (Thornton et al., 2012). As Meyer and Höllerer (2010: 1251) pointed out: “Logics may peacefully coexist, compete, supersede each other, blend or hybridize or reach a temporary ‘truce’”. The case of Alan Kurdi raises interesting questions in this context as we see an apparent rapid shift in logics. Further, understanding of what factors impact which logic is or becomes dominant must originate at the micro-level of interaction (Barley, 2008; Powell & Colyvas, 2008). However, our understanding of the link between micro interactions and macro effects remains nascent.

Powell and Colyvas (2008: 277) have highlighted that “Institutional logics are instantiated in and carried by individuals through their actions, tools, and technologies” and called for a focus on the micro-level of institutions to study institutional processes. Barley (2008) also emphasized that institutional theory is based on micro-social concepts. In a similar way, other scholars have called for theorists to take into account the “inhabited” nature of institutional processes (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). Gray et al. (2015) developed a process theory about how institutions develop from “bottom-up” in interactions, thus also bringing the discursive element into focus. While Kraatz and Block (2008) noted a lack of research on how local actors deal with institutional complexity, recent research has been trying to illuminate how logics are constituted and used by individuals “on the ground” (McPherson & Sauder, 2013: 167): “Developing a better understanding of these micro-level instantiations is critical to the logics perspective because it is here that logics are translated into action, action that either reinforces or reconstitutes the logics themselves”.

We contend that the recent visual and emotional turns in organizational studies provide us with an opportunity to access these “micro-level instantiations”. Although both the visual and emotional dimensions have recently received some attention from institutional theorists, both areas remain largely under-researched (Meyer et al., 2013; Voronov & Vince, 2012). We suggest that the Alan Kurdi case provides us with an opportunity to examine the links between emotions and visual discourse, and in so doing assess how micro-level institutional processes can have macro-level effects.

The Emotional and Visual Turns

Emotions have been conceptualized as a key link between the micro- and macro-levels of institutions and as possible triggers for institutional change (Creed et al., 2010; Creed et al., 2014; Voronov, 2014). One of the distinguishing features of emotions is their ability to focus the attention of individuals (Baumeister et al., 2007; De Sousa, 1987, Warren & Smith-Crowe, 2008). Based on this, we contend that emotions can direct attention in ways resulting in the potential activation and/or deactivation of particular logics. In this way, emotions can be conceptualized as a key link between the micro- and macro-levels of institutional processes. This impact, we hold, is particularly strong when emotions are transported via images.

A main feature of visual discourse is that images are perceived and processed very quickly and present themselves immediately in full - compared to verbal text which presents itself more sequentially (Doelker, 2002). Another distinguishing characteristic is that images have the potential to both communicate and activate emotions (Doelker, 2002; Meyer et al., 2013). One way in which visual discourse can elicit emotions is by creating an emotional connection between the represented entity and the consumer of the image by triggering empathy (Konstantinidou, 2008). Based on this
we suggest that photographs like that of Alan Kurdi result in stronger emotional responses than verbal texts are able to elicit.

Analysing the image of this drowned boy and its effect on discourse, we propose that it might have triggered empathy as one quote of David Cameron suggests: “Anyone who saw those pictures overnight could not help but be moved and, as a father, I felt deeply moved by the sight of that young boy on a beach in Turkey” (The Guardian 4 September, 2015; emphasis added). Considering this, we conceptualize images as powerful carriers of emotions that hold the potential to trigger reactions in individuals. The effect of these reactions depends on whether or not the transported emotions are in line with the dominant institutional logic. In the former case, we propose that the dominant logic will be reinforced; in the latter case, the visually evoked emotion can cause a shift in attention that can in turn precipitate emphasis on an alternate institutional logic.

Methods

In line with theorising on discursive analysis (Thornton et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2004; Suddaby, 2011) we argue that alteration of discourse can indicate, as well as precipitate, a shift in attention and logic. We therefore study the discourse on the migration crises before and after the release of the image of Alan Kurdi and examine if and to what extent it might have changed.

The approach used by Lamin and Zaheer (2012) has inspired our chosen methods of data collection and analyses. We code articles as either supportive of or opposed to a particular logic according to how the article portrays the migration crisis. We combine a pattern inducing and a pattern deducing approach. First, an inductive approach is applied to capture the prevalent logic by coding articles as described above. Having identified the dominant logic, in a second step a pattern deducing approach will be applied which consists of counting occurrences of particular vocabulary in order to gain further insight on if and to what extent the discourse has changed over time. As
Phillips and Hardy (1997) (see also Hardy & Phillips, 1999) have shown in their work on the UK and Canadian refugee systems, refugees are constituted through discursive activities at different levels that ultimately shapes how they are perceived in society. Their work highlights the important role of discursive activities for the individual fate of refugees. Data will be collected from major newspapers in the UK.

Preliminary Findings

A preliminary screening of the data reveals that the discourse changed dramatically after the release of the image and that different vocabulary was then used. This suggests that a change in logics may have taken place. We provide a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon by integrating the emotional and visual turns in institutional theory. We propose that the image of Alan Kurdi triggered empathy that not only changed the discourse on the migration crisis, but also had an institutional effect at a societal level. We argue that the discourse initially reinforced the dominant logic, but that the image and subsequent discourse collectively undermined that logic resulting in a new logic becoming dominant. Thus, our work not only sheds light on what factors impact the dominance of one institutional logic over another, but also on the causes of deinstitutionalization. In so doing, our paper also attends to one of the blind spots in institutional theory more generally, namely how to link the macro- and micro-levels of institutions. Another contribution of this paper rests in its conceptualization of visual images as powerful carriers of emotions. This paper thus attends to recent calls for the need to pay close attention to the visual turn in management studies (Meyer et al., 2013) while also providing insight into the role of emotions in institutional change. Finally, we offer a theoretical explanation that helps to capture the evolving impact of the migration crisis across Europe.
The Emergence of Institutional Voids: Managing the Permanence of Transient refugee Camps

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Refugee camps are temporary spaces in which displaced populations wait until return to their place of origin is safe again. Camps are characterized by the provision of humanitarian relief to refugees; short-term planning cycles for camp management; and extensive restrictions to refugees’ freedom of movement that prevent integration in the host country. However, today’s displaced spend an average of nearly two decades in refugee camps (Crisp, 2003) and thus lead a semi-permanent camp life, often characterized by boredom, violence and substance abuse (Stearns, 2011).

Nonetheless, the camps’ dominant norms, practices and rules continue to assume transience: Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya has existed since 1997, yet planning and needs assessment continue to be conducted in annual cycles. Zaatari camp in Jordan houses 80,000 refugees and is effectively the country’s fourth largest ‘city’, yet camp managers refrain from referring to a ‘settlement’ or ‘town’ to avoid acknowledging the camps’ longevity. Moreover, although most refugees have been living in Zaatari camp for nearly four years, it is illegal for refugees to leave the camp at their leisure, take up employment or even build housing structures other than the tents and containers that camp managers provide. This paper investigates how refugees and camp managers such as United Nations (UN) agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), experience and cope with living a semi-permanent life in a transient space.

The literature on institutional voids has investigated contexts in which extant institutions are insufficient in guiding actors’ behavior (Mair, Martí & Ventresca, 2012). Although the term
in institutional void was initially employed to describe contexts lacking formal institutions (e.g., legal systems, codes of conducts, and regulations) (Chakrabarty, 2009; Luo & Chung, 2013), recent research study how institutional voids emerge from an over-abundance of institutions that creates ambiguity regarding what constitutes acceptable norms and behaviors (Martí & Mair, 2006; Mair, Martí & Ventresca, 2012). In addition, institutional voids may also arise when actors’ interests and experiences contradict dominant laws, norms and practices (Webb, Ireland, Sirmon & Texas, 2009). The divergent experiences and assumptions associated with the longevity of refugee camps thus also constitute an institutional void: refugees effectively spend decades living in an environment that assumes that their stay is temporary. Although current research explains how actors overcome institutional voids (Mair, Martí & Ventresca, 2012; Martí & Mair, 2006) we currently know little about how institutional voids emerge. Our research is therefore guided by the question: How do institutional voids emerge?

This paper identifies three antecedents to institutional voids that persist in refugee camps: (i) paralysis; (ii) ambiguity, (iii) incongruence. We illustrate the three antecedents to voids and how they interlace by tracing the emergence of refugee camp entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial activity is illegal in refugee camps as running and owning a business implies that a refugees’ stay in the camp will be somewhat permanent. Nonetheless, the majority of camp-based refugees are involved in entrepreneurship.

In part, this refugee camp entrepreneurship is the result of institutional paralysis, i.e. extant dominant institutions no longer mirror individuals’ experienced realities. Refugees spend decades in the camps and especially camp-born refugees view the camp as their only home. In contrast, camp managers and host communities continue to view the camps as temporary safe zones for the displaced and uphold formal laws and regulations that prevent refugees from owning properties,
running businesses or building brick housing – in short, anything that would imply long-termism. A journalist compares camp life to a prison: “Just like in prison, you receive your daily portion of food and water and are asked to wait” (Abu Sarah, 2013).

As a result of paralyzed institutions, many refugees engage in entrepreneurial activity to create meaning to their life otherwise spent waiting to leave the camp. Although illegal, camp managers rarely sanction entrepreneurship and, what is more, members of the host community foster refugee-led businesses through their supply and demand of goods to and from the camp. This generates ambiguity regarding what constitutes acceptable, i.e. non-sanctioned, behavior. As practices that promote understandings of the camp as semi-permanent go unsanctioned, institutional ambiguity regarding the dominant assumptions, norms and practices associated with the refugee camp arises.

Finally, institutional incongruence emerges as refugee camp entrepreneurship becomes a widespread practice among refugees. Entrepreneurial activity formally remains illegal in camps and barriers to entrepreneurial activity such as lack of resources, capital, access to external markets or information infrastructures indicate that the camps’ dominant institutions do not support entrepreneurial activity. Nonetheless, various small innovative businesses and markets emerge inside the camps (Werker, 2007; Cavaglieri, no date). Furthermore, refugee camp entrepreneurs create their own norms and practices. A refugee in Zaatari, for example, explains how mosques become platforms to advertise goods and services rather than signage on the shops: “Especially mosques are a traditional way of disseminating information. Shops don’t advertise themselves, often they are inside the tents and you wouldn’t know it walking past”. Refugee camp entrepreneurs therefore generate incongruence between the semi-permanence implied in entrepreneurship and the dominant camp rules and regulations that promote the camps’ temporariness.
This paper makes several contributions. To the literature on institutions, this paper nuances the concept of institutional voids, by identifying three antecedents to institutional voids – paralysis, ambiguity and incongruence – and explaining how the antecedents interlace, thereby preventing actors from resolving or overcoming the institutional void. For policy-makers and practitioners, this paper identifies opportunities to revisit extant camp management structures and practices. Specifically, camp managers may alleviate refugees’ experienced disconnect between their semi-permanent camp lives and the assumed transience of the camps by introducing refugee livelihood programs such as cash-based aid programs that grant refugees greater autonomy within the camps; broadening stakeholder engagement and involving refugees in camp management and planning; and supporting employment creation initiatives as has happened in Dadaab camp where social enterprises outsource small digital tasks to refugees with basic computer skills (Betts, Bloom & Omata, 2013).
REFERENCES


