


RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Refugee Camps as Contested Gendered Spaces: Afghan Women's Liminality, Inequality, and Agency in Germany

Sayed Mahdi Mosawi 

Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Correspondence: Sayed Mahdi Mosawi (mahdi.mosawi@ed.ac.uk)

Received: 18 October 2025 | **Revised:** 13 February 2026 | **Accepted:** 24 February 2026

Funding: Volkswagen Foundation; Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World, University of Edinburgh

Keywords: Afghan women | agency | asylum seekers | Germany | intersectionality | liminality | refugee camps

ABSTRACT

This article examines how migrant women from Afghanistan who arrived in Germany in or after 2015—including asylum seekers, refugees, and those with rejected cases—experience and contest the everyday challenges within the liminal and precarious confines of camps and camp-like structures, including asylum reception and collective accommodation centres. It contributes critically to camp and refugee studies by centring the gendered experiences, liminality, intersectional vulnerabilities, and agency of women in these settings. The article argues that camps and camp-like spaces are contested gendered spaces where female migrants navigate and challenge multiple inequalities by exercising agency through diverse strategies. Afghan migrant women provide a compelling case, justified by their intersecting origins and the limited research on their experiences. In-depth interviews, participant observation, and a review of the literature are utilised to collect data using a qualitative design that implements an engaged narrative inquiry. Two interconnected themes emerge from the research. The first analyses how participants categorise their living arrangements as camps and *heims*, while addressing the spatial inequalities, gendered vulnerabilities, and liminal experiences they encounter. The second examines women's agency and the various strategies they exercise to navigate and contest these inequalities. Specifically, three forms of agency are highlighted: creative space-making, resilient navigation, and solidarity through faith and sisterhood.

1 | Introduction

In the aftermath of the so-called 2015 refugee crisis and the sudden increase in the number of asylum seekers, Europe experienced what is described as a “refugee reception crisis” (Böhm et al. 2021). In response, refugee camps and camp-like facilities—such as reception centres and collective accommodations—became central to migration governance, particularly in Germany (Göler 2020), one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries, accommodating over 2.7 million refugees (UNHCR 2024). Kreichauf (2018, pp. 2–4) conceptualises this shift through the notion of *campization*, describing how the tightening of asylum laws and reception regulations has resulted in the emergence and deepening of

camp-like characteristics in refugee accommodation, including large and restrictive infrastructures, spatial isolation, and diminished living standards. This process is accompanied by an increasingly hostile political climate in which refugee accommodation is framed by the far right as a driver of housing scarcity and local insecurity (Held and Patana 2023), giving rise to anti-refugee housing movements, reflected in online campaigns such as “*Nein zum Heim*” (“No to the shelter”) (Schelter and Kunegis 2017, p. 278), alongside protests and attacks targeting reception infrastructures (Martin 2023). These conditions amplify the liminality and socio-spatial exclusion of forced migrants, particularly women, who face intersectional vulnerabilities (Mendola and Pera 2022), restrictive asylum policies, and lack of citizenship rights (Bartolomei 2016). Yet, their

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2026 The Author(s). *Population, Space and Place* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

experiences, struggles, and agency remain largely absent from encampment processes (Chowdhury and Shilpi 2022) and camp studies.

This article investigates how migrant women from Afghanistan who arrived in Germany in or after 2015—including asylum seekers, refugees, and those with rejected cases—experience and contest everyday challenges within the liminal and precarious confines of camps and camp-like structures. In doing so, it addresses a critical gap in camp and refugee studies, which often overlook the gendered dimensions, intersecting inequalities, and agency of women residing in these settings. In this research, the concept of *camps* encompasses a broader spectrum of institutionalised and established settings, including asylum reception centres, collective accommodations, and asylum shelters (Razum and Butenop 2022).

Despite an extensive body of scholarship on refugee camps, mainstream research often analyses these spaces through Agamben's theorisation of the "state of exception" (Agamben 1998, 2005), applying the concept of "bare life" to understand the exclusion of refugees from political belonging and their subjection to sovereign power (Ek 2006). While these approaches have significantly contributed to understanding camp as a site of legal liminality and sovereign control, they often fail to account for its spatiality (Ramadan 2013), as well as complex social relations, hierarchies (Turner 2016), and heterogeneity of lived experiences within these spaces. This body of scholarship has also been criticised for being gender-blind (Preser and Olier 2023), overlooking how gender, as a key social structure that shapes everyday practices and interactions (Connell 2021), intersects with liminality (Turner 1987), spatial exclusion and power imbalances (Amelina and Lutz 2019). As Weheliye (2014, p. 43) maintains, "bare life is not only a product of previously established distinctions but also, and more significantly, aids in the perpetuation of hierarchical categorizations along the lines of nationality, gender, ... race and so on." Building on this critique and the broader call to examine intersecting forms of exclusion and coping strategies (Seethaler-Wari and Yanasmayan 2023), this article focuses on how women navigate constraints of camp and camp-like facilities, recognising the various ways in which migrants actively "negotiate, evade, and resist" these structures (McConnachie 2016, p. 396).

This article argues that camps and camp-like structures are not only distinctive political and social spaces but also contested, gendered spaces where female migrants navigate and challenge multiple inequalities by exercising agency through diverse strategies. To examine this, Afghan women constitute a particularly compelling case for understanding the gendered dynamics, intersectionality, and agency in refugee accommodation. Afghanistan has remained one of the most common countries of origin for asylum seekers in Germany, with 419,410 Afghan nationals registered by the end of 2023, of whom 148,765 were women (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2025; Statistisches Bundesamt Destatis 2024), many of whom reside, or have resided, in camp-like accommodations. These women experience multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities linked to their gender, racial, ethnic, and religious identities—for instance, as Muslim women from ethnic minorities in Afghanistan. Such vulnerabilities extend across both their country of origin and Germany as the destination context. They include oppression under the de facto Taliban regime in Afghanistan as well as restrictive asylum policies in Germany,

which fail to grant asylum to Afghan women and girls on the basis of "gender-based persecution" (Golesorkhi 2024, p. 15). Moreover, Afghan women migrants in Germany are frequently represented in media discourses as passive victims of "conservative Islamic countries" who "feel safe" in Germany (van Laak 2019). This reductionist portrayal disregards persistent obstacles they face post-migration and the agency they exercise in negotiating life within these spaces. Despite these challenges and the significance of their experiences, the literature on Afghan women migrants in camp and camp-like settings in Germany and Europe remains limited, focusing on their identity and socio-cultural changes (Saidi 2018) or health-related issues (Rahimitabar et al. 2023).

The article is structured as follows: the next section provides an overview of policies concerning refugee camps and reception and accommodation centres in Germany. The third section outlines the conceptual framework, examining key approaches to camp-like structures, liminality, spatialised inequalities, and agency, alongside relevant empirical literature. The fourth section details the methodological approach and research design. The fifth section presents the findings and discussion, focusing on spatialised inequalities, gendered vulnerabilities, and liminality experienced by migrant women, as well as their agency in asylum spaces, demonstrated through creative space-making, resilient navigation, and solidarity grounded in faith and sisterhood. Finally, the article concludes by reflecting on the implications of the findings and proposing directions for future research.

1.1 | Refugee Camps and Camp-Like Structures in Germany: Historical and Policy Context

The use of camps to manage migration in Germany has a long history. Since 1949, repurposed facilities, including former military barracks, have been used to accommodate immigrants and asylum seekers (Sowa 2024). As asylum applications increased in the 1970s, the camp system expanded and became increasingly decentralised. This period marked a shift in migration policies from a guest worker system to an "asylum regime," particularly in response to rising arrivals from Eastern European countries. This shift was accompanied by the introduction of stricter controls, which heightened the repression and criminalisation of migration (Karakayali 2008, as cited in Sowa 2024).

This restrictive approach continued into the 1990s, coinciding with a renewed surge in asylum applications. Camp accommodation became central to these policies, exemplified by the 1993 introduction of the *EASY* (*Erstverteilung Asylbegehrende*, or initial distribution of asylum seekers) system. This quota-based mechanism distributed asylum seekers across federal states, resulting in the establishment of 50 new reception centres. These facilities managed internal dispersal and played a key role in deportation procedures. In recent years, camps have increasingly served as processing hubs, regulating residence, restricting mobility, and facilitating deportations.

Since 2015, particularly during what has been termed the *long summer of migration*, reliance on camp accommodation has intensified, reflecting a growing emphasis on streamlining migration processing and control. This shift has influenced

accommodation policies, notably the balance between collective and private housing. Before 2015, there was a gradual move towards decentralised private accommodation. However, the sharp rise in asylum applications in that year led municipalities to prioritise mass accommodations, often repurposing existing structures to meet demand (Seethaler-Wari and Yanasmayan 2023, p. 42). The maximum length of stay in reception centres was extended from three to 18 months. *Anker* (Ankunft, Entscheidung und Rückführung or arrival, decision and return) facilities were introduced, consolidating services and administrative authorities in a single location to centralise and expedite asylum processes (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2023).

Asylum accommodation policies in Germany differ across federal states, resulting in varied living conditions. These range from centralised camp-like structures, such as arrival centres, special reception centres, and Anker centres, to decentralised private housing (Fachinger et al. 2024). Asylum seekers must register with a state authority, either at a border crossing, police station, or reception centre. After registration, they are required to remain in state-level facilities for up to 18 months, sometimes longer. During this period, they primarily receive in-kind benefits to meet basic needs, such as clothing and healthcare, and are housed in shared bedrooms with communal sanitary facilities, controlled entry, and centralised food distribution (Rast et al. 2024).

After the initial reception phase, asylum seekers are typically accommodated in either collective centres or decentralised housing within the same federal state (Fachinger et al. 2024). County-level accommodations range from large facilities with shared amenities to individual apartments. At this stage, financial allowances largely replace in-kind assistance. Transition to private housing becomes possible under certain conditions, such as the legal recognition of refugee status, extended residence in county-level accommodations, or specific personal circumstances, including health-related needs (Rast et al. 2024).

1.2 | Women's Experiences in Camps and Camp-Like Settings: Theoretical and Empirical Insights

In examining the gendered dimensions of camp and camp-like facilities and the experiences of women within these spaces, I adapt a conceptual framework that weaves together theoretical and empirical insights. This framework highlights the spatial characteristics of these facilities alongside the interconnected dimensions of liminality, intersectionality, and agency. It serves as a lens to understand the everyday struggles, inequalities, and strategies through which women navigate these spaces.

Building on Kreichauf (2018) analysis, I identify key features of asylum reception and accommodation centres that contribute to their camp-like character. First, these spaces are designed to separate and contain migrants, specifically asylum seekers, refugees, and those with tolerated or rejected statuses, resulting in distinct forms of segregation. Second, they are spatially demarcated by physical and material boundaries that distinguish the “inside” from the “outside,” reinforcing social containment and exclusion (McConnachie 2016, pp. 398–399). Third, they function as spaces of legal exceptionality, governed by asylum and immigration regulations that differ from those

applied to citizens (Agamben 1998; Isin and Rygiel 2007, p. 189). Fourth, as part of broader immigration control mechanisms (Leroy 2024), these centres require migrants to reside temporarily on site while applications are processed (Migreurope 2005, as cited in Hailey 2009). Nonetheless, despite their intended transience, such arrangements can develop into prolonged conditions of indeterminacy and uncertainty concerning the duration and outcome of migrants' residency.

Liminality is a central concept invoked to describe forced migrants' status in camp and camp-like spaces (Mountz 2011; Tunaboylu and van Liempt 2020). It refers to a transitional state—a “period of margin” (Turner 1987, p. 4)—where individuals exist in an interstructural condition, slipping through legal and social classifications. Within accommodation centres, forced migrants are “betwixt and between” legal and social categories, suspended in a “limbo condition” (Hartonen et al. 2022). These centres function as “vital devices of power” (Malkki 1995, p. 498), reinforcing legal and spatial liminality. Temporariness becomes “ongoing” and “lasting,” trapping refugees and asylum seekers in a state of “frozen transience” (Bauman 2002, p. 345), where inability to move forward or fully integrate exacerbates exclusion and uncertainty (Ramadan 2013; Turner 2005). Fontanari (2015) describes asylum seekers' experiences in *Wohnheime* (residential accommodations in Germany) as confined to a liminal threshold, characterised by time suspension, non-belonging, and in-betweenness. Although technically open, these spaces are often perceived as carceral. Similarly, O'Reilly (2018) highlights how residents of Ireland's direct provision centres internalise fear, insecurity, and invisibility under strict control. Engaging with this literature, this article focuses on forced migrant women in accommodation centres, seeking to move beyond homogenised accounts of asylum seekers and refugees. It remains critically attentive to the diversity within women's experiences and the risk of essentialising ‘women’ as a singular category. It employs an intersectional lens, alongside the concept of agency, to analyse the gendered nuances in these spaces.

Carastathis et al. argue that intersectionality, often overlooked in (forced) migration studies, illuminates differences in migratory processes, as migrants are “positioned in hierarchies of gender, race, class, age, religion, and sexuality” (Carastathis et al. 2018, p. 6). Among intersectional approaches, the concept of *spatialised inequalities* (Amelina and Lutz 2019) is particularly relevant, illustrating how spatial classifications, such as being a forced migrant in an accommodation centre, intersect with other axes of inequality, including gender and ethnicity, to produce hierarchical structures that shape unequal life chances (Walby et al. 2012). Freedman (2022, p. 113) notes that in camp settings, women face distinct challenges stemming from both material conditions and entrenched gendered power structures. In Germany, sexual violence and abuse against women in reception centres, perpetrated by other asylum seekers as well as staff, guards, and volunteers, remains a pressing concern (Bonewit and Shreeves 2016 p. 27). Rast et al. (2024) demonstrate how precarious living conditions in these facilities, including inadequate privacy and limited access to healthcare, disproportionately affect women. Hartmann (2017b) further shows how women re-appropriate space in refugee centres through informal support networks.

In restrictive environments, migrants seek to regain control and “negotiate their situation, exercising *agency*” (Triandafyllidou 2019, p. 5). This refers to their capacity at the micro-level to

reflect on everyday conditions and to act in ways that influence or manage their circumstances (Ramachandran and Vathi 2022). In this research, agency is understood as encompassing a range of actions, including “actively resisting visible forms of power; resisting normalised structures through reflective consciousness; maintaining a delayed form, inspired by dreams and desires without immediate actions; or choosing marginality in relation to power” (Ghorashi et al. 2018, p. 377). A growing body of research illustrates various ways in which forced migrants assert agency within asylum-related institutions. Turnbull (2015), for instance, examines detainees’ strategies of resilience and resistance in UK immigration detention centres, where they deploy legal tactics, faith, and strategic patience to mitigate uncertainty. While existing scholarship has explored resilience and survival strategies in asylum contexts, the gendered dimensions of forced migrant women’s experiences in camp-like settings, particularly through the lenses of intersectionality and liminality, remain a significant gap. This article addresses this gap by focusing on the under-represented case of Afghan women asylum seekers and refugees.

2 | Methodology

This research employed a qualitative narrative inquiry (Creswell and Poth 2024) to understand the lived experiences and narratives of forced migrant women in camps and camp-like facilities, while situating these narratives within broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Clandinin 2023). The research design was informed by Ghorashi (2021) and a feminist ethics framework (Jaggar 2013), foregrounding participants’ reflections on inequality and their positionality within accommodation spaces. Women participants actively contributed to the data collection process. One participant, after her interview, volunteered to take part in the research as an interviewer. Following training, she conducted interviews with women who felt more comfortable speaking with someone of the same gender. Her involvement enriched the study, as she amplified marginalised narratives, drawing on her own lived experiences and stories emerging from within accommodation spaces.

This research utilised a combination of narrative interviews (Kartch 2017), participant observation, and a literature review. Interviews involved ten Afghan women (see Table 1); six were conducted by the researcher and four by the trained female participant. Participants were recruited through theoretical sampling, followed by snowball sampling. Initial recruitment involved refugee communities and non-governmental organisations, which circulated information about the study to Afghan women who arrived in Germany in or after 2015 and had lived experience of camps or reception facilities. Additional participants were identified through referrals from interviewees. Fieldwork was conducted between 2019 and 2021 across four German states, Hesse, Berlin, Lower Saxony, and Rhineland-Palatinate. A substantial part of the fieldwork involved temporary observations, visits, and occasional participatory interactions, including invitations by participants to join them as guests in camps and accommodation centres in Hesse and Berlin, enabling a deeper understanding of their everyday experiences.

Interviews were held in participants’ native language, *Dari/Persian*¹, which is also the researcher’s native language, in accordance with participants’ preferences. They lasted between

1.5 and 3.5 h, averaging 2.5 h, and were conducted both in person and online to accommodate participants’ needs. Participants were aged between 20 and 53 years and included seven married, one divorced, one engaged, and one single. All belonged to ethnic minority groups, namely *Tajik*, *Hazara*, and *Sadat*², and identified as Muslim. Their length of stay in camps or reception centres ranged from 1 to 9 months, while time in accommodation centres varied from 6 to 60 months.

In this research, I navigated the dual positionality of being both an insider and an outsider. Sharing citizenship, migratory experiences, and an ethnic minority background with participants provided insider access, fostering trust, connection, and deeper narrative engagement. Simultaneously, my academic role and gender identity as a man positioned me as an outsider, informing my approach to and interpretation of the data. This dual positionality required an ongoing process of reflexivity to maintain a balanced and critically engaged relationship with participants.

To address power dynamics and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation, interviews were guided by feminist and trauma-informed research principles, which prioritise participants’ safety, trust, collaboration, and empowerment, while recognising the cumulative and intersectional nature of forced migration experiences (Critelli and Yalim 2020). Participants were informed that they could skip questions, pause, or stop the interview at any point, and interviews were suspended when signs of distress emerged. These principles were also incorporated into the training provided to the female participant interviewer. Informed consent was prioritised, and transparency was maintained throughout the research process. Interviews were conducted as social interactions, consciously minimising hierarchical relations through open dialogue and active listening. Drawing on prior research experience and contextual knowledge of gender dynamics in Afghanistan, I integrated cultural and gender sensitivities into the research design. Women participants were given options for how to share their narratives, including the choice to be interviewed by a female migrant volunteer. Their preferences regarding interview timing and format were prioritised. To protect participants’ privacy, their chosen pseudonyms are used; names and specific cities remain undisclosed.

All interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analysed in the original interview language. Where participants used German or English terms, these were retained in the transcripts and analysis. Translation into English was limited to the presentation of interview excerpts and was undertaken by the researcher, with attention to preserving meaning and contextual nuance rather than literal translations.

Interview transcripts were analysed alongside observation notes and the field journal using thematic analysis, which involves generating initial codes, organising them into categories and themes, and conceptualising them to identify key concepts, patterns, and deeper insights (Ayres 2008).

3 | Results and Discussion

3.1 | Spatialised Inequalities, Gendered Vulnerabilities, and Liminality

Interlocutors’ narratives highlight the ways in which camp and camp-like structures are labelled and experienced, as well as

TABLE 1 | Sociodemographic characteristics and accommodation trajectories of participants.

PSEUDONYM	Age	No. of reception centres (RC) participant resided in		Duration of stay in RC (months)	No. of accommodation centres (AC) participant resided in	Duration of stay in AC (months)	Marital status	Asylum status (first decision)	Occupation	Ethnicity
Sahar	43	2	1	4	1	12	Married	National ban on deportation	Employed in a food-related business	Hazara
Hala	42	1	1	3	1	60	Married	Rejection	Housewife	Hazara
Tuba	20	2	1	2/5	1	36	Engaged	Rejection	Employed in healthcare	Preferred not to say
Zara	35	1	1	9	1	54	Married	Rejection	Housewife	Sadat
Bano	53	3	2	4	2	42	Married	Rejection	Employed in healthcare	Sadat
Sajeda	48	2	2	3	2	42	Married	Rejection	Employed in a food-related business	Sadat
Sadaf	34	2	1	7/5	1	30	Married	Subsidiary protection	Housewife	Tajik
Mahtab	30	2	1	4	1	6	Married	Rejection	Housewife	Tajik
Marwa	38	1	2	1	2	48	Divorced	National ban on deportation	Employed in healthcare	Tajik
Tabasum	28	1	1	1	1	24	Single	Rejection	Student	Tajik

their spatial characteristics, and intersections with inequalities, infrastructural inadequacies, surveillance, and a pervasive sense of liminality. During interviews and observations, participants frequently referred to their accommodations as “Camps” or “Heims” (German for Home), using these terms in their native language, Dari/Persian. This was notable, as the interview questions were intentionally phrased in broad terms, avoiding explicit references to Camps, Heims, or Centres. This methodological openness allowed participants’ framing of these spaces to emerge through their lived experiences and reflections. This finding aligns with Kreichauf (2018) argument that naming refugee accommodations reflects a struggle over interpretational sovereignty. While institutional labels such as “asylum centre” obscure exclusionary realities, refugees’ use of the term “camp” challenges the official name and underlines their marginality and the spatial function of these spaces as designated for forced migrants.

Camp was the term commonly used for reception or arrival centres, the initial accommodation spaces in the asylum process (Glorius and Doomernik 2020). These spaces were located in diverse settings, including repurposed fire stations, sports halls, military barracks, tents in open areas, or other shared facilities in urban and remote locations. Described as overcrowded and mixed-gender, they lacked privacy, autonomy, and adequate facilities, contributing to participants’ persistent sense of insecurity, distress, liminality, and exposure to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

As several participants recounted, these camps lacked physical boundaries or partitions, forcing women into close proximity with strangers and depriving them of personal space. The lack of privacy created distressing conditions, heightening spatial insecurity (Nassim et al. 2022) and physical vulnerability (Gewalt et al. 2019). Zara described her shock and despair at the prospect of being placed in this chaotic setup:

Our camp, an asylum reception centre, was outside the city, far from any market. It was a large sports hall with beds scattered everywhere, with no order. When we arrived, they took us in and said, ‘You have to live here.’ I asked, ‘With everyone together?’ They said, ‘Yes, it doesn’t matter if you’re a woman, a man, or a family; you all have to live here.’ Seeing this was so difficult for me that it made me cry. How could anyone, especially women, live in such a space under the constant gaze of so many strangers, with no privacy at all?

Beyond the lack of privacy, gendered impacts of poor infrastructure were exacerbated by unsafe communal facilities. Bathrooms and showers lacking dividers or secure locks became sites of vulnerability, as Hala’s traumatic experience illustrates the SGBV risks women face in camps:

One of the worst experiences of my life was my first night in the camp after arriving in Germany. It was a large, mixed-gender hall. I had travelled from Afghanistan with my three daughters, and after a long, exhausting journey, I was in complete shock at the camp’s mixed space. That very night, we suddenly heard the screams and cries of a woman coming from the

courtyard, and everyone rushed outside. She was crying hysterically because, while she was showering in the women’s container bathroom, a man had attempted to break the flimsy plastic lock and enter. It felt like a nightmare, one that my daughters and I can never forget.

As Krause (2015) explains, SGBV poses a “continuous threat” to women during conflict, flight, and encampment, occurring across both public and private spaces in refugee camps. Hala’s account illustrates this persistence and supports Freedman’s observation that refugee women’s vulnerability to gender-based violence in Europe is “exacerbated by the inadequacy of reception and accommodation conditions in many countries,” including Germany (Freedman 2016, p. 22). These accounts suggest that gendered vulnerability in camps is not incidental but structurally embedded in the spatial design and governance of accommodation regimes, where infrastructural arrangements produce conditions of exposure and insecurity for women.

Some participants, particularly single or lone mothers with children, emphasised the institutional surveillance and monitoring of their caregiving roles. Marwa described camp guards closely monitoring her caregiving, intensifying her feelings of judgement, inadequacy, and constraint:

In the camp, I often felt watched and scrutinised, especially in how I cared for my young children. I was alone with them, without my husband. Once, the guards warned me never to leave my 1-year-old unattended—something I never do as a mother. But the toilets were far from the hall, and once, I had to go, briefly leaving my child on the bed. When the guards noticed, they called me in and warned me strictly. After that, I had to take my child even to the toilet, which was entirely inappropriate. They questioned why I left my child alone but never considered why essential facilities were too far for a mother to access easily or appropriately with her child.

Marwa’s account underscores the dual pressures women face in camps, arising from inadequate infrastructure that neglects caregiving needs and institutional surveillance that enforces compliance without addressing intersectional realities. As a single migrant mother, she occupies a precarious position, navigating an environment where her caregiving is scrutinised by institutional authority while structural barriers remain unacknowledged. Agier (2011, p. 4) argues that “there is no care without control,” highlighting camps’ biopolitical function in managing and distancing refugee bodies. Similarly, Szczepanikova (2013) reveals the entanglement of control and assistance in asylum accommodation centres, producing environments of dependency and oppression. Marwa’s experience revisits these analyses by illustrating a form of control without care, in which institutional authority shifts caregiving entirely onto asylum-seeking mothers, creating an oppressive, gendered environment that disregards their needs and evades organisational accountability for practical challenges.

Participants’ narratives also distinguished camps from Heims—“collective accommodation centres” (Fachinger et al. 2024)

where they were transferred after completing the initial reception period and procedures, including interviews or the receipt of decisions. While Heims offered marginal privacy and autonomy through individual rooms allocated per household, they presented new challenges due to shared facilities, such as kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry (Rast et al. 2024). Overcrowding, long waiting times, and competition for resources produced a different, yet equally pervasive, set of inequalities. Zara described her struggles during Ramadan, when limited cooking facilities made meal preparation during fasting nearly impossible:

In our Heim, one shared kitchen with six stoves served 30 families on the same floor. It was always crowded, making cooking a constant struggle. During Ramadan, when we were fasting, it became almost impossible because there were too many people and too few stoves.

The shared nature of these facilities also imposed gendered constraints on women's mobility and autonomy. Participants expressed discomfort using communal spaces, such as kitchens, dimly lit laundry rooms, and other public areas frequently accessed or dominated by unfamiliar men. Field observations affirmed these accounts, revealing women's restricted access to shared spaces and a predominant male presence in areas such as lounge halls. In a repurposed accommodation centre in Berlin, where the researcher was invited by a participant, the lounge, intended as a communal space, was primarily occupied by men. Residents noted that the building had previously functioned as a hospital, adapted to house both families and single individuals. Rooms varied by household size; the participant's room, for example, contained six beds and a private bathroom. Shared facilities, such as the kitchen and laundry, were located in a separate building. During the visit, several young and middle-aged men were observed in the lounge, engaged in conversation and laughter. After joining the conversation, I asked about the typical users of the space; they explained they met there regularly because it felt more comfortable. In contrast, women were said to gather in private rooms, illustrating how spatial arrangements and gender norms reinforce exclusion and restrict women's presence in communal areas.

The male dominance of shared spaces, as highlighted by participants, also contributed to shifts in the household division of labour and to instances of gender-based violence. Sajeda shared that her spouse assumed cooking and laundry responsibilities due to the perceived unsafe environment for women in the Heim, which simultaneously restricted her mobility, exemplifying a form of masculine protection and control (Echavez et al. 2016):

The laundry was in a dimly lit basement, making women in the Heim feel unsafe. This also unsettled family men, including my husband, who wouldn't let me or my daughter go there or to the shared kitchen used by single men. He instead took on the laundry and cooking responsibilities.

This experience reflects similar accounts reported by women in other refugee shelters in Germany, where the use of communal

spaces often led to unavoidable encounters with unfamiliar men. Christ et al. (2019) note that such situations were sometimes perceived by husbands or male relatives as a "loss of masculinity" and honour. In contexts where cultural expectations require men to protect female family members and preserve honour, such encounters were seen as emasculating (Mosawi 2020). In some cases, these tensions escalated into violence, as men sought to "regain the power they think they have lost" (Christ et al. 2019, p. 33). In this sense, accommodation arrangements reflect and reconfigure household gender relations, masculinity, protection, and control within conditions of spatial constraint.

A recurring theme in participants' narratives was the pervasive liminality and prolonged uncertainty characterising their accommodation experiences. Despite the home-like connotations of "Heim," these spaces failed to provide stability or safety. Instead, they reinforced precarity, temporality, and waiting, leaving residents in inadequate conditions for extended periods without clear timelines for transition. This sense of liminality transcends temporality and spatiality, encompassing an ontological "in-betweenness" that becomes internalised, shaping migrants' identities and lived experiences within accommodation centres (O'Reilly 2018). Sadaf's 3-year stay in a crowded building with limited facilities highlights the emotional toll of this prolonged liminality:

We never felt a sense of home in the Heim, even after more than 3 years. Every day, we just hoped it would end and our status be decided.

Such prolonged uncertainty indicates that accommodation regimes institutionalise waiting as a governing mechanism, keeping migrants in a suspended legal position and structuring their lives around endurance, deferred decisions, and constrained belonging.

The participants' narratives revealed how the spatial arrangements of camps (reception centres) and Heims (collective accommodation centres) were deeply intertwined with systemic inequalities and infrastructural shortcomings, neglecting women's intersectional needs. This resonates with Hartmann's argument (2017b, p. 103) that women in refugee centres face "specific challenges and discrimination due to their gendered identities." The findings extend this by exposing intersectional hierarchies and nuanced struggles that women navigate within these spaces, shaped by their spatial, gendered, and migratory positionalities. Instead of providing safety, these arrangements exacerbated insecurity, distress, surveillance, and exposure to SGBV, perpetuating liminality. These spatialised inequalities (Amelina and Lutz 2019) and inadequacies rendered camps and Heims spaces of exclusion, alienation, and othering (Göler 2020), as well as systemic neglect, leaving life unstable and transitional. The next theme details women's responses to these inequalities.

3.2 | Migrant Women's Agency in Asylum Spaces: Creativity, Resilience, and Solidarity

Migrant women exercise multifaceted and dynamic forms of agency to navigate spatial inequalities, gendered vulnerabilities,

and persistent liminality in camps and Heims. They respond to structural constraints with creativity, resilience, solidarity, and strategic contestation, reclaiming agency amid exclusion. This analysis conceptualises three interconnected forms of agency: creative space-making, resilient navigation, and solidarity through faith and sisterhood.

In the overcrowded and restrictive camp environment, where lack of privacy heightened insecurity, women demonstrated creativity and resourcefulness by adapting their surroundings. Facing the absence of partitions in shared reception centres, participants used limited resources to reclaim personal space and respond to spatial insecurity. Tuba recounted:

When we were in that large hall in the camp, where all the beds were lined up next to each other with no privacy at all, and we had no choice but to stay, we tried to find a way to create even a small sense of privacy. Each person was given a bedsheet, so we and others tied them together and hung them around the beds to create a little space for our family to sleep.

This seemingly small yet symbolic act of creative space-making shows how women actively reimagined their environments to regain privacy and control. These micro-adjustments reflect immediate agency, as participants like Tuba responded directly to structural and spatial constraints, asserting partial autonomy within gender-insensitive spaces. This contributes to discussions on the alternative possibilities asylum seekers imagine within reception centres. While Ghorashi et al. (2018) introduce delayed agency, grounded in aspirations and deferred until future possibilities of transformation arise, Tuba's actions emphasise immediate, real-time agency enacted in response to present limitations. Her adaptations underscore the dynamic, inventive ways women negotiate and endure life in restrictive environments.

Women's agency extended beyond immediate adaptations, encompassing resilient navigations of systemic barriers and legal liminality. This was evident when the absence of government-provided language courses in camps created major obstacles for women striving to integrate into new social and cultural contexts. One participant, Sahar, described this challenge:

Unfortunately, while we were in the camp, despite my eagerness and plans to learn German, the government didn't provide any language courses for us. This was especially hard for me because I wanted to integrate into society quickly. For this, I first talked with the camp officials about my right to language courses. But they said nothing would be arranged until my application was processed.

However, Sahar, like some other participants, actively sought alternative solutions to overcome these institutional constraints, demonstrating her agency by seeking and attending volunteer-led language courses:

While this was disappointing, I insisted and approached the officials again, hoping for a solution. They told me I could only attend charity-run or volunteer-led classes if I found one myself. I thought I could either wait

endlessly or use the time wisely. So, I decided to make the most of it. I found free language classes run by volunteers and began attending them. By the time my application was processed months later, I had learned enough German to communicate. In the camp's hopeless, uncertain environment, these goals kept me motivated and gave me the strength to carry on.

Sahar's narrative illustrates that resilience involves more than passive endurance, including strategic, goal-driven actions (Ortner 2006). By pursuing alternative options, she contested the institutional neglect that sustained her legal and social exclusion. Here, resilience is closely intertwined with strategic action, showing how women forge paths toward empowerment and integration within a context of liminality and unequal power relations. This result extends previous research on refugee asylum centres in Germany, which primarily emphasises Afghan women's "loss of power and agency" during prolonged stays in multiple camps and the lack of official language courses (Hartmann 2017a, pp. 226, 238).

The interlocutors' proactive engagement with volunteer-led language courses was further confirmed during an observation involving Bano, a participant who regularly attended informal sessions at a local church near the shared accommodation centre. Through Bano, the researcher met a retired volunteer teacher who acknowledged the migrant women's active participation, stating, "While their language progress is remarkable, they have also become part of the local community." This instance reflects the ways women's efforts to access informal classes, despite the absence of official provision, enabled both language acquisition and integration within local communities, capturing the practical and transformative potential of their agency.

Faith and spirituality emerged as vital to both individual and collective forms of resilience and agency. Several interlocutors stressed that religious practices helped them interpret hardship and sustain hope throughout their time in the camps and during the asylum process. These reflections resonate with findings from Norway's asylum centres, where women drew on religious beliefs to endure periods of depression and disheartenment (Robleda 2020). In this study, faith extended beyond personal endurance to form the basis of collective agency, shaped by the intersection of gender, ethnicity, migratory status, and shared experiences of exclusion and legal liminality. In the Heims, where temporary residence often stretched into years, faith-based gatherings offered spaces for spiritual practice and community-building. Prayer groups united women—married, single, and divorced—from various ethnic and migratory backgrounds, gradually becoming networks of solidarity and support. Zara, one of the participants, reflected on the transformative impact of these gatherings and their meaning in her life and everyday experience.

When we moved to the Heim, I, along with a few other women, began a women's prayer group. We met weekly in one of our rooms to pray and share food. I believe this helped us cope; without it, I don't know how we would have managed. Over time, more women joined. Some were awaiting asylum decisions; others, like me,

had been rejected, and some had temporary status. There were also newcomers and those who had been there longer, from different ethnicities. The group gradually grew, and we connected with more people. These gatherings made everyday life in the Heim more bearable.

Initially centred on religious rituals, these prayer groups became spaces of emotional connection, mutual care, and collective advocacy. Women used these gatherings to discuss challenges in both private and public spheres, including restrictions on mobility, domestic violence, and the prolonged uncertainties of the asylum process. This echoes findings from Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, where women's religious spaces fostered community, friendship, and collective identity in displacement (Rahman 2019, pp. 877, 882). Zara further explained how such gatherings provided a platform for solidarity, rooted in shared struggle and faith:

At these prayer gatherings, women would pray individually and together, and afterwards, we would sit and talk about our daily struggles—challenges in the Heim, in our households, with our husbands, and even about asylum cases. We were all in almost the same situation, facing similar challenges. We comforted and supported one another, like a family, like sisters. We would share our thoughts and feelings, which made our hearts feel lighter. If anyone got information related to asylum laws, they would share it with the group. The connection among us has been so strong that even when it was not possible to meet in person, we held our gatherings through WhatsApp.

This transformation of faith-based gatherings into solidarity networks reflects how agency is forged through collective mobilisation. These spaces moved beyond their initial spiritual focus and forms of adaptive religious coping in displacement (Pertek 2024), evolving into platforms for emotional and practical support, knowledge exchange, and everyday empowerment. By cultivating sisterhood solidarity, participants countered the isolation and precarity of asylum life, establishing a sustained basis for mutual care and collective resilience.

Together, these diverse forms of agency—creative space-making, resilient navigation, and solidarity through faith and sisterhood—highlight the significance of women's everyday practices in negotiating and contesting the liminality, spatial constraints, systemic inequalities, and institutional barriers embedded in asylum life. By foregrounding these multilayered expressions, the analysis moves beyond dominant accounts that primarily emphasise migrant women's lack of agency and loss of subjectivity in asylum reception and accommodation centres (e.g., Gewalt et al. 2019; Nassim et al. 2022). It demonstrates that agency operates along a continuum, encompassing immediate responses as well as longer-term, goal-driven strategies across individual and collective levels. Such enactments, though situated in restrictive settings, illustrate how women transform marginalisation into sites of resistance, contestation, and possibility. Through creative spatial adaptations, alternative routes to inclusion, and solidarities rooted in faith and sisterhood,

participants challenged exclusionary systems and redefined their relationship with precarious and hierarchical asylum environments. These narratives highlight the transformative force of agency across intersecting axes of gender, forced migration, faith, and spatial inequality.

4 | Conclusion

This article examines how migrant women from Afghanistan who arrived in Germany in or after 2015—including asylum seekers, refugees, and those with rejected cases—experience and contest the everyday challenges within the liminal and precarious confines of camps and camp-like structures. The concept of the camp in this study includes a diverse range of institutionalised and established settings, such as asylum reception centres and collective accommodation centres. It also captures the terms “camp” and “Heim” as used by refugees to describe their accommodations and narrate their lived experiences within these spaces.

This study significantly contributes to critical camp and refugee studies by focusing on the gendered experiences, liminality, intersectional vulnerabilities, and agency of women in camps and camp-like structures. It frames these settings as contested gendered spaces, where female migrants navigate and challenge multiple inequalities through diverse strategies of agency. Furthermore, the research offers an in-depth analysis of Afghan migrant women, justified by their intersectional backgrounds and marginal positions within power structures in both their country of origin, Afghanistan, and their country of asylum, Germany. This focus addresses a significant gap in the empirical literature, given the underrepresentation of their experiences.

The findings reveal two interrelated themes. The first highlights how the spatial arrangements of asylum reception centres (camps) and collective accommodation centres (Heims) intersect with systemic inequalities and infrastructural inadequacies, neglecting women's intersectional needs. Within these spaces, women contend with complex intersectional hierarchies and nuanced struggles shaped by their spatial, gendered, ethnic, and migratory positionalities, such as being single, married, or a lone mother with differing asylum statuses, compounded by gender discrimination in their home country and limited rights in the country of asylum. Rather than providing safety or care, these arrangements exacerbate insecurity, distress, surveillance, and exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, while perpetuating a pervasive sense of liminality, exclusion, alienation, and othering.

The second theme examines how women respond to challenges and spatialised inequalities, demonstrating that agency operates across a spectrum, ranging from immediate responses to long-term, goal-oriented, and strategic actions at both individual and collective levels. Such agency often transforms adversity into opportunities for empowerment. These diverse expressions of agency underscore the significance of women's actions and strategies in navigating and contesting liminality, socio-spatial constraints, and systemic challenges in asylum life. By foregrounding these multifaceted forms of agency including creative space-making, resilient navigation, and solidarity through faith and sisterhood, this study challenges prior research that predominantly emphasises the loss or lack of agency and

subjectivity among migrant women in asylum reception and accommodation centres, portraying them solely as passive victims.

The findings carry significant implications for policy and practice, particularly by highlighting the shortcomings of reception and accommodation centres for forced migrants in Germany. Recognising the intersectional inequalities, pervasive liminality, and exclusionary practices embedded in these spaces is critical for designing gender-sensitive asylum procedures, including accommodation. Moreover, this study advocates for a reimagining of camp and camp-like structures, shifting from spaces of exclusion and surveillance to environments that uphold safety, dignity, care, inclusion, and integration for migrants, particularly women.

Finally, this study opens avenues for future research. The gendered dynamics of other camp-like structures and asylum accommodations, such as AnKER centres and specialised detention facilities, remain underexplored. Investigating these settings could offer deeper insights into how liminality, intersectionality, and agency manifest across diverse institutional contexts. Another potential area for further research is the examination of migrant women's experiences during relocation processes between multiple reception and accommodation centres.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the migrant women who participated in this study and to the participant who volunteered to conduct interviews as part of the research process. I also extend my sincere thanks to the peer reviewers, as well as to Prof H. Neşe Özgen and Dr Alex Fusco, for their insightful comments. The research and preparation of this article were supported by the author's fellowships at the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, and at the Al-waleed Centre, University of Edinburgh.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Endnotes

¹Dari, also known as Afghan Persian, is a national language of Afghanistan and a major variety of Persian, which is also spoken as Persian (Farsi) in Iran and Tajiki in Tajikistan (Spooner 2012).

²This reflects participants' self-identified ethnicities. While all Afghan migrants are minorities in Germany, the participants' status here specifically highlights minority backgrounds shaped by ethno-religious affiliations in Afghanistan, particularly for Hazara and Sadat participants (Mosawi 2024). The term 'minority' is used in line with the IOM definition, referring to a "numerically inferior" and/or "non-dominant" group within a state, distinguished by ethnic, religious, or linguistic traits and a shared sense of solidarity aimed at preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language (Capotorti 1979, as cited and adapted in Sironi et al. 2019, p. 141).

References

- Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, G. (2005). *State of exception* (K. Attell, Trans.). The University of Chicago Press.
- Agier, M. 2011. *Managing the undesirables: Refugee camps and humanitarian government*. Polity.

Amelina, A., and H. Lutz. 2019. *Gender and migration: Transnational and intersectional prospects*. Routledge.

Ayres, L. (2008). Thematic coding and analysis. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 867-868). California: SAGE Publications.

Bartolomei, L. 2016. "Refugees and refugee camps." In *The wiley blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*, edited by In. N. A. Naples, 1-5. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss331>.

Bauman, Z. 2002. "In the Lowly Nowherewilles of Liquid Modernity: Comments on and Around Agier." *Ethnography* 3, no. 3: 343-349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146613802401092788>.

Böhm, F., I. J. Ramsøy, and B. Suter (2021). Norms and values in refugee resettlement: A literature review of resettlement to the EU. Malmö University. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1537530/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

Bonewit, A., and R. Shreeves (2016). Reception of female refugees and asylum seekers in the EU - case study germany. European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/536497/IPOL_STU\(2016\)536497_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/536497/IPOL_STU(2016)536497_EN.pdf).

Carastathis, A., N. Kouri-Towe, G. Mahrouse, and L. Whitley. 2018. "Articles." *Refuge* 34, no. 1: 3-15. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050850ar>.

Chowdhury, S. A., and S. A. Shilpi. 2022. "Social and cultural isolation of women in refuge." In *ActionAid Association (Ed.)*, 118-126. Routledge.

Christ, S., E. Meininghaus, and T. Röing (2019). "All day waiting": Causes of conflict in refugee shelters in Germany [BICC Working Paper](3/2019). Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-62796-0>.

Clandinin, D. J. 2023. *Engaging in narrative inquiry* (2 ed.). Routledge.

Connell, R. 2021. *Gender in world perspective* (4 ed.). Polity Press.

Creswell, J. W., and C. N. Poth. 2024. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5 ed.). SAGE Publications Limited.

Critelli, F., and A. C. Yalim. 2020. "Improving Access to Domestic Violence Services for Women of Immigrant and Refugee Status: A Trauma-Informed Perspective." *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 29, no. 1-3: 95-113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2019.1700863>.

Echavez, C. R., S. M. Mosawi, and L. W. R. Pilongo. 2016. "The Other Side of Gender Inequality: Men and Masculinities in Afghanistan." *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit* 1: 89281. <https://doi.org/10.13140/rg.2.2.36658.89281>.

Ek, R. 2006. "Giorgio Agamben and the Spatialities of the Camp: An Introduction." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 4: 363-386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2006.00228.x>.

Fachinger, T., P. Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, and M. Stiller (2024, October 7). Types of accommodation: Germany - country report. Asylum Information Database (AIDA) and European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). Retrieved 2024, October 28 from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation/>.

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. (2023, September 18). Arrival centres and AnKER facilities. Retrieved 2024, September 7 from <https://edin.ac/3ERjFzr>.

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. (2025). The migration reports. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Forschung/Veroeffentlichungen/Migrationsberichte/migrationsberichte-node.html>.

Fontanari, E. 2015. "Confined to the Threshold." *City* 19, no. 5: 714-726. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1071112>.

- Freedman, J. 2016. "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Against Refugee Women: A Hidden Aspect of the Refugee "Crisis." *Reproductive Health Matters* 24, no. 47: 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rhm.2016.05.003>.
- Freedman, J. 2022. "Protection gaps for women and girls in refugee crises. In ActionAid Association (Ed.)." In *Women refugee voices from Asia and Africa: Travelling for safety*, 111–117. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003047094-7>.
- Gewalt, S. C., S. Berger, J. Szecsenyi, and K. Bozorgmehr. 2019. "If You Can, Change This System" -Pregnant Asylum Seekers' Perceptions on Social Determinants and Material Circumstances Affecting Their Health Whilst Living in State-Provided Accommodation in Germany—A Prospective, Qualitative Case Study." *BMC Public Health* 19, no. 1: 287. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6481-2>.
- Ghorashi, H. 2021. "Normalising Power and Engaged Narrative Methodology: Refugee Women, the Forgotten Category in the Public Discourse." *Feminist Review* 129, no. 1: 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01417789211041089>.
- Ghorashi, H., M. de Boer, and F. ten Holder. 2018. "Unexpected Agency on the Threshold: Asylum Seekers Narrating From an Asylum Seeker Centre." *Current Sociology* 66, no. 3: 373–391. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392117703766>.
- Glorius, B., and J. Doomernik. 2020. "Introduction." In *Geographies of asylum in Europe and the role of European localities*, edited by In. B. Glorius and J. Doomernik, 1–11. Springer Open. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25666-1_1.
- Göler, D. 2020. "Places and spaces of the others: A German reception centre in public discourse and individual perception." In *Geographies of asylum in Europe and the role of European localities*, edited by In. B. Glorius and J. Doomernik, 69–91. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25666-1_4.
- Golesorkhi, L.-Z. 2024. "Gender Apartheid and Asylum: Establishing General Risks of Gender-Based Persecution in International Refugee Law." *Politics & Gender* 21: 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X24000436>.
- Hailey, C. 2009. *Camps: A guide to 21st-century space*. MIT Press.
- Hartmann, M. 2017a. "Contested Boundaries: Refugee Centers as Spaces of the Political." *Zeitschrift für Flüchtlingsforschung* 1, no. 2: 218–243. <https://doi.org/10.5771/2509-9485-2017-2-218>.
- Hartmann, M. 2017b. "Spatializing inequalities: The situation of women in refugee centres in Germany." In *Gender, violence, refugees*, edited by B.-Z. Susanne and K. Ulrike, 102–126. Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781785336171-008>.
- Hartonen, V. R., P. Väisänen, L. Karlsson, and S. Pöllänen. 2022. "A Stage of Limbo: A Meta-Synthesis of Refugees' Liminality." *Applied Psychology* 71, no. 3: 1132–1167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12349>.
- Held, A., and P. Patana. 2023. "Rents, Refugees, and the Populist Radical Right." *Research & Politics* 10, no. 2: 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680231167680>.
- Inis, E. F., and K. Rygiel. 2007. "Abject spaces: Frontiers, zones, camps." In *The logics of biopower and the war on terror: Living, dying, surviving*, edited by In. E. Dauphinee and C. Masters, 181–203. Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-04379-5_9.
- Jaggar, A. M. 2013. "Feminist ethics." In *The blackwell guide to ethical theory*, edited by In. H. LaFollette and I. Persson, 433–460. Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1111/b.9780631201199.1999.00022.x>.
- Kartch, F. 2017. "Narrative interviewing." In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, edited by In. M. Allen, 4, 1072–1075. Thousand Oaks California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Krause, U. 2015. "A Continuum of Violence? Linking Sexual and Gender-Based Violence During Conflict, Flight, and Encampment." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 34, no. 4: 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdv014>.
- Kreichauf, R. 2018. "From Forced Migration to Forced Arrival: The Campization of Refugee Accommodation in European Cities." *Comparative Migration Studies* 6, no. 1: 7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-017-0069-8>.
- van Laak, C. (2019, May 5). Flucht in die selbstbestimmung wie sich asylbewerberinnen in Deutschland emanzipieren. Deutschlandfunk. Retrieved 2024, August 1 from <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/flucht-in-die-selbstbestimmung-wie-sich-asylbewerberinnen-100.html>.
- Leroy, I. 2024. "Migrant Reception Centres and Coercive Social Control: Rule by Legal Uncertainty?" *Social & Legal Studies* 34: 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639241228963>.
- Malkki, L. H. 1995. "Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 495–523. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.002431>.
- Martin, N. (2023). Germany: Far-right group protests refugee housing plan. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved 2026, January 1 from <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-far-right-group-rallies-against-refugee-housing-plan/a-67679723>.
- McConnachie, K. 2016. "Camps of Containment: A Genealogy of the Refugee Camp." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, no. 3: 397–412. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hum.2016.0022>.
- Mendola, D., and A. Pera. 2022. "Vulnerability of Refugees: Some Reflections on Definitions and Measurement Practices." *International Migration* 60, no. 5: 108–121. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12942>.
- Mosawi, S. M. 2024. "Everyday Lived Islam Among Hazara Migrants in Scotland: Intersectionality, Agency, and Individualisation." *Religions* 15, no. 8: 950. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080950>.
- Mosawi, S. M. 2020. "'You must keep your 'honour', a man without 'honour' is no man at all': 'Honour, masculinity and violence in Afghanistan." In *Men, masculinities and honour-based abuse*, edited by M. M. Idriss, 128–149. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/978042927726-8>.
- Mountz, A. 2011. "Where Asylum-Seekers Wait: Feminist Counter-Topographies of Sites Between States." *Gender, Place & Culture* 18, no. 3: 381–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.566370>.
- Nassim, M., A. J. Jinan, L. Felicia, F. Naika, H. Andreas, and K. Ulrike. 2022. "Spatiality of Social Stress Experienced by Refugee Women in Initial Reception Centers." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23, no. 4: 1685–1709. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00890-6>.
- O'Reilly, Z. 2018. "Living Liminality': Everyday Experiences of Asylum Seekers in the 'Direct Provision' System in Ireland." *Gender, Place & Culture* 25, no. 6: 821–842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1473345>.
- Ortner, S. B. 2006. *Anthropology and social theory: Culture, power, and the acting subject*. Duke University Press.
- Pertek, S. 2024. "Adaptive Religious Coping With Experiences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Displacement." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 37, no. 2: 307–323. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feae003>.
- Preser, R., and A. Olier. 2023. "Structures of Abandonment: Gender, Statuslessness, and Bare Life." *Migration Studies* 11, no. 4: 505–522. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnad010>.
- Rahimitabar, P., A. Kraemer, K. Bozorgmehr, F. Ebrahimi, and A. Takian. 2023. "Health Condition of Afghan Refugees Residing in Iran in Comparison to Germany: A Systematic Review of Empirical Studies." *International Journal for Equity in Health* 22, no. 16: 16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-023-01832-7>.
- Rahman, F. 2019. "I Find Comfort Here': Rohingya Women and Taleems in Bangladesh's Refugee Camps." *Journal of refugee studies* 34, no. 1: 874–889. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez054>.
- Ramachandran, N., and Z. Vathi. 2022. "Agency in Waiting? Everyday Tactics of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Glasgow." *European Journal*

- of *Social Work* 25, no. 6: 1104–1116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2022.2117135>.
- Ramadan, A. 2013. “Spatialising the Refugee Camp.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 1: 65–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2012.00509.x>.
- Rast, E., M. Hintermeier, K. Bozorgmehr, and L. Biddle. 2024. “Housing and Health: A Multidimensional Qualitative Analysis of the Experiences of Asylum Seekers and Refugees Living in German Reception Centres. *SSM: Qualitative Research in Health* 5: 100407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2024.100407>.
- Razum, O., and J. Butenop. 2022. “Camp settings in the EU, Australia, and their extended border zones.” In *Refugee camps in Europe and Australia: An interdisciplinary critique*, edited by In. O. Razum, A. Dawson, L. Eckenwiler, and V. Wild, 47–63. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Robleda, Z. W. 2020. “Re-Inventing Everyday Life in the Asylum Centre: Everyday Tactics Among Women Seeking Asylum in Norway.” *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 10, no. 2: 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.251>.
- Saidi, S. 2018. *Juggling between two worlds: Sociocultural change in Afghan immigrant women's identity in Germany*. LIT-Verlag.
- Schelter, S., and J. Kunegis. 2017. ““Dark germany”: Hidden patterns of participation in online far-right protests against refugee housing.” In *Social informatics 9th international conference*, edited by G. L. Ciampaglia, A. Mashhadi, and T. Yasseri, 17, 277–288. Springer International Publishing AG. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67217-5>.
- Seethaler-Wari, S., and Z. Yanasmayan. 2023. “Unfolding Intersecting Forms of Socio-Spatial Exclusion: Accommodation Centres at the Height of the “Refugee Reception Crisis” in Germany.” *International Migration* 61, no. 3: 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13140>.
- Sironi, A., Bauloz, C., and Emmanuel, M.). (2019). Glossary on migration (Vol. 34). International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Sowa, C. (2024). *The camp, housing, and the city: Berlin's migrant camp accommodation after the »long summer of migration«*. Transcript.
- Spooner, B. 2012. “Persian, Farsi, Dari, Tajiki: Language Names and Language Policies.” In *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice*, edited by H. F. Schiffman, 89–117. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004217652_005.
- Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis). “ (2024, May 2). Foreign population by sex and selected citizenships on 31 December 2023. Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis). Retrieved 2024, September 30 from <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/foreigner-gender.html>.
- Szczepanikova, A. 2013. “Between Control and Assistance: The Problem of European Accommodation Centres for Asylum Seekers.” *International Migration* 51, no. 4: 130–143. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12031>.
- Triandafyllidou, A. 2019. “The Migration Archipelago: Social Navigation and Migrant Agency.” *International Migration* 57, no. 1: 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12512>.
- Tunaboylu, M. S., and I. van Liempt. 2020. “A Lack of Legal Protection and Limited Ways Out: How Asylum Seekers Cope With Liminality on Greek Islands: Lesbos and Chios.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 2: 1560–1576. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa002>.
- Turnbull, S. 2015. “Stuck in the Middle’: Waiting and Uncertainty in Immigration Detention.” *Time & Society* 25, no. 1: 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X15604518>.
- Turner, S. 2016. “What is a Refugee Camp? Explorations of the Limits and Effects of the Camp.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29, no. 2: 139–148. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev024>.
- Turner, S. 2005. “Suspended spaces—contesting sovereignties in a refugee camp.” In *Sovereign bodies: Citizens, migrants, and states in the postcolonial world*, edited by In. T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat, 312–332. Princeton University Press.
- Turner, V. 1987. “Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites of passage.” In *Betwixt and between: Patterns of masculine and feminine initiation*, edited by In. L. C. Mahdi, S. Foster, and M. Little, 3–19. Open Court.
- UNHCR. (2024, October 8). UNHCR's refugee population statistics database. UNHCR. Retrieved 2024, October 20 from <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.
- Walby, S., J. Armstrong, and S. Strid. 2012. “Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory.” *Sociology* 46, no. 2: 224–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511416164>.
- Weheliye, A. G. 2014. *Habeas viscus: Racializing assemblages, biopolitics, and Black feminist theories of the human*. Duke University Press.