Article

Building Humanitarian Corridors

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A Study of Refugee Resettlement in Italy

Narrating Authentic Refugee Experiences

> ***What does it mean to accompany someone? Is "integration" always the correct word? What is "culture clash?" Can a person cause harm even when they act in good faith? What is the proper amount of distance to keep while welcoming another?***
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> ***—Analysis/Conclusions*, Human Lines, *"The Anatomy of Welcoming"***

These are just a few of the many questions that emerge out of *Human Lines*, a dynamic "web documentary" that captures and narrates authentic refugee experiences in the Humanitarian Corridors project. As is well known, thousands of refugees and migrants risk their lives each year crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. Between November 2017 and January 2019, an agreement between the Italian government and several religious nongovernmental organizations, led to the Humanitarian Corridors project, which was

funded by the Italian Bishops' Conference. This made it possible for 500 Eritrean, Somali, and South Sudanese refugees to leave Ethiopia and enter Italy via a legal and safe route, receiving housing and resettlement assistance upon arrival.

Notre Dame University researchers Ilaria Schnyder von Wartensee and Clemens Sedmak examined the refugees' experiences, from their departure from Ethiopia to their arrival in Italy, and evaluated whether the humanitarian corridor effort could serve as a model for migrant integration and inclusion in Europe.

After four years of research, von Wartensee and her team created a web portal/documentary called *Human Lines* to "narrate the stories and relate the dynamics, faces, beauty, and difficulties that make up and distinguish the Humanitarian Corridors project." A key outcome was an interactive exhibition called "Anatomy of Welcoming," whose ambitious goal was to translate the complexity of many years of observation into concise bytes of text and image, like "flashes of light that can illuminate hidden corners, details, and shadows that are difficult to see at first glance." The exhibit does not uncritically celebrate the Humanitarian Corridors but "probes its depths, drawing out strengths and weaknesses, obligations and short circuits, values and perspectives." Designed to be used by associations, dioceses, institutions, and universities, the work was a synthesis on a variety of levels: the exhibition was composed of 36 free standing panels that introduce the project, and address specific themes through photographs and short text, QR codes linked to audio content, including the protagonist's voices and testimonies regarding the theme from the perspective of operators, refugees, volunteers, experts, and others involved in the experience. There is also a complete online version of the experience, with further textual insights.

Human Lines Team

Ilaria Schnyder von Wartensee– researcher Notre Dame University (US), project manager
Benedetta Panchetti – research assistant
Marida Augusto – photos, audio editing, narrating voice
Max Hirzel – photos, texts and scripts
Corrado Phil Fileppo – corporate, visual and digital design

Visit Human Lines here

Human Dignity, Christianity and the Refugee Crisis

The Notre Dame research team also sought to understand how religion affects both European attitudes toward migrants and migrant attitudes toward host societies. In particular, Clemens Sedmak explored the division within the Catholic Church over its responses to the migrant and refugee crisis.

He joined the *Signs of the Times* podcast to discuss his experience of returning to his home city of Salzburg, Austria, in September 2015 and being overwhelmed by the sheer number of refugees and migrants. This prompted his research with the Humanitarian Corridor Initiative, a project of the Ford Program in Human Development Studies and Solidarity. In the podcast, Sedmak discusses a model of accompaniment as a means to integrate refugees into a new city as well as the pitfalls of the phenomenon called overaccompaniment.

Click here to listen to the podcast

The Role of Civil Society in Creating Humanitarian

Corridors

Ilaria von Wartensee co-authored an article in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* titled “Actions Speak Louder than Claims: Humanitarian Corridors, Civil Society and Asylum Policies.” This article analyzes civil society’s sponsorship through religious institutions and the collaboration with governments to create humanitarian corridors.

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