

The global refugee crisis and the career ecosystem

The global
refugee crisis

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to introduce this special issue about the “Impact of the Global Refugee Crisis on the Career Ecosystem” and summarise the key contributions of the included practitioner and scholarly papers which examine refugee business and labour market experiences. The paper also examines the impact of media reports to provide a broader understanding of the context within which the current refugee crisis is evolving.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors begin with a delineation of the concept of a career ecosystem in the context of refugee crises. The authors then employ this framing as a backdrop to engage in a basic analysis of business media coverage of the most recent Syrian refugee crisis, and a summary of the practitioner and scholarly papers.

Findings – The findings of the media analysis suggest major coverage differences between different groups of countries in the number of documents identified, the proposed aim of business engagement with refugees, and substance of the extracted statements generally.

Research limitations/implications – The analysis of business media coverage is rudimentary and intended only as a prompt for further conversations about how contemporary media commentary impacts on career opportunities for refugees and relevant stakeholder practices.

Practical implications – This paper demonstrates the importance of including broader considerations of refugee careers that explore the interaction and intersection with transnational and local ecosystem of labour markets while paying attention to the sociocultural and political refugee-host community dynamics.

Originality/value – This paper presents a more systems-oriented perspective and provides both practice and scholarly perspectives on the composite and dynamic nature of the refugee crisis on career ecosystems more broadly.

Keywords Media, Refugee, Career ecosystem, Global refugee crisis

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Over the last decade, images of individuals, families and children forced to flee their homes and communities in search of safety, survival and better futures have occupied news channels and other global media outlets to reflect what is now widely understood as the “Global Refugee Crisis” (*The Economist*, 2016). These images depict refugees seeking to escape war torn countries such as Syria and Somalia, the internally displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the more recent “human caravan” escaping violence and poverty in Central America. Fed by socio-political and economic instability and war in disparate geographic locations, the crisis continues to expand with broadening geopolitical strife and rising levels of environmental disasters (Bayes, 2018).

By the end of 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that there were 68.5m people forcibly displaced globally, up by 16.2m from 2016. This figure is of particular concern given that in 2015 it was estimated that 1 in every 122 individuals on the planet was either a refugee, internally displaced or in search of asylum (UNHCR, 2017). Adding further to this concern, recent reports suggest that there are currently 25.4m refugees worldwide, with South Sudan and Myanmar contributing to the latest surge in numbers (UNHCR, 2018). Most of these refugees (85 per cent) are being hosted in developing economies, with Turkey hosting the highest number of refugees (3.5m) and Lebanon hosting the largest number relative to its population – where one in every six people in that country is a refugee



(UNHCR, 2018). The displacement of millions of people poses the challenge of integration in host communities, which can be exacerbated by extant barriers to finding suitable employment (Ager and Strang, 2008; Knappert *et al.*, 2018). In fact, labour market integration (i.e. securing and maintaining any type of formal employment) has been identified as a key driver for refugees' integration (e.g. Correa-Velez *et al.*, 2010; Gericke *et al.*, 2018).

Whereas governmental approaches to resettlement of refugees have been varied in terms of actual practice, they have been relatively similar in their impact on national and international debate (Hynie, 2018). It is especially notable, for example, that many political parties have incorporated their stance on refugee acceptance and resettlement into their respective campaigns. Indeed, debates about refugee resettlement have given rise to a highly politicised employment landscape (Wahlbeck, 2018). Furthermore, it is notable that the integration of refugees into local and transnational job markets is largely predicated on government and intergovernmental social, educational and citizenship policies and policies governing skill matching, transfer and employment opportunities and rights (Buckner *et al.*, 2018; Mulvey, 2018).

However, even in supportive political and social environments, access to career opportunities and integration into local workforces is extremely challenging for many refugees (Newman *et al.*, 2018). As we might anticipate, in contexts where refugees are being met with political and social resistance, their access to career opportunities is even more restricted. For example, earlier careers research suggested that at the same time as host country nationals were expressing concerns about threats to their job security due to the influx of a cheap labour supply, there were also explicit political efforts to limit integration (Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010). Yet, such examples, and government policies more broadly, must be understood against the historical backdrop of protracted refugee crises such as Rohingya refugees arriving in Bangladesh before 1992; South Sudanese, Somali and Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia since 1990; Palestinian refugees since 1948 in Jordan and Lebanon who either do not have the right to work or can only do so within limited constraints (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016, 2018). This backdrop is further complicated by the over 40m internally displaced persons, who also flee from their homes to other parts of their country (UNHCR, 2017). For example since 2012 there have been approximately 6.2m people displaced within Syria, representing the largest internally displaced population globally (UNHCR-Syria, 2017). These people face the same difficulties as refugees but are not granted the same rights under international law. Indeed, insights concerning today's policies toward refugees and the internally displaced[1] must be made within the context of the "century of refugees" – that is, the 100 years since the First World War (Gatrell, 2017).

This special issue aims to add to the emerging body of scholarship on the career experiences of the most recent refugees (see for example Newman *et al.*, 2018). More specifically, the collection of papers examines refugees' career experiences in the context of what can be understood as the "career ecosystem" (Baruch, 2015; Baruch and Altman, 2016). Exploring the impact of the current Global Refugee Crisis through the lens of a career ecosystem is particularly helpful because it captures the inherent connectivity between a composite range of actors (including, but not limited to, the refugees themselves) and host and home country institutions. We draw on Baruch and Altman (2016) who describe "an ecosystem of labour markets and careers" which they characterize as being embedded within the general business ecosystem and therefore part-and-parcel of the interconnectedness and interactions of the variety of entities at various levels (p. 17).

This ecosystem is a useful framework to examine career mobility issues, and the career of refugees and the internally displaced more specifically as it captures the dynamic flux characterizing their experiences, and recognises that individuals and institutions operate in a mutually interdependent and recursive fashion thus capturing both the structural and agentic nature of careers. Whereas there may be some parallels between refugees and other

internationally mobile career actors (e.g. immigrants), there are some important differences. A notable difference concerns the forced, danger-laden and often abrupt departure of these individuals from their homes where most have left due to circumstances beyond their control (Stewart, 2002).

Our aim in this special issue, therefore, is to provide a platform to discuss and debate the implications of the current Global Refugee Crisis for careers and career systems. Our intent is to adopt a systems-oriented perspective and provide a critical reflection of the composite and dynamic nature of the refugee crisis on career ecosystems more broadly. The reactions of key stakeholders in the career ecosystem to the influx of refugees, especially in the context of mass movements, are often cautious due to the corresponding highly politicised, historically-grounded and complex social and economic implications (Long and Crisp, 2010). Local and national government offices, as well as business groups and private sector actors, are faced with complex challenges concerning whether and how to facilitate or restrict refugee mobility, access to labour migration schemes, skill training and recertification programs and formal employment possibilities. These challenges are often exacerbated by reports and commentaries in the mainstream media alongside what may be, on some occasions, unsubstantiated claims and counterclaims in social media and official communications of local religious and societal leaders and decision-makers (Holmes and Castañeda, 2016; KhosraviNik, 2010; Ktotofil and Motak, 2018).

Interest in the impact of the media on societal and individual understandings of, and reactions to, a particular phenomenon has gained momentum in recent years with the formation of a specific field of study, “Media Psychology”. Indeed, according to Lopez-Guimera *et al.* (2010):

Media are among the principal social agents in many societies. Television, magazines, newspapers, radio, cinema, advertising, the internet, and other so-called “new media” or “new technologies” occupy – if not invade – much of our leisure time, and indeed our working time. (p. 388)

Concerned with the impact of media on reactions to the Global Refugee Crisis, in 2015 the United Nations Higher Commission on Refugees commissioned a report to analyse the media discourses on the topic. The report focused on general coverage across media outlets in five European countries and revealed significant between-country differences in the way the crisis was framed, the language used and the solutions suggested (Berry *et al.*, 2016). Demonstrating the importance of the study, Berry *et al.* (2016) note that 2015 was a particularly critical time to undertake such a media analysis as it was a “crucial period of agenda-setting” (p. i).

Following this lead, and as a starting point for this special issue, we examine the same 2015 period, and conduct a basic analysis of business media coverage of the crisis. The purpose of this analysis is to move towards an understanding of themes raised in the media in relation to business, private sector stakeholders, and related issues of commerce, trade and industry in the context of the possible career ecosystems for refugees. Given that the refugee crisis has global implications, we are also seeking to move beyond EU countries and hence have included Australia and four countries in the Middle East in our analysis. With this in mind, therefore, we examine a select number of key business magazines and business sections of newspapers in eight countries, with Group 1 comprising the USA, UK, Germany and Australia, and Group 2 comprising: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

As a starting point for the study, we searched for articles that were specifically focused on Syrian refugees and published between 30 January 2015 and 1 December 2015 given Berry *et al.*'s (2016) assertion about this being a particularly “critical period”. In our search for relevant articles, we took a two-step approach on the Lexis Nexis database. First, we searched for the following key terms: country and/or capital, refugee, Syrian refugees, Syrian refugee crisis, refugee crisis, migrant crisis, business, private sector, economic impact, corporate social responsibility (CSR). We then initiated a Google alert to receive

articles containing the keywords Business and Refugee. For the Arab countries, we ran a search with the following keywords: اللاجئين السوريين ('Al Llaji2in 'Al Suriyin – the Syrian Refugees) and الشركات و اللاجئين السوريين ('Al Llaji2in 'Al Suriyin Wa 'Al Sharikat – the Syrian Refugees and Businesses).

The search yielded 120 documents, 20 identified from the Arab countries and 100 from the other four countries. The identified articles were used for a basic comparative thematic analysis, where the emergent categories from Groups 1 and 2 were juxtaposed. The results suggested that the respective media reports differed in terms of their general types of coverage. The predominant coverage in Group 1 addressed the “value added” contribution of refugees to the host economies, where they were portrayed as filling national labour gaps and fostering new business opportunities; whereas in Group 2 the coverage was more cautionary (see Table I).

Overall, and as depicted in Table I, we found major differences between the two groups not only in terms of the number of documents identified, but also in the proposed aim of business engagement with refugees, and the tone and substance of the extracted statements generally. In Group 1, the number of articles available was five-times more than those for Group 2. This difference may suggest a more cautionary approach to commenting openly about implications for business in the respective Arab communities and countries. By comparison, in Group 1 there were more explicit considerations of how business can engage with and benefit from the presence of refugees. Suggestions for how to engage with refugees most often revolved around exploring potential benefits to the economy, filling national labour gaps and fostering new business opportunities. In Group 2, coverage was more subdued focusing on the negative consequences and experiences of the already present refugees in the host communities.

Data analysis also suggested that there were differences in terms of the general tone and framing of arguments in the respective regions. As shown in the first column of Table I, coverage in Group 1 explored more positive, action oriented themes revolving around the potential to boost national economic activity, to increase business development opportunities

Group 1	Group 2
Consequences on host community in the form of national economic boost in Local rural areas Filling labour gaps from aging population Supporting a net gain to European National Budgets	Consequences of current crisis on the host communities, in the form of burdening The host communities economically The sociopolitical climate by increasing internal civil unrest and destabilization
Opportunity for business development to Increase global knowledge of firm Foster new community markets Foster trading partners with refugees' home country an region	Opportunity for business development for Host community businesses through being the conduit for Humanitarian efforts and aid Host community businesses through increasing the segments of service and product market opportunities in refugee communities
Businesses activities in the form of actual Local businesses activities Local businesses requests to provide career opportunities for refugees Activities that big businesses are doing Barriers to business initiatives due to a need For change in national policy frameworks for employment and a right to work To pressure government for business to be part of the policy debate early on	Description exploitative businesses activities in the form of Challenging the current levels of exploitation of refugees in informal work Documenting examples of child labour and inhumane working conditions

Table I.
Key themes emerging from the Group 1 (USA, UK, Germany and Australia) and Group 2 (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt) business media coverage of the Syrian Refugee Crises from 30 January to 1 December 2015

and to document actual examples of what businesses are doing in Europe in response to the refugee crisis. This included discussions about how the influx of refugees could have a positive impact through a national economic boost. Here references were made to resettlement of refugee families in rural areas where local populations have shrunk or aged, so as to help fill labour gaps and increase economic activity in the country overall. For example, Conaghan (2015, 3rd paragraph) describes areas in rural Australia where mining jobs have disappeared and quotes a local MP who states:

If we can get them into towns in rural areas where no one is renting these houses and have them start to make a life for themselves out there, it's going to generate income for businesses if they have people filling house vacancies.

Kumar (2015) also comments on the benefit of resettling refugees noting the weakening skilled labour pool in Germany, with its rapidly ageing population and low birth rates. Furthermore, Davis (2015, 5th paragraph) in his article argues that an influx of refugees is just what Europe needs, and that:

Although Europe has had its share of economic difficulties in the last decade, experts say efforts to house and integrate the refugees now will determine the fiscal effects down the road – and could eventually prove a net gain to European budgets.

Similarly, Jenkins (2015) notes that in the UK, waves of skilled and diverse refugees have, over the centuries, sparked economic stimulation, and hence great economic benefit.

The second major theme focuses on business development opportunities and how incorporating refugees in the workforce can help increase a firm's "global knowledge" thus enabling a more international outlook in today's transnational markets. These opportunities were also described in terms of fostering new local markets for refugee communities and fostering international trade ties through local community connections with their country of origin. In this regard, we identified regular commentaries about how the current business response should not be framed as fulfilling CSR requirements alone, but rather as strategic forward-thinking firms (Koser, 2015). Decker (2015, 5th paragraph) commenting on different refugee communities settling in Europe, for example, states that:

Communities mean new markets. 50,000 Libyans arrive in Italy, they will want Libyan food, Libyan clothing, Libyan schools, Libyan music and much more. Communities will be created, just as we have Chinatowns and Little Italys. Ethnic communities mean new markets.

Decker (2015) further highlights the business case for "ethnic marketing" strategies, where refugee communities can be used as testing ground for marketing initiatives before going to overseas markets. Data analysis also identified depictions of business efforts to work directly with refugee communities including provision of skill and language training initiatives, government-assisted apprenticeship programs, shaping positive societal attitudes (Kumar, 2015; Marcus, 2015). There were also reports about big businesses using their resources to boost initiatives such as job creation (Jenkins, 2015) and facilitating immediate responses and to support humanitarian partners in meeting refugees' basic needs (Atkins, 2015). A final theme emerging from Group 1 reports concerned barriers to employing and setting up business initiatives with refugee communities. Here we identified a tendency towards revisiting the "right to work" legislations in the respective countries and the importance of businesses being included in debates around the formation of related national policy frameworks of refugee employment (Aldrick, 2015; Collins, 2015; Kanter, 2015).

Overall, these four themes seemed characteristic of the mood of the articles over the first 11 months of our study. However, there was a notable shift in tone in mid-November 2015 continuing to the end of the time-frame in December 2015. This shift is marked by a decrease in discussions showcasing the economic benefits of welcoming refugees and an increase in

more tempered sentiments about refugees and a greater push towards highlighting risks. This shift appeared to have occurred alongside increased coverage about “global terrorism” during the same period. For example on 13 November 2015 there was extensive media coverage of terrorist attacks in Paris, and a wave of backlash in the political democracies of Europe where rising levels of fear shaped the opinion of some groups with regards to refugees (Jungkunz *et al.*, 2018) and, by extension, the business-refugee relationship concerning refugee careers. Indeed, Nail (2016) describes the difference between pre- and post-Paris attacks as a “quick shift of attention [...] (where) the European response to the Syrian refugees has now become explicit in the response to the tragic attacks in Paris” (p. 158).

Moving to our analysis of the media coverage for Group 2, and as shown in the second column of Table I, the predominant coverage appeared to have a more tempered tone and with a noticeable “silence” from the business community concerning the careers of refugees in the host Arab communities. This comparative lack of conversation surrounding business in the refugee crisis was starkly apparent, not only in terms of the relative lack of business media articles identified, but also in terms of the description of business actions, initiatives, and the desire to engage in policy debates. This finding is, however, perhaps unsurprising given the political climate both within and between regional players. After all, the crisis occurring within this region has far-reaching and often complex political dynamics that require careful diplomacy within and across borders. Any discussion of the refugee crisis in public forums, therefore, is likely weighed against recent and past geopolitical histories of occupation, war and instability feeding the ongoing volatility in the region.

Therefore, in the context of these Arab nations, the role of business and the private sector *vis-à-vis* refugee career ecosystems is regularly seen as something of a “hot potato” constantly being positioned and repositioned. This mirrors host government’s constant efforts to negotiate their respective positions with national counterparts, intra-national communities, and the international community, regarding refugees and displaced persons (Geha and Talhouk, 2018). It also mirrors the narratives of local and national leaders who are careful to maintain a focus on “Return” with explicit mention of the need to help refugees re-skill in order to facilitate or support the return and rebuilding of Syria and Syrian communities rather than integration in host communities (Grandi, 2019).

Given the contextual dynamics, the tempered conversations in the business media in Group 2 media outlets are, perhaps, understandable. There were three key themes that emerged in the 20 articles we examined in Group 2 countries. They revolve around the negative consequences that the influx of refugees has had on host communities, the possible benefit of humanitarian aid for host community economies and description of businesses exploiting vulnerable refugees for cheap and unprotected labour. As noted in the first row of Table I, in Column 2 there was some discussion of the problems arising from the economic burden of refugees on already strained host communities and countries. For example, Kumar (2015) quotes King Abdullah of Jordan who stated that:

Almost quarter of the state budget is spent each year on refugees and infrastructure support. When 90% of the refugees live outside the refugee camps, this has negative impact on the educational services, the infrastructure and the medical services. Additionally, it increases the competition between Syrian refugees and Jordanian citizens over job opportunities. (King Abdullah the Second, 2015)

Discussions about creating career opportunities for refugees were often prefaced or immediately followed by discussion about the need to create job opportunities for local populations. For example, Al Moukhtar (2015) notes that national responses to the refugee crisis need to support weak communities through providing job opportunities for both nationals and refugees. These recommendations were often linked to concerns that explicit support for refugees’ work opportunities might exacerbate unrest and instability both within and between nations in the region (Youm7, 2015).

The second key theme (see Table I, Row 2, Column 2) focused on “opportunities” for business development emerging from the increased market possibilities with new refugee communities and the idea that the money (in the form of humanitarian aid) allocated to a host community/country may benefit some businesses (*Al Watan*, 2015). For example, Al Fakhouri (2015) in his article titled “Jordan should not be punished for opening its borders to Syrian refugees” reports on a high-level strategic meeting held in Jordan aimed at stressing “the need for an approach that integrates economic development with humanitarian work under the management of host countries”. This article describes the need to capitalise on hosting challenges to further develop the infrastructure for all.

The third and final theme that we identified in Group 2 concerned statements regarding the exploitation of refugees, with examples of child labour, underpayment, and inhumane working conditions that refugees are often exposed to in the informal economy (*Al Watan*, 2015; Al Shoufi, 2015) within the host communities and countries under study. In describing Syrian refugee labour in Lebanon, Al Shoufi (2015) notes that these vulnerable groups are “a necessity for business owners in Lebanon, especially in the construction and contracting sector, where about 350,000 Syrian workers work, according to estimates by the Lebanese Contractors Association. They are subject to harsh conditions in the labour market. They are deprived of the minimum wage and social security, and thus profits are inflated through their exploitation”. These and other reports of what could be seen as violations of basic labour rights are often noted in the press in Group 2.

Whereas a more in-depth and broader analysis of global media reports would likely provide further themes for discussion, our initial analysis of the two groups of articles suggests salient differences in media coverage. Among other things, this highlights differences in media perspectives concerning the international and cross-border impact of the crisis and how it might be addressed. The identified themes in Group 1, the countries furthest away and least impacted by the crises, appear to provide media coverage that is more optimistic than the media coverage in countries most directly impacted.

Having reviewed trends in media coverage of the refugee crisis, in the sections that follow we turn to take a closer look at other aspects of the crises through a series of research and professional papers. Each paper included in this special issue, makes a unique contribution to the extant scholarship on the implications of the refugees crisis on the ecosystem of labour markets and careers.

Research papers

The two research papers included in this special issue offer interesting illustrations of the interconnectedness, interactions and interdependencies of the variety of entities at various levels within the labour market and career ecosystem. They further offer practical insights thus augmenting our understanding of the discourse around refugees as identified in our media analysis. More specifically, these articles add to our understanding of the career barriers facing refugees and how those barriers impact refugees’ professional identity. They also draw attention to the macro- and meso-forces impacting on refugees, urging reflection on the organisational mechanisms that might be used to enhance refugees’ career experiences and opportunities.

Drawing on an in-depth qualitative investigation of refugees’ narratives of career barriers and professional identity, Mackenzie and Jones analyse the accounts of 15 professionally qualified refugees in medicine or teaching who had fled Sudan (4), Zimbabwe (3), Afghanistan (3), Iran (2), Sri Lanka (2) and Senegal (1) and were living in the UK at the time of the study. The authors examine the tensions these refugees faced between maintaining a coherent sense of who they were and adapting to the many barriers they faced in building a new life in the UK. The authors further explore this tension through the lens of the professional identity literature, reporting how threats to, and maintenance of, professional identity was a central theme in participants’ accounts.

Specifically, they examine themes relating to the maintenance and recovery of professional identity, structural barriers to re-entry into their respective profession and the impact of social context. They further explore specific tensions that highlight both the limits of maintaining a professional identity and its function in sustaining self-esteem and providing a bridge between individual self-identity and the new cultural and social context in which they were located.

From a practical perspective, this paper highlights the need to raise awareness about the barriers refugee professionals face and provides some suggestions for governments and professional associations to ease and speed processes for recognition and integration of professionally qualified refugees. From a labour market and career ecosystem perspective, it would be interesting to reflect further on the interconnectedness, interactions and interdependencies among multiple stakeholders, to support the integration of professionally qualified refugees.

In the second scholarly paper, Van Dijk *et al.* leverage the relational framework presented by Syed and Özbilgin (2009) to shed light on the individual, organisational and contextual factors affecting the inclusion of refugees in workplaces in the Netherlands. Drawing on a thematic analysis of 18 semi-structured interviews with refugees from Armenia, Eritrea, Senegal and Syria, who were employed in different organisational contexts at the time of the study, the authors examine the influences that hinder or enable inclusion of refugees in the workplace. From a labour market and career ecosystem perspective, the value of this paper is that it points to the multi-level factors impacting on refugee career experiences and opportunities. These themes are sorted along a continuum that falls within the range of what facilitates vs what may inhibit inclusion into the respective career field or workplace.

Van Dijk *et al.* also contribute to emerging discussions about the skill paradox of refugees' career experiences and opportunities, whereby highly qualified refugees are more likely to be less satisfied than their less qualified counterparts. This leads them to highlight the role of national labour legislation in supporting the inclusion of highly qualified refugees into their respective career fields. This dimension of the paper is particularly important for highlighting the diversity among refugees with respect to professional qualifications and experience. It demonstrates the associated problems of assuming professional/educational homogeneity among refugees which has, arguably, been an underlying message in some of the media and social media discourse.

The refugee crisis and its implications for the labour market and career ecosystem is especially relevant to the professional community. Indeed it has been the subject of particular attention among many NGOs, INGOS and other stakeholders in refugee home and host countries. Whereas scholarly literature and thinking on the experiences and opportunities of refugees has an important role to play, in putting together this special issue we recognise that giving voice to professional insights is vital. In this respect, our aim is to draw an explicit connection between scholarly and practitioner insight and practice.

Incorporating practitioner insights into scholarly literature

There have been growing calls to increase the practical impact of business and management research in order to extend its benefit beyond the academic community (e.g. Kelliher *et al.*, 2018; Merchant, 2012). These calls are closely connected to shifting requirements among international accreditation bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business and for Business Schools to have demonstrable accountability for the utility of their outputs both in terms of research and teaching. Ozane *et al.* (2016) argue that one way to achieve this is to engage with a broader range of

relevant societal stakeholders. They suggest that whereas traditional approaches to academic research have employed:

Bibliometric measures and focus on the creation and use of journal articles by scholarly audiences, it is now essential for business scholarship to extend collaboration to a broader audience in order to enhance its societal impact. (p. 1)

One way to do this is to engage in what Ozane *et al.* (2016) describe as a “relational approach” to business research and publication involving direct engagement with business practitioners outside of academia.

In this special issue, we have responded to that recommendation by inviting contributions from three professionals practicing in the field to provide commentary. Drawing on their own professional experience and observations, each of the contributors and their co-authors, have provided a critical analysis of the institutional influences impacting on the employment ecosystems, and hence on the career opportunities of refugees and other immigrant groups in two countries, namely Switzerland and Turkey. We invited contributions on these two countries given that they provide contrasting examples of willingness to accept refugees and yet similar approaches to refugee policy and support systems with reportedly similar outcomes for refugees’ career and work opportunities. Turkey for example, hosts the highest number of refugees and displaced citizens in the world (Human Rights Watch, 2018) whereas Switzerland has a more restrictive approach to immigration and particularly to workers originating from outside the EU/EFTA. Despite these differences, however, it is notable that the authors each identify similar themes with respect to the institutional factors impacting on the career/employment opportunities of refugees/immigrants in the respective countries that can add to our understanding of the ecosystem of labour markets and careers.

First, each of the practitioner papers calls for more efficient systems to be put in place to facilitate refugees’ participation in local labour markets. Their arguments mirror recent scholarly work showing the extent to which structural barriers, understood as institutional systems and processes, negatively impact on refugees and immigrants career opportunities (e.g. Campion, 2018; Knappert *et al.*, 2018). They also mirror the findings of our media analysis, as noted above, which demonstrates a clear understanding among the media of the impact of the crisis on institutional systems and processes and vice versa. The practitioner papers also respond to broader arguments in careers scholarship inviting scholars to acknowledge and engage more directly with the impact of contextual influences on career experiences and opportunities as a counterbalance to the “agentic” focus which has emerged in recent years (Akkermans and Kubasch, 2017). In so doing, they draw attention to the impact of public policy signalling how inefficient and cumbersome employment policies can deter employers from providing career opportunities for refugees.

While acknowledging the potentially deleterious impact of institutional practices, each of the invited practitioner authors also calls for better support systems to be put in place to enhance refugees’ linguistic, host culture proficiency and social integration. These calls echo themes in extant careers literature relating to the enabling and constraining impact of institutions (Inkson *et al.*, 2012). Given the increasing importance of “soft skills” and social capital for career experiences and opportunities, their calls are well-supported in the extant careers literature with increasing interest in the impact of different forms of career capital, including social capital, on career success (Clarke, 2018; Gibson *et al.*, 2014; Guan *et al.*, 2018; Akkermans and Kubasch, 2017). They are also clearly supported in the emerging scholarly literature on refugees’ careers (Gericke *et al.*, 2018; Newman *et al.*, 2018). The practitioners are unanimous in their assertion that, without appropriate support systems, an increasing number of refugees are likely to end up working in the host country’s informal labour markets, often illegally. Each of the practitioner contributors also draw attention to themes

relating to underemployment of refugees in each of the two countries indicating that many refugees are highly qualified with extensive skills that could be transferable to their respective host country. These commentaries are also reflected in recent work on the impact of internally displaced career actors (Ivlevs and Veliziotis, 2018) indicating that people who have escaped some form of conflict are more likely to be unemployed and/or work in the informal labour market even while they are otherwise well-placed to make an important contribution to the broader labour market.

By drawing attention to their potential to contribute to host country economies, the practitioner papers emphasise the recursive nature of individual career behaviours and local and national contexts and in doing so mirror on-going concerns among career scholars to pay attention to the impact of both structure and agency on career opportunities, experiences and outcomes. For example, Saner *et al.* report that Syrian refugees in Turkey had invested nearly \$334m in the Turkish economy. In this regard, each of the commentaries takes a positive step towards addressing reported fears about refugees replacing host country nationals' jobs. Instead, their papers demonstrate how refugees have an important role to play in host country economies but need to be given an opportunity to do so in a more seamless and efficient manner.

Conclusion

Taken together, this special issue brings together considerations of the potential impact of the global labour market and careers ecosystem. Urging for greater consideration of the implications of the crisis for business and management practices and for individual careers and career systems, it highlights some key directions for future policymaking and support systems in particular. The sheer numbers of refugees who are of working age, who are displaced from their homes has created an urgent and immediate need for action by a broad range of stakeholders. The transformation we are likely to see with regards to opportunities for national economic development, for developing novel "niche" career subsystems and the directions for further expansion in the informal economy are vast. We hope that the compilation of works in this special issue will motivate and inspire further research and action to be undertaken by both scholars and practitioners to address the far-reaching implications and possibilities presented by the global refugee crisis.

Note

1. In this introduction we reflect on the career ecosystems of both refugees and the internally displaced. According to the UNHCR (2018) the phrase "internally displaced person" is a descriptive term and not a legal one. Although many IDPs face the same difficulties as refugees, they are not granted the same rights under international law. From this point forward we use the term refugee only.

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Please note that Media Articles quoted in this introduction are noted with * for English articles and **for Arabic articles.

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