Introductory Editorial Remarks

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Chères/Chers Collègues,

Editorial change is always an awkward time in terms of making sure various aspects of the transition occur smoothly. In this case it is particularly challenging because of the work and investment put into the journal by my predecessor. Before accepting the position of editor-in-chief, I looked carefully into the evolution of the journal in which I had first published a piece almost two decades ago. It was quickly clear to me that Professor Sharryn Aiken had done a wonderful job in moving the journal far along the path from a periodical with relatively short articles to a world-class academic journal.

According to the information I was able to gather as I pondered the decision to accept the position, the dedication and energy demonstrated by my predecessor is truly extraordinary. She took this journal from a difficult phase in which it was emerging from a format somewhat similar to a newsletter and turned it clearly into an academic journal that is attracting a large number of submissions of remarkable quality from around the world. The journal is now engaging in both conceptual and practical debates on a variety of topics, as should be the case for a globally minded publication in this field. At the same time, the Canadian base is undeniable, whether it is in the content that focuses explicitly on Canadian problems or in the implicit approach that drives many of the articles. And through this modern Canadian outlook the journal reaches out to perspectives presented by diverse authors from different continents, as well as contributions that would appear at first glance to have no connection to Canada. Indeed, *Refuge* has become over the last few years much more than "Canada's periodical on refugees."

Many thanks go out to Sharryn Aiken for being part of this journal, for having helped it in difficult times, for having transformed it, and for being part of the community of engaged scholars who are trying to make a difference in our imperfect world. I look forward to her continued participation on the editorial advisory board.

The intention of the new editorial team is to continue the evolution of the journal and to consolidate its position in local and international discussions. To the extent possible, we should all be trying to encourage these discussions to not shy away from debates in which provocative and controversial views are presented. While it is difficult to imagine work in this field that is not in some way attempting to be policy-relevant, we should consider the possibility that "policy-irrelevant" work can often be surprisingly useful for both practitioners and academics who are exploring new ways to deal with old problems. After all, it is probably safe to assume that such a journal should strive ultimately to contribute with innovative reflections and lively debates on problems in our field, regardless of whether one defines it as "refugee studies" or as "forced migration studies," two distinct categorizations that can potentially have highly different meanings and implications. While other printed and online sources will provide readers with basic information and awareness on key issues in the field, we can provide at the very least a heuristic function accompanied by promises to impact the way we think about population displacement.

We consequently need to debate all views, popular and unpopular. Despite the fact that various analysts will present different interpretations of refugee situations around the world, few would deny the difficulties and global inequalities that characterize forced migration in the early stages of the twenty-first century. More locally, the Canadian government has tried to implement various legislative changes in order to improve what it perceives as serious problems, and these attempts have been met by strong criticisms from refugee advocates. From a starting point that assumes we all want to help refugees, we need to hear each other out even though our views may differ on how to achieve this general objective.

Donc, soyons prêts à écouter les autres points de vue (y compris en français, avec la tradition intellectuelle distincte que cela puisse impliquer) et préparons nous à débattre.

The general call for papers made for this issue has produced a wide variety of articles that reflect the lively debates, as well as diverse methodologies and conceptual frameworks, that make up our interdisciplinary field.

The issue opens with two practical problems relating to population displacement in Africa that pose complicated questions for both academics and policy makers. Derderian and Schockaert apply their field experience in order to encourage us to think about the shift from long-term

development assistance to emergency humanitarian aid in the context of the unstable eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Further east, problems concerning the border between Kenya and Somalia are analyzed by Burns, who explores the connection between refugees and national/regional security. The opening studies focusing on problems related to border regions in Africa are followed by a more conceptual piece by Banerjee that explores refugeehood in the context of principles related to our notions of justice and democracy.

The next articles in the issue deal generally with questions of integration. Fries and Gingrich propose an empirical study on aspects of multiculturalism policy that has potential implications for integration efforts and the way we rethink Canada's multiculturalism policy in light of recent challenges. Manjikian follows with an empirically based analysis in order to propose new conceptual ways of thinking about how refugee claimants can be proactive, particularly in terms of civic engagement at the local level, while waiting for their status to be clarified. Whereas the symbolic impact of the student refugee program administered by the World University Service of Canada has been considerable, few studies have focused on this innovative idea that has existed across Canadian campuses for decades. Plasterer contributes in filling this void by examining aspects of the program run by students from the University of British Columbia. The integration sub-theme is capped with an empirical study authored by Mah and Ives that explores the needs of HIV+ refugees from a multidisciplinary perspective with various implications on practice and theory.

The last series of articles in this issue engages directly with what might be considered macro-level policy challenges currently being debated in Canada but with implications and lessons beyond the country's borders. Murray explores Canada's response to climate change while providing an overview of how it fits within more general refugee policy. Bonisteel analyzes a concern raised recently by a number of advocates who claim that the current Immigration Minister has made statements which undermine the integrity of Canada's refugee determination procedure. With her proposal to have the problem raised before the courts, the country's adversarial legal system suggests that analysts inclined to defend the governmental position may want to take up Murray's challenge by exploring counter-arguments within the pages of upcoming *Refuge* issues.

To lead the final set of contributions to issue 27(1), Collacott proposes a policy-oriented commentary on reform of the Canadian system that goes against the flow of most academic analyses in the field. The topic lends itself well to a formal debate: Poulton provides us with a response from an advocate's viewpoint, immediately followed by Collacott's rebuttal. As suggested by the Collacott and Poulton exchange, the divide is large between the various actors concerned about the evolution of Canada's refugee policy. The problems raised are clearly of relevance around the world, and we can only hope that open discussions within the Canadian context contribute to our collective attempts to understand these difficult questions which affect refugees worldwide.

Please note that due to publication delays, some articles included in this spring 2010 issue have been updated as of April 25, 2011.

Bonne lecture. Le débat est ouvert … .

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