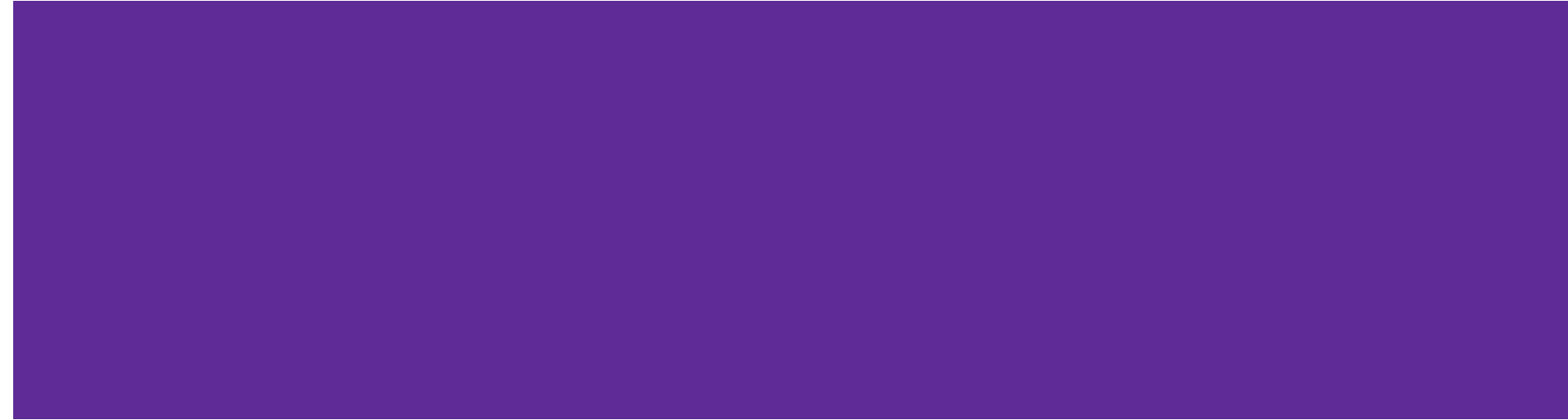# Mobile Libraries & Information Needs in Refugee Camps

Allison Easton & Katherine Wells

Outline

- Learning Objectives + Outcomes
- Key Terms
- Postcolonial theory & Global citizenship
- Information Needs in Refugee Camps
- Role of Libraries & Mobile Libraries

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Objectives

- Communicate existing library services in an international-context
- Outline the postcolonial perspective(s) relating to global information access
- Posit mobile libraries as an intervention to address the information needs of refugees in refugee camps

Outcomes

- Understand key terms relating to information needs & refugees
- Be aware of current interventions in meeting the information needs of refugees
- Be aware of the variety of services that mobile libraries offer in an international context
- Be able to critically assess information provision in refugee camps

Key Terms I

Refugee:

"Refugees are people fleeing conflict or persecution. They are defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk" (UNHCR, 2019)

Refugee Camp:

- "A refugee camp is intended as a temporary accommodation for people who have been forced to flee their home because of violence and persecution. They are constructed while crises unfold for people fleeing for their lives." (UNHCR, 2019)
- 2.6m refugees live in camps (UNHCR, 2019)

Key Terms II

Mobile Library:

- "Any library service that does not stay in one place is classed as a Mobile Library" (IFLA, 2010, p. 5).
- "[A] specially designed vehicle for use as a library that provides books and other reading material, and often, nowadays, audiobooks, IT equipment and Internet access" (Bikos & Papadimitriou, 2018)
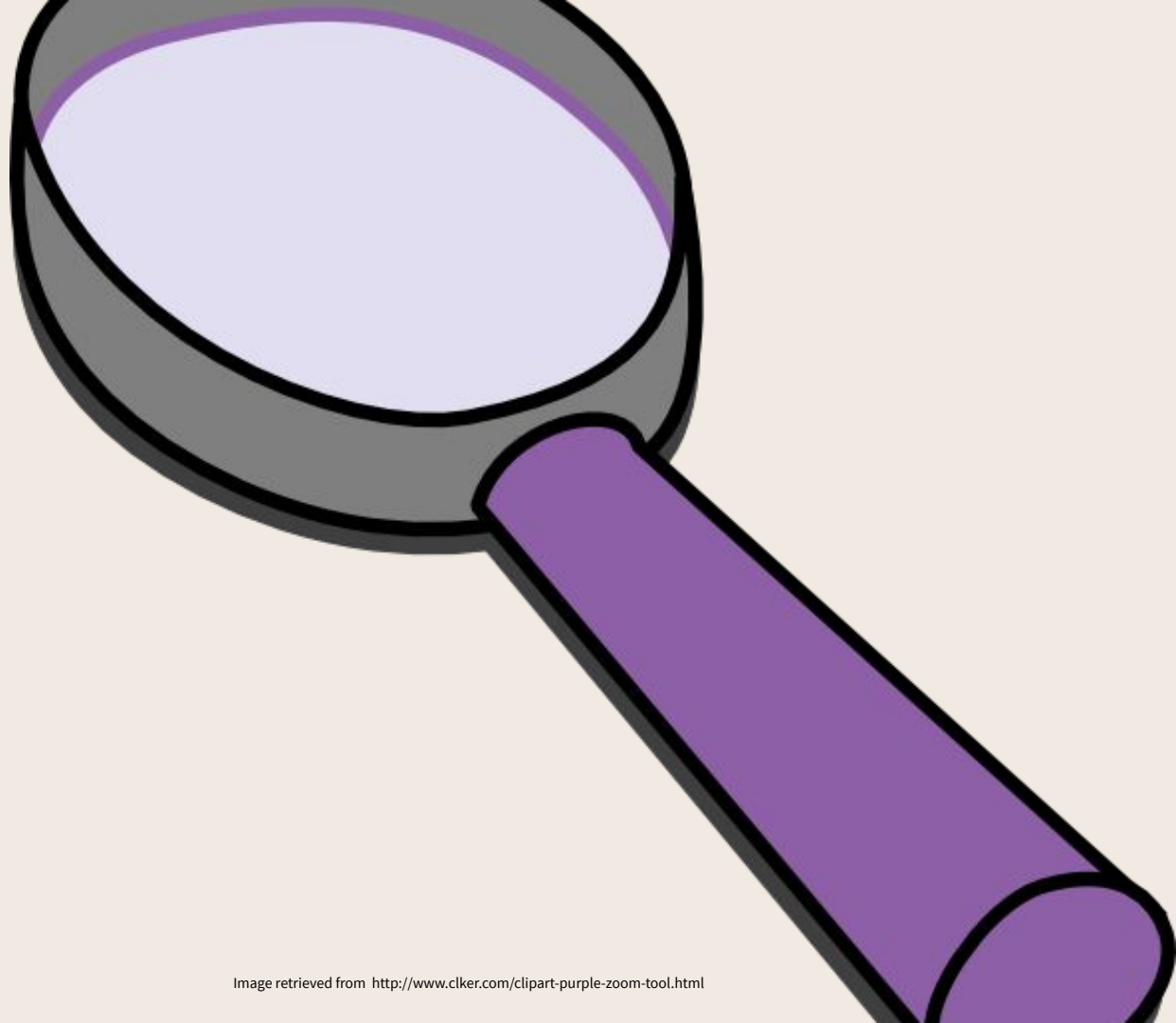
ICT: information and communication technologies

- For example, mobile phones
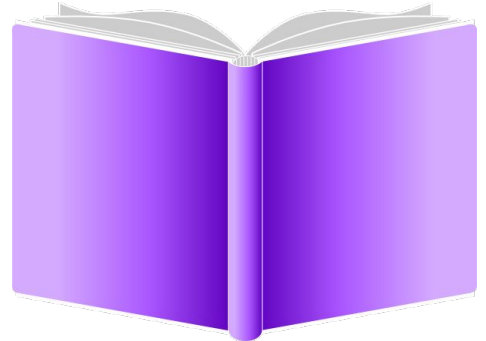
Postcolonial Theory

- Rejecting the "universalizing tendency of Western knowledge" (Iwowo, 2019, p. 6)
- Postcolonial Feminist Theory: Power dynamics & "The Other(s)" (Hesse-Biber, 2012)

Image retrieved from http://www.clker.com/clipart-purple-zoom-tool.html

Global Citizenship

- Locating, Contacting & Communicating
- Ethics of Engagement
  - Commitment to understanding conditions that produce refugees & their reception
  - Ethics of civility
  - Ethics of care

(Paehlke, 2014; Sidhu, 2017)

Library Values Internationally: IFLA & ALA

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF **Human Rights**

UNITED NATIONS

- Human Rights

    "Libraries are innately subversive institutions born of the radical notion that every single member of society deserves free, high quality access to knowledge and culture. " - Dr. Matt Finch
    (as quoted in ALA, 2019, Access to Library Resources and Services)

Library Values Internationally II

- Access & Sustainability

  - "The library is the only place in many communities where people can access information that will help improve their education, develop new skills, find jobs, build businesses, make informed agricultural and health decisions, or gain insights into environmental issues" (IFLA, 2017).

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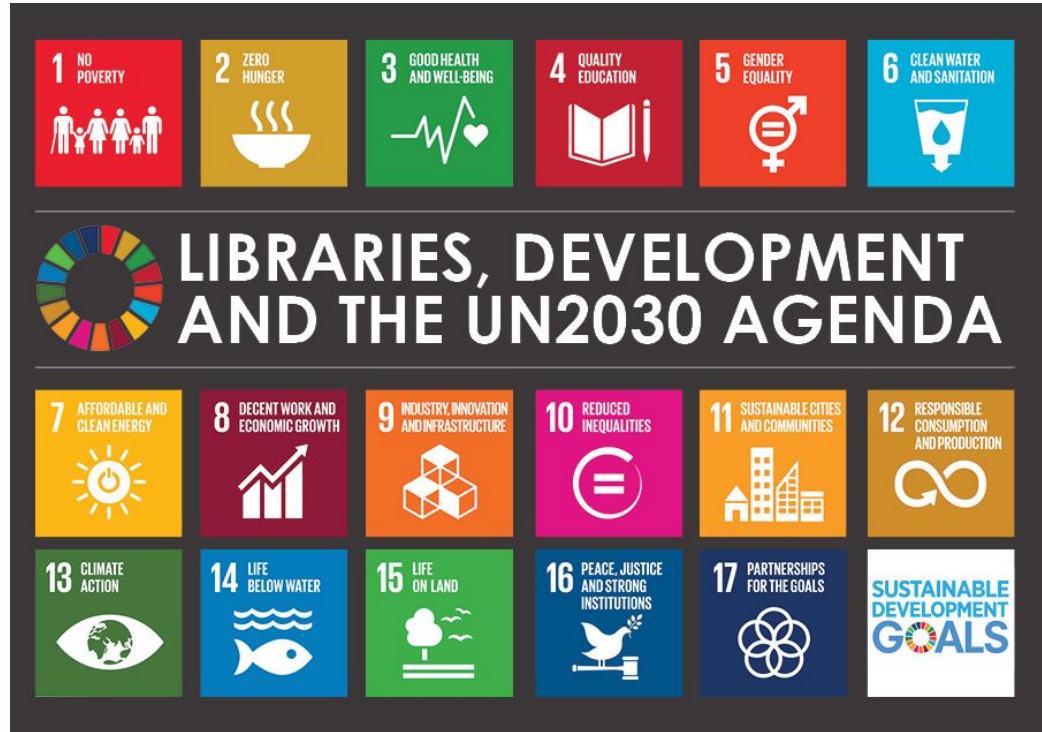
Stages of Settlement

Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson & Qayyum (2013)
- transitioning
- settling in
- being settled

Andrade & Doolin (2019)
- orienting practices
- instrumental practices
- expressive practices

However...

- Context matters!
  - Size of refugee camps varies
  - Difficult to generalize literature (Mansour, 2016)
  - Community engagement (Fisher, Yafii, Maitland, & Xu, 2019)
- Cultural considerations
  - Gender (Fisher, Yafii, Maitland, & Xu, 2019)
  - Linguistic barriers (Nawotka, 2019)
  - And more!

Information Needs in Refugees Camps: Themes

Diaries filled out by Za'atari community members (Fisher, Yafii, Maitland, & Xu, 2019)

- Daily Tasks
  - Everyday Information Landscape (Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson & Qayyum, 2013)
- Security
- Shelter

(Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Obodoruku, 2014; Redmond & Associates, 2004; Sambo, 2017; Smith, 2008)

Information Needs in Refugees Camps: Themes II

- Health Information
- Information on Relocating Family
- Information on Country of Origin
- Education for School-Aged Children
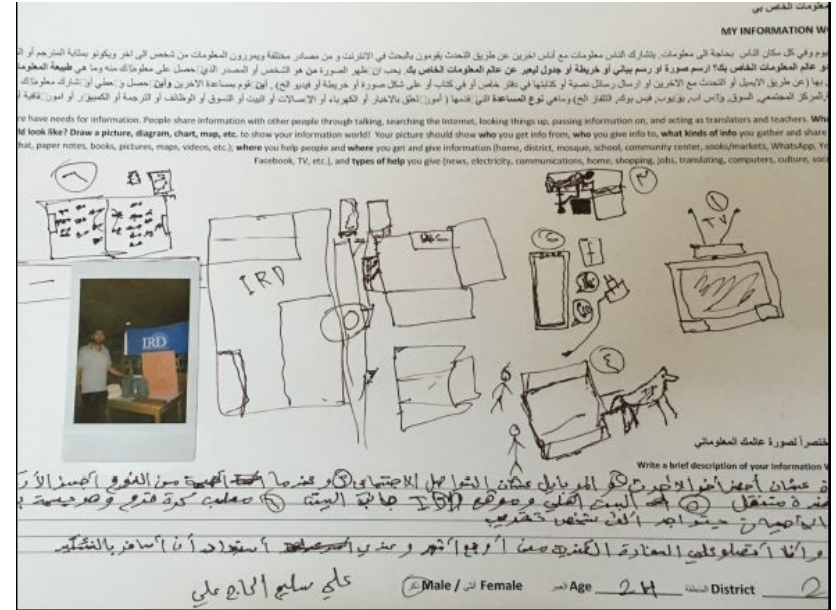
Information World Drawing at Za'atari (Fisher, Yafii, Maitland, & Xu, 2019)

(Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Obodoruku, 2014; Redmond & Associates, 2004; Sambo, 2017; Smith, 2008)

Strategies in Refugee Camps

- Social Networks
- ICT
- Formal Organizations

(Andrade & Doolin, 2019; Benitez, 2012; Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson & Qayyum, 2013; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2019; Mansour, 2018; Obodoruku, 2014; Redmond & Associates, 2004)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- UNHCR Strategic Directions (#4 of 5 core directions)
  - Empower through information (UNHCR Strategic Directions 2017-2021, p. 24)
- Opportunity for Collaboration
  - Over 900 partners

Mobile Libraries

- What is a mobile library?
  - "Libraries in any form that move in any manner, offer library services, are served by specialised staff and work in an organised manner within an institutional framework, can be formally classified as Mobile Libraries" (Bikos & Papadimitriou, 2018).
- Local context
  - epl2go Literacy Vans
- Beyond books
  - Variety of services offered
  - Technology is significant

(epl2go Literacy Vans, n.d.; Library Resources, 2018)

Mobile Libraries (Not Just Vans)

Elephant mobile library in Laos

Stockholm county library boat (bokbåten)

Kenyan camel library

Mobile Libraries in Refugee Camps

- Relief International focuses on promoting **childhood literacy** with a Library-in-a-Truck in the Kelenterli refugee settlement
- ECHO mobile library serves refugees in the Athens area with the goal of fostering **learning** and a **sense of community**
- Through UNHCR, a nurse established mobile libraries at refugee camps in Tanzania for health workers to **update medical training** .
- Truck-library in Sahrawi refugee camps is part of a network that hosts **book clubs** for children and adults.

(Asselin & Doiron, 2013; Bausells, 2015; Knight, 2009; Lynch, 2017)

Based on these examples...

- Themes:
  - Educational Needs, Health Information, Employment Help, Security Information, Community
  - Collaborate with community & provide tools

Expanding the Mobile Library Service to Meet Information Needs in Refugee Camps

- ICT
- Access to Mobile Phones and/or directing to resources that can be used on mobile phones
- Collaboration

(Andrade & Doolin, 2019; Benitez, 2012; Mansour, 2018)

Incorporating ICT with Mobile Libraries: An Example

Libraries without Borders - Ideas Box

Conclusion

- To view library services through a postcolonial lens and practice our global citizenship, we think that library service to refugees in refugee camps is an important topic to consider.
- We see the use of mobile libraries as a meaningful and flexible intervention in addressing the variety of information needs that refugees may have while in refugee camps.
- We see the use of ICTs in these mobile libraries as particularly important for connecting individuals to the information they need. We see Libraries Without Borders' Ideas Box as an example of creative service that other mobile libraries could model.

Thank you!

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