

**BOOK REVIEW**

# Lyytinen, Eveliina. (ed.) 2019. *Turvapaikanhaku ja Pakolaisuus Suomessa* *[Asylum Seeking and Refugeeeness in Finland]*. Turku: Migration Institute of Finland. 352 pp

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The edited anthology on asylum seeking and refugees in Finland (in Finnish: *Turvapaikanhaku ja pakolaisuus Suomessa*) is one of the first academic contributions that conjoins research from various academic fields on the issues of refugees and asylum process in Finland. It also gathers analysis of the events in 2015–2017 when Finland, among other European countries, received more asylum seekers than it had ever before. Altogether 25 researchers from different academic fields provide an overarching picture of asylum process and refugeeeness in Finland. Temporally, the analyses cover the journeys from the decision of fleeing the country of origin to the permanent settlement of families who have lived in Finland for over 20 years. Most of the articles are based on qualitative data and offer critical insights covering a broad range of themes, from state to grass-roots level. The editor, Eveliina Lyytinen, is a senior researcher in the Migration Institute of Finland and is specialised in forced migration. In the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), she sets Finland in an international context and presents a historical overview of refugee studies in Finland.

The book is organised thematically into four parts. The first part focuses on societal structures (i.e. politics, legislation and control). In Chapter 2, Matti Välimäki outlines the historical developments of Finnish refugee and asylum politics and legislation during 1973–2015. He covers the period since the first political decision was made to receive refugees from Chile until the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, when the number of asylum seekers in Finland multiplied. He finds links between the political and legislative developments, which are influenced by both national and international events and developments. Mikaela Heikkilä and Maija Mustaniemi-Laakso (Chapter 3) compare the Finnish asylum legislation with international and European case law. Even though vulnerability is recognised in the Finnish legislation, in practice the concept is rarely applied sufficiently. According to the authors, the legislation is perceived rather as a guideline than as a binding juridical mechanism when it comes to the treatment of vulnerable persons (p. 81). In Chapter 4, Talvikki Ahonen and Annastiina Kallius interpret the sudden rise of the number of undocumented persons in Finland within the European context and underline the link between undocumented status and asylum

processes. They analyse how the state has been active in producing and managing undocumented migration in Finland during the years 2015–2017. Instead of prevention or support, the state's response has been to limit the rights of undocumented persons.

The second part of the book sheds light on refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences by analysing refugee journeys, the asylum process and life in the reception centres. Saara Koikkalainen and Tapio Nykänen draw from the concept of 'cognitive migration' (Chapter 5) and illustrate how Iraqi asylum seekers' journeys happen in both time and place: before the physical relocation, the journey starts with planning, imagining the journey, and decision-making, and social networks influence it. In Chapter 6, Eeva Puumala, Hanna-Leena Ristimäki and Riitta Ylikomi analyse the asylum interviews in the Finnish asylum process. They focus on how experience, narrative and knowledge are entwined and how hierarchies of knowledge are produced in the context of asylum interviews. Tapio Nykänen, Saara Koikkalainen, Tiina Seppälä, Enni Mikkonen and Minna Raunio (Chapter 7) conducted research on reception centres in northern Finland during 2015–2016. They analyse the period through the theoretical lens of 'state of emergency'. This idea refers to a crisis, which disrupts the linear perception of time. They show how different stakeholders— asylum seekers, employees and the native neighbours—experience and deal with the same exceptional situation in different ways. Sari Pöyhönen, Lotta Kokkonen and Mirja Tarnanen (Chapter 8) conducted linguistic ethnography in a reception centre in a small Finnish municipality. They focus on social networks of two asylum seekers from Iraq. These cases illustrate how the social networks during the asylum process consist of weak relations, for example with authorities and staff in the reception centre, and strong relations, which are upheld through virtual contacts in the country of origin (p. 200). They manage to live simultaneously in two places at the same time, here and there.

The third part is titled 'Representations of refugeeess'. It concentrates on the perspectives of different actors and asks how the police, church employees and journalists represent refugees and asylum seekers. The chapters complement recent research on encounters between immigrants and Finnish welfare-state services (Hiitola et al. 2018) by shedding light on the 'unofficial' services and ideologies, which influence the reception and interaction between the majority population and those considered 'outsiders'. In Chapter 9, Sari Vanhanen analyses the ways in which the Finnish police interpret their role in educating asylum seekers on issues of lawfulness and the rules of the society. She discovered that in addition to meeting the newcomers when giving information, the police work also includes incidental encounters. The police acknowledge that they also learn from the asylum seekers (p. 225). Officially, asylum seekers are not entitled to integration measures, but the police consider their work to be part of pre-integration, during which an important objective is to build trust between the police and asylum seekers. Ulla Siirto and Hanna Niemi use the concept of 'conviviality' to understand the relations between church employees, volunteers and asylum seekers (Chapter 10). They encountered conflicts between the policy practices that forced asylum seekers to relocate several times, thus impeding them of creating roots and bonds in any geographical place. This was opposite to what the congregations were aiming for in their work (i.e., welcoming the newcomers as members of the community). In Chapter 11, Meira Pappi analyses how Finnishness is represented in online conversations. According to these texts, Finnishness is uniform, nostalgic and impossible to attain, not only for asylum seekers and immigrants, but also for many native-born Finns.

What happens when refugees and former asylum seekers settle in Finland? The fourth part offers some answers to this question by discussing the processes of integration and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers in their everyday life in Finland. The overarching theme is processes of change that take place both spatially and temporally. In her focused ethnography on the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Finnish psychiatric care institutions

(Chapter 12), Susanna Kallakorpi discovered that cultural differences and different cultural understandings of mental illness are not sufficiently taken into consideration among Finnish health care workers. Research on family reunification has been mainly limited to the perspective of restrictive legislation and obstacles (see e.g., Fingerroos et al. 2016), but Marja Tiilikainen and Outi Fingerroos (Chapter 13) reflect on the long-term effects of family reunification through the lenses of two Somalis. One managed to reunify with his wife in Finland, while the other did not. The experiences of both men span over two decades and illustrate how family is negotiated under different circumstances and how it influences integration. The authors emphasise that integration ought to be considered as a process, which overlaps consecutive generations. Time and temporality are also the focus of Elli Heikkilä's and Eveliina Lyytinen's analysis on Iraqi youth's experiences of integration and the labour market (Chapter 14). Their conclusion is that integration is a process, which develops over time. The cases of three young men exemplify different contexts of how age and migratory processes influence the integration experiences of individuals. The authors emphasise that feelings of integration, which cannot be measured, ought to be the focus when we discuss integration, because they vary depending on the time, place and domains of life (p. 341).

The overarching theme that is seen throughout the chapters is temporality and contextuality. In her concluding chapter, Lyytinen writes that becoming a refugee is not a one-time event but a process of becoming and being. It unfolds over time and is influenced by both individual experiences as well as structural and political developments. The book complements and diversifies earlier research on refugees, immigration, services and well-being in Finland. Compared to another recent anthology (Gothóni & Siirto 2016), which concentrates on refugees and the reception process, this book also scrutinises the reception and treatment of asylum seekers in the exceptional climate of the period 2015–2017 and calls for deeper and alternative reflection on refugeeeness and on the role of refugees in society. It is therefore a welcome reading for anyone interested in an academic analysis of Finnish research on refugee and asylum issues.

### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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