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(Un)imagination and (im)mobility: Exploring the past and constructing possible futures among refugee victims of torture in Greece

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Abstract

Greece represents a unique context in which to explore the imagination-(im)mobility nexus: both a transit country and final destination for refugees. This article explores the imagination of refugee victims of torture in Athens as they weave together images of the past, present and future to confer meaning to their current situation and imagine new possible futures. In the context of a growing interest in emotions and temporalities linked to migration, the aim of this paper is thus to explore the complex interplay between the imagination of migrants and the trauma from the theoretical standpoint of sociocultural psychology. The paradoxes are multiple: (i) Migration is inherently imaginative, in the sense that the actualisation of migration begins with individuals imagining their destination; (ii) however, trauma related to forced migration experiences in particular may impede imagination. To further add to the complexity: it may be imagination itself which acts as an essential component to healing from trauma. The article explores forced migrants' mobility choices and individual migration trajectories to provide insight into how the emotionality of subjective experiences, as well as the sociocultural context, are fundamentally involved in people's plans to migrate and the development of their ever-changing imagination of a better future elsewhere. The results similarly illustrate imagination as being significantly shaped by the collective imaginings of entire communities.

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Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), an unprecedented estimated 362,000 refugees[1] risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2016, with 181,400 people arriving in Italy and 173,450 in Greece. In the first half of 2017, over 105,000 refugees entered Europe. As the "reception crisis" continues unabated, Greece remains one of the first ports of sanctuary. According to recent statistics provided for March 2018 by the UNHCR,[2] over 50,000 asylum seekers and refugees currently remain in Greece following this mass flow. The majority of the one million asylum seekers arriving in the country appear to have seen Greece as a transit country, yet neither of the refugees' routes out of Greece are functioning as anticipated, leaving many blocked (Howden, 2017). Greece therefore represents a unique context in which to explore the (un)imagination and (im)mobility nexus among asylum seekers: perceived both as a country of transit as well as a final destination. Currently, many asylum seekers find themselves "stuck" in limbo in this context, unable to proceed with their asylum claim or continue their journey to the destination countries of Western Europe – often imagined "lands of milk and honey" to which many continue to aspire.

For this refugee population, trauma does not stop at the border. Increasingly, there has been a burgeoning of theoretical models for understanding trauma that situates individual refugee's trauma sequelae and recovery within inter-personal, political, and social context. The focus is on the ever-changing post-migration environment (De Jong, 2007; Drožđek, 2015; Maercker & Hecker, 2016; Maercker & Horn, 2013; Miller & Rasmussen, 2017). Various studies have demonstrated the detrimental impact on mental health of the migration journey, including prolonged detention or stays in often unsafe refugee camps (Gkionakis, 2016; Lambert & Alhassoon, 2015; Silove, Austin, & Steel, 2007) as well as the asylum-seeking process (d'Halluin, 2009; Laban, Gernaat, Komproe, Schreuders, & De Jong, 2004). Migration itself is a complex, nuanced and ongoing process. The act is often driven by individuals or indeed entire communities imagining brighter futures in distant lands, as well as by more pragmatic strategic planning and opportunism. In this respect, it is never singular in its temporality, but rather is an ongoing process where past, present and future are folded together in the emergence of migrant lives (McCormack & Schwanen, 2011). What many asylum seekers have in common is the painful loss of home and separations from loved ones and the inevitable mixed emotion of sadness for what they have lost as well as the hopeful anticipation of what they could gain, the ambivalence of wanting to stay versus wanting to go (Falicov, 2002).

Within this context, the paradoxes are multiple: (i) Migration is inherently imaginative, in the sense that the actualisation of migration begins with individuals imagining their destination; (ii) however, trauma related to forced migration experiences in particular may impede imagination. To further add to the complexity: it may be imagination itself which acts as an essential component to healing from trauma. This is because imagination is one of the processes which serves to repair the multiple ruptures created by trauma. It allows for finding the semiotic means by which trauma can be made sense of and resolved. It creates self-continuity between past and future. It facilitates the progressive creation of new links to absorb and transform trauma into semiotic forms (Kadianaki & Zittoun, 2014). For the transformation of traumatic memories into semiotic forms which connects it through language to its rightful place in time, the elaboration needs to be socially situated and "intersubjectively acknowledged" (Marková, 2006; Zittoun, 2014). The process is thus inevitably connected to the sociocultural environment in which the individual is situated.

In the context of a growing interest in emotions and temporalities linked to migration aspirations (Carling & Collins, 2017), the aim of this paper is thus to explore the complex interplay between the imagination of migrants (and associated hopes and aspirations driving their migration journey forward) and the trauma many experience which risks thwarting this process. The article further attempts to contribute to the recent development of interest in the concept of "immobility" in particular, developed as "a cipher for assemblages of blocked, stuck, and transitional movement [...] involving political, economic, cultural, geographical, and human components" (Khan, 2016, p. 93). It thus serves to contribute to the ever-expanding field of mobility studies which "not only encompasses mobility across a wide range of forms, practices, scales, locations and technologies, but also interrogates the politics of mobility and immobility, the material contexts within which they are embedded, and their representational and non-representational dynamics." (Blunt, 2007, p. 684).

By analysing migration from a sociocultural perspective, the article explores forced migrants' mobility choices and individual migration trajectories – providing insight into how the emotionality of subjective experiences, as well as the sociocultural context, are fundamentally involved in people's plans to migrate and the development of their ever-changing imagination of a better future elsewhere.

Imagination from a sociocultural perspective

To explore the (un)imagination-(im)mobility nexus, I draw on an expansive and developmental view on imagination from a sociocultural perspective as developed by Zittoun (Zittoun, 2012; Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015; Zittoun & Sato, 2018), Valsiner (Valsiner, 2000; Valsiner & Rosa, 2007) and others. They define imagination as the process of temporarily disengaging from the here-and-now, a process which demands the use of various resources, so as to take some distance from the current present and situated experience.

Such an approach emphasizes the importance of non-linear temporality in the context of migrants' changing subjective current realities – as individuals weave together images of the past, present and future to cope with situations of trauma, confer meaning to their current situation and redefine-reposition themselves toward the future. This includes tracking the processes of change in imagining alternative possible lives. From a sociocultural perspective, imagination is understood necessarily to be culturally-informed and shared. In other words, it may be distributed among communities. Imagination is thus theorized as being significantly shaped or contested by the collective imagination of entire communities: for example, from the shared imaginary expectations of life in Europe among communities in countries of origin, to the constantly developing situated imaginaries of refugee communities upon arrival in Europe. As such, imagination is inherently cultural (Zittoun & Glăveanu, 2017). Indeed, "communities of imagination can become galvanized by a vision of the future and seek to institute it, leading to sociogenesis, that is, the development of society itself" (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015, p. 111). It has similarly been argued that it is culture which constitutes the basis for the "collective aspirations" of migrants (Appadurai, 2004).

Individuals who imagine life elsewhere, for example, are seen within this framework as drawing on communal cultural resources which form part of a collective semiotic guidance system (Valsiner, 2007) – the process is considered to be co-constructed and dialogical. This includes drawing on cultural symbols, patterned practices such as storytelling, mental time travel and other forms of mental projection in order to imagine (Kirmayer & Ramstead, 2017). Imagination among individuals therefore is constantly evolving across the life course in relation to the sociocultural environment. It is "culturally guided and personally-semiotically reconstructed" (Valsiner, 2000, p. 82).

This perspective is captured in Zittoun's model of imagination as a process which creates "loops" out of the present, here-and-now of experiences connected to the material reality of the current environment. As illustrated in her model (Figure 1), she conceptualises the process as being triggered by some disrupting event, which generates a disjunction from the person's unfolding experience of the "real" world, and as unfolding as a loop, which eventually comes back to the current, actual experience (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013) (Figure 1).

Thus, what is conceptualised as triggering imagination is a "rupture," "disruption" or "misfit" between the given experience of the world and one's ongoing flow of thinking – a situation requiring new solutions and experiences (Glăveanu, Karwowski, Jankowska, & de Saint Laurent, 2017). This developmental perspective views imagination as a process that allows the individual to take distance from the here-and-now of current experience to consider alternative possibilities: for example, rereading the past or opening possible futures. A rupture in one's life in Africa, for example, may trigger an individual to imagine a life for themselves in Europe, as a solution. Imagination is therefore a resource for individuals to draw upon to make meaning of – and act upon – the world: an important component of development and a way to expand one's experience

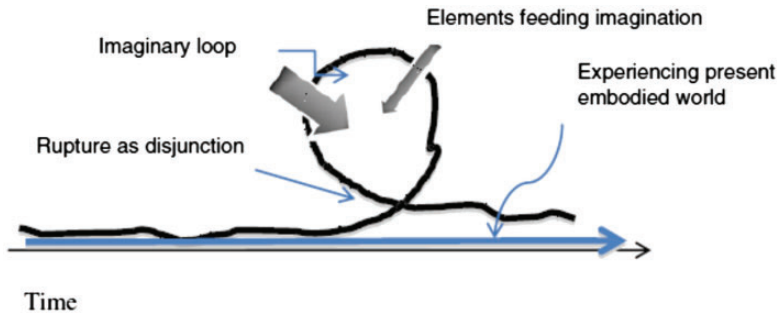

Figure 1. Imaginary loop: Expansion version.

(Vygotsky, 1980, 1997). It allows for the implementation of social and cultural affordances, that is, expectancies, prescriptions, and possibilities for action in context (Kirmayer & Ramstead, 2017). It is a "freedom" which expands experience beyond the here-and-now, allowing humans to reimagine themselves and their future choices, coming to radically new perspectives, ideas and modes of acting (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015; Zittoun & Sato, 2018).

Imagination, trauma and migration

The act of migration itself is inherently imaginative (Salazar, 2010; Salazar & Smart, 2011). It is motivated by an (often collective, culturally-informed) imagination of a future beyond the here-and-now. As argued by Zittoun and Gillespie (2015), "indeed, all human travel, and exploration in particular, is motivated by an imagination of a future that lies beyond the horizon of the present and which is as-yet not actualized" (p. 113). It may be perceived as an act of agency on the part of the individual, who turns imagined possibilities into actuality. Due to the constantly evolving nature of imagination, continually developing in relation to the sociocultural environment, the period of transition following migration in and of itself may trigger the imagination of new possibilities. Upon arrival in Greece and first encounters on European soil, asylum seekers may find themselves imagining the possibility of life in a particular town in Sweden, for example.

Yet at the same time, and particularly in the case of forced migration, migration may similarly be perceived as a traumatic rupture: an "a-temporal space" – a transitional and disconnected period wherein experiences, skills, connections acquired and built in the past are rendered inaccessible (Métraux, 1999). In the specific context of forced migration in particular, itself characterized by a rupture in connection to "home" (and all the social, cultural, professional and linguistic connections that this implies) – the physical, social and political isolation so typically experienced by asylum seekers upon arrival to host countries and often imposed by the state through legal requirements, serves only to feed monstrous

feelings of disconnection (Bhimji, 2015). Disaffiliation, de-culturation and de-linking both in terms of family and social ties similarly affects the internal capacity to make links between different events and moments in life. Without the container of home-as-it-was, there is little membrane to hold the symbolic (Goguikian Ratcliff, 2012). In other words, there may be no or little capacity to imagine. As such, trauma begets trauma. Exposure to trauma, itself connected to a breakdown in social connection and exacerbated by the process of migration, risks the individual being caught up in a vicious cycle where no addressee may be found, no language exists to form a coherent narrative whereby trauma may itself be collectively represented and made sense of.

Here, the notion of trauma is understood to straddle both intrapsychic and interpersonal spaces, and is theorized as creating ruptures in time, memory, language and social connection. It is a freezing in non-dialogical space, a shattering of the capacity to generate meaning, and a severe disruption of those relational processes in which meaning is formed (Sucharov, Buirski, & Kottler, 2007). The result is a significant disconnect between the traumatic events and the current sphere of experiences. The consequent lack of connection between past and present can also be understood as preventing the emergence of possible futures. Put simply, trauma may impede processes of imagination. It has even been defined as a state of "limited or constrained modalities of imagining" (Zittoun & Sato, 2018, p. 203). Returning to Zittoun's "loop" model of imagination (Zittoun & Sato, 2018), trauma may similarly impede the movement of *coming back* to the actual, ongoing present. In this case, imagination would be locked in the past, or in an alternative reality.

The theoretical background of sociocultural psychology allows for an exploration of this ever-changing and dynamic development of imagination over time, and within sociocultural context. It evokes a methodology incorporating an exploration "not only of the subjective perspective, but also the dynamics by which the social and cultural environment guide and enable the person's development" (Zittoun, 2017, p. 171). Of particular interest in this study is the way in which the imagination of refugee populations is influenced by the encompassing fabric of the cultural collective – and the complex interplay inherent to the trauma-(im)mobility-(un)imagination nexus. This includes a focus on the processes inherent to changes in imagination as (im)mobile individuals configure, reconfigure, and made meaning of ever-changing new realities. The approach similarly highlights the societal, institutional, and individual conditions that form and shape imagination in constantly changing contexts (Adams & Fleer, 2017).

Methodology

To explore the way in which the complex imagination-mobility-trauma nexus unfolds in the context of the so-called "refugee crisis" in Greece, I present the results of 12 months of research among asylum seekers and refugees in a center for victims of torture in Athens. This involved 3 months of participant observation in

the centre (including attending daily team meetings and co-facilitating sessions with the beneficiaries). Furthermore, 125 in-depth, qualitative interviews with refugees, health professionals, interpreters, and refugee community leaders across Athens. In particular, multiple qualitative interviews were carried out with 10 individual refugee victims of torture, identified as suitable participants by the health professionals of the centre. These individuals were followed over the course of a year, with an average of five in-depth qualitative interviews being conducted with each participant, in order to explore their subjective experiences of migration and their aspirations for the future. 64 health professionals and community leaders were also interviewed, including religious leaders, leaders of refugee associations as well as doctors, psychologists, social workers and cultural mediators working with this population.

A key proposition of analysis from the perspective of sociocultural psychology is to use case studies to explore individual migration trajectories within unique, specific and ever-developing contexts. The analytic focus therefore is on individual trajectories unfolding in relation to the sociocultural environment (including material realities as well as connection to social others), specifically with a view of tracking dynamic processes of "trauma" and "imagination" within these trajectories. In other words, the vignettes presented here as a case study serve to illustrate the complex realities and interrelatedness of migration trajectories, trauma and imagination. In particular, a case of a refugee victim of torture who participated in the research over the course of a year is presented. The intention is to detail how imagination "may be thwarted, and how, through considerable resistance and struggle, it may nevertheless help to overcome the consequences of radical sociocultural disruption" (Keightley & Pickering, 2018, p. 169).

The case of Jules

Jules is a 45-year-old Congolese man who was arrested and tortured after engaging in anti-government protests. After being released, he fled the country imagining France to be his ultimate destination. He arrived in Athens in December 2015. Our first interview took place in August 2016, nine months after his arrival. During this first interview, he refers to his motivation to continue his journey to Western Europe, stating:

> In any case, all the Congolese know that in France, Belgium, Germany or Austria – that if you ask for asylum they will give you money… someone could sacrifice themselves or a family could sell one person of the family to come to Europe. Europe is the dream of Africans

His words highlight aspects of the collective nature of the imagination of refugees dreaming of Europe. It's not only him, but *all* Congolese who know (imagine?) that they will receive money upon entering Western Europe. Furthermore, the motivation to migrate is not necessarily driven by the individual alone, but

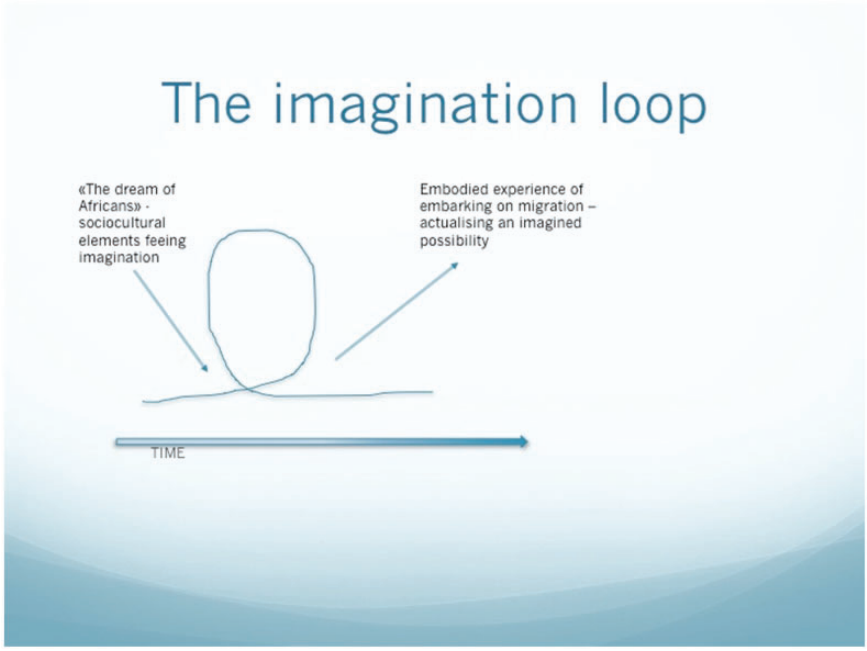

Figure 2. The imagination loop.

linked to the aspirations of an entire family who collectively take the decision for one person to migrate on behalf of the others. Europe is a "dream" shared by "Africans."

According to the imagination "loop" model, it could be argued that this collective "dream" of Africans serves as the sociocultural elements fuelling Jules' imagination of life in Europe, a dream which he goes on to actualise through the embodied experience of migrating (Figure 2).

As illustrated in Figure 2,, Jules' imagination is nourished by the collective dreams of others within his sociocultural environment, allowing him momentarily to depart from the "here and now" of his life in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in order to imagine a better life elsewhere. It is this figurative departure which allows for a subsequent literal departure to Europe.

In a subsequent interview conducted six weeks later, in September 2016, this initial "dream" to which Jules had so enthusiastically referred, seems somewhat to have been shattered:

> We are human beings, but I am an adult without a wife, without a child. My life is bloody ruined, everyone is in the same hole, who can change it? Nobody. Nobody cares about us . . . [these problems] devour us. If I was well, you could see that I was

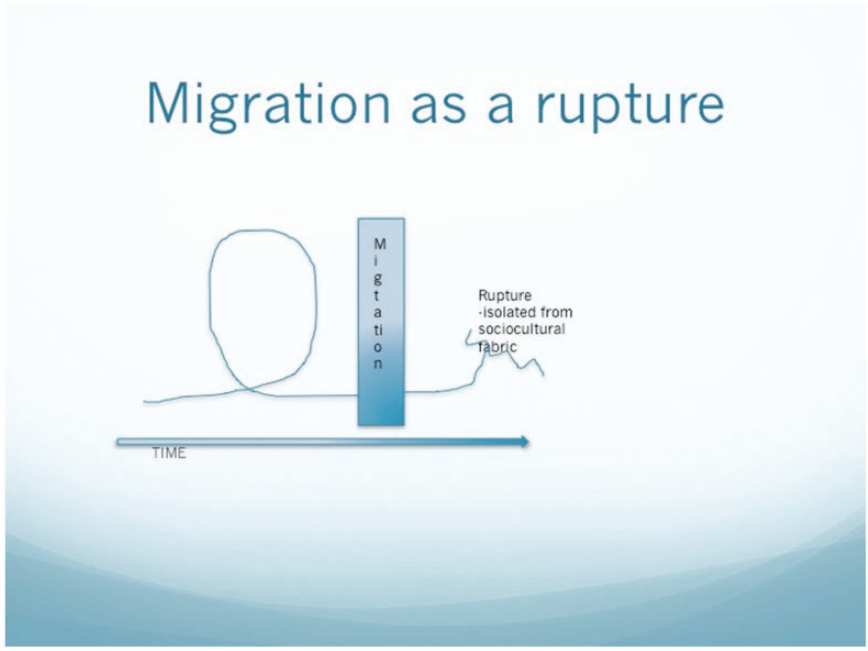

Figure 3. Migration as a rupture.

> well, but I'm sick, I'm not in good health. I'm physically fine, but in my interior – I'm not at all okay [. . .] I'm with the others but not in spirit

He is confronted with a reality different to that which he had initially imagined – rupturing the sense of social connectedness and identity as a member of a community. He is not a husband, nor a father. Rather, the social fabric within which he was located has fragmented. From a sociocultural perspective, ruptures created by trauma are embedded within an intersubjective context wherein severe emotional pain cannot find a relational home in which to be held and integrated (Atwood, Orange, & Stolorow, 2002; Stolorow, 2011). These traumatic ruptures lie at the intersection of the individual and their social context and are related to safety, trust, independence, power, esteem, intimacy as well as spiritual and existential beliefs. Jules finds himself feeling alone, "not with the others," and with the perception that nobody cares. Furthermore, this rupture has an impact on his ability to imagine a life for himself in Europe, as depicted in Figure 3.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the experience of migration itself is a traumatic rupture isolating Jules' from his sociocultural environment. However, a few months later, in an interview conducted in January 2017, he refers to new social connections having been formed. There are some repairs to the rupture experienced in the social fabric of his life. He has started to relate more to his neighbours, members of

his church congregation, and his psychologist. Notably, he also reports falling in love with his Greek social worker and wanting to marry her:

> And my psychologist asked me 'and if you aren't granted asylum, what are you going to do?' I replied, 'I will ask my social worker to marry me.' She asked me why, and I replied 'why not?' ... I don't say anything but she knows that I love her. I've told my whole entourage

Compared to prior periods, he increasingly refers to others in his social world – for example, reporting discussions that he has had with his psychologist as well as members of the Congolese community in Athens. He has a "whole entourage" to tell about his newfound wish to marry his social worker. Similarly, it is during this time that new life projects start to be imagined. He is able to envisage a future as a husband, married to a Greek women and constructing a life together in Greece. Imagination flourishes, as depicted in Figure 4.

His first asylum interview takes place in September 2017 during which he has to speak about the torture he endured. He describes this event as having "retraumatized" him:

> It's a story that hurts you and causes a lot of emotions [...] the pain that I felt that day, that could be at 10%, if the pain has passed, but if you have to repeat the story, you feel it at 100% [...] it hurts you to have to tell your story, yes it hurts. Even during the interview, it hurts you.

His claim to asylum is ultimately rejected a few weeks later. The news devastates Jules. When asked about his future plans following this court decision, he states that:

> My vision is to go somewhere or stay here, I really don't know ... but if I had the idea of going somewhere else, I couldn't ask for asylum here. Some have their families over there [in Western Europe] already, but I am the only one in my family. So if I had to go to France, well, where would I sleep? I don't have a place there. It's hard, but what can I do? I don't see any solutions

It can be argued that the negative decision on his asylum claim is a traumatic rupture in his life, impeding his ability to imagine. He "really doesn't know" what his "vision" is. There are simply no solutions, no clear idea of a future. Notably, he associates the lack of being able to imagine a future for himself with a lack of social connections: others have families "over there" (in Western Europe), whereas he does not. He cannot imagine having "a place" in Western Europe as he does not have any family or friends to accommodate him. In other words, as depicted in Figure 5, the traumatic rupture of being denied asylum echoes a social disconnection, impeding his capacity to imagine a future for himself.

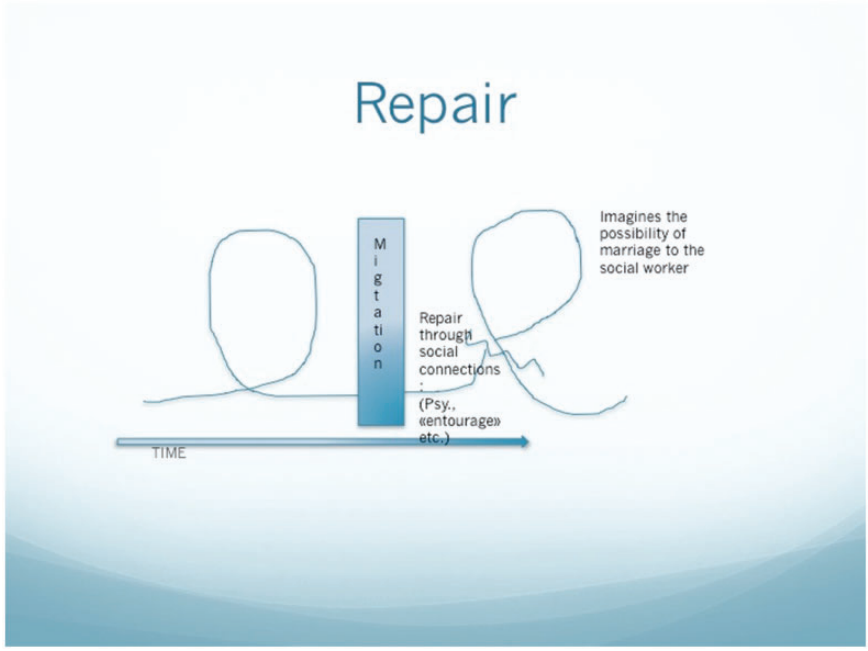

Figure 4. Repair.

Elsewhere (Womersley & Kloetzer, 2018a), we have conceptualised the trauma of migration as a "double" rupture – one rupture related to traumatic events experienced in the country of origin and subsequent forced migration, the second related to issues of displacement and social isolation experienced by displaced population. Particularly for those whose claims to asylum are rejected, this "double rupture" invokes a vicious cycle of trauma and isolation, a series of disruptions to the relational processes nourishing imagination.

In July 2017, a few months subsequent to his asylum claim being denied, Jules reports that:

> There have been some big changes because when you cry a lot, there's a moment where you stop crying. You see the reality in front of you. I have already suffered a lot from thinking, thinking. I must think until where and until when? Must I spend my whole life crying? [. . .] since being here, the pain has changed form [. . .] The essential is that I'm in good health. I'm alive. It's not the end of the world. Life continues.

There is evidence of repair to the rupture of being denied asylum. His words highlight him having a new sense of perspective – of past, present and future. He projects himself into the future and decides that he does not want to "spend [his] whole life crying." Rather, he refers to being able to "see the reality in front of

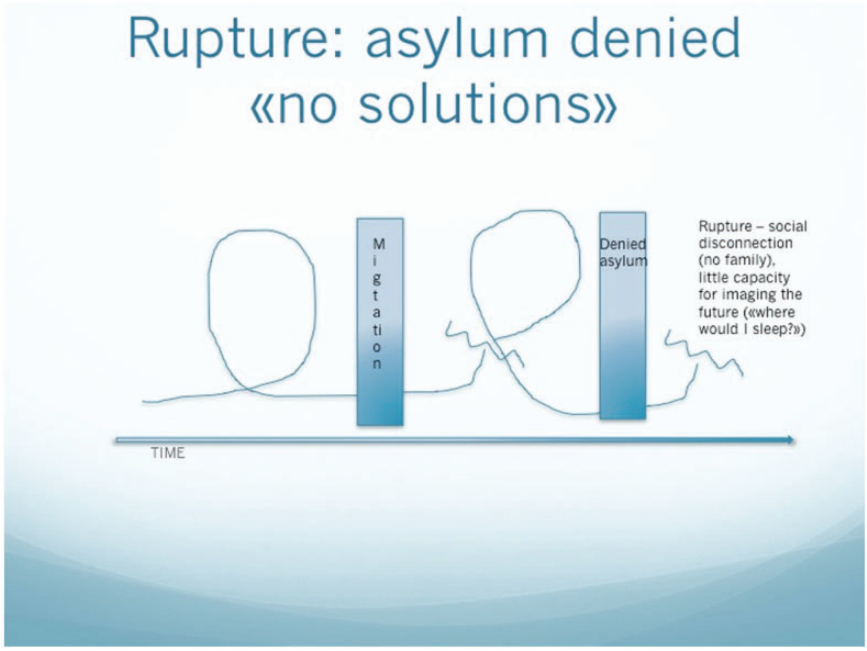

Figure 5. Rupture: Asylum denied "no solutions".

[him]." A new, clear vision for the future appears to have emerged. He imagines a new life for himself – not in Athens but in "other European countries":

> In other European countries, they easily give you papers [refugee status]. Like in France, papers or not, I'd have work there. In France, anything is authorized. I want to spend the rest of my youth and my old age next to the white people, the Europeans. I need to learn their habits – how do they speak? How do they walk? . . .

He imagines a life in France, a life where "anything is authorized," where he will easily be granted asylum. He imagines being able to work easily, regardless of refugee status. This would be for him the metaphorical land of milk and honey, echoing the dream which initially fueled his desire to come to Europe. This dream similarly includes a newly imagined form of social connectedness – that of being connected to "white people, the Europeans." He imagines being able to build these social connections through studying their habits, down to the way in which they speak and they walk. This, he imagines, would enable a seamless integration into Western Europe, and would be the key to a rich and successful future.

> I know that the beginning is difficult, but it will be better with time . . . with friends, with people, with a little help. You can have no money but if you have travel

> documents and your ideas, you can go anywhere . . . I'm poor in money but rich in spirit. I know that with my ideas, I can go anywhere . . . there are people who are here, but who are like a television with the remote control somewhere else. Anything and anybody can change the channel. But me, I'm not like that. I'm here – the television and the remote control in my hands . . . I'm a visionary, by the grace of god I'm a visionary

As stated by Pelaprat and Cole (2011), "imagination is the process of resolving and connecting the fragmented, poorly coordinated experience of the world so as to bring about a stable image of the world" (as cited in Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013, p. 399). Jules describes being a "visionary" – having a clear idea of what he imagines for his future life in Europe. What is important to note is that he does not believe this imagined future to be possible without "friends . . . people." Once again, there is a relationship between his ability to imagine a life where he "can go anywhere" – and the connection to others. Having a new sense of a power to act over his future, having "the remote control in [his] hands," allows new life projects to be imagined:

> I have ideas, and because I have ideas, I have plans and projects. I know it will all be all right in the end . . .

A clear path to his future is imagined:

> I have a rhythm that I've adopted. I dont look left, I don't like right. I look straight ahead of me, the place where I want to get to, right until I arrive. One single point, that's all. That helps me not to feel the stress. I see a normal life ahead

Two years after arriving in Europe, following multiple ruptures and repairs, Jules has a rich capacity to imagine a future for himself in Europe, as depicted in Figure 6.

As illustrated in Figure 6, the repair to the traumatic rupture of being denied asylum lies in the "imagination loop" being completed. The future is once again rich in new imagined possibilities. In our last interview, he boldly concludes that:

> It's Europe, Europe is miracles

Discussion

What is revealed through an analysis of Jules' migration trajectory is the importance of socio-cultural resources which shape and define his imagination. The imagination of a "brighter" future in Europe may never wholly be considered "his" alone but collectively shared and distributed. He is not alone in having arrived in Europe after an arduous migration journey fueled by "geographical

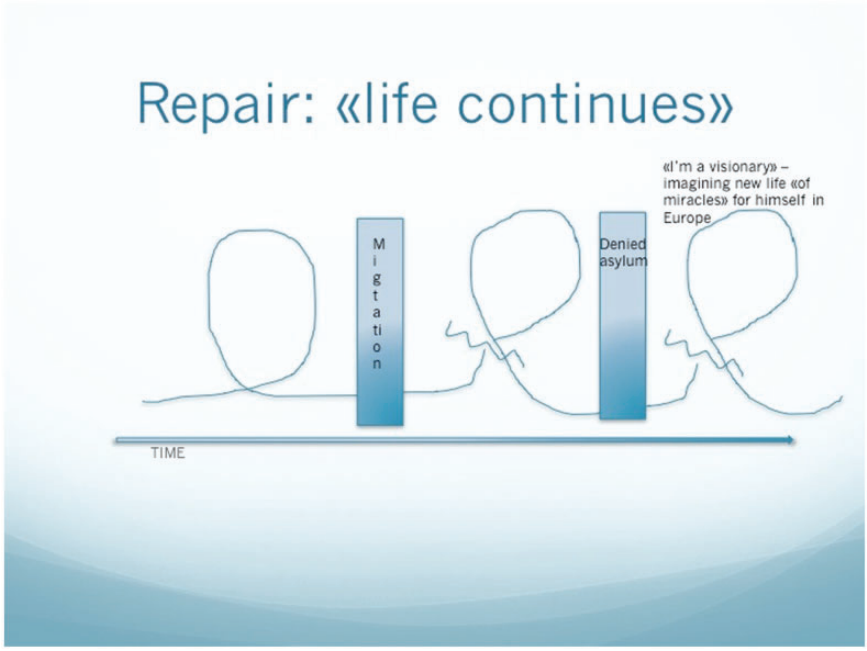

Figure 6. Repair: "life continues".

imaginaries" (Salazar, 2010; Salazar & Smart, 2011) of a better life in Europe. In sharp contrast to the initially imagined "dream" of a "miracle" life in Europe, he felt disillusioned by the every-day reality of Athens – a disillusion seemingly shared by the vast majority of refugees encountered over the course of the research. Many participants reported experiencing a similarly sense of disillusion:

> We had another vision of Europe . . . Europe is different from Africa. For me, at least, Europe is even more complicated than Africa . . .
>
> We came because we had different dreams, we came to see the reality
>
> When we dreamed, we then later understood that life is something else
>
> Often we had Europe in our minds like the films that we saw. When you watch a film, it's just a scene that they created. You forget that there's a reality behind it. There's an actor, a director, interpretors to make it all look real. Now it's only when you come to Europe that you see that reality

Note the frequent use of the collective pronoun "we," instead of the singular "I," in the above quotes – alluding to the collective nature of the aspirations of many refugees and a culturally shared imagination of life in Europe.

Jules' case is illustrative of the dynamic interplay between trauma, migration and imagination. However, it is not representative of all research participants. His imagination continues to thrive despite the multiple traumatic ruptures he faces. Among other participants, however, this rich capacity to imagine the future appears to have been thwarted by ongoing traumatic ruptures to their lives. Social isolation, harsh living conditions, insecure residency status and continual exposure to violence and trauma characterises the daily lives of so many of the participants encountered. Without a connection to a meaningful past or a beckoning future, and without a sense of connection to others, they report feeling "trapped" in a traumatic present – as evidenced in the following statements:

> I can't think properly what to do in my future. I'm not able to think about my future, what is going to happen next in my future. I don't know what is going to happen.

> I'm trapped here.

> I don't know when will my life going to take me. I don't know what is going to happen next with me now . . . I don't want to stay here because there is no life.

We have presented a detailed analysis of a case elsewhere (Womersley & Kloetzer, 2018b), wherein an Indian asylum seeker and victim of torture finds himself in shared accommodation with Pakistani nationals. He accuses his Pakistani roommate of spying on him. Psychotic symptoms start to emerge, including auditory hallucinations and paranoia. Many of the voices are those of authority figures, including the torturers in India and, rather tellingly, police officers, bureaucrats and judges in the asylum procedure in Greece. He's hospitalized as a result. All of these ruptures create negative "feedback loops" (Kirmayer & Ramstead, 2017), defined as a process whereby an effect is reinforced by its own influence on the process giving rise to it. The case illustrates how such negative feedback amplification extends beyond the individual to include a wider network of relationships and processes wherein the individual is embedded. This again speaks to the vicious nature of the trauma-(un)imagination-(im)mobility nexus: imagination – often socially shared – may drive migration, yet the traumatic ruptures to this social fabric (so often associated with forced migration in particular) may thwart capacity to imagine.

Conclusion

An in-depth analysis of the case of Jules from within a sociocultural framework highlights the complex interplay between imagination, trauma and migration. Imagination is a powerful motivating force driving migration. However, this is not a static, once-off process. There is no singular moment of deciding to migrate. Not only is the imagination of individuals constantly transforming in relation to the ever-changing sociocultural environment: it is significantly shaped and

contested by shared or collective imaginings of entire communities. This starts, for example, with collective imagination of life in Europe among communities in the country of origin, and extends to the constantly developing shared imagination of refugee communities as they arrive in Europe. Yet migration, and particularly forced migration, inevitably brings changes which are likely to be experienced as ruptures which radically affect one's subjective sense of self and sense of connection to others. The capacity to imagine, and consequently heal from traumatic ruptures, may only be restored within the context of the sociocultural environment surrounding the individual, and their relation to their social world. As Tania Zittoun and Tatsuya Sato (2018) convincingly conclude, "imagination is facilitated by both [social] recognition and material resources that have cultural meaning and is, in this sense, the process by which post-traumatic growth occurs" (p. 203). If trauma is healed, imagination may be restored. If imagination is restored, trauma may be healed.

The research highlights the important value sociocultural psychology may bring to the field of (im)mobility and migration studies by enriching understandings of trauma and imagination among refugee populations, with an emphasis on the sociocultural location of human subjects. From within this perspective, what is highlighted are the ever-changing cultural and social systems which are in continual interaction with the various forms of an individual subjective experiences of (im)mobility. Furthermore, it highlights how "immobility may transform transnational and transcultural categories, praxis, imaginaries, and subjects" (Khan, 2016, p. 96). Sociocultural psychology allows for this urgent and critical reconsideration of trauma and imagination as dynamic processes influenced by the interplay of changing social, historical, material, economical, political and subjective dimensions, in populations fighting to construct their new lives in Europe.

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Notes

1. Throughout the thesis, the term "refugee" as defined by the Geneva Convention of 1951 is used to include both refugees legally recognised in a host country as well as asylum-seekers.

2. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/62950.pdf

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