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RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES AND

INTEGRATION OF CULTURES IN SPACE

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ABSTRACT

Due to the large number of Syrian refugees seeking asylum, the study of refugee resettlement is important for understanding how First World communities can aid their integration. Theories of identity and space will be analysed in terms of refugee resettlement into asylum countries. The idea of identity being rooted in space will be discussed in relation to the production of urban space, specifically the social network of centres and peripheries that Lefebvre theorises about.[1] This discussion will reveal complications in the common idea of rooted culture in relation to refugees and resettlement into urban space, leading to the development of a new rooted culture theory that coincides with production of urban space and the resettlement of refugees.

[1] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 121.

CONTENTS

Since the civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, over 5 million people have fled Syria in search of asylum.[2] From this, the UK has accepted 8000 refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, with 20,000 to be accepted by 2020.[3] The ongoing conflict in Syria and the subsequent countless refugees makes the study of refugee resettlement important for understanding how First World communities can help integrate refugees that are brought to countries for asylum. I will be exploring the assimilation of refugees into host societies and the integration of cultures during that process.

This essay will draw upon theories of identity and space and how both can be applied to the resettlement of refugees. Later exploring the relevance of these theories to the integration of Syrian refugees into English communities. The theory that will be fuelling the essay is the theory of identity rooted in space. Explored by anthropologist Liisa Malkki, the essay will first look at the 'common-sense' idea of the roots in one's identity being arborescent, a tree-like form which develops from a singular origin point which in terms of culture is a person's homeland. This idea will adapt and change throughout the essay as the research into refugees and production of space is explored to find that the arborescent form of cultural roots does not fully explain refugee experiences.

Section 02 explores theories of production of space from key writers such as Henri Lefebvre and Neil Brenner and

[2] United Refugees, 'Syria Emergency', *UNHCR*, 2017 http://www.unhcr.org/uk/syria-emergency.html [accessed 5 November 2017].
[3] Kate Lyons, "Britain Has Accepted You': What It's Like To Be A Resettled Syrian Refugee', *The Guardian*, 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/09/britain-has-accepted-you-resettled-syrian-refugee-batous-family-nottinghamshire [accessed 5 November 2017].

how they can be related to the resettlement of refugees. Also looking at how the integration of different cultures affects the production of space, especially depending on the roots of refugee's identity being arborescent. Section 03 will consider the developments that Malkki makes in the understanding of cultural roots and how in terms of displacement more rhizomatic forms of roots explain refugee experiences better. The idea of rhizomatic roots will be analysed in conjunction with the production of space theories and whether this idea better explains the social connections and differences that are needed to produce a functioning society. Section 04 will look at case studies of refugee experiences of integrating into host societies and how these experiences relate to theories of space and could reinforce theories of cultural roots in the form of rhizomes. The conclusion looks at the strength of the rhizome theory with theories of urban space and how they have both influenced the resettlement of refugees.

Malkki's main hypothesis centres around a contested yet common sense thinking that situates identities in space. What makes it common sense is the repetitiveness of everyday language, from a nationalistic point of view, assumes rootedness of identity in space.[4] The common language such as 'the nation', 'the country' and 'the land' which is defined as 'the people of a country', portray the existing separations between people and cultures based on the land they live on.[5] Figure 1 shows the seperations between nations because of cultural roots.
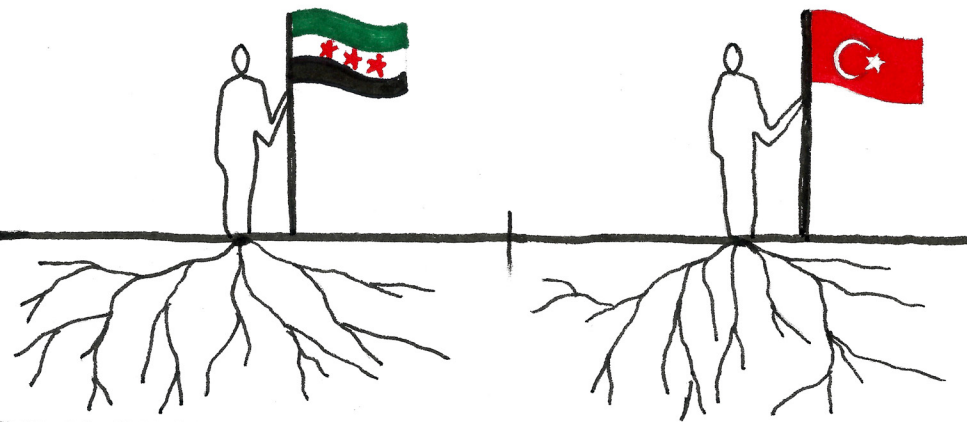

Figure 1: National seperations caused by rooted identity (Authors own).

[4] Liisa Malkki, 'National Geographic: The Rooting Of Peoples And The Territorialization Of National Identity Among Scholars And Refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7.1 (1992), p. 25, https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1992.7.1.02a00030.
[5] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 26

These metaphorical links between land and person are seen as arborescent. For example, the historical terms 'motherland' and 'fatherland' reference a genealogical tree that each person belongs to and has its roots in the land of their nation.[6] Malkki follows with the application of these metaphors to people who have been forcibly uprooted or displaced. Transplantation describes the colonial and post-colonial migration of the upper class where their roots would be reburied in new soil without damage.[7] Whereas forcibly displaced roots of refugee's, wither once taken from their homeland without settling into new soil because they have no new land to welcome them.[8] This damage to refugee's cultural roots creates a sense of loss of identity upon displacement, in-turn making the process of integration into a new society more difficult. Initially, this metaphor of arborescent roots portrays a negative outlook towards the resettlement of refugees and their identity because of the harsh removal from national soil.

Henri Lefebvre's The Production of Space and The Urban Revolution are highly regarded books on the theory of urban space and modes of production. In these texts Lefebvre states that social space is produced through social relations.[9] This leads on to the idea that urban space is a collection of networks consisting of relationships and social connections,[10] shown by figure 2. Within this network of space there is a hierarchy between centres (of power and wealth) and peripheries (deserted areas), where the domination of centres over peripheries creates a

[6] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 28
[7] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 31
[8] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 31
[9] Henri Lefebvre, and Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production Of Space,* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), p. 59.
[10] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 121.

Figure 2: Social networks creating urban space (Authors own).

homogenous character of space.[11] Homogeneity of space stops alternative cultures from expressing themselves against the dominant culture of an urban centre. Lefebvre gives the example of housing projects for immigrants, a relevant topic for today, that it is assumed they would be placed in the periphery category, where they would be policed to protect the homogenous space made from existing social relations.[12] Similar to how refugee camps are in the periphery, if housing projects for immigrants are built in periphery areas - where alternative culture and

[11] Henri Lefebvre, Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, *State, Space, World* (Miinneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 215.
[12] Lefebvre, *State, Space, World,* p. 215.

social relations are oppressed the refugees would lose their homeland culture. The theory or arborescent roots calls the displacement of refugees from their homeland 'uprooted', this shows that the damage to the cultural roots happens in that initial break from the homeland. When this is compared to Lefebvre's theory of dominating cultures of the asylum country, it would seem the withering of roots happens upon resettlement because the alternative refugee culture would upset the homogenous society.

Neil Brenner, an urban theorist, agrees with Lefebvre that the urban is a social network with centres and peripheries, where centres contain higher quality social interactions compared to the sparse interactions of the peripheries.[13] Relating to the case of refugee resettlement, if refugees are placed in the peripheries the lack of meaningful interactions would deny them development of a new social space. Brenner goes onto argue that the 'city is a place of difference' where the urban network allows difference to come together and be productive for everyday lives.[14] According to common sense thinking, a nation comes from one soil therefore any difference within an urban space must have come from another nation. Thus, contradicting the idea that the act of uprooting withers one's roots because difference must have come from the transition and resettlement of people. It can be assumed, therefore, that as long as refugees are resettled in the urban centres where difference is accepted, their culture would be able to develop in the new soil. Taking into consideration the

[13] Neil Brenner, *Cities For People Not For Profit* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 54.
[14] Brenner, *Cities For People,* p. 53.

argument that urban centres need different cultures and experiences to be able to create a functioning society, complications arise in the idea of arborescent roots due to the need for difference which can only come from foreign nationalities part of which would be the resettlement of refugees. This shows a clear demand for the rethinking of rooted culture theory in terms of refugee resettlement to be able to work cohesively with theories of urban space.

As seen in the previous chapter, the idea that rooted culture takes an arborescent form can cause complications when relating to refugee resettlement. Malkki also discovers this problem and so develops the idea of rooted culture after studying two groups of Hutu refugees in Tanzania. After fleeing from Burundi, one group of refugees situated themselves in a well-organised, isolated refugee camp. The other 'town' group were dispersed amongst the non-refugee neighbourhoods.[15] Both groups went against the common-sense idea of arborescent roots; the camp group had constructed a temporary refugee status for themselves believing they would rebuild or reclaim their homeland.[16] The town refugees had searched for ways of assimilating and merging multiple identities from their current and homeland social contexts to integrate into the new society.[17] Although arborescent roots is a credited theory, Malkki argues that the theory of rhizomorphous roots is more relatable to the refugee experience.[18] Cultural roots in the form of rhizomes originates from the work of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Unlike arborescent roots, rhizomes do not grow out of a singular point, they are a series of connections between points along lines or pathways.[19] The structure could be broken due to an event such as forced displacement, but would be able to rebuild itself along a new pathway.[20] Figure 3 is a diagram showing the more flexible and complex structure of a rhizome compared to an arborescent structure.

[15] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 35.
[16] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 36.
[17] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 36.
[18] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 37.
[19] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 8.
[20] Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 9.

The dynamic nature of rhizomes creates identities that are in a state of flux and change, therefore have no pure origin point. However, the history of one's homeland still has influence on the current identity of a person.[21] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson support the idea of homeland culture influencing current identity in displaced persons. They claim, displaced people who are not only distant from home but doubt the notion of home, rely on memories of social aspects of their homeland in order to feel like they belong in the host society they have been resettled
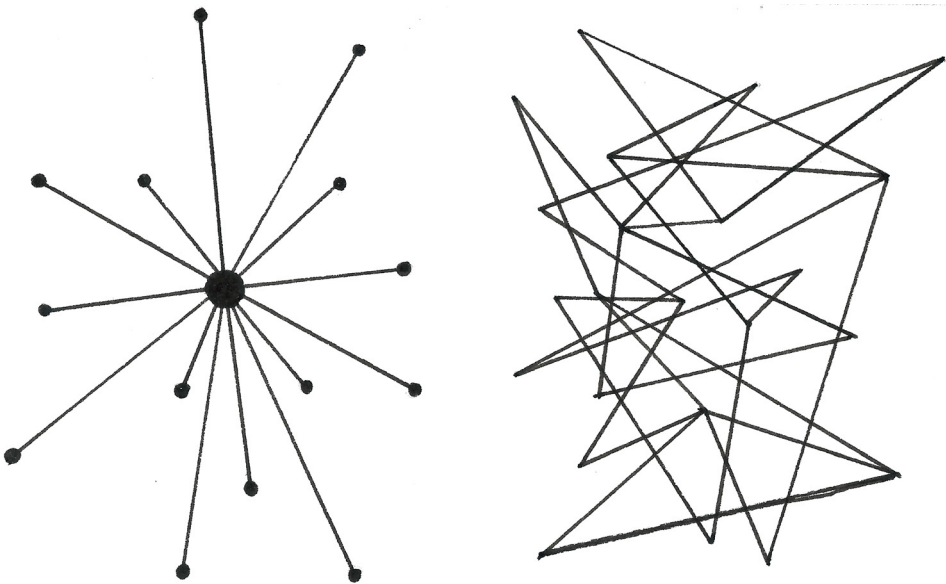

Figure 3: Difference between arborescent roots (left), and more complex rhizomorphous roots (right) (Authors own).

[21] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 37.

to.[22] This claim contradicts the arborescent theory that identity is completely lost upon displacement. On the contrary, if refugee identity took the form of rhizomes, forced displacement from one's homeland would cause a rupture of the cultural rhizome structure. Rupture does not cause total loss of identity; new connections can be made from places where the refugee currently resides, as shown through figure 4. Although the new land would be a path added to their rhizome structure the homeland culture would be there guiding the refugee's integration into society.
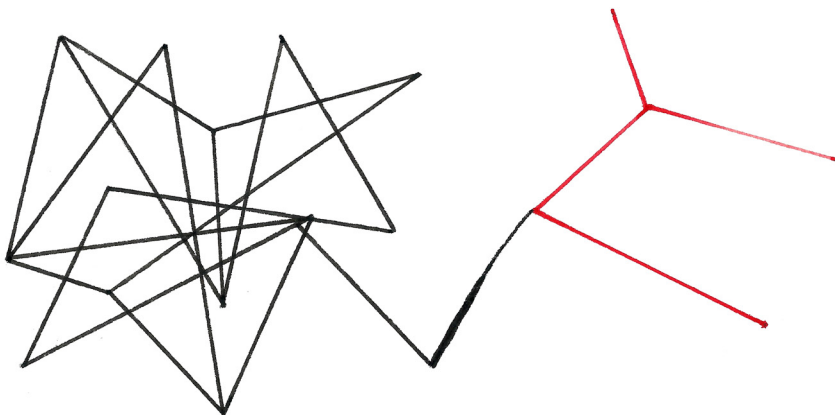

Figure 4: Growth of rhizome from a rupture, the red lines represent the growth post-resettlement (Authors own).

[22] Akhil Gupta, and James Ferguson, 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, And The Politics Of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7.1 (1992), p. 11. https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1992.7.1.02a00020.

Theories of rhizome culture can also be linked to theories of space, through analysing Malkki's examples of Hutu refugees. The refugees who lived within an organised camp, were situated in the periphery of the social network of the host country. The sparseness of social interactions caused by being situated in the periphery, allowed the Hutu people to retain their homeland identity claiming to only have a temporary status of refugee because they believed planting roots in the new land would spoil their Hutu heritage.[23] Lefebvre also argues that each society produces its own space, any that aspire to be real but fail to create their own space could see a loss in identity.[24] The strength of the rhizome structure is demonstrated through the refugees developing a strong Hutu identity in the foreign land through the creation of their own space in the periphery of the host social network. Even after the trauma to their identity that forced displacement would have caused, the camp refugees managed to rebuild their identity ready to return to their homeland, this would not have been possible if their identities were arborescent.

On the other hand, the town refugees who had assimilated themselves into a so called central point of Lefebvre's social network, combined multiple identities to be able to coexist with the existing society. This integration into a host society links to Brenner's description of urban centres; qualities of urban space come from the different cultures, ethnicities and activities, the differences allow the production of everyday lives.[25] This type of urban centre should celebrate

[23] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 35.
[24] Lefebvre, and Nicholson-Smith, *The Production Of Space*, p. 53.
[25] Brenner, *Cities For People,* p. 53.

the integration of refugees, and the rhizomorphous form of culture supports this integration. After the rupture of being displaced the 'town' refugees used the existing social interactions to reconnect their cultures to the new land they were living in. The host asylum country would have had an impact on the new paths added to the refugee's identity, however their Hutu heritage would have been the starting point for that growth and integration. In turn, the refugee homeland culture would not have just affected the growth of the individual identity, the refugee culture would have also developed the overall culture of the urban centre through bringing new opinions and experiences.

So far, the rhizome cultural roots have proved their strength that when forcibly displaced causing a break in their structure, that they are able to rebuild the structure using the existing homeland culture as a base. However, Deleuze and Guattari put no emphasis on the historical places of a person's life to influence their culture. They argue that rhizomes are comparable to a map because maps rely on the current events to determine their being, the same way a person's current location has influence on their identity.[26] This is shown in the way the host society had influence over the Hutu refugees who had resettled into the urban centre. The rupture of being displaced was fixed by inheriting some of the host society's culture to be able to integrate.

[26] Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 12.

The above explanation of the rhizome characteristics relates closely to how Brenner defines the urban. Brenner uses Lefebvre's three modes of production of space to claim that the combination of all three modes creates a dynamic urban space that is constantly being reproduced and evolving.[27] The three modes are; material production (material interaction and physical encounter with the urban), production of knowledge (the idea and opinions of the urban from its inhabitants), and production of meaning (representation of the urban through the inhabitants everyday experiences).[28] These modes portray the urban space as a combination of experiences and thoughts of the inhabitants, and this could not just be existing inhabitants but also new inhabitants such as resettled refugees who are trying to rebuild their cultural roots. If the urban accepts difference, the combination of the natives and refugees culture could create a multitude of different experiences, opinions and memories that influence the production of urban space. These urban theories combined with theories of rhizome culture suggest that the integration of refugees into urban centres leads to new social interactions and develops the overall culture of the space, therefore integration is key for functioning urban space.

[27] Brenner, *Cities For People,* p. 56.
[28] Brenner, *Cities For People,* p. 55-56.

This chapter analyses case studies of refugees that have been resettled in the UK using theories discussed previously. As discussed in chapter two, the integration of different cultures is key to the urban, however refugee experience of resettlement may not be easy. Barry Stein argues *'the refugee is searching his way through a strange and frightening society. The patterns of behaviour that sustained life at home are no longer sufficient'*.[29] This chapter explores the difficulties refugees face integrating into host societies, what host societies are doing to aid the process of assimilation and how these examples are applied to theories discussed in earlier chapters.

A gardening club for refugees from rural backgrounds began in North London, when the refugees expressed the want for a place to sit and talk that reflected the same nature as their homeland offering the refugees a sense of familiarity in the new host society.[30] Mark Fish is one of the original members and a psychologist who believes that to have substantial healing after the terror the refugees have faced in their homeland, they need to have a sense of belonging.[31] The gardening project creates social interactions between locals and other refugees. It allows them to share their issues and sets up a common ground that combines the homeland culture of the refugees with the gardening culture of England. Allowing the refugees to share their gardening with the locals gives them a sense of belonging and aids the refugees in their resettlement and integration into English society. Looking

[29] Barry N. Stein, 'The Refugee Experience: Defining The Parameters Of A Field Of Study', *International Migration Review,* 15.1/2 (1981), p. 328. https://doi.org/10.2307/2545346.
[30] Mark Tran, 'Garden Helps Refugees Put Down Roots In Britain', *UNHCR*, 2017, http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/stories/2017/10/59eda4e24/garden-helps-refugees-put-down-roots-in-britain.html [accessed 4 January 2018].
[31] Tran, 'Garden Helps Refugees Put Down Roots In Britain'.

Figure 5: Members of the gardening group take a break in the sunshine.[32]

closer at Lefebvre's production of knowledge as a mode of production of urban space, connections can be made from the theory to the gardening club; the arrival of the refugees has brought a new social interaction, and the sharing of knowledge from refugee homeland to the host country. An example of knowledge exchange is shown in the way the refugees are showing the natives different ways of gardening, growing exotic fruits and flowers.[33] This sharing of diverse knowledge is what makes the community centre a functioning urban space both for locals and refugees.

[32] Tran, 'Garden Helps Refugees Put Down Roots In Britain'.
[33] Tran, 'Garden Helps Refugees Put Down Roots In Britain'.

Similarly, in relation to rooted culture, the refugees made a natural space to mimic their homeland, demonstrating that their memories of homeland are not erased as arborescent roots suggests. Past links in the refugees rhizomorphous roots are helping to build their new lives in the UK, merging the foreign UK cultures with their homeland cultures to create a new identity for themselves.

Figure 6: Professor demonstrating his donated beehive.[34]

[34] Caroline Brothers, 'Syrian Beekeeper Tastes Sweet Success With British Honeybees', *UNHCR*, 2017, http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/stories/2017/12/5a26b73b4/syrian-beekeeper-tastes-sweet-success-british-honeybees.html, [accessed 4 January 2018].

The argument for rhizomorphous roots has demonstrated that connections to historical places but also the experience of new places are central to the making of a refugee's identity, leading to the point that identity is self-constructed, processual and a fund of memories.[35] This theory sets up the premise for understanding the second example; a Syrian professor who fled to the UK to avoid death threats and attacks to his family. The professor struggled to integrate into York society due to multiple job rejections for being overqualified. The professor had been attending monthly refugee meetings, where the need for beekeeping was raised, following the meeting the professor gathered donated beekeeping equipment and re-established his passion of beekeeping here in the UK.[36] Due to negative experiences upon initial resettlement in York the professor's roots would have withered had they been arborescent, losing all his homeland culture. However, the memory of beekeeping in Syria, helped the professor integrate into society through redeveloping a part of his identity in conjunction with the new culture. The act of adapting an activity from his homeland and making it work within the new host society shows the flexibility of the rhizome identity, because he was able to build on the paths that were existing to create parallel paths that respond to the location of the asylum country.

[35] Malkki, 'The Rooting Of Peoples', p. 37.
[36] Brothers, 'Syrian Beekeeper Tastes Sweet Success With British Honeybees', 2017.

Host Abingdon is a local refugee charity in Oxfordshire, originally a bed and breakfast it now pairs as a spiritual retreat for all faiths.[37] Refugee families are welcomed into open houses encouraging locals to integrate with the new arrivals to achieve community cohesion.[38] As discussed in chapter two, Brenner argues that the urban accepts difference creating a functioning society, contradicting Lefebvre's theory of dominating culture creating a homogeneous society. Acceptance of difference is shown through Host Abingdon, not only are the refugees trying to integrate with the host society, the locals are trying to understand and integrate with the refugees, which Stein would call a *'romantic ideal'* for integration.[39] The refugees in this example who integrated into the host society still practiced their religion and included their homeland culture during the process of assimilation, supporting the theory of rhizomorphous roots. The points and paths in the refugee's rhizomes may have got more complex, but they have not lost touch with the links and paths that were existing before displacement. Deleuze and Guattari clarify that being in transition or movement from one place to another, does not mean that the structure of one's identity begins again, from a blank slate but develops from the existing structure evolving the person's identity.[40] The combination of the rhizome theory and Brenner's theory of urban space, applied to refugee resettlement stories, shows how the displacement of a person does not leave them lost without an identity. Displacement allows one's identity to grow and develop influenced by the new location the refugee is

[37] Omar Karmi, 'Bed, Breakfast And New Beginnings', *UNHCR,* 2017, http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2017/4/58ef88504/ bed-breakfast-and-new-beginnings.html, [accessed 4 January 2018]
[38] Karmi, 'Bed, Breakfast And New Beginnings', 2017.
[39] Stein, 'The Refugee Experience' , p. 329
[40] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 25.

resettled to. This development in identity also affects the culture of an urban space, contributing different opinions and experiences, which in turn leads to the evolving and diverse social network which urban space is structured on.

Figure 6: Walking home after a community meeting at Host Abingdon.[41]

[41] Karmi, 'Bed, Breakfast And New Beginnings', 2017.

The fundamental point to this essay is difference allows for functioning production of space, which allows refugees to bring their homeland culture with them when they are resettled into a new society.[42] This statement alone begins to contradict the theory of arborescent roots, because difference in urban space can only have come from people transitioning without their roots being withered in the process. As Malkki states, refugee studies make simplistic assumptions when looking at identity, for example, the idea of uprooting and removal from a national community immediately translates to the loss of one's identity and culture.[43] This led to the development from arborescent to rhizomorphous roots in relation to refugees, where identity is a complex web of paths which evolves throughout a person's life depending on their current events and locations.[44] The analysis of the Hutu refugee case study carried out by Malkki, led to the conclusions that both groups of refugees had rhizomorphous identities because they had adapted to the places they had been moved to. However, the two groups responded differently to different locations within the urban network. For example, the camp refugees had used the periphery to develop their own society with a true Hutu identity. In comparison, the urban centre which allows for difference according to Brenner, had allowed the town refugees to merge their identities with the host society. From analysing refugee resettlement stories, it became clear refugee identity is rhizomorphous, as they remember certain homeland cultures and have used this to aid them in resettlement in the UK. Overall,

[42] Brenner, *Cities For People*, p. 54.
[43] Liisa Malkki, "Refugees And Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' To The National Order Of Things", *Annual Review Of Anthropology,* 24.1 (1995), p.508, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.24.1.493.
[44] Deleuze, and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 21.

it can be understood that theories of rhizome identity and flexible urban space, allows refugees to integrate into the urban using memories of their homeland. This process of assimilation develops the refugee's individual identity through the new location and interactions, whilst also developing the urban network of social connections. The varying culture of refugees creates different social interactions within the network, causing the overall culture of the urban space to develop into a new blended society becoming more functional.

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