

# Abject Citizenship: When categories of displacement collide with categories of citizenship

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## Abstract

This article argues that the political exclusion of displaced people living within states under a variety of humanitarian and policy categories are simultaneously constitutive of mainstream political belonging and social belonging for those excluded. Based on long term research-engagement with displacement in Georgia, Jordan and Sudan, we analyse situations where an initial crisis-based humanitarian status becomes protracted, and in which people are labelled forced migrants as well as citizens, giving rise to tensions with the mainstream but also creating social identities that foster belonging from experiences of exclusion. By analysing these processes as ‘abjection’ – forms of state control and boundary-making that exclude members from the very thing that requires their inclusion – we show that a type of ambiguous citizenship emerges from protracted situations of displacement. Simultaneously, people ‘out of place’ but within a state may exclude themselves from full citizenship rights by nurturing an alternative status derived from their experiences with the state or international humanitarian regime. When established and enduring for a lengthy period, these displacement-statuses, we show here, become social categories and identities through processes of abjection. In conclusion we show how citizenship itself becomes ambiguous through norms of belonging, the formation of new social categories and because forced migrants help to constitute the political.

## Keywords

humanitarian categories, protracted displacement, exclusion, abject citizenship

## Introduction

Civil wars, secessionist movements, and irredentist territorial claims have often produced displaced populations who receive humanitarian assistance, but are nevertheless also citizens of the affected nations. As people who reside somewhere but “belong elsewhere” they effectively hold a different class of citizenship and may even be excluded from mainstream resources despite their often significant importance to the national narrative (Brun 2003; 2010). . This article argues that the political exclusion of

displaced people living within states under a variety of humanitarian and policy categories are simultaneously constitutive of mainstream political belonging and social belonging for those excluded. Of central importance to our argument is the changing nature of these types of belonging over time and, by extension, the way citizenship is therefore negotiated. While displaced, citizens may live for decades under particular humanitarian categories or legal statuses, and these categories in turn define the core components of citizenship (Stokke this issue). For these displaced citizens, rights, membership and participation vis-a-vis the state evolve, giving rise to tensions with mainstream citizens but also creating social identities that foster belonging forged from experiences of exclusion. These processes of 'abjection' --forms of state control and boundary-making that exclude members from the very thing that requires their inclusion--lead to a type of ambiguous citizenship that emerges from protracted situations of displacement.

Based on long-term research-engagement with and the analysis of three situations of protracted displacement in Georgia, Jordan, and Sudan, we explore how citizenship itself becomes ambiguous. We analyse situations where an initial crisis-based humanitarian status becomes protracted, and in which people are labelled forced migrants as well as citizens. We show that these various statuses contribute to excluding people from citizenship rights through a process of 'abjection' emerging from the political use of their status as 'displaced' creating categorical tension with state-sanctioned citizenship rights. Simultaneously, people 'out of place' in a state may exclude themselves from full citizenship rights by nurturing an alternative status derived from their experiences with the state or international humanitarian regime. When established and enduring for a lengthy period, these displacement-statuses, we show here, become social categories and identities through processes of abjection.

To understand the encounter between citizenship and displacement, we need to train our analytical lens beyond and below the nation-state scale to understand citizenship as lived practices where norms of belonging interact with legal rights to profoundly shape access to membership, participation and rights. This article re-engages the Fàboss' previous discussions of long-term displacement and challenges to ahistorical thinking (Brun 2003; 2015; 2016a; Brun & Author 2015; Fàbos 2015; El Abed et al. 2010; El Abed 2014; 2015), and Brun's ongoing work on the unintended consequences of humanitarian labels in protracted situations of forced migration (Brun 2003; 2010). The 'displaced' status is often understood as a humanitarian category that, per definition, is not supposed to last. Humanitarian categories are based on an emergency imagery (Calhoun 2004; 2010), providing people who are understood to be in need of humanitarian assistance with a particular temporality that lies "out of the ordinary" (Brun 2016b). However, as we have previously demonstrated, the dilemmas and tensions played out in a chronic crisis result in a permanent temporariness in the lives of many people whose status and identity is connected to an initial humanitarian category such as 'internally displaced person,' 'stateless person,' or 'refugee' (Brun & Fàbos 2015; El Abed 2014).

The conventional understanding of citizenship is juxtaposed with opposing notions of “non-citizen”--i.e. immigrant, foreigner, refugee, or “other”. However, as humanitarian crises persist beyond the international nation-state resolution framework, these categories of “displaced citizens” interact with conventional norms of citizenship and the rights that accrue to full-status residents of the states (Brun; Desforges et al. 2005; Staeheli et al. 2012; Nyers 2015). The age-old- status analysis of how certain social groups become excluded from the prevailing rights provided to citizens gets a fresh look here through bringing in the interplay between humanitarian norms and labels, and citizenship rights through the formation of social groups and the dynamics between groups and the state. By engaging with citizenship as inclusion and exclusion by way of processes of abjection, we seek to bring new light into the relationship between categories of displacement and citizenship.

This article is in five main parts. In the first and second sections, we position the paper in the discussion of the application of Agamben’s (1998) ‘bare life’ and the alternative and more productive conceptualisation of ‘abject lives’ inspired by the work of Judith Butler (1993) and Julia Kristeva (1982) and the rich body of literature that has emerged in the aftermath of their writings. In the third, fourth and fifth sections, we use material from three settings where initial crisis-based humanitarian categories have transformed into social categories through ‘un-ending’ displacement, and where policies of exclusion and separation are interwoven with narratives of citizenship and belonging. In each of the settings, subjects initially identified with a humanitarian category are or have been recognized as citizens of the nation-state in which they reside: internally-displaced persons in Georgia; citizens of Palestinian refugee origin in Jordan, and former internally-displaced persons in Sudan who have become stateless through the establishment of South Sudan. Through these case studies, we test the idea that the transformation of humanitarian categories into social categories of displacement produces abject citizenship, but that through abject living, displaced people see political possibilities for using their status for creating identity and belonging. We anticipate that our analysis can contribute to the discussion on the changing meaning of citizenship in situation of protracted humanitarian crises, and may add to our understanding of how basic rights are jeopardised and withheld because of humanitarian status.

## **Categories of Displacement in Protracted Crises: From Bare Life to Abject Living**

The forced migrant is often understood to be the paradigmatic victim of modern life (Lubkeman 2008). States use various categories of forced migrants--refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless people, or “others of concern” (UNHCR)--to define national and local belonging and to nurture particular understandings of citizenship: it is the particular tensions between norms of belonging on the one hand and norms of citizenship on the other that we are interested in here. Through categories of displacement, the nation-state legitimises particular processes of inclusion and exclusion because a displaced person is per definition a person who belongs somewhere else, has been uprooted from someplace to which she is expected to return. In this sense,

forced migrants are often understood to be the ultimate biopolitical subjects: those that can be governed at the level of exception outside the normal legal framework. Displacement becomes the threat to the “national order of things” (Malkki 1992) posed by people out of place that are given a permanent spatial arrangement through institutional and extra-ordinary spaces for forced migrants, such as camps. By placing people in the refugee and displacement-status categories, humanitarian actors and the state in effect indicates that the displaced are not full citizens, that they cannot access all the rights of the state, and that they do not belong.

This understanding originates in Agamben’s (1998) well-known writing about the camp, in which he argues that refugees are reduced to “bare life”; human in as much as their biology renders them living, but excluded from the political order and without political freedom. However, Agamben’s way of thinking about the reduction of human capacity to “bare life” falls short in a number of ways. Isin & Rygiel (2007) show that the logic of the camp, as set out by Agamben, does not or cannot account for the novelty of the kinds of spaces that have been created as a result of displacement. Additionally, scholars of forced migration have faulted the idea of bare life for being devoid of political possibility (see for example, Owens 2009; Lemke 2013; Sigona 2015 ), since there is no opening for human agency in bare life. We assert, furthermore, that living in conditions of bare life does not necessarily mean that displaced people are completely outside of the political domain, because the political domain--the state--is notably conditioned on the role of those who are defined as outside. Consequently,, we need to find an understanding that reveals its simultaneous inclusion and exclusion in the political order.

The analysis of citizenship is indispensable to explaining the key principles of membership in a nation state and the established power between the regime and its citizens and the “right for them to have rights” (Brun; Butenschon 2000; Smith 2000; Soysal 1994). We follow in our work, the definition from 1955 by the International Court of Justice where citizenship is “a legal bond having as its basis a social fact of attachment, a genuine connection of existence, interests and sentiments together with the existence of reciprocal rights and duties” to indicate that rights and duties as well as identity and attachment are decisive elements of citizenship (cited in Batchelor 1995, 233, see also Brun 2003). A common distinction to understand the impact of citizenship on the ground is the separation between *de jure* and *de facto* citizenship (EU 2016; Zetter and Long 2012). We analyse the experiences of displaced populations who are also citizens in the countries in which they reside but who experience a tension between the laws (de jure) and the practiced (de facto) citizenship based on their displacement. We thus show how citizenship may be applied differently based on residency, belonging and formal status (Bauder 2013). At the same time, however, citizenship is experienced and practiced in everyday lives and significantly those experiences and practices may seem unrelated to the legal standards (Staeheli et al 2012). This is typically taking place when the nation state fails to include some groups in the full sets of citizenship rights, as we return to below. When the modern state fails to include and integrate its inhabitants and secure them their rights and obligations, while monopolising their basic resources, we need to find an alternative conception of the status that people actually experience.

This article presents the idea of 'abject citizenship' as a way of establishing this alternative, whereby politically excluded actors are still included in the juridical order. Unlike bare life, abject citizenship additionally opens up the possibility for agency and creativity; people are able to create their own spaces, meanings and identity within their exclusion, and may act upon new political possibilities.

In the next section we deliberately move away from this concept of 'bare life' and unpack some of the ways through which norms of belonging and citizenship instead intersect through abjection. Abjection lets in history and context, and demonstrates that both reactive and proactive moves to define and redefine borders. For displaced people in a variety of citizenship contexts, abjection recognizes their role in maintaining mainstream citizenship rights while their exclusion hones their own sense of belonging.

### **Abjection: Simultaneous Exclusion and Inclusion in the Political Order**

The word "abject" comes from the Latin *abjectus*, the past participle of the Latin verb *abdicere*, meaning "to cast off" (Merriam-Webster 2016|) Its original meaning in English was "cast off" or "rejected," but it is now used more broadly to refer to things in a low state or condition" (Merriam-Webster 2016) Abjection as a concept is often used to signal exclusion and outsidership as well as political misrecognition (Sharkey and Shields 2008; see also Nyers 2003). Imogen Tyler (2013) traces the concept back to Georges Bataille's writing, where "abjection is the imperative force of sovereignty, a founding exclusion which constitutes a part of the population as moral outcasts" (2013, 19). Abjection describes the ongoing processes of bordering that make and unmake both the psychological and material boundaries of the subject (Tyler 2013). From this follows our understanding that abjection is a form of governmentality, which helps to explain the simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion of displaced populations.

Feminist writers Julia Kristeva (1982) and Judith Butler (1993) have been main sources of inspiration in contemporary theorising of 'the abject'. For Kristeva, abject describes psychological and bodily aversion--or rejection. At a more general level she describes that which causes abjection as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite (...)" (Kristeva 1982, 4). Scholars like Tyler (2013) and Sharkey and Shields (2008) take inspiration from the different scales of engagement by bringing together practices of subject and state formation. This is where we can understand abjection as a meeting point between norms of belonging, mobility, and the laws of citizenship (Butler 1993). It is a way of understanding how individuals and groups are excluded, but at the same time, they are not cut off from that which excludes them. It is a mutual process of being excluded and excluding oneself, of becoming part of the norm that excludes them. In other words, displacement is a spatio-temporal condition with the label 'out of place' but at the same time "never fully excluded" (Sharkey & Shields 2008, 239).

We consider 'abjection' to be a more productive entry point for understanding current

processes of protracted displacement than the more commonly floated but problematic 'bare life'. In situations where the displaced 'victims' are also citizens of the state in which they reside, 'abject citizenship' unveils the tension between citizenship and the position of forced migrants, and describes how forced migrants embody this tension. Even in cases where experiences of state exclusion are brutal and alienating, we demonstrate here that the presence of displaced citizens are of keen interest to the citizenship regimes. And, the practices of this class of citizens to manage their predicament maintain a discursive challenge to binary narratives of exclusion.

## **Narratives of Abjection in Georgia, Jordan and Sudan**

Displaced people within the states of their citizenship experience abject living through tensions between group membership and participation; between legal status and access to rights. Abjection influences people's experience and understanding of the contested right to be present. Here, we offer three examples of groups of forced migrants--IDPs in Georgia, Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship, and now-stateless South Sudanese displaced earlier as IDPs within Sudan a result of civil war--who are made to feel like outsiders, and their right to membership contested. In all three cases, displacement is an element in their exclusion from full membership in the state that leads to their participation within the group of forced migrants rather than other citizen groups.

### ***Internally Displaced People from Abkhazia in Georgia***

In Georgia, the process of internal displacement for ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia began when Georgia was declared an independent nation-state in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This was rapidly followed by the secession of Abkhazia from Georgia in 1992. Georgian authorities refused to accept the secession claims, and Georgian forces entered Abkhazia to regain the disputed territory. As a result of fighting and the defeat of the Georgian forces, the ethnic Georgian population, approximately 46% of the population in Abkhazia at the time, fled their homes (ICRC 1999). The conflict left an estimated 10,000 people dead and some 250,000 displaced (Amnesty International 2010). The ethnic Georgian population who left Abkhazia for Georgia was granted the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and they, and their descendants, still maintain this status. An IDP is a person who has fled from the habitual place of residence but not crossed an internationally recognised nation state boundary. Ethnic Georgians displaced from Abkhazia are both Georgian citizens and IDPs.

In 2016, the situation may be described as a frozen conflict with periodic outbursts of war. Most recently, the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 prompted many scholars to believe that Georgia has lost de facto control over Abkhazia (Kabachnik 2012). Nevertheless, the nationalist discourse of a unified Georgia that includes Abkhazia is still strong, and its internally displaced people play an important role in keeping alive Georgia's hope of regaining control over Abkhazia. The belief that return represents the only valid solution to the displacement and the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia is shared by most IDPs. Kabachnik (2012) explains the discourse of return

with the uncertainty and fear surrounding questions related to Georgian nationality and territorial integrity as “Georgia’s cartographic anxiety.” He likens the gaining of independence by a separatist region to an “‘amputation’, leaving ‘wounds’ and ‘scars’” (Kabachnik 2012, 47). Accordingly, the return of the IDPs to Abkhazia is a concern not just for the IDPs themselves, but for the whole Georgian nation. The need for a continued inclusion of Abkhazia in Georgia contributes to the Abkhazians’ unending IDP status and has consequences for understandings of belonging: an IDP is a humanitarian category for someone residing in a place where she or he does not belong, a meaning that greatly affects people’s status, practices and identities.

As unwilling participants in Georgia’s irredentist drama, Abkhazian IDPs have struggled to recreate a sense of belonging as long-term recipients of state aid, lack of access to mainstream job opportunities, and public discourses that overlook the complexities of their situation. Nevertheless, the humanitarian category that they continue to inhabit demonstrates how important their nostalgia and collective memory are for the nation. Their abject status--and the collective identity Abkhazian IDPs make through their daily practices--undergird their role as displaced citizens, and point to the tension around their exclusion-as-inclusion.

### ***Palestinian-origin Jordanians as Citizens and as Refugees***

Palestinian-origin Jordanians in Jordan share certain characteristics as Abkhaz-origin ethnic Georgians, such as citizenship rights in a state of exile and a marginalized status amongst certain classes based on their social class, power and social networks. As per the Jericho conference in December 1948, which laid the groundwork for the annexation of what was left of historical Palestine to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, all Palestinians in both the West and East Banks of River Jordan were granted Jordanian citizenship. With that, Jordan expanded geographically and demographically. The population of the kingdom, initially 390,000 (Shaul 1978), more than doubled within a year, and soon comprised a majority of Palestinians expelled from their homes and their livelihoods in historical Palestine. More than 80 percent of those newcomer/citizens were farmers and peasants (Smith 1971). which added to a high number of professional urban people who were easily integrated into the newly established state where they worked, as citizens, in the administration and in the business sector in the newly created sectors. The international community with United Nations for Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) invested in the economic development of Jordan in order to integrate the big number of refugees. Large scale development projects were created in the East Bank of Jordan and the cities grew with the trained human capital into urbanised spaces. Jordan also took charge of the administration and services for those living in the West Bank, and had the guardianship (which continues until today) over al-Quds (Jerusalem) with its Dome of the Rock mosque.

Refugee camps were created and UNRWA took charge of the social services for Palestine refugees in Jordan and in the other territories where Palestinians fled (Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza Strip) providing basic education, vocational education, health clinics and relief for hardship cases. A majority of the trained Palestinian-origin

Jordanians sought work opportunities in the Gulf, taking advantage of the Oil boom. The flow of aid and remittances from the Gulf countries to Jordan had a major impact on the economic development of Jordan until the late 1980s.

The 1967 war, in which Israel militarily occupied the West Bank of Jordan, displaced a new group of 350,000 refugees to the East Bank (Abu Odeh 1999). More refugees arrived from the Gaza Strip which was under the Military and administrative rule. Jordan hosted them in the growing cities and in refugee camps. With the assistance of UNRWA, services were provided, as before. The majority of this new influx already held Jordanian citizenship, except for those who arrived from Gaza, who have been given a temporary status. The 1970s tension between Palestinian guerrillas and some Jordanian military forces sculpted Jordanian national identity while defining some Palestinians as “other”. These processes of othering were strengthened after 1974 conference in Rabat when the King of Jordan was pressured to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, even while his country hosted about fifty percent of the Palestinian refugees (Abu Odeh 1999). In response, Jordan sought to ‘Jordanise’ its institutions, creating subtle barriers for Palestinian-Jordanian citizens in employment and higher education. While on paper, university education and job opportunities are open to all citizens equally, the “subtle” policies of the state towards citizens from different origins, economic class and status (power) have, *de facto*, aimed at de-Palestinising the public sector by significantly reducing their “visibility” (Abu Odeh 1999).

For Palestinian citizens of Jordan, abject status emerged over time as political boundaries hardened. State policies to enhance opportunities for economically disadvantaged Jordanians--code for “loyal” citizens from tribal or local land-holding families rather than those of Palestinian refugee background--were built upon continued national and regional support for an eventual independent Palestinian state. And, despite their citizenship status, Palestinian Jordanians keep the Right of Return project very much alive. Through abject living, these refugee-citizens maintain a collective identity that does not require the conditions of bare life; their status stems from mutual interest with the Jordanian state--the eventual return of Palestinian refugees to Palestine.

### ***South Sudanese Doubly Displaced in Sudan***

In situations where the displaced ‘victims’ are citizens of the state in which they reside (such as internally displaced persons in Georgia and Palestinian refugees in Jordan), the term ‘bare life’ represents a political impossibility. The Republic of Sudan gained independence in 1956 after a half-century of British colonial administration. The new country’s borders incorporated a dizzying mix of linguistic, religious, and tribal groups but with some clear political hierarchies in relation to the dominant Arabic-speaking Muslim ruling class. Some of these members were descended from powerful tribal groups who had historically participated in slave-raiding and slave-trading from populations and tribal groups living in the areas designated as “the South”. The economic and political interests of the northern rulers in the south, combined with their



religious bigotry and racism, created conditions for a marginalized underclass of Sudanese citizens. Southern rebel movements emerged to challenge the unequal political and economic national structures from 1955 to 1973, and again between 1983 and 2005, producing significant southern Sudanese refugee flows, as well as internal displacement in the south as well as to the northern provinces. In particular, Khartoum, Sudan's capital, ballooned from a few hundred thousand residents in the early 1980s to a sprawling city that included several million internally displaced persons from the multiple humanitarian disasters facing Sudan's populations (Shadid 2000). While southern Sudanese had full Sudanese citizenship, their marginalization by the dominant class of Arabic-speaking, Muslim Sudanese had been built into the national framework of the country, even during democratic periods. In 2005, a comprehensive peace process between the Government of Sudan and the longstanding rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) agreed to a referendum to decide upon South Sudanese self-determination. Overwhelmingly, southern Sudanese voted to secede, and in 2011 South Sudan became an independent nation.

While many refugees and displaced persons returned to their areas of origin in South Sudan, many--including those who had lived in northern Sudan--expressed concern that the new country lacked infrastructure and jobs. Recent estimates suggest that between 500,000 - 700,000 South Sudanese still live among the 3.2 million IDPs in Sudan (UNHCR 2016), with approximately 250,000 residing in the capital city, Khartoum and its environs (UNHCR 2014). Their subsequent disenfranchisement when the south of the country seceded to become South Sudan is a case of multiple displacements and unending exile. The "displacement in place" thrust upon South Sudanese by the state and the humanitarian agencies whose aid replaced social services depends upon a history of state-sponsored racism, suspicions related to civil war combatants, and a government discourse of *jihad* against southern "infidels."

As former citizens of Sudan, displaced persons, and recipients of humanitarian relief, disenfranchised South Sudanese are still present as meaningful participants in the political and national order of the new nation states of Sudan and South Sudan. Regardless of whether or not they have been stripped of their citizenship, doubly-displaced South Sudanese experience abject citizenship through being subjected to political bargaining between the two states. But their status reveals a form of agency that belies the exclusion and marginalisation of having been stripped of their Sudanese citizenship. These former IDPs have a terrible choice to make--remain stateless in Sudan or relocate to an unstable country in which they have citizenship rights but lack livelihoods, security, and personal knowledge of the post-war situation. Under these circumstances, their continued presence in Sudan defies the bi-national narrative of secession and the unmixing of peoples between Sudan and South Sudan. While there are a variety of reasons for stateless South Sudanese to reject their ouster by Sudan--many were born in Sudan, speak Arabic and have no family ties in South Sudan, while others have developed livelihoods and social networks in their place of displacement--the inherent politics of their identity has drawn them together as a displaced social group.

## **Becoming Social Categories: Citizenship as Inclusion and Exclusion**

Recent work on citizenship has placed citizenship's universalistic claims under scrutiny from the perspectives of a range of marginalized social groups and of nation-state "outsiders" (Kabeer 2005; Lister 2007). Citizenship is always about simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion (Brun 2003). It is worth examining the problematic universalist promise of citizenship and unpacking the exclusionary forces of citizenship from within, whether political, ethnic, social, or other. The exclusionary forces of citizenship among citizens indicate a move towards a citizenship understood in the context of "an ethos of pluralisation [which] makes possible a radically plural rather than dual way of thinking about citizenship and identity" (Isin & Wood 1999, 23; see also Young 1990; 2009; Lister 2007). It is in this context of an ethos of pluralisation that the relevance of social groups become apparent for citizenship. A social group is defined by a set of shared attributes and by a sense of identity (Young 1990; 2009). Young shows how social groups are "not entities that exist apart from individuals but neither are they merely arbitrary classifications of individuals according to attributes that are external to or accidental to their identities" (Young 2009, 8-9). She emphasises that group meanings partially constitute people's identities in terms of cultural forms, social situations, and histories that group members know as theirs because these meanings have been either forced on them or forged by them or both.

Social groups may be defined according to specific dimensions such as solidarity and fellowship; struggling/mobilising for material and ideal interests; classification struggles and labelling; and, institutionalisation (Isin & Wood 1999). The formation of social groups takes place in a dynamic between internal and external forces; as an interplay between the state, the majority (general population) and people identifying with a particular group. Such group formation can potentially enable oppression through the dynamics of power and differential access to resources -- symbolic, political, economic. However, at the same time, social justice requires institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression which again requires special rights attending to group differences. Within a pluralist notion of citizenship, rights, resources, political recognition, access to participation and membership can result from mobilisation via a social group because social groups may form a political possibility.

Forming social groups is " (...) [always] fraught with danger that, instead of advancing the legitimate claims of its members, it may turn an oppressive power on them" ... (Isin & Wood 1999, 38). In the three cases of displaced citizens in national contexts presented here, categories of displacement become social categories that have an effect on membership, participation and rights as citizens in their countries of residence. In particular cases of long term displacement, categories that in some ways were linked to humanitarian needs over time have changed their meaning to become accidental communities of memory: people who have experienced war together and who live together as displaced persons, but who might not otherwise have met in the ordinary course of their lives. The displaced communities that become social groups are based on

solidarity and fellowship (a common history of forced migration and a lost home), material and ideal interests (assistance and the right to return), labelling and a common identity; and institutionalisation (interest groups, specific rules and regulations, customary law).

In Georgia, where most IDPs settled and continue to live in Western Georgia and in and around the capital Tbilisi, IDPs are still - after more than 20 years of displacement considered as Other, as a different group from the Georgians non-displaced residents. But also for the IDPs themselves, it is important to maintain the IDP-category. As an example, Tamuna<sup>ii</sup>, a woman in her twenties and an activist working in a civil society organisation, fled Abkhazia as a child. For her it is extremely important to maintain the IDP category; it is part of her identity. She says the reasons to maintain the IDP category are political. It has to do with her displacement history, her rights and her status in the Georgian society. The IDP category helps to explain why she belongs to a marginalised social group, why she cannot afford having a place of her own but shares a room with her aunt in a privatised space in a collective centre<sup>iii</sup>. She grew up understanding she did not belong. Recounting how non-displaced children in her school were told by her teachers that the collective centres were dangerous places and no-go places for her peers, she felt as if her home was defined as a dangerous space and her people threatening and different. This, and many similar events, made her feel excluded from the general society and the IDP category was to some extent a comfort - and a social group she felt she belonged to.

In Jordan, the categorisation of citizens into classes, statuses and origins empowered some groups to access better educational or employment opportunities and strengthened others in their social and political status, excluding, as a result several other groups. Over the years and due to several political and economic events, categorisation of citizens has tended to obliterate the rights of disenfranchised Palestinian-Jordanian refugee-citizens coming from lower-middle classes, while privileging those who are best serving the interest of the state, supporting its ideology and claiming allegiance. With the Palestinian-origin Jordanian population surpassing that of the East Jordanians, the priority of the state since the 1970s events where clashes happened between some Palestinian guerrilla and some Jordanian army members, has been given to the East Jordanians in employment, education and other rights. Collective identity continue to be based on the claim of safeguarding right of return which is often presented, as if ensuring fully fledged rights could erase the national identity or roots of the individuals. Refugee camps and refugee status have become the symbols of return representing the political stance of the host state. The liberalisation politics since 1989 have created a monopoly empowering those involved in politics and business, close to the regime. This widened the disparity amongst people, creating several socioeconomic classes. The groups varied from those fully-fledged citizens holding Jordanian national numbers to the others who have become West Bankers since the severance of the West and East Banks in 1988 and the holders of provisional Jordanian travel documents, the Gaza refugees since 1967. Rights varied and claims for equal rights amongst everyone were encountered by political challenges affecting their dual identity and their class and

status. Despite having acquired citizenship rights, these Palestinian refugees/Jordanian citizens of East Amman have not received the same rights and privileges as other Jordanian citizens. The politics of domination and stratification has been perpetuated by regulating access to social citizenship rights – particularly access to higher education and economic opportunities. The citizenship has ‘invisibilised’ their basic rights and their integration. Palestinian origin Jordanians chose alienation and invisibilisation in order to be included in a state that has not managed to include everyone on its territories. Discursive politics has managed, in this way, to create politically, economically and socially privileged citizens, which in turn means that other segments of the population, citizens and non-citizens, access fewer *de facto* rights and have less power.

In Sudan, despite their prior citizenship in the Sudanese state, displaced southern Sudanese were largely excluded from state-run social services, with provision of water, medical care, and education provided by UNHCR and its implementing partners. Muslim Sudanese domination of the national framework of Sudan, which significantly draws upon a history of slave-raiding and slave-trading conducted by “Arabs,” shapes the circumstances of their permanent temporariness and abject status. Indeed, representatives of the majority population in Sudan, Arabic-speaking Muslim-identified Sudanese have for decades referred to their southern compatriots as *abiid*--the Arabic word for “slave.” This anachronistic pejorative is also rendered spatially, whereby Sudanese citizens with roots in the south have long been viewed as having no political belonging. For example, a 1996 conversation with Arabic-speaking Muslim Sudanese businessmen who were visiting their compatriots in Egypt loudly complained about the number of “foreigners” back home in Khartoum. Upon further clarification, the men expressed their distaste for the many thousands of displaced southern Sudanese citizens residing in Khartoum--people, I pointed out, who had every right to live in the capital city of their country, but who were existing instead in abject social, economic, and political conditions (Fàbos 2010).

The new political border between Sudan and South Sudan has dramatically altered the humanitarian categories and political identities used to describe South Sudanese in Sudan. Before 2011, they were displaced citizens--albeit racialised and second class citizens--but since secession they have in addition been stripped of their Sudanese citizenship and asked to “return” to a home country that many of them do not know. Regularizing their political status has required many of these newly-claimed citizens of South Sudanese to document their origins in the “indigenous tribes” residing in the independent territory (Manby 2012) and apply for visas as foreigners. But Schultz (2014) also identifies the very category ‘displaced’ used by humanitarian organizations to refer to South Sudanese living in the north as problematic; she argues that,

by referring to people as displaced persons, a reality is constructed in which people are not only denied citizenship rights but also rejected from feeling at home in the place they stay. This happened to all Southern Sudanese after the CPA when they were construed as ‘displaced’ people by international organisations, such as the UNHCR and the IOM and the GoS. (Schultz 2014, 306)

In this sense, South Sudanese in Sudan have been given an unwelcome humanitarian category, that of 'displaced' and 'going home', that does not match with their own social understanding and lived experience.

In all three cases we analyze here, the abject status comes to light as a result of the formation of new social groups originating in a common identity of being forced migrants. This particular identity and social status within the nation state enable exclusion, invisibilisation and disenfranchisement by the state based on the categorisation of displacement as social group. At the same time, however, the cases analysed show that there is a simultaneous self-exclusion, self-alienation and inward orientation towards the same displaced group because those excluded also accept the norms of the exclusion.

### **Spatio-temporal Tensions, from Bare Life to Abject Citizenship**

Processes of abjection contribute to the formation of social groups. The abject becomes a kind of counter-space and identity is formed as an outcome of abjection. Processes of abjection make group formation possible; displacement, in our analysis, becomes the basis on which social groups are formed. When displacement is long term, often experienced as 'un-ending', displaced communities become social groups that are considered marginal, almost on the outside of - and excluded from - society based on norms of belonging and the politics of citizenship and territoriality. Abjection refers to processed of being excluded but also making oneself excluded.

Through abjection, subject formation and state formation interact and represent 'the making together' (Tyler 2013) of citizenship in the context of displacement. We can identify the creation of a particular 'lived citizenship' through people's practice and identities (Christensen & Siim 2010; Lister 2007). People work within their exclusion to create their own identity (Sharkey & Shields 2008). And as we show below, it is the particular nurturing of the identity and status of the displaced, and the accompanying norms of "out of place", NOT-BELONGING that, to a large extent enables these processes of abjection. Sharkey and Shields explain that,

For them, a form of contradictory, abject citizenship becomes possible – one where they are considered outsiders to the establishment, refuse, trash; one where this reduced status is the norm, and it is the established insiders who becomes the outsiders. Hypothetically, this stabilizes identities for the abject who maintain a marginal presence in public space despite being excluded. The label of 'abject' is not pure but a real work/reworking of second-class status and exclusion which violates the black- white view held by established insiders. Abject citizenship becomes their flag of convenience". (Sharkey & Shields 2008, 247)

Displacement represents a change in the political geography of citizenship. Categories of displacement are highly politicised categories, hence subjects identified with those categories are also seen as part of the political that constitutes citizenship. When displacement categories become protracted and turn into social categories, the political

nature of the categories create particular exclusions that lead to abject living and abject citizenship. Citizens who are displaced persons (IDPs), refugees or who become stateless nevertheless help to constitute the political order. Social abjection is a theoretical resource that enables us to consider the states of exclusion that takes place on the margins (Tyler 2013).

At a more general level in the Georgian case, we can understand the experience of displacement and its consequences in the light of abjection; there was a mutual, negotiated process of rejection, exclusion and separation that took place. The IDPs wanted to stay together to support each other and to maintain their rights as IDPs which came with assistance and a continued state commitment to the right to return. Tamuna's reaction, must be understood in light of the larger discourses on internal displacement in Georgia where there is an interest by both the state, the non-displaced population and by the displaced to maintain the category, but for different reasons. The day the government gives up the IDP category, those displaced give up the hope for return, since giving up the hope for return also means giving up the territories of Abkhazia from where Tamuna were displaced. Maintaining the IDP category, even though it is a fluid and constantly negotiated status, remains important for the Georgian national identity. For the IDPs themselves, maintaining the IDP category involves right to return and compensation, access to protection, and the safety and recognition from within a social group rather than from the Georgian society.

Jordan's discursive politics around Palestinian-origin citizens, with the various labels and constantly changing legal/political categories given to their status, have rendered their integration one of uncertainty and fear. Amidst the invisibilisation politics led by the state, Palestinians of Jordan, be situated within civic 'black holes' wherein the unwanted are sequestered as utterly available victims (Butenshon 2000, 626). Palestinian-origin Jordanians face "a technology of 'care and control'...a technology of power entailing the management of space and movement- for 'peoples out of place'" (Malkki 1992, 34). The state with its practiced apparatus of power of exclusion and population management politics has excluded people from the wider societal circles in which they are included; despite their Jordanian citizenship, their refugee status and their Palestinian identity have resulted in them being denied their rights by the Jordanian state. Importantly, the political economy of the state has, over many decades, rules using politics of divisiveness, as a way to manage its hybrid population, labeling citizens as refugees or Palestinians and empowering those showing political allegiance and those sharing economic interests and sharpening the means of expressing Jordanian national identity. It has enabled the state to distribute its resources in ways that benefit its own interests in its economic development projects and in funding its budget. Palestinian origin Jordanians representing different classes and statuses have been affected directly or indirectly by such politics as if being reminded of their displacement from Historical Palestine. Many Palestinians defy this politics by sticking more loudly to the Palestinian identity and to their right of return, flagging by this their displacement, that has exceeded today five generations.

While many displaced southern Sudanese returned to independent South Sudan in organized repatriations in 2010 and 2011, thousands stayed behind to live as “foreigners” in their former country of citizenship. Many younger South Sudanese born in the north had never even visited their purported homeland. A 2012 cooperation agreement between Sudan and South Sudan promising, among other things, mutual residency permission, has never been implemented. The uncertainty and invisibility in which South Sudanese live is captured by Grabska & Miller (2016), who describe the housing strategies that marginalized South Sudanese pursue in a wealthy neighborhood in Khartoum. One such place, an old villa in a key location and still owned by the South Sudanese government, has become a residence for a diverse group of South Sudanese university students, older men, families, and single mothers, mainly from the Dinka tribe. Grabska and Miller describe not only the struggles for livelihoods, education, and inclusion in the newly reconfigured Sudan, but also the solidarity that emerges from their shared experience. In interviews with the house’s residents, they identify a sense of being “stuck” in Khartoum, but also being privileged at not living in a war zone.

Other men commented that now it is different in the sense that they feel that they are South Sudanese. “*Jenubeeni*”, Ayen says proudly, “I am *Jenubeeni*”. And then she laughs. The sharing of a space with other South Sudanese in the house allows her and the others to reinforce their sense of being *Jenubeeni* in the struggle with difficulties vis à vis the Sudanese state. (Grabska & Miller 2016, 14)

The authors nevertheless demonstrate the underlying tensions in the “we are one” discourse, and describe the house as a metaphor for the transformation of South Sudanese identity. For these abject citizens, their unified membership in a doubly displaced social group is necessary not only for the Sudanese government which has labeled these former citizens “foreign”, but also for the South Sudanese state for whom their continued presence as non-citizens in the north establishes its legitimacy.

As mentioned above, abjection is an ongoing process of bordering (Kristeva 1982). The particular construction of a norm of belonging that takes place through the dynamic between displacement and citizenship constructs the victim, a figure out of the ordinary, that do not belong/is out of place, but at the same time essential for constituting citizenship. Abject citizenship, in itself a contradiction in terms, is in this context experienced through tensions between legal status and rights; membership and participation (Stokke, introduction to this special issue). We have explored some of the mechanisms that prevent people associated with displacement and humanitarian categories from accessing rights by analysing the ‘symbiotic’ relationship between the interests of the state and the interests of people associated with categories of displacement: they (the forced migrants and the state) both want to maintain the categories, but for different reasons. This symbiosis enables the controlling of particular territories by the state, rights to particular places, recognition of the various injustices that people in the displacement category has experienced but at the same time the justification of continuous injustices.

## **Conclusions: Abject Citizenship and the Right to be Present**

'Abjection' helps to conceptualise how people displaced in the different contexts of Georgia, Jordan and Sudan are included in the juridical order, but at the same time excluded in different permutations-- all as a result of a history of displacement. In all three cases, there is a tension between legal status and rights. IDPs in Georgia are citizens of their own countries, but the IDP status excludes them (and they exclude themselves) from full citizenship rights. In the case of Jordanian Palestinians, they are citizens, but the history of displacement and the strong Palestinian political identity has led to systematic exclusion and deprivation of rights. In the case of Sudan, the South Sudanese who were displaced as citizens (IDPs) then lost their access to citizenship upon South Sudan's 2011 independence by refusing to leave their homes in the north to "return home".

Processes of abjection take place in the tension between norms of belonging on the one hand, and laws of citizenship on the other. The lived experiences of long term displacement together with the politics of the state and the norms of the general society contribute to the formation of social groups based on the categories of displacement. As we have shown through the brief analysis of three cases of long term displacement, the formation of social groups, although helpful in mobilising certain resources through a common identity, also enables oppression, rendering a group invisible and preventing access to essential citizenship rights.

The insights we contribute in this paper are not entirely new. Citizenship is always about processes of inclusion and exclusion. We have demonstrated that there are unintended consequences of long term association with the category of displacement and the role of these identities for access to citizenship rights. In the case of forced migration, when a nation-state border has not been crossed, or people are "given" citizenship but continue to live with a displacement status, a liminal status of "out of place" is enforced through norms and politics. Citizenship can be used as a political possibility to enable resistance and struggle for inclusion. In a similar vein, the category of displacement is not devoid of agency. The spatiality of categories of displacement may indicate alternative ways of practicing citizenship - away from the Western construct in democratic states - towards a more differential notion and norm of citizenship in Georgia, Jordan and Sudan - all relatively new nation states with different regimes of mobility and belonging in which the state takes on particular powers in governing the different forms of mobility associated with the territory under their control.

The institutionalisation of preventing access to citizenship rights vary in the three cases, with the IDPs in Sudan as the most extreme, where the displacement status helps to justify statelessness. In all three cases, abjection, understood as governance through norms of aversion, helps to explain what processes take place between categories of displacement and citizenship. The temporality of displacement categories justifies the exclusion from citizenship rights because the mobility that displacement represents is out-of-the-ordinary; and people in the category do not belong, may be labeled as



dangerous and therefore should not be there. At the same time, however, they form an extremely important part of the majority's identity; the displaced populations are needed in order for the nation state to be preserved in the image of the majority population.

A number of scholars have addressed the tension between mobility and citizenship (Desforges et al. 2005; Staeheli et al. 2012; Nyers 2015). We have discussed a particular category of mobility--that of displacement as a result of conflict and the associated understandings of belonging that comes with it. Displacement is embedded in particular norms of belonging: these norms are related to discourses of return, belonging and the right to mobility as well as social status and the right to be present. Humanitarian norms define a social group as temporary, and analysing long term displacement through processes of abjection contributes to an understanding of how mechanisms of governing social groups through aversion (as mentioned above) takes place. Displaced groups are excluded from particular rights, but at the same time, they are not cut off from that which excludes them. It is a mutual process of being excluded and excluding oneself – becoming part of the norm that excludes them.

Forced migrants help to constitute the political, they are not outside the law. While policies towards migrants often employ different strategies to reduce people to abject inexistence, it does not only create varying conditions of rightlessness but also enable different logics and acts of resistance. This resistance is possible to understand through the hope embedded in the particular temporality that comes with the categories of displacement and the associated humanitarian status. However, abject also helps to indicate the limits of that political possibility which largely takes place within the social group of displaced people and thus, struggles to get acceptance beyond the limits of its group.

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<sup>i</sup> Subtle because policies have been implemented through classified administrative regulations and have not been made public.

<sup>ii</sup> Pseudonym, interview December 2015, for more information about the research on which this research is based, please see Brun 2015; 2016a.

<sup>iii</sup> A collective centre is a building or a group of buildings used to house internally displaced persons. The buildings were built as student- and worker dormitories, hospitals, kindergartens and hotels and often not meant for permanent living and not for family lives.

<sup>iv</sup> Southern; a Southerner.