

Imagining Refugia: *thinking beyond the current* *international migration regime*



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**Migration and mobility – new frontiers for
research and policy**

Accra
5-6 October 2017

'The year of summits'



Focusing on Protection: Previewing Upcoming High-Level Fora on Migration

Schedule of Major International Humanitarian Events in 2016

Syria Crisis Conference (aka "Syria IV"): February 4, London, co-hosted by the UN Secretary General and the United Kingdom, Norway, Kuwait, and Germany.

Goals: Raise significant new funds both to meet immediate needs inside Syria and support neighboring countries; support schooling and job creation to address longer-term needs of those affected by the crisis; identify long-term funding solutions.

Solutions Alliance Thematic Group on Engaging the Private Sector: February 9-10, Brussels, Belgium, co-chaired by Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR, UNDP, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Goals: Promote and enable the transition for displaced persons away from dependency towards increased resilience, self-reliance and development.

High-Level Meeting on Legal Pathways for Syrians: March 30, Geneva, under aegis of the UN Secretary General and led by UNHCR.

Goals: Generate pledges for resettlement or for other legal pathways to protection for Syrians such as humanitarian/labor/student/family visas, as well as family reunification and methods of enabling resettlement, e.g. private sponsorship of resettlement.

Forum on New Approaches to Protracted Forced Displacement: April 2016, London, organized by the World Bank, UNHCR, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Goals: To build agreement among key stakeholders on the principles of a new approach to the challenge of protracted displacement and put in place pilot projects to test this approach.

World Humanitarian Summit: May 23-24, Istanbul, an initiative of the UN Secretary General, managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Goals: To propose solutions to the most pressing global challenges to keep humanitarian action fit for the future, and to reshape the global humanitarian agenda by addressing financing and humanitarian challenges in order; refugees/displaced persons will have prominence in the agenda.

High-Level Plenary Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees & Migrants: September 19, New York, a special session of the UN General Assembly.

Goals: To reach a new "global agreement" on responsibility sharing in the context of refugees and vulnerable migrants. A Secretary General's report due in May will make recommendations on how to address large-scale movements of migrants and refugees.

US-Hosted Summit on Global Refugee Crisis: September 19, New York.

Goals: To secure new commitments and sustained support for UN humanitarian appeals; greater opportunities for resettlement; and expanded opportunities for refugee self-reliance through access to education, legal employment, and other measures.

Limits to traditional 'durable solutions': local integration, resettlement and return



Economic/ecological limits

Livelihoods, water, land and degraded environment

Institutional limits

intergovernmental bodies

nation-states

regional entities

municipalities

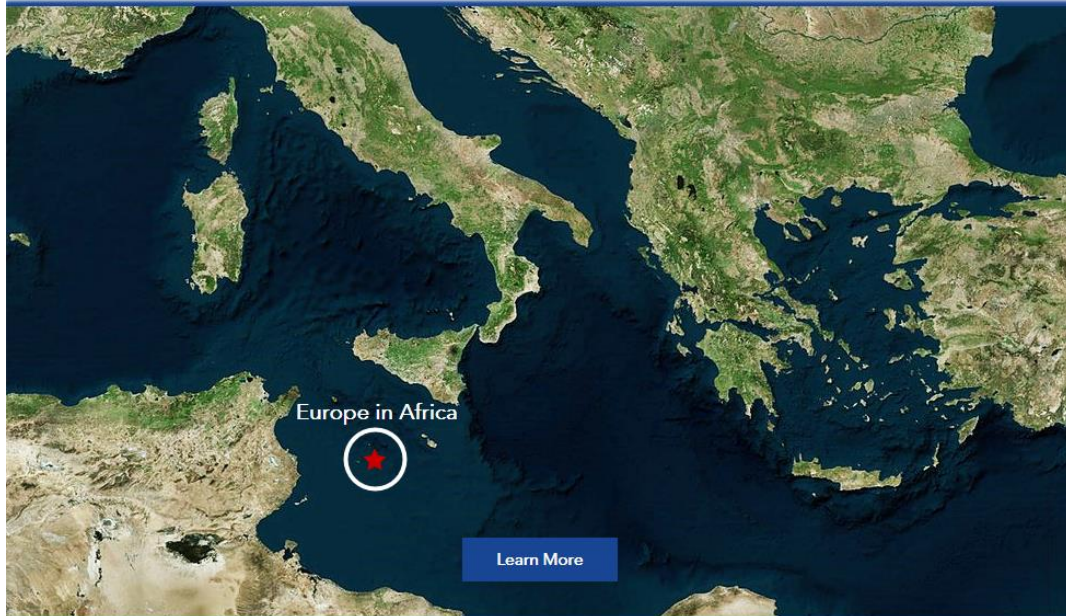
Political limits

Varied but ultimately limited
level of tolerance

Three island examples

- Refugee Nation (Jason Buzi)
- Mediterranean Island (Naguib Sawiris)
- Europe in Africa (Theo Deutinger)

Europe in Africa



Europe in Africa

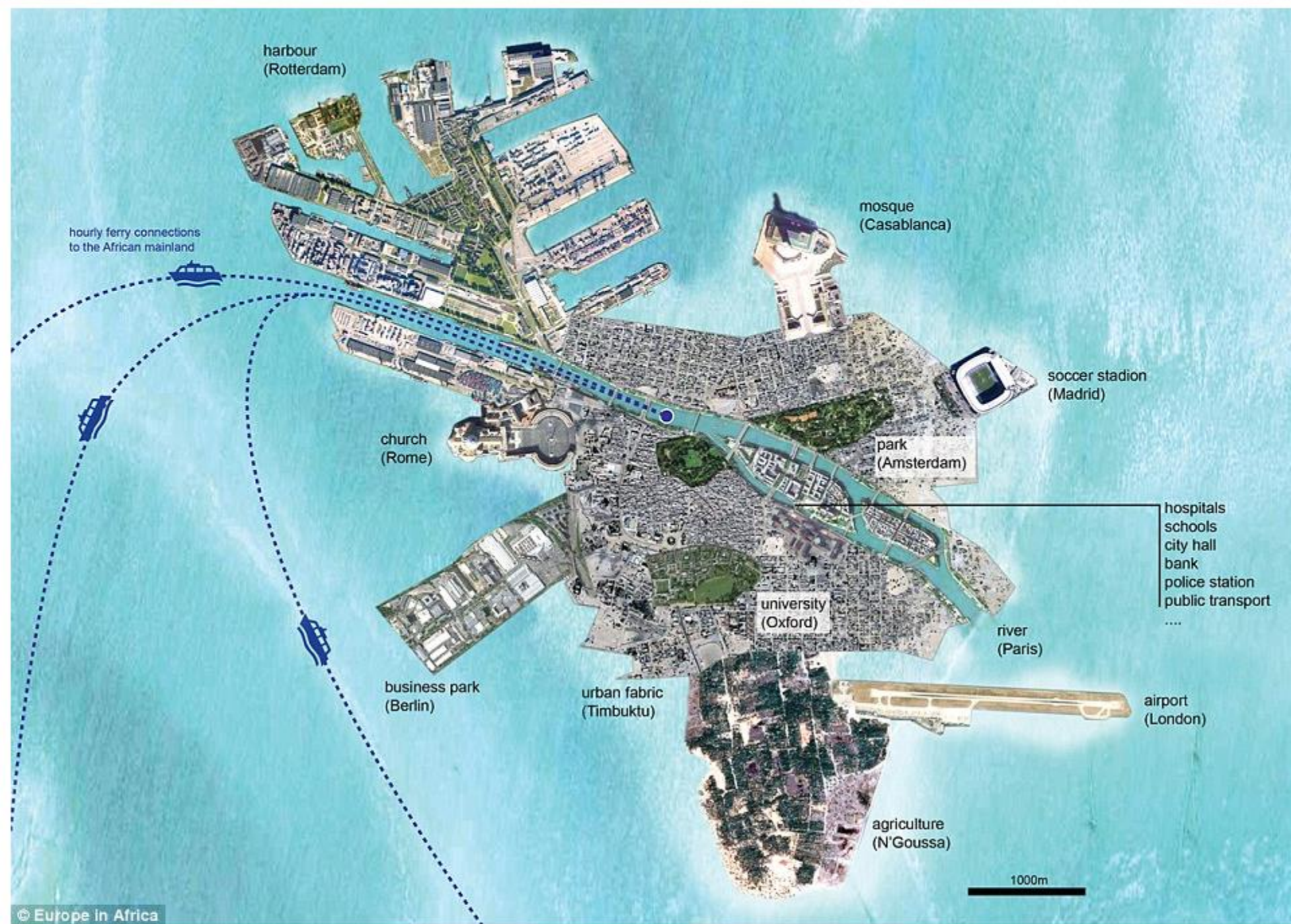
Learn More

Europe in Africa (EIA) is a proposal for a **new city - state** founded on an artificial island built on the shallow Tunisian Plateau right between the Exclusive Economic Zone of Tunisia and Italy. The aim of EIA is to provide a **secure place** for people that have to flee their country and want to reach Europe.

The seabed on which the island will be erected and its surrounding territorial waters will be rented for 99 years from Tunisia and Italy, by the European Union.

Credit: Europe in Africa <https://www.europeinafrica.com/>

Theo Deutinger, Spuistraat 272, 1012VW, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



Refugia: key elements

- A transnational polity...
- ...rather than a new nation state....
- *Refugia* comprises *all* its constituent elements worldwide
- the outcome of a grand bargain ...
- sovereign states licence tracts of territory to *Refugia*
- self-governing, self-sustaining, but subject to law of host
- supports *Refugians* in conflict regions (with remittances and other transfers)



Acknowledgement:
octophetus 2012

Refugia: governance and economy

- Governed by a transnational assembly elected by *Refugians* worldwide...
-with some host representation and participation...
- component *Refugia* territories are based on affiliation wider than ethnicity or religion
- eventually self supporting through economy part linked to 'host' societies



Acknowledgement: Grandmother Maka Nupa I. Cota

Refugia now, prefigured

- Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey as proto *Refugia*...
- ...likewise Iran, sub-Saharan Africa.....
- ...likewise neighbourhoods in world cities
- *Transnational governance*: imperfect examples already exist
- *Finance*: remittances today as a form of global redistribution of wealth and welfare
- *Culture*: art, dance, music, sport

Culture and sport



Credit: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/575154624/10-refugees-compete-2016-olympics-rio.html>. Photo in public domain.

Refugia prefigured

Cities and havens:

- Refugee cities
- Sanctuary cities
- Charter cities
- 'Free havens', free zones



Mini Refugias:

- Hotel Oniro, Greece
- Riace, Italy

Enclaves:

- The Bekaa Valley
- Rojava autonomous region, N Syria



Barcelona city of refuge



Refugia now, prefigured



- *Mobile commons*: community creation and reproduction through mutual aid among migrants en route, aided by supportive host citizens
- Collective action by migrants and refugees across ethnic/national groups which has transformed EU policy, with host citizen support
-all of which add up to Refugia (imperfectly) prefigured

The mobile commons consists of

- knowledge of mobility that circulates among people on the move
- infrastructure of connectivity distributing these knowledges
- a multiplicity of informal economies that cover activities and services than cannot be accessed easily through the public sector or privately
- diverse forms of transnational communities of justice
- a politics of care and mutual cooperation

(Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 191)



Men wait for the opportunity to stow away on a lorry: Matt Sprake



Migrants walking out of Budapest in the direction of Vienna:
Frank Augstein/AP



Photo and text: Qusay Loubani

After hundreds of refugees turned their backs on Idomeni, totally disillusioned due to the closed borders and the evacuated wild camp, many of them headed to the Athenian harbour of Piraeus, favouring a place on the dockside, in the unbearable blazing heat of June within the view of the tourist liners to other places. Frankly, many of us had no other place to go to anyway.

Since life in a tent near the docks in another wild camp was not to be regarded as a picnic, and since harbours are not built to accommodate fugitives in rising numbers, some Left-wing Greek activists decided to help us look for a solution, and they made a good find: The *Oniro* hotel. A hotel at a 500 metre distance to the Victoria underground station at the centre of Athens, that has been closed due to tax debts for about four years now.

The building was somehow abandoned but it had all the necessary simple, but comfortable furniture and each room had its own bath. For every one of us the latter was a dream come true! The long lines at the refugee camps seemed all of a sudden like an almost forgotten nightmare compared to the new situation of total independence by using a bath.

About 200 – 250 refugees are staying here now. As in other occupied camps in Athens, the meals for the inhabitants are prepared in the hotel while some of us, supported by Greek and foreign volunteers, take care of getting the supplies.

“It’s the dream itself“, described one of the new Oniro residents regarding his life there. He wishes that “every refugee could somehow experience the same luck we had.”



‘A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.’ Oscar Wilde (1912/2007, p. 147)

‘No nation but the imagination’, Derek Walcott

Refugia: a pragmatic utopia

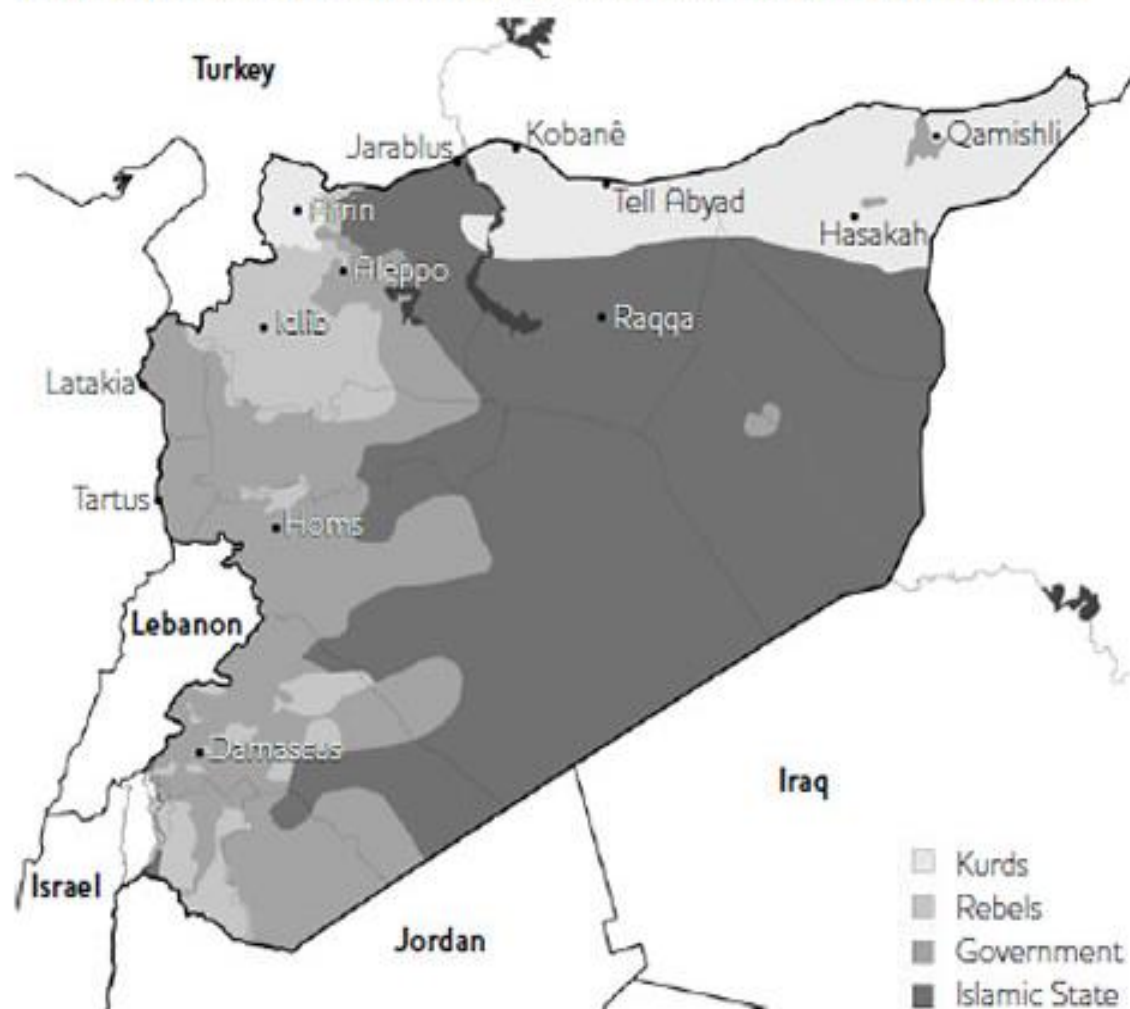
For additional reading (free access),
search for:
visions of refugia planning



Three modes of refugee 'settlement' in the Bekaa valley

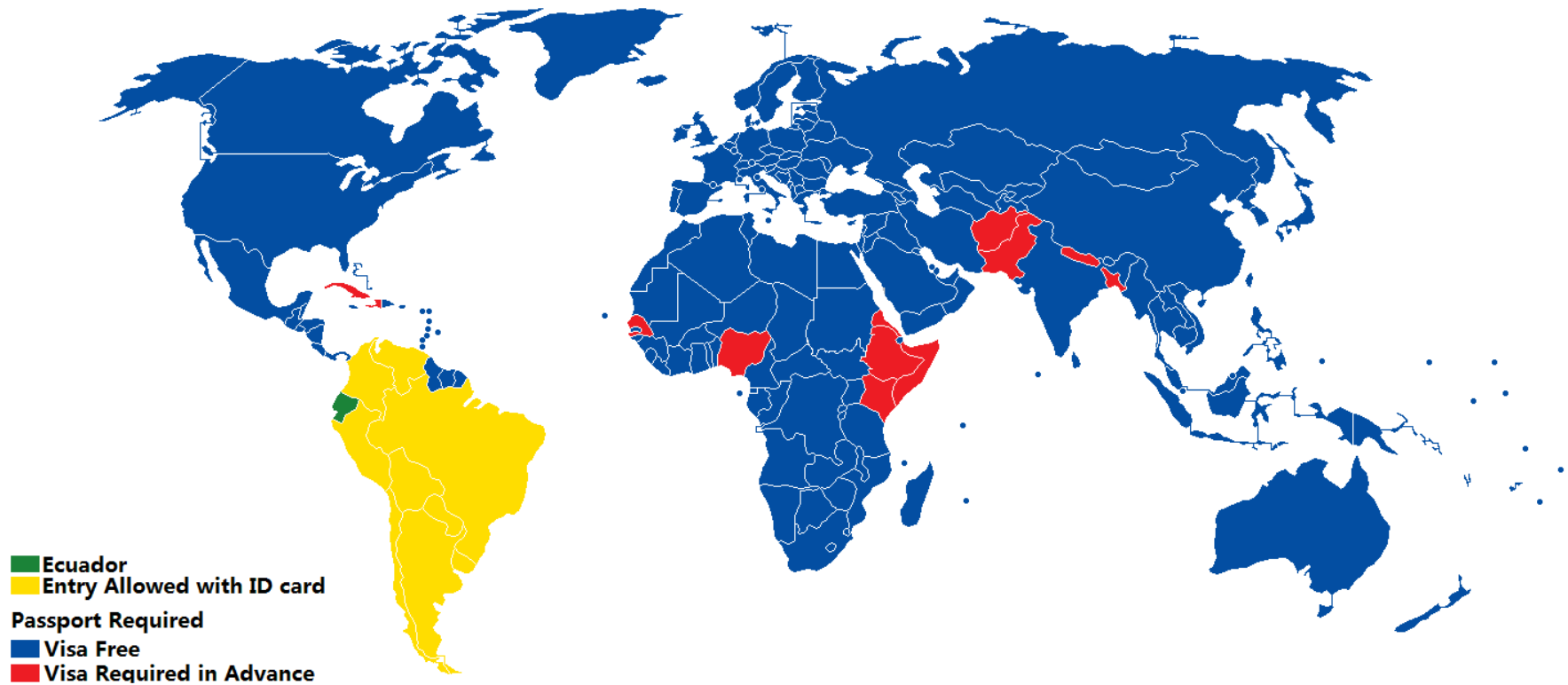
- Refugees who have a relationship with the absentee owners – either as relatives or friends -- live in their houses or on land attached to the houses for free or for a nominal rent
- Refugees unrelated to the owners who rent or squat on land from such absentee owners
- Refugees who rent from NGOs which have rented the land from absentee owners
- But vulnerable....demolition recently by Lebanese authorities

Territorial control in the Syrian civil war: situation on the ground January 2016



Source Redrawn from original by Dilek Gürsoy.

Open borders in Ecuador



the 'mobile commons'

The mobile commons is neither private nor public, neither state owned nor part of civil society; rather it exists to the extent that people share it and generate it as they are mobile and when they arrive somewhere ...the knowledge and practices of mobility circulate beyond the enclosures of public, private and civil society institutions and they are cooperatively produced in the commons and through the commons (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 190-191)



Refugees negotiate barbed wire at Hungarian border: Al Jazeera



Pitched Battles at Eurotunnel: EastAfro.com

Cairo 2005



"For how long will the international organization save us meanwhile we are suffering" Source: Youssef Assad

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Credit: Europe in Africa <https://www.europeinafrica.com/>
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Refugee cities slides

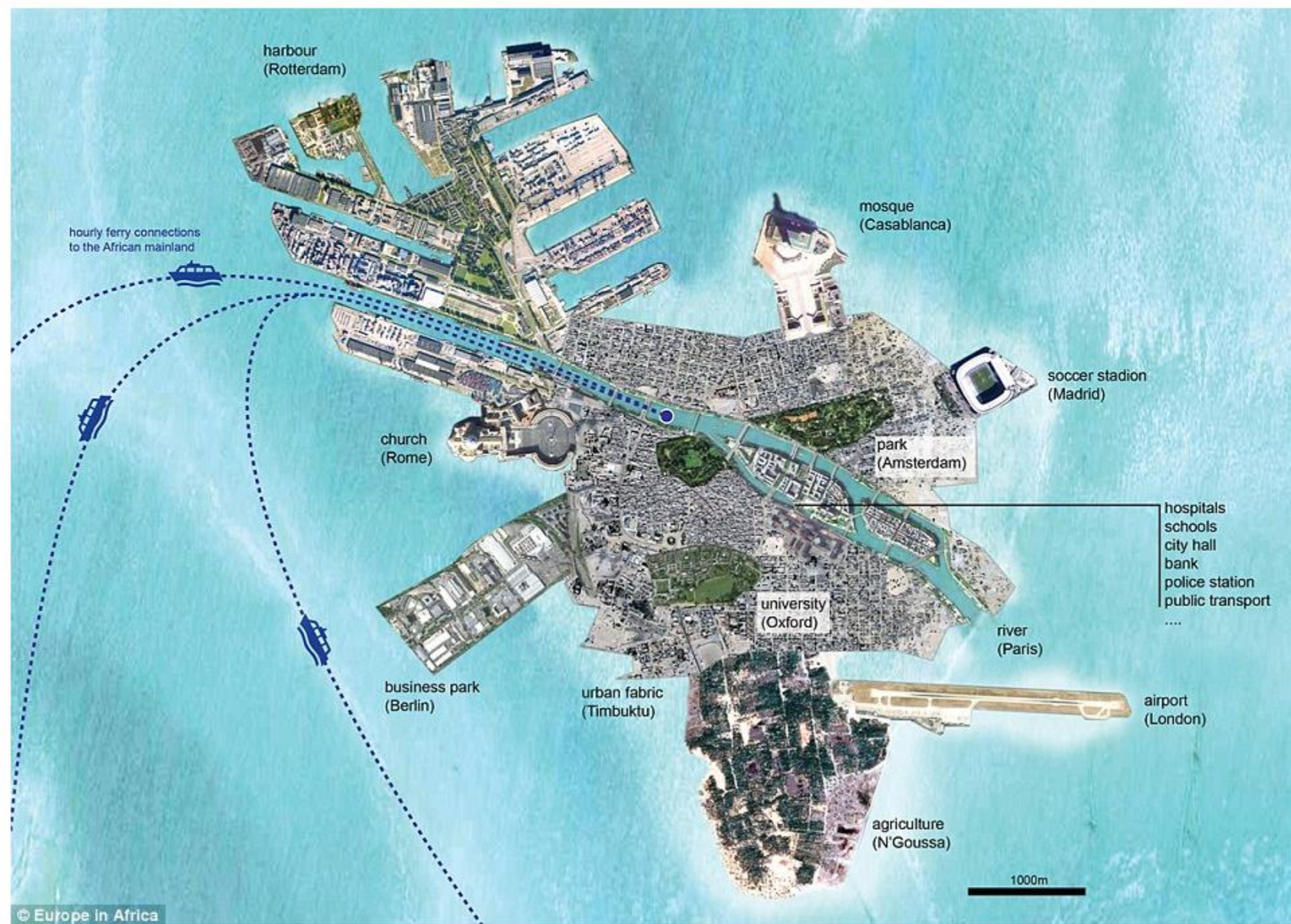
- Neoliberal
- SEZs betts collier
- Community led
- Barcelona
- Sanctuary cities
- Riace

Riace pic

Insert bekaa valley pic

Refugia now, prefigured

- Mobile commons: community creation and reproduction through mutual aid among migrants en route, aided by supportive host citizens
- Collective action by migrants and refugees across ethnic/national groups which has transformed EU policy, with host citizen support
- Mini Refugias: Hotel Oniro, Greece; Riace, Italy; Rojava, northern Syria
-all of which add up to Refugia (imperfectly) prefigured



harbour
(Rotterdam)

hourly ferry connections
to the African mainland

mosque
(Casablanca)

soccer stadium
(Madrid)

park
(Amsterdam)

church
(Rome)

hospitals
schools
city hall
bank
police station
public transport
....

river
(Paris)

university
(Oxford)

business park
(Berlin)

urban fabric
(Timbuktu)

airport
(London)

agriculture
(N'Goussa)

1000m



Our perspective and tasks on the Rojava Revolution

How Not to Design a World Without Borders

Ecuador tried to rewrite the rules of human migration—only to recoil at the results.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/how-not-to-design-a-world-without-borders/374563/>

The 'SesamePass': liquid transnational citizenship



- **Ensures security** (iris, photo, fingerprint, DNA, blood-group, reference)
- **Permits movement** (across all of Refugia and authorizing states)
- **Accesses credits** (temp. and self-build housing, internet/phone time, travel tickets)
- **Grants entitlements** (community voting, 1st, 2nd, 3rd aid kits, education, health care, food, clothing)
- **Provides status determination** (*prima facie* decisions)
- **Encourages work** (international labour exchange and work/residence visas in authorizing states)