FRIENDS OF THE SCOTSMAN /

There is radical denial of humanity and hospitality in the UK asylum system

To totally dismiss a wounded body, traumatised mind, and exiled human being seeking refuge is an abdication of responsibility, says **Hyab Yohannes**

People seeking refuge do not do so as physical bodies needing protection. Often sealed within wounded bodies and behind strange faces, they respectfully appeal to the Government and people of the UK to uphold their ethical responsibility to treat fellow human beings with dignity and respect.

Refugees make these appeals as humans with their own languages, cultures, skills, and knowledge, and they want to use their languages, cultures, and skills to build a world where everybody can give and receive as equals.

Yet, in the giving-receiving paradox of so-called integration, it is only citizens who have the right to give. Citizens accept no gifts from refugees, yet expect refugees to accept their way of life as a gift. The notion of integration as a benign relationship between immigrants and citizens hides the fact that citizens force their values and way of life on those seeking refuge without receiving anything in return. People seeking refuge are expected to leave their own "worlds" and enter a new "world" as if they had never previously existed as subjects with language, culture, and knowledge.

They experience a reduction of their subjectivities. They want to work, study, speak their languages, and share their cultures, but are denied any opportunity to give back their languages, cultures and ways of life. This impossibility of giving anything back forces refugees to become permanent receivers – to be at the receiving end. Assimilated into a system in which they no longer recognise themselves, they unbecome what they once were to become like "us".

The category of "citizen" appears to be assigned the role of "giver", which denotes colonial relations. While, for citizens, the act of receiving is rendered impossible, for refugees, it is inevitable. One can only refuse to receive a gift – to share a world with those who seek refuge. In fact, those seeking refuge resist the idea that it is impossible for us to share the world; they know better how to coexist with new faces in new places. It therefore behoves the citizen to recognise the refugees' dignity, and their rights to give and receive, requiring radical openness and hospitality.

Ironically, however, the government creates a "hostile environment" in which citizens are taught to blame refugees for not giving back. Once citizens are persuaded that those seeking refuge are to blame, the government then uses this to deny the refugees' very existence and their basic rights to seek asylum. To deny people the right to asylum is the most radical dismissal of their very existence. To dismiss a wounded body, traumatised mind, and exiled human being seeking refuge is a radical abdication of any responsibility to protect the human condition.

To conclude, giving and receiving are essential elements in the process of integration. They allow us to leave ourselves and our worlds in order to find ourselves in a new world that we have built together with others. If we deny people the right to give, we are refusing to share a world with them. If we are incapable of recognising a human face in the faces of the refugees or a human place in the places of the refugees, then how can we claim to have humanity in our own faces and hospitality in our own places?

There is a radical denial of humanity and hospitality in the UK asylum system, and this denial amounts to a refusal of the subjectivity of the refugee. Reversing this requires intercultural and inter-epistemic communication between cultures, languages, bodies and minds outside of the state-sanctioned violence. It necessitates imagining integration otherwise and recognising the fact that we might need what the refugees have to offer us in order to accommodate them – to "integrate" them.

Dr Hyab Yohannes, Academic Coordinator (School of Education), University of Glasgow for Young Academy of Scotland

Species matter for our biodiversity

It's strange that in the draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy species barely feature at all, writes **Paul Walton**

The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to keep all the pieces, said American conservationist and writer Aldo Leopold.

The immense variety of the living world is astounding, bewildering – but it is not disordered. Individual animals, plants, fungi, even microbes, occur in inter-breeding groups that we call species. There is genetic diversity within species, and wider ecological diversity too, but species are fundamental units of life. They interact with one another to build ecosystems and together, these comprise biodiversity. Which is in crisis.

Globally, we are losing biodiversity at a rate faster than ever in human history. Scotland is not exempt. Out of 240 territories around the world, Scotland ranks 28th from the bottom in the Biodiversity Intactness Index, an estimate of overall biodiversity condition. The 2019 State of Nature in Scotland Report showed an average loss of 24 per cent in the abundance of well monitored wildlife species since 1994.

Species-based measures of national biodiversity like this one are not just the territory of wildlife charities and pressure groups. The Scottish Government bases its own National Performance Framework biodiversity indicator on similar, species-based measures. It is strange, therefore, that in the draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045, on which consultation recently ended, species barely feature.

There has been much constructive discussion around that draft, in Parliamentary committees and beyond. Publication of the Strategy, originally due for October, has been postponed pending a new draft in December, with further public consultation in early 2023. Conservation organisations have been pressing for three changes: The Strategy must include provisions for a Programme of Ecosystem Restoration; a Programme of Species Recovery; and specific Outcomes and Targets against which to measure progress. The Scottish Government are now considering including Ecosystem Restoration and stronger outcomes and targets. But on Species Recovery there is, so far, a frustrating response; "we do ecosystems, we don't do single species". There is a simple and seductive logic here: ecosystems comprise lots of species, restore ecosystems and lots of species benefit.

But this vastly oversimplifies the regeneration of the natural environment, overestimates understanding of species interactions and ecosystems, and overlooks our international obligations. Humanity is a long way from full understanding of ecosystem function, the roles played by component species, and how these change through time.

It would be possible to launch much-needed ecosystem restoration programmes for, say, Caledonian pinewoods, yet for these to entirely miss critical actions for species currently struggling in this fragmented habitat – like the twinflower, which needs carefully planned translocation initiatives to help pollinators reach the flowers. We should launch restoration programmes for marine ecosystems – but, alone, these would fail to halt the loss of Scotland's seabirds, already halved even before the sudden impact of avian influenza. Seabirds have specific needs – like the removal of island invasive predators and in-perpetuity biosecurity, and active measures in fishing fleets to reduce entanglement of birds in long lines and nets. A dedicated programme for every single wild species was never the idea. This is about specific actions, targeted at specific, threatened species.

We need Programmes of both Ecosystem Restoration and Species Recovery. The detail and prioritisations can await future Delivery Plans. But if these are not both explicitly included, in principle, Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy will not do what it must: regenerate Scotland's nature, maximise its resilience to intensifying human threats, and fulfil our international responsibilities. Species matter. If we ignore them, we ignore global obligations – and we forget what inspires and sustains our health and culture. A red squirrel, a Scottish primrose and a sea eagle speak more directly, to more people, than any metric or indicator.

Paul Walton, RSPB Scotland's Head of Habitats and Species Scotland

↑ A red squirrel feeds in the Trossachs

Optimistic and pessimistic scenarios for border trade following independence

There could be minimal friction or greater border disruption with some categories of freight vehicles subject to routine or random checks, says **John Yellowlees**

Brexit has already done much of the border management groundwork needed for Scottish independence in the European Union (EU).

That was a claim put forward by Professor Alan McKinnon of Kuehne Logistics University in Hamburg at a recent webinar on the logistics impact of Scottish independence and Brexit. He quoted a study by Hayward and McEwen as finding that "Brexit has re-energised the campaign for Scottish independence, but it has made the practicalities of independence more complex".

A comfort noted by Alan was that in the event of a Yes vote for Scottish independence the process of detaching Scotland from the UK and then readmittance to the EU would probably take several years, giving business more time to make adjustments than during some recent fiscal changes. Also, in that period there would surely be further progress in digitising customs procedures.

Currently lacking any significant non-food distribution centres other than Amazon, Scotland is at present dependent on movements from the logistics heartland of midland England. According to research by London School of Economics (LSE), so close is the economic integration between Scotland and the rest of the UK that the volume of trade is six times greater than what a gravity model would predict for two economies of their size and proximity.

Most of Scotland's international trade passes through English ports and airports. The country lacks a direct RoRo ferry link to mainland Europe and its airports handle only 2 per cent of UK air cargo.

If border controls significantly constrained cross-border freight traffic, a possible business response to independence might be to position more inventory in Scotland. This could impair logistical efficiency but would promote property development and employment. There might also be a modal shift from road to rail, offering easier border transit both to England and via the Channel Tunnel to other EU countries. Independence would promote an expansion of direct shipping services (containerised and RoRo) between Scotland and the European mainland and help Grangemouth to fulfil its potential.

Evidence of how countries can change economic direction is provided by the Irish Republic, where at the time of accession in 1973 the proportion of its exports going to the UK amounted to 55 per cent – now this is only 9 per cent, and since Brexit the proportion of Ireland-EU trade on direct ferry routes to the European mainland has doubled with seven new routes, while the share which crosses the UK "land-bridge" has dropped from 84 to 66 per cent.

If Scotland rejoined the EU single market as an independent country it could have border-free access to other EU countries via Ireland but routing our trade on a double sea-crossing would be too circuitous.

Alan sketched out two scenarios. In the benign one, there would be minimal border friction: the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) would remain in force, providing tariff-free trade between UK and EU. Minimal divergence would prevail between UK and EU regulatory standards, and the Common Transit Convention would continue to apply to Scottish international trade "land-bridging" the rest of the UK. In his more pessimistic scenario, border friction would arise from divergence of UK and EU regulatory standards, requiring re-negotiation of the TCA and imposition of tariffs/restrictions on some classes of product. With less progress on the digitisation of border processes including alignment of SPS controls and checking on rules of origin, we might see much greater border disruption with some categories of freight vehicles subject to routine or random checks.

There could thus be an increase in the length and variability of cross-border transit times, with occasionally significant tail-backs. Scotland's international logistics might also be affected by inconsistencies in such areas as truck fuel economy standards, cabotage rules and emissions trading, particularly after the EU introduces a carbon border adjustment mechanism.

John Yellowlees, Scottish chair, CILT

Definitely time to get clued up on what MPNs can do for you

Rise of interest in mobile private networks from businesses across the country, says **Tom Sime**

With the drive towards improving operational efficiency and digitisation, Scottish businesses are changing the way they operate with many looking to mobile private networks (MPNs) to improve efficiency, reliability and increase digital capacity.

If you haven't heard of MPNs, it is definitely time to get yourself and your business clued up. While MPNs are not new, we have seen a rise in interest from businesses across the country and across various sectors wanting to know more about the benefits and if it's something they should consider.

MPNs can revolutionise business by bringing the network and the cloud closer to the devices that need it. They allow companies to manage all of their devices, services and assets in a more secure and efficient way, all while having more control of their network, a local network on their premises.

While public networks can be accessed by anyone with a mobile plan, private networks are deployed for exclusive use by an enterprise and allows only authorised users and devices to connect. It's definitely worth considering what the benefits are of deploying something like this for your business.

Security is often the driving force behind companies that choose to create their own private mobile network. We hear more and more reports of cybersecurity attacks on businesses across the globe and MPNs can be a key tool to reducing risks and keeping important data safe as it doesn't leave your premises to be stored externally.

Reliability is also an important factor. Industries such as manufacturing, for example, cannot rely on a public network to monitor its machines and equipment. If the network has an issue, it could halt production. MPNs create greater business responsiveness as your data can be collected, analysed and then acted upon locally without needing to cross the network.

It is scalable so it's possible to create a solution for a manufacturing company which enables thousands of devices on its factory floor to connect to the network without affecting performance. Slow public connections and lagging can also affect productivity and a private network eliminates any dependency on a public network.

As well as solving these common concerns businesses can have, MPNs open the door to the future and make it easier to upgrade and implement new technologies, ensuring businesses can remain agile and adapt.

MPNs can utilise both 4G and 5G technology and for many businesses. However, private dedicated 5G networks ensure a business owns all of the network infrastructure as well as the spectrum, giving it full control. This is often a good option for large businesses, but that doesn't mean that it isn't something smaller companies and those in other sectors can benefit from. Hybrid MPNs see businesses owning part of the infrastructure. A good option for retail, healthcare, stadiums and office campuses.
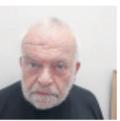
More and more, I have been helping businesses create their own MPN but it's important to think about these aspects before taking it forward. What is certain is that digitalisation is only going to become more important to businesses as we head into 2023.

Tom Sime, CEO of Exchange Communications