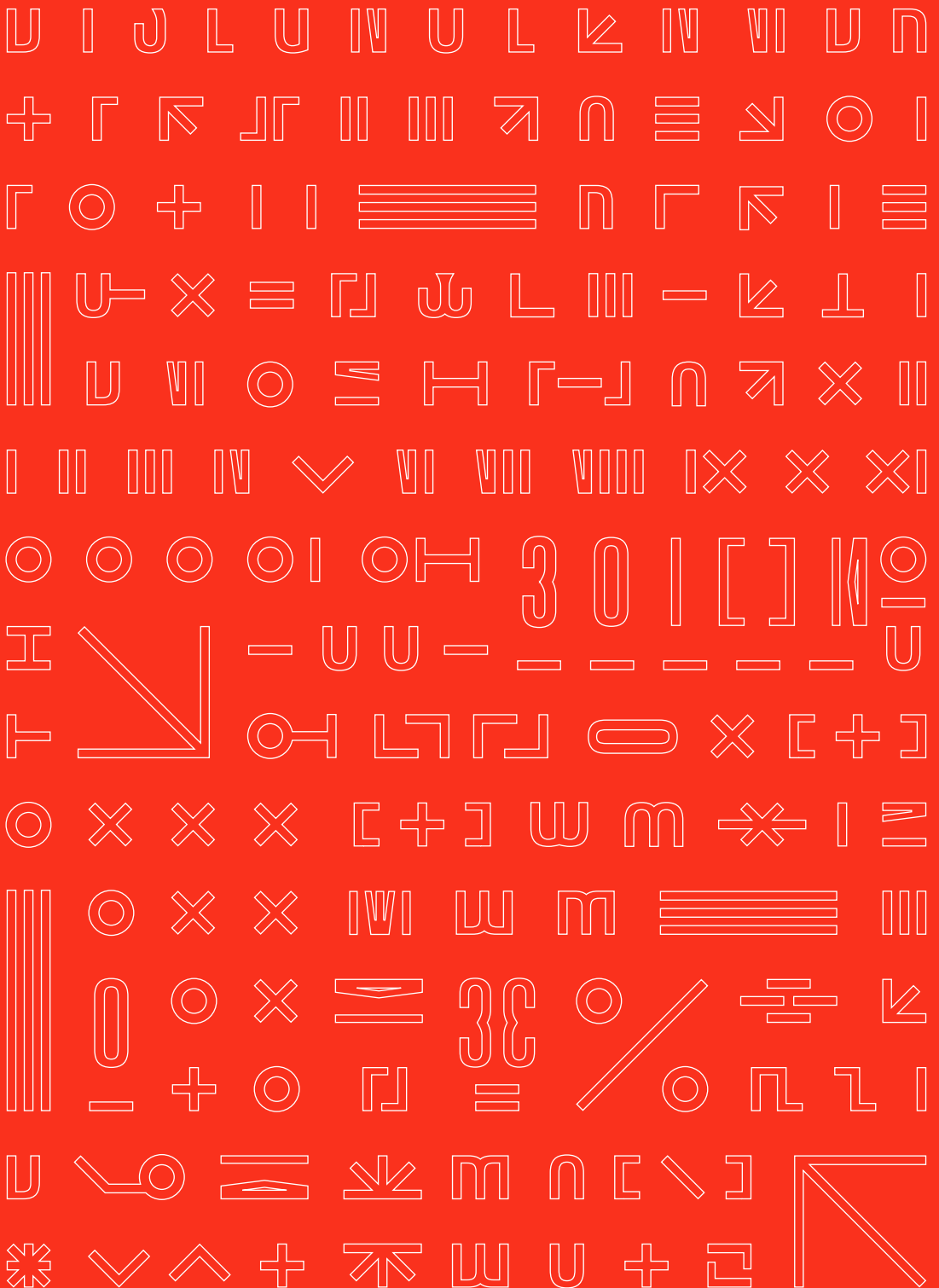
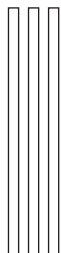
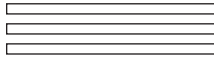


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EVERYDAY OBJECTS IN TRAUMA THERAPY: EXAMINING THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF YOUNG REFUGEES WITH THE AIM OF TRAUMA PROCESSING

Erzsébet Hosszu

ABSTRACT

Objects help us to integrate, socialise, learn, and mirror our past and self. They also represent our home, as we can take them with us when moving. What happens to our objects when this move is accompanied by the trauma of forced migration? The aim of this paper is to understand the significance of the object, the smallest physical unit of the home, in the recovery processes of trauma caused by forced migration. In parallel with a literature review, this research relies on in-depth interviews and the author's ten years of field experience in refugee communities in Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium and Palestine. The literature review explores the importance of objects in the context of migration, highlighting the roles of them in the process of socialising with others, learning new skills, developing our own self, transforming our home and surviving a challenge. According to the literature, objects can create a safe and well known environment, they can materialise the past and culture, therefore they can help to recall memories and they can also have a significant role in reconnecting us to life, since they integrate us into new communities. According to the interviews, the coping strategies have more to do with activity and social connections and less with everyday objects due to the trauma of forced migration. Taking advantage of the general nature of objects, the coping mechanism of forced migrants and loose object attachment, objects can become a neutral tool of trauma therapy. From the results, a design therapy toolkit will be created for professionals, educators and therapists, which can support processing trauma by developing place and object attachment.

#loss of space, #boundary objects, #object attachment, #forced migration, #design therapy

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INTRODUCTION

“The surrounding material world matches human needs of an invisible type and number, well or badly, and conversely, countless human needs can be objectified in an infinite type and amount of things.” (Dúll 2009, 138) Objects help us to integrate, socialise, learn, and mirror our past and self. They also represent our home, as we can take them with us when moving.

To consider forced migration as a traumatising event (Silove et al. 1997), it is necessary to understand the essential nature of trauma. In response to a threat, a complex reaction system arises, which affects both the body and the mind. As the adrenaline level increases, a state of readiness sets in: full attention is directed to the threatening situation, changes occur in the usual modes of perception (we do not feel hunger, fatigue, pain). These changes mobilise the threatened person to be able to take persistent action: either to fight or to flee. A traumatic reaction occurs when action is ineffective (Herman 2015). Neither fighting nor fleeing helps, so the self-defence system is overloaded, and its functioning is disrupted (Herman 2015). Besides that, “loss of control is traumatising in itself.” (Dúll 2009, 233) The traumatic events of forced migration are not only the push factors (war, persecution, disaster) but also the experience of multiple losses (of loved ones, home, possessions, and existence) and the inevitable transformation of one’s culture upon arriving in a new environment (Hautzinger, Hegedüs, and Klenner 2014).

Restoring the self-structure and control of the traumatised person are the primary goals of a recovery process (Herman 2015). The victim’s self-structure and control can only be restored in the way it was originally formed: through connection with others (Herman 2015). The three stages of recovery are: (1) the creation of security, (2) the restoration of memories and grief of loss, and (3) the reconnection to everyday life (Herman 2015). The importance of attachment to relevant objects appears in Hungarian (Dúll 2009, Wilhelm 2014b) and international literature (Belk 1992, Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011). In the context of migration, material culture and object attachment has particular importance because they make the home moveable, so they can maintain its sense of

continuity (Dúll 2009), and also because they support developing new social connections by helping us to express our identity to others (Kapitány and Kapitány 2010), learn social norms (Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011), and connect to people with different cultural backgrounds with “boundary” objects (Wilhelm 2014b). In the place called home, the individual is able to experience the highest level of control and security, this is the place where the individual recharges upon returning, and then sets off again and explores the world with confidence (Dúll 2009).

The review of the relevant literature will establish the context, including the psychology of migration and the nature of trauma, material culture and cultural anthropology, symbolism and environmental psychology. In addition to the literature review, in-depth interviews were conducted with nineteen forced young migrants, a population that has been repeatedly traumatised and had to leave its homeland behind. They allow insight into how material culture can become part of their coping strategy to create a new home in a foreign country. Existing studies (Korac 2009, Dudley 2010, Guevara González 2022) have mostly examined the object culture of refugees in refugee camps and in the transitional areas of the borders. In contrast, this study examines a population that already has a residence permit, official education, and a permanent job, so their experiences are not framed by the limitations of illegality and refugee camps.

Since January 2013, the author has been working with young refugees and asylum seekers as a volunteer for a Hungarian association called *Útilapu Hálózat*, where she founded the Open Doors working group with her graphic designer partner, Ágnes Jekli. Open Doors was created with the aim of using the methodology of participatory design to improve the integration opportunities of young refugees and to support intercultural dialogue. Over the past ten years, the author has facilitated countless creative workshops, placemaking projects and seven to fourteen-day design camps with young refugees, immigrants and their disadvantaged Hungarian peers. The author compares her field experiences of the past ten years with literature and in-depth interview research to understand how architecture and design can support the development of forced migrants’ sense of home and the processing of their trauma caused by the loss of place and objects.

The purpose of this study is to focus on material culture and understand the importance of the smallest physical unit of the home—our everyday objects—in the recovery processes of the trauma caused by the loss of space. The results of the research will be manifested in a prospective design therapy toolkit, which is intended to support the processing of the trauma of the loss of place and the rebuilding

of place attachment: a collection of creative workshops that develop safety, memory, and reconnection to the community.

METHOD

The research process relies on two methods. The first is in-depth interviews with young adult forced migrants living in Hungary. The second is the author's ten-year fieldwork experience, including creative workshops and projects with refugees, as well as consultations and discussions with professionals working with refugees. The interviews are analysed and completed with the experiences of the fieldwork in the results section.

This paper interprets the results of the interviews through the frame of the central question of "What everyday objects are forced migrants in Hungary attached to and what do those objects mean to them?" The interview questions focused on two main topics: (1) what old belongings they have from their homeland, and (2) if they undertook another big journey, what objects would they take with them. With the interviews, the aim was to get to know the interviewees' coping strategy through the stories of their everyday objects. Understanding their relationship with material culture told us if they built (and if so, how) a new physical and mental home, community and other attachments in Hungary.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with nineteen people, selected according to five conditions. The first condition was that all the interviewees must consider themselves forced migrants. This means that their migration happened due to push factors (war, torture, persecution, poverty, hunger, environmental disasters, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, underdevelopment of the health care system or social instability) (Hautzinger, Hegedüs, and Klenner 2014) and their life was in danger. The second condition was that the interviewees had to be between the ages of eighteen and forty. Making interviews with people under eighteen was excluded for legal reasons connected to the child protection system. The cut-off age was forty, reflecting the higher potential in younger individuals to integrate more fully with local communities. The third condition was that all the interviewees must have been born outside Europe. This means that all the interviewees experienced an extreme culture change. The fourth condition was that they had already been living in Europe for at least two years, including at least one year in Budapest (or close to Budapest). This condition is important because it means that all the interviewees already had general experiences in Europe and knowledge of everyday life in Budapest. The fifth condition was that all the interviewees possess a residence permit and/or have recognised refugee status. It means that their protection is legally

¹ All interviewees were fully informed about the purpose of the interview, the research, and the use of the results. They were also informed that after the interview they could still request to withdraw what they said from the research. Since the research project preserves the anonymity of all participants, ethical requirements are respected.

guaranteed and official, there is “light at the end of the tunnel”: they can start settling down (or have already started to). It also means that none of the interviewees live in a refugee camp anymore but in a rented flat or room.

During the interviews, an interactive model was followed (Creswell and Creswell 2018) to adapt to the language barriers and to respect the fact that the examined population is traumatised by war, torture, and leaving home behind. With the interactive method, the goal was to help the interviewees express themselves, and to avoid the confusion of one-sided conversations. The interviews were supported by visual games and tasks (pictures, maps, and drawings). The interviewees are assumed to have negative feelings towards being interviewed: the author became part of the conversation to avoid recalling the traumatising memories connected to the one-sided interviews of the asylum process. Through dialogue and visual games, an informal and deep conversation could develop.¹

The research also relies on the author’s field experience, which she gained in the home of unaccompanied minor refugees and asylum seekers in the Childcare Centre of Fót, in other adult detention centres and refugee camps in Hungary, as well as international study visits to Switzerland, Belgium, and Palestine. During these years, she facilitated short (half- to one-day) creative workshops, and long (one-week to three-month) design themed camps, international youth exchanges and projects. At these activities, the target community found a common design challenge, then developed and implemented solutions to it. The short programs included workshops such as textile silk printing, bookbinding, furniture renovation, and mural painting. During the long-term projects, several indoor and outdoor public spaces were designed and renovated, and media (photo, video) training, placemaking design camp, and interactive message board development were implemented. Regardless of whether we are talking about a short workshop or a long project, the goal is always to involve young people in the design and implementation process so that they can make their own decisions, acquire new competencies and develop their creative problem-solving skills. Besides these, the indirect result of the activities is the development of the community, given that these are never individual sessions and that the participants have to find a common agreement and cooperate in order to succeed. The experiences gained in the field are complemented by ongoing consultations and discussions with professionals working with refugees (psychologists, teachers, social workers, and project coordinators). The experience and results of the ten years were documented in the form of photos, videos and diary entries (Sztompka 2009).

THE DIVERSE ROLE OF OBJECTS IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

Before presenting the results of the interviews, a literature review of material culture in the context of migration and trauma processing is necessary. There is a complex interrelationship and transaction between the material environment and human behaviour, which is also marked, characteristic, and extremely stable: every object and material environment typically triggers and maintains persistent patterns of behaviour over a long period of time, even though the given people change in the environment (Dúll 2009). Because of the ongoing interaction between the people and their objects, it is more reasonable to understand the combined phenomenon of them than to try to examine them separately (Wilhelm 2014b, 24). In the following section, different phenomena of interaction will be explained, highlighting the possible relevance of migration and trauma processing (the creation of security, the restoration of memories and grief of loss, and the reconnection to everyday life).

First it is important to understand the individual's attachment to objects in general. The empirical research of Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány can help with this comprehensive examination. In their research, the majority of respondents answered that objects are "important," followed by those for whom "only certain objects are important," and the option "not important" was chosen the least (Kapitány and Kapitány 2005, 126). According to Belk, attachment to property can have a negative effect if the attachment is so strong that it negatively affects the relationship with other people or if the attachment is so extreme that the loss (or damage) of the object puts the self itself in danger (1992, quoted by Dúll 2009).

Objects can symbolise social integration or differentiation. (Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011) The object can embody the power and knowledge of its owner, it can make its social affiliation visible, and it also embodies belonging to a segregated community. Community can give meaning to distinguishing ourselves, but at the same time it can also mean social separation (the cross or the flag, for example) (Kapitány, Kapitány 2021). Integration and connection can be strengthened by the exchange of objects: interpersonal relationships are strengthened by the fact that a person gives a piece of himself and receives a piece from the other. Objects thus act as the "material embodiment of social relations in our environment" (Wilhelm 2014b, 35). It is a general cultural phenomenon to treat gifts differently: they are protected and kept in a special place (Wilhelm 2014b).

Connecting to social integration and connection, Gábor Wilhelm draws attention to the importance of "boundary objects." In this

sense, boundary objects can mediate and thus create a connection between different people and groups, because the given object can be related to all members of the group (Wilhelm 2014a). Although the interpretation of these objects may be different for different individuals and groups, they are still able to become a starting point for interaction. “Boundary objects are therefore suitable for coordinating groups, individuals, actions, communications, and creating collaborations without assuming a kind of common knowledge or culture between them.” (Wilhelm 2014b, 42) However, it is important to keep in mind that while boundary objects can serve as a tool for starting a dialogue between different cultures, they can also be the source of misunderstandings and confusion, since the parties do not necessarily recognise that their perception and thus their connection is in two different worlds (Hall 1975, 29). This means that different groups decode these objects and symbols differently, so they can even be a source of conflict (for example, in the socialism of the sixties and eighties, jeans were a status symbol for those who wanted to westernise, yet a symbol of value confusion from the perspective of popular conservatism) (Kapitány, Kapitány 2005, 12).

Objects offer the opportunity to learn (Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011). Whether it is about fitting into social norms, our own personal development, or the environment that supports our learning. Objects influence how we organise our lives (Kapitány, Kapitány 2016).

The everyday objects of our home can help us gain the flow experience. (Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011). The presence of our well-known objects can create a familiar, supportive, and inspiring environment, so the owner’s identity can be strengthened again. Due to familiarity, the number of things that can distract attention decreases, so the individual can create with focused concentration and thus develop (Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011, 268).

Objects also have importance in terms of the development of the self (Kapitány, Kapitány 2021). According to Sartre, objects are integrated into our self-identity through use. Sartre also groups these identity-building objects according to how they can become part of the self: “(1) through craft knowledge, (2) in connection with the creation of the object and (3) through getting to know the object.” (1943, quoted in Dúll 2009, 147) Belk’s addition was also that even the simple presence of the object can provide an emotional basis through a common “shared” fate (1991, quoted in Dúll 2009, 147). Objects that we possess (psychologically or physically) ensure control over the environment, strengthen our concept of self, increase self-confidence, provide a sense of security, and allow us to present our identity to ourselves and others (Dúll 2009, 141). Different objects convey different messages about us: about our daily life, occupation, values, beliefs, and cultural habits. (Kapitány and Kapitány 2010) With objects, we create our own

cultural environment, so an object can become a “carrier and copier of the cultural order.” (Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011, 159) Also, the status of the process of cultural change can be read from the migrants’ everyday objects (Wilhelm 2014a).

According to environmental psychology, lifeless objects very actively influence personal behaviour connecting to the place called home (Dúll 2009, 139). Without our objects we would not be able to inhabit our environment, with them we are able to furnish and rearrange our home: by this adaptation process the person and the environment gradually “fit together” (Dúll 2009, 142). We can move and recreate our home by taking the “things” such as furniture and household items with us, and by this “the usual behaviour and experience patterns can be re-formed.” (Dúll 2009, 144) One of the bases of attachment is “the feeling of real or psychological ownership,” and ownership is an essential factor in building and maintaining a home (Dúll 2009, 146).

Csíkszentmihályi and Halton examined the difference between active and contemplative objects. Referring to Hannah Arendt, they present the difference between these two groups, according to which the first (active) cultivates the personality through individual action, while the second (contemplative) cultivates the individual’s personality through conscious thought and reflection. The preference between the two object types changes with age and typically also differs between genders (Arendt 1958, quoted in Csíkszentmihályi and Halton 2011, 147).

In the case of forced migration, we lose control over a significant part of our life, and decisions must be made quickly (Hautzinger, Hegedüs, and Klenner 2014), therefore rescued and lost objects, just like objects that help survival, need to be examined as well. In-depth interviews examined the 1993 flood victims in the USA. (Schwarz 1996, quoted in Dúll 2009) The main focus of the interviews was to find out which objects were saved by the victims and why. Five groups of objects were identified from the answers: (1) objects of sentimental attachment, (2) objects that reflect and shape the owner’s self, (3) objects of “invested sweat,” (4) objects with cultural meaning, and (5) survival symbols (Schwarz 1996, quoted in Dúll 2009, 155). In the empirical research of Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány between 2002 and 2004, a separate section was devoted to the investigation of lost and destroyed objects. In many cases the respondents mention emotionally charged objects, so in the majority of cases they lose a piece of their personality (Kapitány and Kapitány 2005, 69). We must also take into consideration that migrants do not take certain things with them in physical form, however these things continue to function as references in the new place, where the migrants somehow reflect on their abandoned home (Wilhelm 2014b, 25). In the same empirical

research, in response to the question “If you could take three objects with you to a desert island, what would they be?” in addition to survival and communication tools, most responses included objects that reduce loneliness, remind you of loved ones, and talismans that play a protective role (Kapitány, Kapitány 2005, 141–44).

Connected to lost and missing objects, it is also worth including Turner’s concept of liminality in the context of migration. According to Turner, during the rite of passage, the liminal person is the one who has nothing, who is represented practically naked as a participant in the rites, and from this “nothingness” he must rebuild and endow himself with the new role, status, and objects (Turner 1969, 108). Moving on from this, Turner interprets the concept of *communitas*, the social grouping of liminal persons, where structure and rank are lacking, and thus the most basic “space of collective life” unfolds as a result of a shared fate and a shared life event (Turner 1969).

Through this literature review we can therefore see we should not underestimate the role of objects in processing trauma. We stated before that the primary goal of the recovery process is restoring the self-structure and control of the victim and it can only happen through connection with others. This recovery process happens in 3 stages: (1) the creation of security, (2) the restoration of memories and grief of loss, and (3) the reconnection to everyday life. Through the presence of our well known objects, we experience a familiar and safe environment, so the owner’s identity can be developed again. Objects materialise our past, our culture and identity, therefore they can help to recall memories. In addition, attachment to objects can be formed through memory. Objects have a significant role in reconnecting us to life, since they integrate us into new communities, they teach us social norms, support our education and development, and boundary objects can represent a bridge between people with different cultural backgrounds. If we start from the assumption that “objects imbued with emotional attachment (i.e., things)” actively contribute not only to the already mentioned teaching, integration and the “personal, social and cultural construction of our self, but also to the creation, maintenance and eventual restructuring of the experience of continuity” (Dúll 2009, 156), then objects can have a significant role in the recovery processes of migrants.

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS AND FIELDWORK

At the intersection of forced migration and material culture, studies mostly examined the material culture of refugees in refugee camps and in the transitional areas of the borders. The main focus of Sandra H. Dudley’s research is to understand the material, object-related, and emotional dimensions of being a refugee. Analysing the camp

life of Karenni refugees, she revealed the everyday, civil, and religious objects that surround them, and how they practise their daily routine through their objects and thus create their reinterpreted “home.” Dudley also examines how the object and the process of making it contributes to the experience of home and the personification of space. She particularly focused on clothes and textiles, which, according to research results, can form a bridge between the refugees’ past, present and future, especially if these clothes are made by the refugees themselves after arriving in the refugee camp (Dudley 2010, 126). Maja Korac examined the integration of refugees settled in Rome and Amsterdam. Like Dudley, she examined the residents of an asylum centre. Clothing was a key value here as well, and in addition to that, toiletries, money, and pen drives were important items. Korac also emphasises the importance of clothes: the fact that refugees themselves sew, repair, wash, and protect these items is important in addition to the purchase of them (Korac 2009, 344). Korac’s research determined that the refugee’s taking back control over their own life largely depends on how the person faces the sudden loss of their basic material resources and social status (Korac 2009, 39).

Both researchers attached particular importance to textiles and clothing from the point of view of the refugees’ possessions and attachments. Within the framework of Open Doors, I was able to experience myself how a canvas bag, which a few hours earlier could be described as impersonal and a mass product, can become a self-representative object. Bag painting and silk printing workshops are often organised for young refugees and immigrants, where the participants can shape the textiles into their own image. During the workshops, the young people get to know the techniques of colour mixing and silk printing, and they work deeply on their own ideas. They are also inspired by each other, they help each other in the process of silk printing, and the end result is an object of their own, which they are proud to wear (figs. 1–2).

FIGURE 1–2. *Screen printing workshop in the MiraDoor intercultural community space.*



In contrast to Dudley's and Korac's study, this research examines a population that already has a residence permit, official education, and a permanent job, so their experiences are not framed to the limitations of illegality and refugee camps. The interviewees of this paper live in their own rented room or flat and they manage their own everyday life with their own rules and decisions.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore what everyday objects forced migrants in Hungary are attached to, and what those objects mean to them. The questions were focused on two main topics: (1) what old belongings they own from their homeland, and (2) if they undertook another big journey, what objects they would take with them. Besides the fact that little significant consensus was found between the individual answers, three clear differences between the objects of the past and objects of the future were identified.

The most significant consensus among all nineteen interviewees was that the first reaction of all the interviewees during the conversation indicated that they do not keep any objects from their homeland, and that they are not attached to any new objects, so they would not take anything in particular with them if they undertook another big journey. The most frequent justifications for the lack of objects from the homeland were sudden decision-making, tragic life situations, and practical reasons.

I didn't think about bringing anything with me, everything was difficult, I didn't even think about it, it wasn't important. You know, it wouldn't have been comfortable. You can find everything here anyway.

22-year-old Afghan man. Personal interview. Budapest, March 15, 2021.

It is also important to mention that the objects of the past are not necessarily missing for merely practical reasons. In the first half of the study, we clarified that objects have a prominent role in relocating our home and by this creating the sense of continuity and reconstruction (Dúll 2009). This sense of continuity is unquestionably and markedly interrupted by the fact that the refugees hardly keep any objects from their past. Trauma poses a threat to place and object attachment by fundamentally damaging it (Dúll 2009, 154), so it can also be assumed that people who have experienced multiple traumas do not necessarily want (or are not yet ready) to recreate their past home. Later this gap cannot be filled with authentic objects from the homeland when the refugee is ready for it, but it can be bridged with creativity. An Afghan member of the Open Doors community represents an example of this creative bridging. He does not have any objects from his past (so the continuity of his attachment to objects has been broken) but thanks to the progress of his integration and recovery, he today regularly facilitates creative

workshops. During these workshops he teaches the participants how to make and fly an Afghan kite. It means that he reconstructs his own cultural heritage and knowledge from locally found materials and passes it on to the new, inclusive culture, while he himself recreates it (fig. 3).



FIGURE 3. *Flying Afghan kites from rooftops on a weekend in Pakistan.*

Another important similarity in the answers was that in the progress of the conversation, nine of the nineteen interviewees found at least one object from their past hiding with them and all nineteen interviewees realised that they have belongings that they would take with themselves on a new journey. Their objects from the past are family photographs and jewellery (to preserve the memory of the family), a spoon (because it is practical), a book (because it preserves culture), paper money from home (which was accidentally left in a pocket, but apparently means nothing), and a tie (which is more like a memory). Their objects for the future are cooking equipment (to share culture), shisha and guitar (to spend time together), a sewing machine and a big bed (to be able to help a friend who is in need), study books, professional degrees and portfolios, and pictures and a globe (as memories).

In addition to the objects of the past, belongings lost during the journey were also mentioned. Passports were mentioned the most, and two interviewees recalled losing their shoes. When mentioning lost objects, the personal attachments and the lack of practicality are divided in the case of both types of objects: one person remembered his passport as an object symbolising his country (and thus losing it together with the passport), while in one case the shoes were highlighted due to the need for use, but in the other they symbolised the country and life left behind:

I loved that boot... really, just shoes, you know. But sometimes basic stuff makes some connection even with your soul... When I was in the boat to cross Turkey to Greece. It's kind of a plastic boat, pumping, you know. I had all of my stuff and my boot closed inside my backpack because the sea weather can hurt the leather. I put in the plastic then in another plastic, then into my backpack and my backpack was in the other plastic [laughs]. Some money and I don't know, my phone was there, and so I had everything put in there. And when we were in the sea, our boat get some problem, so we had to jump in the sea and it was night, nothing you know, everywhere was dark, really dark. It was really scary actually. I tried to keep my big [laughs] backpack with me but it was really scary, I was stressed and the sea was waving and it just take some seconds, it came up and it came down. And my backpack just take some metres far from me. And it was for me like: "Woo, no, don't go away!" I was trying. There was a boy and he told us try to stay with each other hand or whatever, because the wave is coming and if you just go with the wave, that's it. So it was kind of like my backpack was on the water [laughs], and I said "C'mon this is just two metres from here, I can go and take it and back." And then the boy was just trying to catch me: "Let's stay together!" Life is like in a second, you can lose anything in a second, really. I don't know, it was for me very strange time. Anyway, my shoe was my last thing.

24-year-old Afghan man. Personal interview. Budapest, March 7, 2021.

The first clear difference between the past and the future objects was quantity: ten interviewees had no belongings from the past while all of them had something for the future. This means the nakedness of the liminal persons (Turner 1969) is represented by the lack of the objects from the past. Owning nothing and leaving everything behind: Gábor Wilhelm explains this phenomenon by saying that we can only mobilise our environment to a limited extent, we ourselves are much more mobile. We don't always know and don't always want to take our objects with us (Wilhelm 2014b, 25). This kind of nakedness significantly dissolves when looking to the future, however, it cannot be ignored that those who have been living in Hungary for several years and have recognised refugee status still believe at first thought: they would take nothing (or nothing important) with them on another big journey. The nakedness characteristic of liminality therefore persists for many years and dissolves only slowly. Related to this, we can conclude that the interviewed forced migrants are mostly free of close ties to their objects. Based on the empirical research presented by Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány, in a more detailed statement we can assume that the relationship of forced migrants to objects is significantly limited. For them objects are primarily "not important," and secondarily "some objects may be important" (Kapitány and Kapitány



FIGURE 4. Future objects of 25-year-old Gazan man (memories from friends, sweater from Open Doors, bank card).

2005, 126). There is an important change in this, as the nudity of the past has visibly changed, and the number of the objects has increased over the years (fig. 4).

The second characteristic difference is that the contemplative objects of the past (photographs, jewellery) are replaced by active objects of the future. The objects of the past mostly preserve memories and are only marginally practical, this ratio is reversed in the case of the future objects. Among the objects of the past, there are functional objects (a tie, a spoon, slippers), but they are also present in the refugees' lives more as memories than as objects of use. The touch of a household object can remain a painful memory and because of this, objects might be removed from their original use, and can be transformed into pieces of a collection (Földessy 2014). The active objects of the future are also objects that aid survival: objects that support or symbolise employment and profession. Considering the fact that according to the interviews, looking to the future calls objects into action, also the process of building a new identity can be read from these active objects. Recalling Sartre's grouping, objects become part of the self almost exclusively through mastery or masterly control in the case of the interviewees. Also, two of the respondents referred to the creation of the object (portfolios). According to my field experience it can be also stated that self-created objects might have the same importance in carrying identity as objects of masterly control if the individuals have the chance to create and personalise their own objects. During our workshops at Open Doors, the participants personalised ready-made objects with their own inscriptions, drawings, and flags, also they renovated their own furniture, bound their own notebooks and sewed their own bags (figs. 5–8).

The third significant difference is that the objects of the past connect only the narrow circle of the family, while the future objects are largely connected to friends and to an even wider community: to society. The objects of the past are accompanied with fear and lost

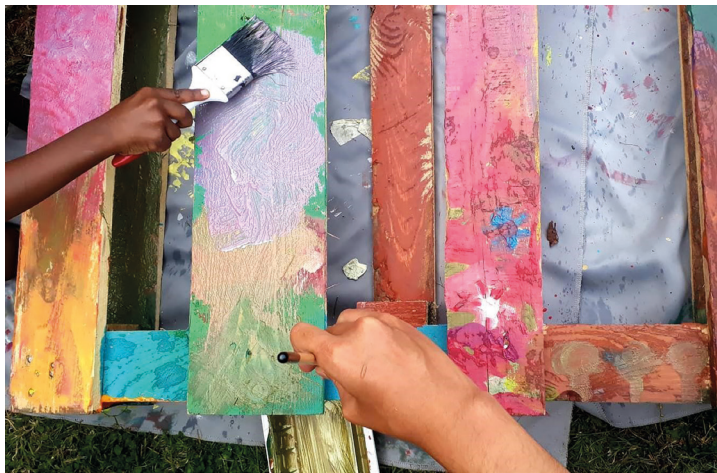
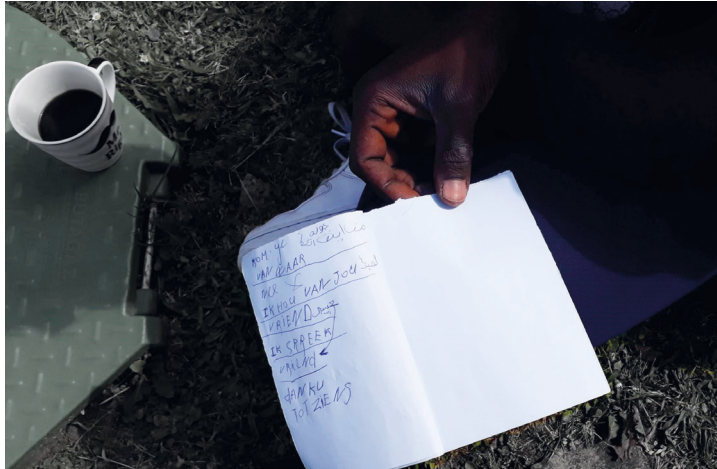


FIGURE 5. *Creating paper decoration at the refugee centre of Red Cross Natoye, Belgium.*

FIGURE 6. *Creating community flag decoration at the refugee centre of Red Cross Natoye, Belgium.*



and painful memories. In contrast, most of the objects to be taken in the future are connected and serve the narrower (bed, shisha, cooking equipment, sewing machine, instrument) or wider (degrees of profession, work tools, portfolios) community. Considering that the development of social networks is essential for not only processing trauma (Herman 2015) but also for new place attachment (Dúll 2009), boundary objects have particular importance, as they can form a bridge between the foreigner and the native. According to my field experiences, practically anything can become a boundary object: at the Open Doors workshops, I witnessed how a photograph, a pair of shoes, a piece of clothing, a bicycle, a camera, or even a ball became a boundary object. On the basis of the in-depth interviews, books, cooking equipment, but also objects representing acquired knowledge such as a musical instrument and the shisha, can be considered boundary objects.



DISEGNO_VII/02_-_S/D: SIGN AND DESIGN

FIGURE 7. Handmade notebook at the refugee centre of Red Cross Natoye, Belgium.

FIGURE 8. Creating outdoor furniture at the refugee centre of Red Cross Natoye, Belgium.

According to the interviewees, even years after their arrival to Hungary, they still find it difficult to call their Hungarian accommodation “home,” most of them even confess that they will never feel “at home” here. It is important to include this detail, because due to this, the relationship of refugees to objects compared to the place called home is much less painful and they consider objects much less important. It also means they set much less emotional expectations for their favourite objects, compared with a place that can be called “home.” Taking advantage of this, we can consider objects as neutral tools in processing trauma: objects can become a tool for a less painful methodology, which does not force the artificial development of a sense of home on the target group. The personal experience below illustrates how objects can contribute to creating a home in a traumatised community without violating their personal space.

We started going to Fót with the Open Doors volunteer team only a few weeks ago, when we were still only getting to know each other with the Afghan boys. We decided together to renovate their community room: this choice was justified on our part because it was the most neutral location, and also because we didn't want to barge into their rooms uninvited. We reupholstered the old chairs in the dining room, everyone could choose from the textiles they brought, and each boy got a chair. The following week, when we arrived, we immediately noticed that the newly upholstered chairs had disappeared from the dining room and were replaced by old, worn chairs. Annoyed, we asked where the nice new chairs went, to which the Afghan boys replied: "We took them into our rooms and brought out the old ones." Personal experience. Károlyi István Childcare Centre, Fót, February, 2013.

All three changes (increased number of objects, replacement of contemplative objects by active ones, replacement of individuality by collective action) testify that refugee youths gradually regain control over their lives and environment, and are able to join society not as passive sufferers, but as active members.

I don't know, I think... I think I've changed. Budapest has changed me a lot. Compared to what was important five or six years ago, it is completely different for me. I just laugh at how much I don't know anything about life, I still have a lot to learn. I see everything differently now. 24-year-old Afghan man. Personal interview. Budapest, March 7, 2021.

CONCLUSIONS – COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

The intent of this article was to explore how material culture can support the processing of trauma. The author compared her field experiences of the past ten years working with young refugees and asylum seekers with literature and in-depth interview research. Migration is a significant chapter of an individual's life, due to unexpected losses and challenges. Migration is considered an "accidental crisis, and the processing of it is an important task of the individual." (Hautzinger, Hegedüs, and Klenner 2014, 69)

The already existing literature proves that objects can play an important role in processing trauma at all three stages of the recovery process (the creation of security, the restoration of memories and grief of loss, the reconnection to everyday life). To support the development of a sense of security, objects create a safe and well-known environment. Objects materialise the past and culture, therefore they can help to recall memories. Objects have a significant role in reconnecting us to life, since they integrate us into new communities, they teach us to the social norms, and also support our education and development.

According to the summarised answers of the in-depth interviews, it seems that everyday objects can support processing the trauma of forced migration. The coping strategy of the interviewees is associated with activity and social connections: the individual memories of their past are replaced by the collective actions of their future. By collective actions it is possible to achieve the two main goals of trauma processing: the individual is not only restoring the lost control of their life but also the individual does it in a community. "[S]tarting a new life is only possible if we leave everything behind and do not take with us our faithful 'companions' and 'servants', i.e., our dear objects collected during our old life, because 'the old life takes off' from them, and so starting a new one remains impossible." (Szentpéteri 2013, 91) This is how Szentpéteri summarises Sándor Lénárd's thoughts, who had to leave Vienna and his family because of the Anschluss. Lénárd's thoughts point to the strongest contrast that seems to emerge from the interviews between voluntary and forced migration: starting with nothing or almost nothing in the hope of a new life and escaping with nothing or almost nothing from the past. According to the interviews, forced migrants are not strongly attached to their everyday objects because of the trauma of forced migration and multiple losses. Taking advantage of the general nature of objects, the coping mechanism of forced migrants and loose object attachment, objects can become a tool of trauma therapy by creating a less painful methodology which serves security, memory, and reconnection.

The author is working on a design therapy toolkit in the frames of a research. Her goal is to collect those active tools (workshops, training) that can be associated with the design process and architecture to serve the therapeutic process of forced migrants and other populations who experienced the loss of place and home (children in state care, homeless people, prisoners etc.). The target group of the design therapy toolkit will be professionals (social workers, therapists, educators, youth workers, NGOs) working with refugees, immigrants or other populations who experienced the loss of place and home.

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