Unpacking knowledge-practices in social movements:
The Rohingya social movement in Canada

Abstract

  Rohingya activists in Canada have built a social movement around the genocide they face in Myanmar, and a resulting refugee crisis in Bangladesh. Using data from interviews and participant observation, I argue that one of the main elements of the movement is the development of knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortes, Osterweil & Powell, 2008). Knowledge-practices are sites where knowledge is generated, modified and mobilized (Ibid). To make this case, I draw on Della Porta and Pavan's (2017) typology of knowledge-practices in social movements: knowledge about collective self, action network, political alternatives, and transmission. First, by using lived experience as a point of departure, Rohingya activists nurtured a sense of collective self. Second, while developing the social movement, activists have cultivated their understanding of political alternatives, and the strategies and tactics necessary to exact the political changes they seek. These findings require that we wrestle more substantively with the intellectual activity of social movements.

Introduction

  Rohingya activists have raised the public and political profile of the genocide and refugee crisis across Canada through the development of a social movement. They have created grassroots advocacy organizations, led events and fundraising efforts, and appealed to government officials. Activists have solidified their roles as experts and spokespeople on the crisis and have developed and refined their tactics and techniques for public and political engagement on the topic. These activities point to knowledge related to on-the-ground expertise, policy alternatives and strategic and tactical decision making. Accordingly, in the literature, knowledge-practices are sites within social movements where knowledge is generated, modified and mobilized (Casas-Cortes, Osterweil & Powell, 2008, p. 20). Yet, as important as knowledge-creation internal to movements may seem, social movement literature has been slow to focus on this dimension of social movements. As Della Porta and Pavan (2017) state, "…empirical research on social movements has focused on their modus operandi through protest, but left others of their activities understudied" (p. 303). The opening in social movement literature thus

presents an opportunity when trying to understand the key elements of migrant-led transnational movements working against genocide, statelessness and a refugee crisis.

The main question of this article is, what role does knowledge-practices have in the Rohingya social movement in Canada? Through the analysis of interviews (n=70) and participant observation, I argue that knowledge-practices are a central element of the social movement that Rohingya activists in Canada use to fight against the genocide in Myanmar and the refugee crisis in Bangladesh. First, activists took their own lived experiences as the point of departure for mobilization. Knowledge-practices around collective self include feelings of responsibility, awareness and resolve stemming from their lived experiences as genocide survivors, migrants and activists in Canada. The strengthening and collectivization of this knowledge has been crucial for advocacy efforts within the country. Second, while developing the social movement, Rohingya activists have nurtured and refined their knowledge-practices related to political alternatives, their action network and transmission practices (Della Porta & Pavan, 2017). Through different events, activists and their allies have established and polished their strategies and tactics in order to exact the political changes they seek.

The order of the article is as follows. I will first situate this work in relation to other research developed in social movement scholarship on knowledge-creation, followed by the methodology. The subsequent section will then analyze the findings related to knowledge-practices of collective self. This part of the article addresses how responsibility, awareness and resolve, resulting from individual experiences, collectivized into the political vision of the movement. At that point, the article will turn to an analysis of how activists have understood and applied knowledge of political alternatives and transmission. The discussion will address the

significance of knowledge-practices for migrant-led, transnational social movements working towards political change in a country that does not consider them to be rightful citizens.

Knowledge-creation in social movements

Why is it that knowledge-creation is only now becoming a main theme in social movement research? Tarrow (1998) defines social movements as "collective challenges based on common purposes, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (p. 4). Meyer (2003) elaborates that this definition includes,

> a) the broad frame allows the inclusion of both institutionally-oriented and extra-institutional activity; b) a social movement is larger than any particular event, representing a challenge extended in time; and c) a movement operates in some kind of dynamic interaction with mainstream politics (p. 6).

In the 1990s, Eyerman and Jamison underscored that past researchers looked at a social movement as "what it does and how it does it, not what its members think and why they think the ideas that they do" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p.46). Or more recently, as Casas-Cortés, Osterweil and Powell (2008) have pointed out that, "the field of social movement studies has largely neglected [movement knowledge] as an area worthy of description and exploration in its own right" (p. 44). Indeed, even more recently, Della Porta and Pavan (2017) underline that social movement activities beyond protest remain understudied. Social movement studies have thus largely ignored how knowledge production within movements is a key mechanism that can be used to achieve social and political change.

Nevertheless, some research has been put forward. Eyerman and Jamison introduced the term 'cognitive-praxis' in 1991. By cognitive-praxis, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) refer to the communicative interaction between movement participants. As they elaborate, communicative interaction is "the linguistically mediated, intersubjective process through which actors establish their interpersonal relations and coordinate their action, through negotiating definitions of the

situation (norms) and coming to an agreement" (Cohen 1985, p. 707 in Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p.48). In 2008, Casas-Cortés et al. revived this conversation. They state that knowledge formed by movements is "embedded in and embodied through lived, place-based experiences, offer[ing] different kinds of answers than more abstract knowledge...situated and embodied, rather than supposedly neutral and distanced" (Ibid, pp. 42-43). These authors underline that knowledge can be considered as dynamic and lived rather than solely as static and abstract. Similarly, Della Porta and Pavan (2017) argue that knowledge production and transmission are not merely conceptual and unintentional aspects of movements, but are deliberate "long-term, dynamic, reflexive, and conflictual self-definition" activities (Della Porta and Pavan, 2017, p.302). In their view, knowledge-creation is planned and observable.

Therefore, in summarizing the work accomplished on knowledge-creation in movements despite this dearth, Della Porta and Pavan (2017) elaborate a typology of knowledge-practices. They recategorize the types of knowledge into knowledge about collective self; knowledge as production of political alternatives; the action network and practices of knowledge transmission (Della Porta & Pavan, 2017). In summary, this section reveals that there is ample room in scholarship to continue to investigate the importance of knowledge-creation in social movements, particularly those led by migrants who have transnational goals.

Studying knowledge-creation in social movements

This article is part of a broader case study developed to understand the Rohingya social movement in Canada. As noted above, the conceptual framework adopted in this article is the typology developed by Della Porta and Pavan (2017) which involves knowledge of collective self, political alternatives, action network, and transmission. Knowledge of collective self refers to how individual experiences and thought processes join into a larger, communal whole,

becoming the political vision of the movement. Political alternatives encompass the options for change that are positioned to counter the status quo. The action network is the infrastructure created and used for circulating information, and transmission refers to the ways in which activists make visible the "alternative values and visions that can animate people" (Crowther & Lucio-Villegas 2012, p.66 in Della Porta & Pavan, 2017, pp.306-308). This framework covers the different possibilities that have been identified as knowledge-practices within movements.

In adopting this type of framework, a case study method is useful for analyzing a movement along its life-course while acknowledging that movements are lively processes, often revising and redefining themselves while they occur. For the purpose of this study, I undertook an intensive ethnographic inquiry which included interviews and participant observation as the main research tools for collecting data. The fieldwork covered a period of two years (December 2017-December 2019). I spent a total of 24 months conducting 70 interviews with Rohingya activists and their allies in Canada, and dedicated hundreds of hours to participant observation. Through snowball sampling, I interviewed and interacted with federal Members of Parliament, a senator, a city councillor, lawyers, academics, religious leaders as well as allies from across the country. The open-ended interviews were conducted to generate rich data by drawing on respondents' perspectives, expertise, and experiences regarding their involvement in the Rohingya social movement. The table below details the number of interview participants, organized according to their primary affiliation relevant to this research.

Group	n-count
Rohingya activists	30
Activists/civil society/NGO/private sector	20
Journalist/photographer	2
Scholars/lawyers	6
Public sector/MPs/senators/city councillor	12

Table 1

During participant observation, I went to conferences, meetings, exhibitions and documentary screenings[1]. I noted on-the-ground ethnographic observations by hand and later transcribed them electronically. The participant observation served to better contextualize the different types of knowledge-practices I learned about in interviews. I employed an inductive approach that allowed me to derive theoretical understandings from the dataset. The themes of the study generally grew out of my ethnographic observations, and the thematic analysis was refined after a review of relevant literature. Thereafter, a deeper reflection of the themes helped establish internal connections that aligned between the dataset and established concepts. This process is how the conceptual framing of knowledge-practices was determined, and the sub-categories of knowledge of collective self, action network, political alternatives and transmission were matched with themes in the data. Overall, these methods proved particularly suitable for fully understanding the internal mechanisms of the social movement.

Building knowledge of collective self: Responsibility, awareness and resolve

First, by participating in the social movement, Rohingya activists in Canada have gained knowledge of collective self. To reiterate, knowledge of collective self refers to the "aggregation of individual and particularized instances to the consolidation of a unified collective actor" (Kavada 2015, in Della Porta & Pavan, 2017, p. 306). This knowledge of collective self, or the political vision of the movement, manifested in the themes of responsibility, awareness and resolve.

First, for the activists I worked with, the initial involvement in the movement was largely spurred on by the inculcation of a sense of duty while in diaspora. They often used words that evoked responsibility to describe their motivation for working in the movement. One Rohingya

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[1] The sequence of the participant observation is outlined in Appendix 1.

activist explained how his perspective changed after moving to Canada as a refugee. Although

trained in pharmaceuticals, he became interested in politics and economics to learn more about

what he could do regarding the refugee crisis in Bangladesh and genocide in Myanmar. He said,

"…it became more, survivor guilt. I am in a place in safety, so I'm responsible for those who are

still in the cages, trying to survive the genocide. It's all the same [feeling] for Rohingyas who

made it to a safe place" (Rohingya participant, January 18, 2019, interview). Similarly, one

Rohingya activist said,

> I am one of the most privileged Rohingya. I live in one of the most peaceful countries of
> the world, I am not targeted for extinction for my ethnicity, I can work, study, I always
> have a roof over my head, and I never have to worry about food... I therefore have a
> responsibility to those who do not have these privileges (Rohingya participant, January
> 31, 2019).

Another participant noted his sense of duty as an activist in diaspora. He voiced his frustration

with the pace of advocacy, and what he felt compelled to do about it.

> Human rights, freedom, it's my duty to represent my people…Enough is enough. Our
> genocide has been through generations and decades. Come on, are we going to live this
> life? We have seen how beautiful life is. I feel responsible in order to have a decent life
> (Rohingya participant, May 10, 2019, interview).

One more activist voiced a similar opinion of being responsible for those still in Myanmar and

Bangladesh.

> Several hundred Rohingya now call Canada home, but the oceans between do little to
> distance them from the suffering of family and friends. They only add to the sense of
> responsibility to speak up, to act and to hope their new home will embrace their old
> (Rohingya participant, May 13, 2018, interview).

Within this idea of responsibility, the key drivers for becoming involved in activism stemmed

from their direct lived experiences, their family and friends' realities in Bangladesh and

Myanmar, and the fear of ethno-religious extinction. In witnessing the suffering of friends and

family abroad and bearing responsibility for their community back in their country of origin and

Bangladesh, these participants formed the nascent activism around the cause. Responsibility extends from the personal to the collective, as these examples demonstrate how the engendering of responsibility towards family and friends back home solidified into a joint ethos.

Next, involvement in different events and activities in the movement prompted greater awareness about how to conduct activism in the Canadian context. For instance, one activist noted his experience of being invited to a panel discussion with the federal government. He noted,

> ...The panel was good. It was helpful. I learned a lot. It's my first political engagement since I came to Canada… People want to hear sentimental things, victimization things. I don't use those words. Lots of hypocrisy. They wanted the struggle stories. If I said, I want solutions, they wouldn't be able to bring that to the table…In Saudi Arabia, you can't do advocacy work…One of the reasons, I left, is because I wanted to make change (Rohingya participant, May 10, 2019, interview).

Another activist discussed one of her early activities in Ottawa.

> After August 25th, I didn't jump on the train right away. I wasn't familiar with activism one bit. That was tough. I'm still largely unaware of what I'm doing. I have an idea of what it looks like…I'm grounded in my beliefs; I've figured part of it out...I didn't know what lobbying government was, lobbying MPs. It went over my head and I slowly learned it. That was really new and ground-breaking for me. I got a lot of context from that event (Rohingya participant, June 2019, interview).

The instances above indicate how activists processed their initial encounters with activism in Canada, how they learned about the forces underlying the issues they are campaigning on, and the nature of the challenges they face. By becoming involved in activism, the activists learned about their subject-positions within existing power relations in Canada and abroad. These experiences turned the sense of responsibility into one of acute perception of their positionality, both individually and as a collective. For instance, one activist gave an example about her work with museums. She noted,

> The Holocaust Museum in Montreal and The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, they're developing a tool for students to learn about how genocide develops. They

interviewed all the [Rohingya] people in Winnipeg last year. That's what partly made us realize that we're being 'othered', dehumanized (Rohingya participant, June 2019, interview).

This activist's involvement with narrating the genocide with other participants reinforced their joint understanding of a community that has faced intense marginalization. Similarly, one activist noted how studying political science and economics in Canada has supported his perspectives on the underlying causes of the genocide and refugee crisis back home. He said, "I'm doing a double major in politics and economics. I'm understanding a little bit more, the picture behind the scene. [My thinking is] more evolved, and hopefully I can contribute a bit more [activism] in the future" (Rohingya participant, January 18, 2019, interview). And another activist, who was a part of the play and documentary stated,

> I didn't know my parents' past. I told my parents about the play and the history and my parents got interested. They supported me to do it. And then they started telling me the stories, and they supported me. Doing this play was a gift to them. I didn't know my background. I didn't know what my parents suffered to give us such a good life. In that moment, I said I'd raise my voice, and give something to my parents (Rohingya participant, August 2, 2018).

One more activist who was a part of the play and documentary correspondingly underlined,

> I started learning about my culture, my people, my parents, and the whole journey. I'm aware now. I know about myself more than I knew before. I felt like I wasn't living my life in the whole picture (Rohingya participant, September 13, 2018, interview).

In these examples, activists talked about heightened cognizance, knowing more about the 'whole picture', and about how they related to their parents' lived experiences. At the same time, the activists went from a sense of responsibility, to awareness about their subject-positions, and the role they can fulfill when pushing for international accountability regarding the genocide and refugee crisis. For instance, for those youth in the play/documentary, they learned throughout the process of the play and documentary-making process by listening to their parents' experiences, and by being able to provide input into the telling of their and their families' realities with the

producers and broader audiences. They used activism through the arts to build knowledge about their Rohingya backgrounds. In fact, they felt more complete, as they point out, after learning more about their culture and community. Related to the literature, they maintain their collective self within their families in which their realities of genocide, statelessness and migration, continue to exist. This contemplation of family, culture, and personal histories adds to the creation of new knowledge-practices about collective self, as activists state their awareness, and intention to retain their culture and connect with their culture through the social movement. In other words, participation in the play and documentary was a site for becoming aware of the subjugation they face collectively, and the related ways to challenge it as activists in diaspora. Developing knowledge practices around collective self within the movement helped to define the purpose of the movement and their roles within it. Indeed, one of the directors sensed this change in the youth involved. He said,

> Their identity has changed. They felt disconnected from their identity. I can understand youth not wanting to be associated with their past and heritage. That changed for some of them. Telling their story. Learning about their parents' stories and their heritage. They now say, "I saw myself as just Canadian and now Rohingya-Canadian (non-Rohingya participant, August 16, 2018).

The activists channeled this political vision of the movement through the play and documentary. In summary, the Rohingya activists developed a sense of responsibility and awareness in their initial experiences of activism in the social movement in Canada. Their individualized and particularized experiences, in aggregate, consolidated into an ethos that encompasses responsibility towards, and awareness of, themselves as a collective (Kavada 2015, in Della Porta & Pavan, 2017).

Over time, this responsibility and awareness translated into resolve, as activists came out as spokespeople of the cause. One activist-academic noted that there is a "real awakening of

consciousness in the youth, shared destiny, common spirit" (non-Rohingya participant,

November 8, 2018). As one Rohingya activist who was a part of the documentary noted, "The

voice of Rohingya children is powerful and global. We can tell the truth. When children are

involved, it becomes obvious that these people [Rohingya] have done nothing wrong, and don't

deserve this suffering" (Rohingya participant, September 13, 2018, interview). Beyond the play

and documentary, as one Rohingya activist noted,

> Rohingya, we can speak for ourselves. We are not considered to be decision makers. We
> are the people who are suffering, they [the international community] are not. They are
> performing their duties, but they shouldn't neglect [us] like this…We have our right to
> express what we want, and they [international community] should listen. They
> [international community] are ignoring us (Rohingya participant, January 25, 2018,
> interview).

Another activist emphatically described how Rohingya voices need to be at the centre of the

social movement. He noted,

> We don't need people's money; we don't need their sentimentalizing. We aren't animals;
> I'm a human being with dignity and responsibility. It's time to act and show the people
> that we can represent ourselves. We don't need other people to represent us. We are more
> than three decades facing the same problem. We are still undocumented. I'm ashamed to
> say I'm stateless. I can't ignore the fact that I'm stateless. But what led me to be
> stateless? I don't want to cry over it, over this society (Rohingya participant, May 10,
> 2019, interview).

These statements underline that Rohingya activists are working to represent themselves while in

diaspora. The activists resolve to demonstrate their visions, perspectives and expertise on their

own terms. As one activist simply and pithily stated, "Rohingya know how to think why they are

persecuted" (Rohingya participant, December 8, 2018).

These activists demonstrate how Rohingyas' sense of collective self, have culminated

from their experience with activism which engendered feelings of responsibility, awareness and

resolve. In the process of activism, going from responsibility to a deeper perception and

awareness of their central role as activists, stemmed from initial activities of the social

movement. Other activists have noted the shift into resolve, and that the knowledge of collective self is theirs to bring forth. As one director of the documentary stated, "They are the interpreters of their legacy. If they're not willing to share that knowledge, then it's gone in a generation." (non-Rohingya participant, August 21, 2018, interview). As one Muslim community leader and lawyer fittingly noted,

> It is the true, genuine, authentic Rohingya voices that need to be at the forefront. How can their experience not resonate with you? It has to be their message to deliver. It's incumbent upon us to allow their voices and to push them to the forefront" (non-Rohingya participant, March 29, 2019).

In summary, knowledge-practices about collective self, involving responsibility, awareness and resolve, is a central mechanism of the movement, as they fuel its political vision. I now turn to the knowledge-practices surrounding action network, political alternatives and strategies for knowledge transmission.

Consolidating action networks, political alternatives and practices of transmission

In this section, I argue that Rohingya activists have refined the political alternatives, action network and practices of transmission within the movement. Noted earlier, political alternatives are the possibilities presented to counter the status quo. The action network encompasses the infrastructure, and transmission refers to the ways in which activists make visible the "alternative values and visions that can animate people" (Crowther & Lucio-Villegas, p.66 in Della Porta & Pavan, p.308). The activists draw on the responsibility, awareness and resolve related to their cause and embed this vision into future strategies around the production of political alternatives, the action network and practices of knowledge transmission. The following examples illuminate this point: a roundtable panel at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs in April 2019, and a Senate motion in 2019.

Rohingya Roundtable at the University of Toronto

In early 2019, two Rohingya activists and one non-Rohingya activist from different advocacy organizations wanted to organize a roundtable seminar for the 1-year anniversary of Special Envoy, the Hon. Bob Rae's report, *Tell Them We're Human: What Canada and the world can do about the Rohingya crisis.* The purpose of the roundtable was to build up emotional momentum, establish new connections, exchange insights, and to develop concrete and actionable recommendations for the consideration of the Government of Canada and the wider public, with a group of people who have been involved and are knowledgeable about the issues (observation notes, 2019). The organizers leveraged and applied the skills they had learned from various events over the previous years, in order to organize the seminar. The seminar was attended by over 30 people, including the Special Envoy Hon. Bob Rae, as well as activists, NGO workers, lawyers, and academics (Ibid). This roundtable is an example of the production of political alternatives and practices of knowledge transmission.

Regarding political alternatives, the Rohingya people in the room were undeniably the experts of their experiences as survivors of genocide, refugees, migrants and now activists. They knew what issues to focus on in the room and developed thematic areas for participants to focus on, in other words, the political alternatives to the status quo. The status quo was the policy framework put forward by the Canadian government that had already been in place following the publication of Hon. Bob Rae's report. Their recommendations were aimed at changing this status quo and to push the government in its commitments surrounding the humanitarian crisis, such as who would be held accountable for the genocide, and how to increase coordination and cooperation to mitigate the crisis. The one-year anniversary was also useful in that timing in order to evaluate what has been accomplished, and to put further pressure on the government. At

the same time, the input of all participants into the discussions was a part of the process of

knowledge production of political alternatives. The discussion drew on the knowledge of others

in the room, and information was exchanged between participants in order to bolster the depth

and viability of alternatives.

Regarding action network, in preparing for the roundtable, the organizers recognized that

the one-year mark would be an appropriate opportunity to bring people together. The anniversary

of the genocide, and the anniversary of the report are dates that are marked in the minds of the

people as they are a reminder of the work to still be accomplished. The organizers further

predicted that having the Special Envoy Hon. Bob Rae join the meeting would be appealing[2] to

the potential participants (Ibid). To draw participants in, they arranged the agenda so that he

would be speaking for the first half of the roundtable, followed by a general overview of

Rohingya advocacy in Canada, and then technical briefings on the thematic areas of Hon. Bob

Rae's report. The participants' list was put together using the extensive networks of people they

had connected with over the course of the past two years. The organizers recognized that

attracting people from various groups would be useful in fomenting more connections for the

action network.

Regarding transmission, the organizers knew that the momentum from the meeting would

be important for next steps. They organized a press conference and a media summary so that the

event was publicized. Further, the event ended with a discussion on developing a set of

recommendations, regarding what can be done to continue to push for action, and to push these

ideas through each other's networks (Ibid). Following the meeting, the organizers prepared a

survey and a chairs' summary which was sent to all the participants, and others (in Canada and

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[2] (to both seek his insights but also challenge his positions).

around the world) who they thought would be interested in reading the outcomes. The activists recognized how to engage broader audiences and distribute the information about the roundtable external to it.

The process of putting together this roundtable was an application of the knowledge-based skills learned through advocacy. Brought altogether, the roundtable underlines an integral feature of the movement, that of knowledge-creation of the alternatives, action network and transmission.

Motion to Urge the Government to Invoke the Genocide Convention to Hold Myanmar to its Obligations and to Seek Provisional Measures and Reparations for the Rohingya People

The following instance is particularly illuminating in terms of how political alternatives, action network and transmission occurred within the movement. It shows how Rohingya activists put forward alternatives regarding the legal possibilities to hold Myanmar responsible, as well as who to engage, and how to broadcast this knowledge in the Canadian context in order to rally more people behind the motion.

In June 2019, independent Senator Marilou McPhedran introduced a motion (*Motion to Urge the Government to Invoke the Genocide Convention to Hold Myanmar to its Obligations and to Seek Provisional Measures and Reparations for the Rohingya People*) in the Senate which asked the federal government to invoke *The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (hereinafter Genocide Convention) of which Canada and Myanmar are both signatories, to pursue a case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (Canada, 2019). The motion also asked the government to push to allow independent investigators access to Rakhine State. In parallel to the federal motion, Montreal City Council and Toronto City Council adopted similar motions in their councils urging the same action.

At that point in time, no other country had yet officially approached the International

Court of Justice regarding a case under the Genocide Convention. The motion included asking

Canada to invoke the Genocide Convention, and to engage with like-minded states to pursue the

matter in the International Court of Justice. The development of the motion underlines the

knowledge-practices of the social movement in several ways. First, the activists' knowledge of

alternatives to the status quo was central to the motion. For instance, the Rohingya Human

Rights Network (RHRN), various professors, lawyers, and other Members of Parliament and

Senators contributed to its formulation. One Rohingya activist involved told me about how the

motion came into being. He discussed the relationships that activists have built with members of

other human rights institutions and politicians over time, and how they worked together on the

motion. He explained how he was first approached by Montreal city councillor, Marvin Rotrand,

another politician with experience and interest in human rights who was concerned about the

lack of action on the genocide. He noted how different people engaged each other, and how all

political levels were involved in the development of the motion.

> Senator McPhedran championed this recently…she took the initiative to table the
> motion…For the City Council motion, Councillor Marvin Rotrand from Montreal got in
> touch with me to discuss the potential of an initiative as such…The motion was written
> by me. It was proofread/corrected by HRERC [Human Rights Education and Resource
> Centre]. And then supported by MIGS [Montreal Institute for Genocide Studies] and
> RWCHR [Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights] (Rohingya activist, January 31,
> 2019).

This example demonstrates how the political alternative to the status quo was created within the

movement, by drawing on the expertise of Rohingya activists, politicians, academics, lawyers,

and other supporters.

Regarding action network, Rohingya activists knew to draw on people across state and

society to bring the motion to fruition. The motion itself was the product of Rohingya activists

liaising with various politicians and supporters across the Canadian state and society. The interpersonal networks, interpersonal communication, and various forms of continuous negotiation added to the motion through mutual sharing, with people with differentiated experiences, skill sets and understandings of the genocide and refugee crisis.

Finally, one of the executive directors reinforced the point about how practices of knowledge transmission were deployed to distribute information about the motion. Similar to the process explained above, the Rohingya activist described that the MIGS, the RHRN, the HRERC and the RWIHR co-created the motion for the City of Montreal to pass, and they called on the Canadian government to invoke the Genocide Convention. In order to broadcast it to a wider audience and to garner support, he stated,

> We held a press conference at City Hall with members of the Rohingya community. Got it in the news cycle, and then we emailed the Mayor and City councillors to pass the motion. RHRN did the same. We shared the motion with different cities. Toronto, some smaller cities, it's a way for them to put pressure too. RHRN shared this letter with Senator McPhedran. So, we connected with different elected officials, and not just Members of Parliament, but also the cities and the Senator.

To underline this point, these conversations created knowledge of practices of transmission, as the activists learned about how to create impact through a motion by communicating it with others. Holding news conferences, connecting with different people, asking City Councils to put forward the same motion all worked to transmit the knowledge to a broader audience of potential supporters.

In summary, regarding the knowledge-practices of the Rohingya social movement, this section demonstrates that there has been an increase in knowledge of political alternatives, action network and transmission. The following section discusses the analytical significance of these knowledge practices.

The prospects for knowledge-practices in social movement literature

This article illuminates the centrality of knowledge-practices and how they are a critical social mechanism of the Rohingya Canadian social movement. Rohingya activists have cultivated knowledge around the visions of the movement, learned how to strengthen the effectiveness of the movement and how to expertly navigate the Canadian political system.

To relate these findings to the literature, as noted earlier, there is nascent research that points to knowledge-creation practices within movements. Nearly thirty years ago, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) unpacked the processes of knowledge production, by looking at them as mechanisms by which various types of intellectual innovation occur. They studied the knowledge production of social movements and labeled it as 'cognitive praxis' (Ibid.). They further outlined three dimensions of knowledge that social movements produce: "cosmological", "technological" and "organizational". The cosmological relates to the movement's vision of the world, while the technological pertains to the modes of transformation, and organizational refers to the channels in which knowledge is produced, transmitted and experienced (Ibid, p. 66). Similarly, Casas-Cortés et al.'s (2008) concept of knowledge-practices in social movements encapsulates "important sites of knowledge creation, reformulation and diffusion".

Perhaps in movements led by migrants who face genocide, internal knowledge-creation of collective self, alternatives, action network and transmission are even more important, considering the severity of the issues they are challenging. Using Della Porta and Pavan's (2017) framework, Rohingya activists' knowledge of collective self is rooted in their lived experience and their knowledge of realities on the ground, crossed with continuous activism efforts. Rohingya activists took their own lived experiences as the point of departure and became the spokespeople of their knowledge through their joint ethos of responsibility, awareness and

resolve. This knowledge results from the difficult effort of bridging and interpreting their understanding of the geopolitical realities in Bangladesh and Myanmar, and the reality of their locally situated context in Canada. Their responsibility, awareness and resolve spring from their constant and continued interaction with themselves, their supporters, as well as challengers. Supporters and observers have noted the dynamic knowledge-making process. As one activist noted, "[They are going through a] political maturation process. Not every group should do everything. [They need to] diversify and be specific" (non-Rohingya participant, January 12, 2019). Indeed, two politicians talked about how the Rohingya community has become more politically savvy in Canada due to their increased involvement in advocacy. One Member of Parliament mentioned that the activists have a greater political 'comfort zone' and know how to access government more easily. The other Member of Parliament stated,

> They have really picked up the game…There's something very genuine about that. Which I think is very refreshing. To filter it down to real, chewable issues, it's always the challenge…You can't speak for another people, and they have a lot of credibility (Member of Parliament, February 22, 2019, interview).

Further by being involved in the movement they have developed political alternatives, the techniques and strategies of organizing (the action network), and how to broadcast their knowledge. They made visible the viable political alternatives that they foresee as the solutions to the impasse in the refugee crisis, and the seemingly unassailable genocidal stances of the Burmese state. As evidence of this mounting prominence, the government has noted the effects of their advocacy. In commenting on the work of one Rohingya-led organization, in their 2019 annual report, two politicians noted the inroads they have made in terms of how to influence the government. As one noted,

> The CRDI continues to play a vital role internationally, as well as across Canada and in Kitchener-Waterloo, through the advocacy for justice and human rights, education, and the empowerment of underrepresented voices…Through this tireless advocacy,

awareness has been raised and a deeper understanding of the Rohingya crisis has been developed in the broader Waterloo Region community. As Member of Parliament, I have had the privilege of witnessing this work first-hand (Member of Parliament).

And,

For too many years, the Rohingya people have faced an unspeakable trauma rooted in discriminatory policies and pure racism. The Rohingya community in Canada has been instrumental in ensuring our country's leadership on the international scene in recognizing this crisis as a genocide, in sending life-saving humanitarian aid, and in taking a stand against the persecution of the most vulnerable, at home and abroad (Member of Parliament).

As the above quotes show, these Members of Parliament have seen their knowledge in action and recognize the impacts activists have made in terms of their advocacy efforts. The examples demonstrate that knowledge-creation within movements is an important facet of their functioning, and one that is perceptible by others. Rohingya activists speak of their own responsibility, awareness and resolve to lead the movement on their own terms. The examples of the roundtable and Senate motion show how they applied their knowledge of political alternatives, the action network and practices of knowledge transmission.

Beyond the typology developed by Della Porta & Pavan (2017), these findings speak to what Barker and Cox (2002) name as "knowledge-in-struggle" (p. 23). Knowledge made in movements is always evolving, both internally and because of confrontations occurring within the movement context. de Santos Sousa (2018) expands on the notion of knowledges-in-struggle, stating that "knowledges-in-struggle are both the products and the producers of struggles that are in a constant process of reconstruction" (p. 93). Mignolo and Walsh (2019) also speak to this feature of social movements. According to them, movements bring forth their own vocabularies, categories of analysis, ontologies, and epistemologies. Indeed, movements' understanding of their ontological and epistemological reasons for being, are generated within and in relation to the power structures the movements are striving to transform. These quotes exemplify two ideas

that also inform and reinforce these findings 1) that knowledge-creation is a living process and 2) that sustains social movements. Knowledge-creation occupies a central role in this social movement, and knowledge-creation is at the forefront of what movements can 'do'. The Rohingya activists in this movement have reflected on their roles as survivors, in diaspora, and they continue to discuss, debate and put forward future paths and channels of action.

In summary, this discussion demonstrates one important mechanism of the Rohingya social movement in Canada. Knowledge in terms of collective self, of alternatives, the action network and transmission have been forged through during this movement, and these practices continue to fuel their ethos and work. Recognizing this specific role of movements as knowledge producers is a necessary step toward a more "genuine understanding of how movements can be laboratories of social and political innovation" (Della Porta and Pavan, 2017, p.3).

Conclusion and thoughts for future consideration

This article argues that a fundamental social mechanism of the movement is the knowledge-practices developed by Rohingya activists in Canada for fighting against the genocide in Myanmar and the refugee crisis in Bangladesh. To make this point, I applied the typology outlined by Della Porta and Pavan (2017) in the movement: knowledge about collective self; knowledge as production of political alternatives; and practices of knowledge transmission. First, activists took their own lived experiences as the point of departure for mobilization. Bridging their lived experiences of the realities of the refugee camps in Bangladesh, of statelessness and state-led genocidal violence in Myanmar, with their Canadian context, has been crucial to developing responsibility, awareness and resolve within Canada, the visions of the movement. By analyzing their initial role in the movement, by developing a sense of responsibility, awareness and resolve, the findings show that they have nurtured their knowledge

of collective self. Second, while developing the social movement, Rohingya activists have cultivated and refined their knowledge-practices related to alternatives, action network and transmission. By participating in the movement, Rohingya Canadians have established and polished their strategies and tactics in order to exact the political changes they seek. The discussion contemplated the significance of knowledge-practices for migrant-led, transnational social movements working towards political change in a country that does not consider them to be rightful citizens.

These findings are important for academics, for the social movements themselves, and for those others who are interested in exacting social change. The implications for other researchers in the field is that knowledge-creation is an important area of social movement activity, and one that deserves recognition for contributing to an academic understanding of movements. These knowledges are important not only because they manifest the ethos of the movement, and the expertise that participants are endowed and working with, but because such knowledges reflect how academics can recognize the emancipatory, ground-breaking work of movements. Next, the approach of this article helps researchers appreciate how those who are survivors of genocide, and who have been rendered stateless, including through forced migration by their own countries, are able to fight for their homes and rights, even when those countries do not recognize them as rightful citizens. As social movements have been studied rather structurally at macro-levels of abstraction, the literature often misses personal elements of movements. Finally, this article in entirety, as the activists do, illuminates the significance of Rohingya activism in Canada and around the world, for its role against a genocidal regime. Rohingya social movement in Canada is remarkable given the myriad obstacles they face to activism, namely stemming from the genocidal conditions in their country of origin, the reticent climate of the international

community for intervention, and issues in settlement. It is notable that a movement led by a small community of recent immigrants/refugees with few material resources - who have an extensive history of intergenerational state repression and extreme marginalization in their home country - has taken hold in Canada. In sum, the production of knowledge is crucial to this movement. These findings require that we recognize and wrestle more substantively with knowledge that is generated by migrant-led transnational movements.

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Appendix 1

Date	Event	Location
February 8 2018	Rohingya in peril: Buddhist/Muslim tensions in Myanmar and beyond	University of Toronto
April 29 2018	Spring into Ramadan with Human Concern International	Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex
May 3 2018	Public meeting with Jean-Nicolas Beuze the UNHCR representative in Canada and the refugee sponsorship training program	Ryerson University
May 11, 2018	*I am Rohingya* documentary screening	Innis Town Hall
May 13, 2018	*I am Rohingya* documentary screening	University of Waterloo
October 9, 2018	*I am Rohingya* documentary screening	University of Toronto
October 15, 2018,	UNHCR sponsored *I am Rohingya* documentary screening	North York Civic Centre
November 9, 2018	Burma Task Force and Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative appreciation dinner	Toronto
December 14, 2018	*I am Rohingya* documentary screening	Kitchener, Waterloo
January 25, 2019	CRDI meeting with Zoryan institute	Toronto
January 2019 to present	Content writer and board of directors for Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative	Toronto
February 13 2019	Meeting between Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative and the Special Envoy Hon. Bob Rae	Toronto
February 8-9 2019	International conference for protection and accountability in Burma	Columbia University, New York
April 2019	Town Hall Discussion on Rohingya Crisis at Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre with MP Rob Oliphant	Toronto
April 2019 to present	Content writer and Myanmar analyst for the Sentinel Project	Toronto
April 16 2019	A roundtable discussion with Hon. Bob Rae with Rohingya activists, NGO workers, academics and think tank representatives along with Burma Task Force and Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative	University of Toronto
June 2019	Photography exhibit of the *I Am Rohingya* documentary and play actors at the Ontario Centre For International Cooperation	Toronto
July 2019	Meeting with MPs Kamal Khera and Robert Oliphant and Rohingya groups	Toronto
August 2019	Meeting with One Free World International and Hong Kong Solidarity Protest with Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Uyghur Activists	Toronto
August 2019	Strategic Planning meeting with Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative	Toronto
August 2019	Photography and Multimedia Exhibit of the Rohingya Community at the Canadian Human Rights Museum	Winnipeg, Manitoba

Table 2