



SYRIAN REFUGEE MOBILITY AS A MEANINGFUL PROCESS

A field study on Syrian refugee journeys from Syria to
Jordan

MASTER THESIS | ESTHER VAN RAVENHORST

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WAGENINGEN
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Ik hoop dat je altijd mag dromen,
met de wind steeds in je rug.
Dat gedachten blijven stromen:
niet te langzaam, niet te vlug.

Moge het zonlicht op je schijnen,
zachte regen voor de groei.
Ik hoop dat zorgen snel verdwijnen,
dat je komt tot volle bloei.

Dat je echt aandachtig luistert,
naar je hart en je verstand.
Dat het onweer voor je fluistert,
een wolk met goud zal zijn omrand.

Dat geluk komt bovendrijven,
ook al is het heel fragiel.
Dat je altijd trouw mag blijven,
aan het diepste van je ziel.

- Coot van Doesburgh -

ABSTRACT

The Syrian civil war, which has been raging in Syria for over 6 years, has uprooted large parts of the Syrian population. Jordan has taken in approximately 1.4 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Every single Syrian seeking safety in Jordan has its own refugee story. Which route have they followed? How do Syrians make sense of their journeys and settlement in Jordan? This research aims to acquire a better understanding of Syrian refugee mobility as a meaningful process. The dissertation is based on 59 in-depth interviews, several observations and informal conversations, which were all collected during a four-month fieldwork period in Jordan. The Syrian refugees engaged in this research resided in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, Zarqa or one of the three refugee camps.

This research illustrates how physical movements as part of mobility set in motion a meaningful process. Throughout Syrian refugee journeys, specific movements have been indicated as having high impact, such as leaving one's house, crossing the Syrian-Jordanian border, transfer to the camps, the ability to settle in Jordan's urban areas and the immobilities faced while trying to build up a living in Jordan. Refugee mobility pass beyond the limits of physical movements, and does not leave their identities untouched. In fact, as a result of crossing borders, Syrians have been confronted with an alteration in their legal status: from Syrian citizens into a minority as Syrian refugees. The living conditions in Jordan continuously undermine the agency of Syrians to take matters in one's own hand. The only hope that Syrians hold on to is going back to a safe and secure Syria. In the meantime, lives are put on hold. A number of physical steps of Syrian refugee trajectories implies an increasing disconnection from their previous lives. Current refugee management policies undermine the agency of Syrian refugees to remake their lives, whereas there is a need to humanize the living conditions of Syrians. This would give Syrians new hope to remake their lives until they will be able to return home.

KEY WORDS:

Syrian refugees, refugee journeys, Jordan, urban areas, mobility, immobility, protracted displacement, sense-making, meaningful process, identity transformation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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-- Chapter 1

1.1 SYRIAN REFUGEE MOBILITY

Six years of conflict have left half of the Syrian population displaced; people are fleeing from bombings, deteriorating living conditions and horrific human rights violations (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan - Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2016; UN OCHA, 2016). Each year, the report Humanitarian Needs Overviews Syria is presented and confirms the increasingly deteriorating situation in Syria:

“The impact of five long years of conflict in Syria defies understanding, let alone its description. [...] Hundreds of thousands are dead. Millions have been displaced. Countless families are torn apart. Towns decimated. Basic infrastructure destroyed. For many who are merely surviving, life is miserable. Deliberately deprived of food and medicine, many face the appalling conditions of desolation, hunger, and starvation. We must all be ashamed that this is happening on our watch.”

UN OCHA, 2017, p. 1

As the Syrian conflict endures, Syrians continue to bear extreme violence, hardship, destruction and inhumane living conditions (UN OCHA, 2016). The exposition to these problematic circumstances caused half of the Syrian population displaced, both internally and externally.

JORDAN AS ONE OF THE SAFE HAVENS

The vast majority of Syrian refugees fleeing the political turmoil and armed violence seek refuge in the region. One of the neighbouring countries that hosts a great number of refugees is Jordan. Since 2011, Syrians began to arrive in Jordan. The number of Syrians refugees in Jordan has been staggering. As of March 2017, approximately 1.4 million Syrians have found refuge in Jordan (UNHCR, 2017). To put it in perspective: per 1000 residents, Jordan is hosting 87 refugees. Only 657,621 of the 1.4 million Syrian refugees in Jordan has been officially registered as refugees with UNCHR (UNHCR, 2017). In contrast to these influxes during the first years of the war, ‘the number of new arrivals now seems to be lower than those of voluntarily returning to Syria’ (Achilli, 2016, p. 7). Despite these numbers, Jordan has always had an open-border policy and humanitarian stance towards Syrian refugees (Achilli, 2015, p. 3). Yet, whereas the first Syrian refugees were being labelled as guests and not as refugees, this attitude has gradually changed due to the large influx of refugees (Achilli, 2016). As a consequence, Syrian refugees are increasingly being perceived as a burden. Syrians are not only blamed to put a strain on basic public services, but also pointed to deny Jordanians access to sustainable livelihoods (The Jordan Response Platform, 2016). This attitude leads to an increased number of reported cases of tensions between Syrian refugees and the local host communities (Interview 51 – Mafraq – Woman).

Although Jordan hosts a great number of refugees from Palestine, Iraq and eventually also Syrians, Jordan is not a signatory to the UN 1951 Geneva Convention:

“In practice, Jordan avoids the official recognition of refugees under its domestic laws and prefers to refer to Syrian refugees as ‘visitors’, ‘irregular guests’, ‘Arab brothers’ or simply ‘guests’, which has no legal meaning under domestic laws.”

ILO, 2015, p. 12

So, without a legal framework on how refugees should be treated, Jordan has no obligation to turn Syrian guests into asylum seekers or refugees, and therefore Syrians are not given residency permits (ILO, 2015).

THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT MANAGING REFUGEE INFLUXES

Initially, the Jordanian government did not have an encampment policy. However, as a response to the rising number of Syrian refugees seeking refuge in Jordan, the Jordanian government decided to open up refugee camp Za’atari. Za’atari was established in July 2012 and has the capacity to host around 80,000 Syrian refugees. In April 2014, a second refugee camp – Al Azraq – was opened, providing shelter to approximately 18,000 Syrian refugees (Turner, 2015). Despite its efforts to designate refugees in camps, only between 16-21 percent of the entire Syrian refugee population resides in one of the refugee camps (UNHCR, 2017). The majority lives in urban and semi-urban areas, mainly in Amman, Irbid, Mafraq and Zarqa (Achilli, 2015).

Since half 2014, refugees residing in Jordan’s urban areas are facing tightened restrictions. As part of Jordan’s encampment policies, the Jordanian government also implements policies aimed to curb the movement in urban areas, by hampering Syrians access to services of both UNHCR and the Jordanian government itself. Without access to basic services, urban refugees feel forced to move back to the camps, to disappear into illegality or to return to Syria. The latter has apparently been on the rise since the beginning of 2014 (Achilli, 2016). Due to the vulnerable positions in the urban areas as well as in the camps, UNHCR’s data shows a steady increase in numbers of refugees returning to Syria (Christophersen, p. 25, 2015). Some of the returnees indicated that cutbacks in food vouchers, depletion of cash resources and increasing debts are reasons to opt for a voluntary return to Syria. However, it is expected that Syrian refugees will not be able to safely return to Syria anytime soon.

EMERGING BORDERLANDS

The history of Jordan with Syria is characterised by interconnectedness through networks, labour migration, export, tribes across borders and so on. This interconnectedness between Jordan and Syria has its roots in a mutual heritage. Both Jordan and Syria as we know them now, have long been part of the larger Levant – a region that included Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Jordan had been under control of the Ottoman Empire for centuries, until, in 1921, this empire was replaced by British rulers. British rulers brought an end to this Ottoman period and had established the Emirates of Transjordan. The initial demarcation of Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine was agreed on in the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. In 1946, the British mandate ended and Jordan gained independence. Because Jordan was part of a much larger region, physical borders of the countries within this region did exist, tribes and family ties transcend national borders reducing the impact of borders (Al Jazeera, 2016).

However, after years of massive displacement caused by the Syrian war, Jordan is inducing a stricter border policy – a policy that curbs the freedom of movement for Syrian refugees (Achilli, 2016). The last straw that broke the camel’s back was a cross-border attack on Jordan, on the 21st of June 2016. It was a coordinated attack, involving multiple vehicles and car bombs explosions, that killed 6 Jordanian guards and left 14 soldiers injured in the buffer zone between Rukban camp and the Jordanian border (Al Jazeera, 2016). As a result of this attack, the Jordanian government declared its Syrian-Jordanian borders

as closed military zones. Consequently, thousands of refugees are stuck in no man's land bordering Jordan where they are refused entry. Even before this attack, thousands of Syrians stranded at their country's border with Jordan, because Syrians were only allowed entrance in dribs and drabs. Since June 2016, this decision exacerbated the humanitarian situation with no access for Syrians at all.

1.2 SYRIAN REFUGEE MOBILITY AS A MEANINGFUL PROCESS

Since the demonstrations in Syria have turned into a full-scale civil war, living in Syria has become more and more unbearable resulting in massive displacement. Shifting from a macro-perspective to a micro-perspective, every single Syrian fleeing Syria has its own refugee story. These stories include events such as leaving houses, figuring out their next move, crossing the border and ending up in Jordan. Imagine if you would be the one that needs to flee, how would you experience this journey? How would you feel when you left your house and pretty much all your belongings, without knowing when you will be able to return? Or – even worse - with the uncertainty of ever returning at all? With this in mind, would crossing the border feel like a moment of relief for finally reaching safety or would you feel further from home than ever? The experiences of those physical movements determine the meanings ascribed to this process of becoming a refugee fleeing a war in one's own country.

Much has been written on refugee mobility, approaching refugee mobility from the angle of migration management, aiming to restrict movements. Much emphasis has been on the role of nation states. However, there is lack of knowledge on examining refugee mobility from the point of view of those who move – from the refugees themselves. This research will take an individual refugee perspective in which refugee's own journey is highlighted. Therefore, the main research question is:

How does Syrian refugee mobility transcend from the physical movements into a meaningful process?

In order to attain the aim of this research, the following sub-questions will build upon the main research question, providing insight in Syrian refugee mobility as a meaningful process. Three themes have been identified as key themes, providing insight in Syrian refugee mobility: (1) Mobility, (2) Experiences and (3) Identity. Through reviewing the literature on Syrian refugee mobility and the interviews, these themes and questions have been identified as important:

MOBILITY:

- What trajectories have Syrian refugees been gone through during their journey?
- How do Syrian refugees represent their refugee journeys, including both mobility and immobility?

EXPERIENCES:

- How is mobility experienced?
- What are meaningful and life-changing experiences within Syrian refugee journeys?

IDENTITY:

- How has Syrian refugee journeys and settlement in Jordan transformed the identities of Syrian refugees?

RELEVANCE

In the last years, the research pile on human mobility has grown staggeringly – particularly since the globalisation discourse has come to rise. Globalisation has rendered movements of people, goods, money, and information as the new normalcy (Hannam, Scheller & Urry, 2006). Yet, it can be questioned whether Syrian refugees render these movements as normal? It is exactly this assumption of normalcy that is questioned by researched that perceives mobility as a social process. These researchers argue that inequality in mobility is caused by processes of power geometry and physical movements implying social change. Despite this focus on social mobility, less attention has been paid these processes from the point of view of refugees themselves – the focus of this research. Therefore, this research aims to add to this scientific knowledge gap.

Besides the scientific relevance, this research is also socially relevant. One of the prevailing discourses around refugee influxes is to perceive refugee mobility as a threat – often heard phrases like ‘they pose a threat to our security, to our constructed identities and our economies’ are becoming part of our everyday discourse. These discourses are a reproduction of the ‘state-centered organisation of power (Cresswell, 2010), while the stories of ordinary people are suppressed (Ashutosh & Mountz, 2012). Therefore, it is important to share the stories of ordinary Syrian people and to let them be heard. Additionally, research on refugee mobility is quite detrimental since it will affect the sustainability of refugee and migration policies, security measures and humanitarian aid efforts (Chatelard, 2010).

THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis outline is as follows: refugee mobility will be illustrated in the theoretical framework. Subsequently, the methodology chapter indicates how data has been collected and analysed. In the results chapter, I will present the results, coming from the data and follow the journey many Syrians made. In the discussion session, there will be a dialogue between the results and the theories elucidated in the theoretical framework. At last, the conclusion will provide the answers to the research questions and suggest recommendation for future research and refugee policy.



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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-- Chapter 2

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the world is characterised by daily flows of information, services, money and objects. Even the human body, homes and communication devices are likely to be on the move (Hannam, Scheller & Urry, 2006). Discourses of globalisation and liberalisation have rendered these movements as the new normality, but it also comes with an increasing inequality in access to movements. The world is characterised by an increase in movements and interconnectedness, although “movement is also something that is considerably delimited for much of the world’s population” (Cunningham & Heyman, 2010, p. 292). Inasmuch as not everybody has the ability to move or to experience the reduction of relative and perceive distances between places in everyday life (Massey, 1994), the socially constructed power geometry linked with this so-called time-space compression should not be overlooked. Massey argues that “different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flow and interconnections” (Massey, 1994, p. 3). In particular, refugee movements have been curbed and by doing so, refugees have been both deprived of forms of freedom of movement and – on the contrary – are being forced to move (Cunningham & Heyman, 2010). Refugee mobility is the central topic of this theoretical framework. This framework will comprehend the following topics: (1) Fixed mobility to mobility as a social process, (2) Mobility as a power management measure and (3) Mobility as a meaningful process. The theories discussed in this framework will enable me to place my research in the perspective of mobility research.

2.2 FROM FIXED MOBILITY TO MOBILITY AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

Schapendonk (2014) argues that mobility should not be perceived as “empty-spaced and dead time”. What does this statement entail? How else should mobility be perceived? This statement will be explained by delving into the following topics: human mobility, immobility and moving up or down the ladder. By means of these theories, mobility will be specified as a highly social process.

THE RELATION BETWEEN HUMAN MOVEMENTS AND HUMAN MOBILITY

Globalisation has led to a surge of all sorts of mobilities, such as capital mobility, information mobility, and population mobility. Mobility, as mentioned in this thesis, will consistently refer to human mobility, defined as “individual and collective actors who have intentionality and who are liable to move about” (Kaufmann, 2012). Put differently, mobility combines both the intention as well as the actual physical move. So, human mobility and movements are strongly related. Nevertheless, a distinction should be drawn between these two notions. Whereas movements refer to the specific crossing of space (Cresswell, 2013), human mobility - both forced and voluntary - refers to the “social processes that enable and induce these movements” (Cunningham & Heyman, 2010, p. 293). In many cases, human mobility implies social change, since movement may disrupt one’s previous living conditions. For example, migrating to another country might also have its effect on one’s social roles or daily mobility, which is travelling to work or returning to one’s home country for family visits (Kaufmann, 2012). Several scholars argue, such as the Chicago school, that movement should only be considered as mobilities when it also insinuates social change. Put differently, “movement in the physical sphere is mobility only if there is a change in social position” (Kaufmann, 2011). Schapendonk takes this one step further, stating that “the movements of people (and things) all over the world and at all scales are [...] full of meaning” and therefore, human mobility and movements should not be perceived as “empty-spaced and dead time”

(Schapendonk, 2014). So, within this research, the mobility of Syrian refugees will not be seen solely as purely physical movements on its own, but the movements will be examined along with its social processes, including social mobility which does not necessarily requires physical movement.

Even so, immobility is not merely non-movement or not moving spatially. The crisis of mobility is turning into a crisis of involuntary immobility: there is a sheer number of people willing to migrate but yet being unable to move. Many refugees once left their home country but find themselves stuck in refugee camps or countries in which they are not able to build up a dignified life. So, "it is not the distance or the speed or the means of transport as such, that constitutes this movement as movement, but the character of encounter with what is found at the other end of the journey" (Frello, 2008, p. 31).

MOBILITY EQUALS MOVING UP OR DOWN THE LADDER

Mobility often insinuates social change. There is a tendency to perceive the (increasing number of) physical and social movements as vertical or upward mobility (Salazar & Smart, 2011):

"Notwithstanding the many kinds of involuntary or forced movements, mobility generally evokes a positive valence, denoting the ability to move, the ease or freedom of movement and the tendency to change easily or quickly"

Gregoric Bon & Repic, 2017, p. 110

Howbeit, mobility is not only induced with positive effects. While moving from one place to another, people are sorted in a specific class or category. This classification is of importance since it exerts influence on the ability to move, the capability to cross borders, the risks to be taken on the journey and the treatment along the way. In sum, it determines your mobility (Tyler, 2016). One of the classifications ascribed to people on the move is 'refugee'. The limitations on refugee movements is ramped up, for a variety of reasons. A downward spiral could not only be noticed in terms of physical movements, but also in relation to social movements. Once a destination is reached, the living conditions and the availability of opportunities determine whether social change has indeed evoked improvement, or, on the contrary, a deterioration in position. It determines whether a person will climb up or down the ladder.

MOBILITY AND IMMOBILITY AS A CONTINUUM

Whereas mobility should not be perceived as fixed, neither should immobility. Mobility and immobility often find its expression in contradictions: you are either mobile or immobile, mobility is positive and immobility is negative and so on. However, many scholars insist on the continuum of immobility and mobility, with mobility at one and immobility at the other end (Wang & He, 2016). They argue that stillness is not opposed to movement (Merriman, 2013). There are a variety of situations demonstrating that mobility and immobility do, as a matter of fact, strongly relate. In certain circumstances, the mobility of some people is enhanced, while others' mobility is delimited (Massey, 1994; Hannam, Scheller & Urry, 2006). I will explain this statement by what transpires from a sample. A forcibly displaced family from Syria, currently living in Jordan, has lost their hope on the possibilities to build up a life in Jordan and to be legally employed. One coping mechanisms that they consider to put in place is to send their son to Europe by illegally crossing borders. Almost all their savings will be given to this son to have an adequate budget to pay the costs of this travel. Although their son's mobility might be increased when succeeding in entering Europe illegally, the family will be left behind without any budget to move within Jordan. Moving from their house to other villages or cities is becoming harder than it was before. So, the mobility of the son would curb the physical movements of the rest of the family. In terms of social change, their position might deteriorate with fewer savings as their property.

2.3 MOBILITY AS A POWER MANAGEMENT MEASURE

Although global interconnectedness is currently considered to be part of the world system, one should also admit that physical mobility is limited for the majority of people in the world (Cunningham & Heyman, 2010, p. 292). One of the central arguments in literature, explains mobility to be presented within a field of power. Therefore, “it needs to be framed in relation to the global political system of nation-states, who set and control the parameters of (trans)national movements and prefer relatively immobilised subject populations” (Salazar & Smart, 2011, p.3). This paragraph will put forward mobility as a power management measure and includes the following topics: power geometry, refugee mobility, borders and cross-border mobility.

POWER GEOMETRY

Mobility is a notion that is caught up by power discourses and this again brings us to Massey’s power geometry. This power geometry only partially emerges when differentiating the people who move from the people who do not or cannot. In addition, power geometry also comes into view when looking at the control over those flows and movements:

‘Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, other do not; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it’

Massey, 1994, p. 2

So, mobility is an interplay of control over one’s own movements and control by others, such as gatekeepers, army officials or partners who exercise power over your movements. Thus, some people physically move without exercising any control and power over their own movements. Mobility produces socially differentiated relations to this mobility and movements (Massey, 1994). So, this power geometry in mobility also transforms mobility into a social process, instead of resulting in movements on its own.

The current migration system is characterised by complex ‘fragmented journeys’; routes can be changed along the way (Velde & Naerssen, 2011; Schapendonk & Steel, 2014) and the time span is often prolonged (Colleyer, 2010) when migrants respond to new opportunities and control policies (Düvell, 2012). For example, as a result of refugee management policies, Syrian refugees fleeing in the early stages of the civil war had the opportunity to directly settle in the urban areas of Jordan. After refugee camps emerged aiming to curb Syrian refugee movements and settlement in Jordan’s urban areas, these camps started to function as a pit-stop before journeys continued. So, power geometry is playing a big role in causing journeys to be fragmented. Fragmented journeys underline how refugee journeys do not always head from A to B. Changing trajectories and shifting between identities and places is not an image that fitted the image of refugees. For years the assumption that refugees lack agency and are being forced to move has been taken for granted (Scalettaris, 2009).

REFUGEE MOBILITY

One form of mobility that highlights the importance of power geometry is refugee mobility. Refugee mobility is considerable delimited and refugee movements are characterised by immobility and forced displacement. According to Van Houtum (2002, p. 128) refugees are often considered to have less meaningful economic resources, and are therefore limited in their movements and flexibility. Since refugees often lack these economic resources, most countries perceive refugees as a burden to society. As a result, countries tempt to respond with harsh measures and increase barriers to curb refugee

movements (Legomsky, 2013). A clear example of banning refugees and migrants is closing national borders in order to protect its own country from newcomers.

The word 'refugee' is a concept of which it is hard to determine what it entails. In addition, how to define refugees is a highly contested discussion and the understanding of this concept - by different people - shows a great variety (Bauman, 2004). One of the most common used and accepted definition is the legal definition from the 1951 Convention. The 1951 Convention established in Geneva, spells out a refugee as a person who:

'...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it'

UNHR, 2011, p. 14

The Convention definition is relatively small, only refers to prototypical political migrants and is, therefore, highly contested for a variety of reasons (Black, 2006). At first, because this term has not only been ascribed to prototypical political migrants but also to, among others, asylum seekers, economic migrants, excluded or illegal residents and so on (Haddad, 2008) Subsequently, the distinction between refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants does not reflect reality on the ground and it becomes even more complicated to define refugees when they continue to shift between being a refugee and migrant (Long, 2013).

Moreover, the term refugee will always cause political disagreement because a wider definition implies a potential burden on host states, and on the contrary, a narrow definition risks denied access to protection for refugees (Haddad, 2003). Given the modern migratory patterns I will not distinguish the various groups and will follow the definition given by Bauman (2004, p. 80) where refugees are to be seen "as part of a continuum with, and encapsulating, a panoply of, identity categories such as 'economic migrants', 'illegal migrants', 'asylum seeker', 'illegal refugees', 'certified refugees', 'displaced person', 'stateless person', perhaps even 'terrorist'". Bauman expounds it as a fluid refugee continuum, in which refugees are best defined as absolute outsiders. Outsiders in the sense of outcasts, outlaws and outside any prospect of assimilation (Bauman, 2004). Before one becomes a refugee, borders of countries or nationalities have been crossed.

BORDERS

As mentioned before, closing a national border is a powerful measure to regulate mobility flows. In discussing the notion of borders, some scholars argue that borders are representations of lines in space and could be considered as fixed and rigid points (Eghenter, 2007). On the one hand, borders are understood as absolute boundaries and demarcation lines. On the other hand, borders should "rather be understood as an ongoing strategic effort to make a difference in space among the movements of people, money or products" (Van Houtum, 2002, p. 126). Where for some the border is experienced as a fixed boundary, others experience the border as a variable boundary where divisions are made based on conventional considerations; on economic, social and cultural accounts (Eghenter, 2007). To refer, once more, to Van Houtum, this process is referred to as 'bordering'. In essence, bordering represents the social process of distinguishing 'us' and 'them'. By doing so, the unwanted others are immobilised.

Bauman (2004, p. 28) adds that “its sole existential mode is the incessant activity of separation”. Borders create stabilised unities and by having control over access, ones’ own classification and territories are preserved (Van Houtum, 2002).

Borders are not only confined to national borders. Other borders that could be thought of include borders of camps, borders of cities or regions and borders of groups. On the contrary, “many of the border which order our lives are invisible to the human eye, but they nevertheless impact strongly on our daily practices” (Newman, 2006, p. 172). Consider the difference made between ‘us’ and ‘them’, which is only partly encountered through constructions of physical boundaries (Newman, 2016). Where national borders enforce these distinctions, the socially constructed borders and categories determine who belongs to the group and who does not. Therefore:

“physically crossing the border often turns out to be the easy part of the crossing process. One border (the physical) has been crossed, while a new one (cultural) presents itself which may never be crossed successfully in their life”

Newman, 2006, p. 179

So, both physical borders, as well as social borders, can have multiple social implications. One example of an important border, next to national borders, are the borders of a refugee camp. A refugee camp is a clear example of bordering and an illustration of the distinction between excluded and isolated refugees being kept away from the included citizens. It is a form of detention that demonstrates “how borders are located and mobilised within national territories” (Mountz, 2012, p 531). At the same time, refugees are inside a country, but they are still being excluded from society. Bauman asserts that these camps are out of reach, placed far from the cities where the ‘included’ live and “all measures have been taken to assure the permanence of their exclusion” (Bauman, 2004, p. 78). Like Za’atari, Azraq and Emirates Refugee Camps are all located in the middle of the desert, at the edge or unbearable sites of Jordan.

CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

For years’ migration studies only studied linear movements from fixed locations, heading to one final safe destination; from A to B. In the nineties, this idea gradually changed when transnationalism was introduced (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014). Transnationalism acknowledges that migrants have multiple relations crossing borders, which influence their experiences of mobility and their trajectories. According to Chatelard (2010, p. 1) “cross-border mobility is not the one-time crossing of a border from the home country to escape persecution or conflict but the possibility of circulating between country of refuge and country of origin”. From this perspective, the return can be regarded as a “dynamic and open-ended process rather than a once-and-for-all move from to the host to the home country” (Marcu, 2014, p. 91). Especially when the levels of human insecurity in protracted conflict zones are at a low level, refugees occasionally visit their home country, while still being settled in another country (Chatelard, 2010). By broadening the interpretation of the border, without limiting borders to merely national border, cross-border circulation can also entail crossing back and forth from the city to the camps.

Cross-border circulation is often used with the ‘aim to pursue or diversify livelihoods, check on families and/or properties and/or evaluate the possibility of return’ (Chatelard, 2010). It is “and always has been, one of the ways that people in difficulty seek to improve their lives” (UNHCR, 2010). By doing so, refugees “exercise a limited degree of choice of the selection of destinations and the timing of their movements” (Richmond, 1994, p. 61). As mentioned before, mobility and transnational migration often constitute effective livelihood strategies. It will provide opportunities to lead active lives in order to

accumulate social and economic capital (Long, 2013). However, independently leaving the first country of asylum in search for a 'better' third country and/or destination is often restricted, since it is undermining a state's right to control its territory. Early registration and identification processes inhibit secondary movements and cross-border mobility and illegal movements are limited as soon as one has registered as 'refugee' (Chatelard, 2010).

2.4 MOBILITY AS A MEANINGFUL PROCESS

Despite many researchers have conducted research on mobility as a social process, less attention has been paid to mobility as a meaningful process for refugees themselves. This point of view from refugees themselves will be central in this research. One of the scholars who has been doing a lot of mobility research - and who points out mobility as a meaningful process - is Tim Cresswell. In one of his video lectures, he mentioned the following sentence, which is essential for my thesis:

"It is about more than getting from A to B, this to me is the central idea of mobility research. And this is true of all kinds of ways of moving, whether you are walking, driving, flying, taking a train, all of them can be imagined as a line on the map, one place at one end, one place to another. Your destination. But mobility's research is about figuring out what fills that line, what makes it significant, what makes it socially important rather than just something you can measure."

Cresswell, 2013 [video]

Further on in this video lecture, Cresswell unfolds that a location could be explained by giving the coordinates of that location or as a dot on a map, however, once you would say that this specific location would be a refugee camp, all kinds of associations come up with this location. Most likely, associations related to uprooted populations in dire need of protection, aid organisations, and poverty (Cresswell, 2013). Those associations transform this location from merely a few coordinates into a location including a rich meaningful set of ideas. Just like location, movements are infused with associations, ideas, and meaning: every movement can be shown as a line on a map, but they also come with rich narratives (Cresswell, 2013). They become rich and socially significant movements, being socially produced and differentiated. Therefore, "mobility entails much more than mere movement; it is infused with meaning" (Frello, 2008; Greenblatt, 2009).

THREE ASPECTS THAT MAKE MOBILITY MEANINGFUL

Within this thesis, the basic premise that is opted for is that mobility is infused with meaning (Frello, 2008): "Mobility as socially produces motion is an amalgam of those three elements; the brute fact of physical movement, [embodied practices] and ideas of mobility" (Cresswell in Javier Coletrío, 2012). The first aspect is the physical movement itself. This movement refers to the spatial displacement, which could be a movement from A to B, a circle or a continuous movement back and forth. All in all, these movements could be illustrated on a map since it is 'an empirical reality' – as explained above (Frello, 2008, p. 30). This physical component of mobility is discussed at great length already. The second aspect that characterises mobility is embodied practice. The question is: how is movement experienced? In which ways is mobility practised? The final and third aspect is ideas of mobility, or in other words, representation. Through representation, people makes sense of their own mobility. For example, meanings associated with leaving your home country Syria for a short holiday trip to visit Petra in Jordan is in sharp contrast with fleeing to Jordan because your home country has turned into a conflict zone. In grasping a better understanding of the meanings attached to one's mobility, the following questions are of importance: What do these movements mean to the people who are doing it and, in addition, the

people around them? In sum, “meanings become all entangled into movements at this point, and we start to get ideologies, narratives, stories, all kinds of ways in which moving is about more than getting from A to B” (Cresswell, 2013). So, in other words, mobility “means different things, to different people, in differing social circumstances” (Adey, 2006, p. 83).

Although these three aspects are all bound up with one another, I would like to entangle these aspects, so more attention will be drawn to the separate aspects. Since the first aspect, the physical movement has already been elaborated on in a previous paragraph, I would like to further present the last two aspects: embodied practice and representation of mobility.

EMBODIED PRACTICE OF MOBILITY

Cresswell and Frello claim that “mobility is practised, experienced and embodied” (Frello, 2008, p. 32). As mentioned above, “our practice interacts with the narrative, the way that we experience mobility is informed by the narratives and meanings that are around it but doesn’t always fit exactly together with it, sometimes there is a difference between them” (Cresswell, 2013). So, practices, narratives, and meanings are all interrelated, whether or not this variety of each aspect is congruent to each other. That is why it is of high importance to take this aspect of experiences of immobility into account. Cresswell (2007, p.20) explains what he considers as practice, derived from Bourdieu’s theory on *Habitat* (1990): practice is “the everyday sense of particular practices such as walking or driving and also the more theoretical sense of the social as it is embodied and habitualised”. While for some the experience of walking around in old city centres may feel liberating and inspirational, others can dislike this activity.

However, by talking about experiences, it is crucial to clarify which interpretation of experiences will be used throughout this thesis. In essence, experiences could be considered as the “direct observation of or participation in events” (Meriam Webster, 2017). Those events can form a basis for your knowledge and feelings, but I will not refer to experience in the sense of accumulated knowledge and skills. When talking about experiences I refer to events that people have observed or participated in while being in Syria, during their journey or in Jordan. Refugee journeys are full of experiences. For that reason, a distinction will be made in those experiences that will be the main point of focus. Stephen Keller wrote in his book *Uprooting and Social Change* (1975) about the stages that constitute the refugee experience. He outlines the following stages; perception of threat, deciding to flee, the period of extreme danger and flight, reaching safety, camp behavior, repatriation, settlement or resettlement, the early and late stages of resettlement, adjustment and acculturation, and finally, residual stages and changes in behavior caused by the experience (Stein, 1981). I must note, not every journey will follow these stages in a chronological order. So I do not perceive this list of events as static because it would imply mobility as a process moving from A to B. I keep myself to a more fluid perception of refugee mobility. Within all Syrian refugee narratives, the analysis will focus on the events mentioned above.

IDEAS OF MOBILITY

The last aspect, ideas of mobility will be put forward in this paragraph. As mobility might be experienced in a multitude of ways, mobility is constructed by a “plethora of representation” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 19). One’s mobility can, for example, be framed as liberating, as adventurous, as threatening, as enjoyment. Cresswell does not describe this process of meaning-making. Up to now, this theoretical framework has mainly been inspired by mobility research. This paragraph will move on and alter its focus on psychological theories constructing this process of meaning-making. It is important to pin down this process since in this research informants elucidated their lived experiences in a number of narratives. By narrating those past events meanings were possibly assigned to experiences. Baumeister has defined meaning as a “mental representation of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, meaning connect things’ (Baumeister in Park, 2010, p. 257). In ascribing meanings, a distinction can

be made between global and situational meanings. Global meanings are illuminated as orienting systems through which experiences of the world are being interpreted. These global meanings, also called core schemas, “nonetheless appears to powerfully influence individuals’ thoughts, actions and emotional responses” (Park, 2010, p. 258). Meanings under the circumstances of a specific situation refer to situational meaning. When a situational meaning is not in line with ones’ global meanings it can result in either an adaptation of the global meanings or situational meanings or it provokes distress (Park, 2010). Put differently, one’s core schema’s might be altered and thereby change ones following thoughts, actions, and responses.

Bearing other perspectives in mind, meaning-making also focuses on the process of how individuals “make sense of knowledge, experiences, relationships and the self” (Ignelzi, 2000, p. 5). Development psychologist Robert Kegan’s theory described meaning-making as an active and ongoing construction of an own sense of reality. Your understanding of reality is, to a very great degree, dependent on those meanings. This process “continues to develop throughout one’s life span” (Ignelzi, 2000, p.6). Just try to remember how you perceived reality as a child: it probably differs substantially from your perceptions nowadays. Because humans change themselves, meaning-making evolves as well (Ignelzi, 2000). This ongoing process of meaning-making is similar to the adaptation of global or situational meanings throughout your life.

Still, it remains unclear how people make sense of experiences, relations, the self, etcetera. Kegan spells out that “an event does not have a particular solitary meaning attached that simply gets transferred to the individual” (Ignelzi, 2000, p. 7). Instead, the creation of meaning happens between a certain event and one’s response to it. To put it differently, experiences are reformulated to understand and comprehend those events and by doing so meanings are made. While everyone is creating their own reality, it might differ per person how they experience the same event. I would like to illustrate this theory by giving an example about borders. Rumford (2006) elucidates that the way we think about borders is very much dependent on our personal experiences. For some, the borders are seen as a gateway while someone else constitutes it as a boundary (Rumford, 2006). Is crossing the border for holiday trips your point of reference? Or has your perception of the border changed because of fleeing your country from war?

In the context of Syrian refugee journeys, it will be interesting to look at the meaning-making of experiences during different periods of time: being in Syria, fleeing to Jordan and settlement in Jordan. In disclosing the meanings Syrian refugees ascribe to their journeys, the main focus is on unravelling their representation and narratives. As has been concluded in the section on the meaning-making process, particular encounters and experiences can result in changing one’s global meanings or core schemas once the situational meanings assigned to that particular encounter are not congruent to the global meanings. Such as the perception of the border changes once a Syrian crossed it fleeing Syria’s war or the ideas about refugee camps when you have to live in it yourself. In amending global core schemas, these changes might also evolve in a transformation of one’s identity. The following paragraph will be about identity transformation while encountering a war zone, fleeing your country or trying to settle in a host country.

IDENTITY IN A FLUX

Incongruence between global and situational meanings are likely to happen when refugees flee their country: the experiences of being forcibly displaced ‘sets in motion powerful processes of identity formation’ (Long & Oxfeld, 2004, p. 170). By physically moving to another country, it also precipitates a shift in personal and social guidelines and boundaries (Van Houtum, 2002). Van Houtum calls this state as being a stranger to ourselves:

“Migrating transnationally, however, is generally seen as one of the most dramatic identity alterations in the consistent fluctuation of ‘home’ and personal identity. In all cases, the process of giving meaning to their new world implies constant negotiations with the new social environment as well as with their former or other social environment”

Van Houtum, 2002, p. 132

The impact of migrating transnationally and becoming a refugee should not be overlooked. Bauman (2004, p. 76) describes how becoming a refugee is a process characterised by dashing hope: ‘on the way to the camps, future inmates are stripped of every single element of their identities, except one: that of stateless, placeless and functionless refugees’. For him, the hope for these people is gone once they have become a refugee, they will be a refugee forever: ‘there is no return and no road forward’ (Bauman, 2003, p. 78). For Bauman, the impact of fleeing your country, being put in a refugee camp or being deprived of citizens can only be presented negatively. Whether Bauman’s statement reflects reality or not, it ratifies the impact of becoming a refugee. In this research, Syrian refugees in Jordan themselves reflect on identity transformation in relation to their experiences in the past couple of years of war, fleeing Syria and living in Jordan.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Throughout this framework, theories shed light on the notion of refugee mobility. I started with describing how a globalised world led to an influx in movements. Movements of products, money, information, people and much more. An increase in movements has not led to access of movement for everyone. Especially those without economic resources are being limited in the freedom of movement (Van Houtum, 2012). Therefore, the movements of refugees are controlled by power geometry measurements, such as closing borders and establishing refugee camps to curb movements. While refugees explore the opportunities within their own continuum of mobility and immobility, it is experienced how physical movements sets in motion social processes. To put differently, mobility could be regarded as a meaningful process. How Syrian refugees themselves assign meaning to mobility will be the main point of attention in the result chapter.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

-- Chapter 3

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As proposed in the previous chapter, the research question of this thesis will be: How does the mobility of Syrian refugees transcend from physical movements into a meaningful process? This chapter will consider the research approach chosen to find an answer to this research question. This chapter consists of the paragraphs as follows: (1) research approach, (2) data collection, (3) data analysis and (4) reflections.

Throughout my fieldwork period, including fieldwork preparation and several brainstorm sessions for relevant thesis topics, I have been closely working together with Jip Bekkers, a master student from the same chair group, i.e. 'Disaster Studies'. We made the decision to set up this collaboration picking out two specific topics within Syrian refugee mobility. By doing research on two complementary topics, we hoped to create added value in researching a larger topic. While my focus is on the meanings of Syrian refugee mobility, Jip has been working on the negotiations within Syrian refugee mobility. For this reason, setting up a network, drawing up a research strategy and conducting interviews have been all carried out together. This collaboration will be more thoroughly elaborated on in the final paragraph.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research has its focus on the mobility of Syrian refugees in Jordan as a meaningful process. To get insight in this meaningful process, it is of great concern to become familiar with Syrian refugee perspectives to uncover the experiences, meanings, and perspectives. For this aim of exploring experiences, meanings, and perspectives, a qualitative approach is required. Many definitions of qualitative research have passed, but they often boil down to:

"Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives."

Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2

This qualitative field study in Jordan exactly fits this definition, aiming to expose and understand the meanings people bring to their mobility, within the context of underlying social processes (O'Reilly, 2012). I perceive refugees as actors in the social world. Within this research, it is the aim to partly understand their social world, with acknowledging that this understanding will only be very limited. To gain a better understanding of their social worlds, data was collected in flexible ways. I have conducted semi-structured interviews to identify meanings, to get insight into the background of respondents and to be informed about the refugee life. The interviews aimed at Weber's idea of 'verstehen': I tried to truly understand the intentions, and interpret the meanings of the action for the refugees (O'Reilly, 2012). I acknowledge that in making sense of their narratives, misinterpretations could have been of the data as well. I will address this aspect in the paragraph on key actors where I elaborate on my role as researcher.

Besides semi-structured interviews, two other research methods were used: observations and informal conversations and observations. Before elaborating on this data gathering process, I will first discuss how an inductive approach is characterising this research.

INDUCTIVE & DEDUCTIVE APPROACH

In addition to a qualitative approach, this research has taken an inductive approach as well. According to O'Reilly (2012, p. 29) an inductive approach entails a process in which "the researcher begins with as open a mind and as few preconceptions as possible, allowing theory to emerge from data". The following quote lucidly explains this open approach:

"The principle of openness implies that the theoretical structuring of the issue under study is postponed until the structuring of the issue under study by the persons being studied has 'emerged'".

Hoffmann-Riem, 1980, p. 343

With this research approach in mind, themes, patterns, hypotheses, and categories were not imposed on this research prior to the data collection and analysis (Bowen, 2006). Nevertheless, this research partially adopts a deductive approach, because I acknowledge that it is impossible to start out with no preconceived ideas. However, to guard for this I was honest and open about my possible preconceptions and wrote them down (O'reilly, 2012). This method allowed me to be critical and open to new insights and surprises. In addition, it enabled the data to be prominent in steering the research instead of me as a researcher. One of the preconceived ideas I had was that movements from Syria to Jordan would be more meaningful than movements within Jordan. Additionally, I expected most Syrian refugees in Jordan to descend from the South of Syria – a preconception that was discarded during the first few interviews. I was really surprised to hear respondents mentioning Aleppo or Hama as their place of residence in Syria. Although they had to travel long distances, it was their aim to be reunited with family members or friends who fled to Jordan prior to them.

LIMITATIONS

To overcome the problems of this approach, the main underpinnings of grounded theory have been applied to data collection and analysis. Therefore, constant reflection and comparing unfolding observations were one of the important undertakings during data collection (Babbie, 2010). It allowed me to adjust focus, discard theoretical ideas and rethink my topic list as the research progressed. Moments of reflection had to be planned, both during field work and data analysis. One of the reflection sessions led to the adjustment of the topic list. Whereas I first tended to focus more on background information of Syrians living in Syria, later more attention was given to a refugee's journey to and within Jordan. Therefore, more questions could be asked about the meaning of the borders and identity transformation as impacted by Syria's civil war and refugee journeys. So with constant reflection, I have addressed its limitations.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

As discussed above, the data was collected with an inductive and qualitative approach in mind. In this chapter, I will elaborate more thoroughly on the data collection. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first will be about the variety of forms of data, including semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and observations. The second section will highlight the process of collecting data

and accessing respondents. The final section will be on the crucial roles translators, researcher, and respondents had in collecting data.

DATA GATHERINGS METHODS

Various forms of data have been gathered throughout this research, however, the one most essential for this research is semi-structured interviews and will be mentioned as first.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

One of the most common used method in gaining qualitative data about respondents' experiences, feelings and perceptions, is semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have been used as the main important and flexible method within this research. Initially, we expected to conduct around 30 interviews. This was a rough estimation based on others researchers' stories about possibilities to get access to respondents, research sites and ideas of data saturation. While in the field it appeared the number of 30 interviews was easily reached. In the end, a total of 59 interviews has been conducted. After 30 interviews were conducted, respondents only covered a limited geographical area in Jordan. That is to say, the respondents were mainly settled in Zarqa or in on the camps, however, no Syrians settled in Irbid or Mafraq were part of this research, yet. It was decided to continue conducting interviews and to look for opportunities to speak with Syrians living in Mafraq, Irbid, and Amman. Mainly due to practical matters, such as transport costs and duration of travels, it was difficult to follow respondents for a longer time and therefore most Syrian respondents were only visited and interviewed once. Each interview was an interesting, thought-provoking add-on to the data collected.

The duration of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 120 minutes. The topic list was subdivided into three main topics: life back in Syria, the journey from Syria to Jordan and settlement in Jordan. These three themes touched topics such as the mobility within Syria, leaving family members and friends behind when fleeing, being left behind in Syria while others flee, the journey from Syria to Jordan, the meaning of the border, the mobility within Jordan etcetera.

During the interviews, notes have been made on the emotional process reflected throughout the narratives and the interview. Emotions, silences, denials, evasions etcetera provided interesting metadata. Metadata is the information people communicate about their interior thoughts and feelings (Fujii, 2010). According to Fujii, forms of metadata could be an indication the quality and reliability of the data. Although in theory, this metadata might have provided tonnes of interesting research data, it was impossible to uncover all this information. Due to my unfamiliarity with the Arabic language, the cultural habits, and common non-verbal communication signs, I was not able to entangle all underlying emotions, nuances, and gestures. In order to do justice to the emotions shown by the respondents and to include this information within the data analysis, a separate vignette can be found in the chapter on results.

INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS

The interviews were, in nearly all cases, conducted in a formal interview setting, primarily in one of the community centres of Terre des Hommes. Throughout the interviews, the topic list structured the meetings making it a somewhat controlled conversation. To ensure not all meetings were steered in a certain direction by using the topic list, additional informal conversations were held at a local café in downtown Amman, with a Syrian man who – over time – became a friend of ours. Besides this Syrian man, we also frequently visited a Syrian family in their own house in one of Amman's neighbourhoods: they prepared meals, I brought apple pies and made handcrafts with their little girl. In these informal settings, much room was offered to let the Syrian friends steer the conversation. These informal conversations formed additional information in trying to grasp the refugee life in Jordan, the background

in Syria and their personalities. Furthermore, conversations were held with officials in the refugee camps, our translator in the camps, an Iraqi refugee and others researchers who were conducting PhDs on similar topics.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations have been only conducted on a small scale. Observation is “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (De Walt and De Walt, 2002: 1). Examples of situations observed are home-visits, paying visits to the Syrian embassy and a Palestinian neighbourhood in which many houses are now rented to Syrians and taking part in interactions with one of our Syrian friend with his family members. The aim of these observations was rather to better understand the Syrian culture, to build trust among Syrians and to reveal the living conditions of Syrians living in Jordan. These observations helped to recognise habits discussed in interviews, but also revealed information on the treatment by Jordanians and provided additional context to interpret answers given during interviews. Nevertheless, on every occasion, there was a certain distance between the participant and me as the researcher. Due to the appearance of both Jip and me – having uncovered blond hair - accompanied by a Jordanian translator – I could never have behaved ‘like one of them’. Although my different behaviour is not of main concern, questions about why I might have behaved differently made the respondents highly aware of my presence among them (Barakat & Ellis, 1996). Yet, my ‘outsider role’ also could have been an addition, because it enabled me to see the other, as a party with another history and life (Norman, 2009).

ACCESSING DATA

In getting access to respondents we were supported by Terre des Hommes Italy (TdH), as they provided us with contacts of potential respondents. It was very helpful as a starting point for building up a network to further generate contacts of respondents - through snowball sampling - which we would normally not have access to. Not only contacts at TdH were helpful in building connections. My former colleagues at ZOA Jordan offered support in finding an apartment in Amman through connecting us to multiple Facebook groups, in which both locals and expats are part of an online community. These groups have proved to be extremely constructive platforms for finding translators, connecting to other researchers in Amman and getting in contact with key persons. All these people were able to help, in one way or another, to get access to Syrian refugees. The first priority was to find a suitable translator since fluently speaking Arabic is not yet a skill we mastered. After having met a variety of Jordanians willing to help out, a few suitable translators were selected – who met the requirements of fluently speaking both English and Arabic, showed no hard feelings toward Syrians and showed to be committed to this research.

The first few interviews were being held at Terre des Hommes’ community centre in Zarqa. TdH arranged that during each visit of the community centre, 3 respondents were scheduled to have interviews with us. TdH took the responsibility to ask people whether or not they willing to participate and informed them about the purpose of this research. Since TdH Italy only worked in Zarqa, and our aim was to initiate contacts with Syrian refugees settled in various cities in Jordan, TdH Lausanne – working in Irbid & Mafraq - was also contacted. They provided us with a database of their beneficiaries visiting community centres in Irbid & Mafraq, whom we could approach, with the help of a translator, for interviews. More than half of the respondents we interviewed were arranged through the community centres of TdH Italy & TdH Lausanne.

Another way of getting access to respondents was through a Syrian translator, who had a big network of Syrian acquaintances living in Jordan. This translator already (partly) knew the life stories of her Syrian acquaintances. She made the assessment of choosing those respondents who were of most added value

for the research. The only aspect that could be controlled was place of residence in Jordan and in some cases gender, by, for instance, inviting a husband as well. In Amman, we gained access through snowball sampling, with the help of a variety of contacts. A researcher met in Amman could bring us in contact with a young Syrian guy living in Amman. In addition, a taxi driver could connect us to a Syrian refugee living in downtown Amman. This Syrian man was a valuable key respondent and later connected us to a variety of other respondents in Amman.

Overall, getting access was easier than expected – unless a permit was needed. Getting access to the refugee camps, government officials or the Syrian embassy included lengthy processes; official request letters from the university were sent, every now and then calls were made about arranging a permit and as befits a true Jordanian: we called again and again. All in all, it was not an easy, quick fix, especially since the ‘rules’ for these procedures were not clearly laid out – it was often not even known whether it would be feasible to obtain a permit at all. Fortunately, a few days before Ramadan would start, the Ministry of Interior decided to give us a permit for a one-day visit to each of the three camps (Za’atari, Azraq, and Emirates refugee camp). In practice, this permit did not automatically give access to the camp and we had to renegotiate access upon arrival at the camps. It was very interesting to visit the camps and to meet Syrians who have settled in one of the three camps. Although ever since a permit was given, it would be easier to arrange a new permit to re-visit the camps to conduct more interviews with refugees in a camp setting, it was an extremely costly project paying for certified drivers and translators. In conclusion, decisions on whom to approach or with whom to spend time were also practically limited (O’Reilly, 2012, p.42). Therefore, only a limited number of interviews were conducted with encamped refugees. So, access to the respondents has shaped the construction of knowledge, since the number of narratives of urban refugees was significantly higher than narratives from Syrians living in refugee camps.

KEY ACTORS

This process of data gathering was highly dependent on three key actors: the translators, myself as researcher and most of all the respondents. Their impact on data collection and analysis will be the focus of the following paragraphs.

ROLE OF TRANSLATORS

Since we did not master the skill to speak Arabic, and almost every respondent barely spoke English working with a translator was a necessity. It was of great value to have several translators who proved to be committed to play a key role in the interviews as both translator and interpreter. They were not only translating the words said, but also interpreted the meanings and the emotions assigned to narratives. And in particular, working with the Syrian translator was found very helpful in asserting emotional trust from respondents, since this translator facilitated several interviews with people she knew (Norman, 2009)

On the other hand, being compelled to work with a translator had several disadvantages. The life stories were not translated word for word, but the translator summarised the narratives. For this reason, it could have been the case that highly important elements have not become part of the data. Because of the unfamiliarity with the language, the control was only partly in our hands and even more in the hands of the translator. In addition, it was out of our control to assure the questions were phrased in the way it was intended to be. Despite the fact the translators were given feedback on his or her role, it was a limitation we had to accept. To conclude with, important information, intonation and other non-verbal communication (body language, emotions etc.) were not being translated into research data because of not speaking the local language.

ROLE OF RESEARCHER

At first, it is important to note that the character of this research is summarised by two key concepts: descriptive and interpretative. As a result, this research is not determining in nature. Therefore, I will not claim that the outcomes of this research could be seen as the objective truth about Syrian refugee mobility (Richards, 2005). In representing the life stories of Syrian refugees and shedding light on their sense-making of mobility, I acknowledge that objectivity cannot be achieved (Zahar, 2009). As Zahar (2009, p. 3) asserts, “we interpret events through our own categories of understanding and these induce biases into our analysis”. I believe this research should be regarded as socially constructed knowledge in which both the respondents, the translator and the researcher exert influence (Berger & Luckmann, 1996). Additionally, the place where the interviews were conducted – such as at home or a centre of Terre des Hommes - made a difference. Above all, respondents embodied and constructed a certain representation of their reality embedded in narratives. A reality that I, as a researcher, tried to grasp through those narratives. This process is phrased by Borland (1991, p.63) as “construct[ing] a second-level narrative based upon, but at the same time reshaping, the first”. Misinterpretations of the data could not entirely be avoided and checking my interpretations with respondents could have resulted in conflicts over interpretations. Still, it was my role as researcher to interpret the narratives and to place the refugees’ life stories in a larger perspective or pointing out some specific elements (Borland, 1991). Therefore, the data analysis reflects my sense-making and, to a certain extent, differ from respondents’ accounts. To avoid misunderstandings, several interpretations were checked with the translator or have been examined through triangulation; observations, informal conversations, articles etcetera.

ROLE OF RESPONDENTS

This research could only be realised by the willingness of so many respondents to share their life stories. 57 Syrian refugees offered me a glimpse into their lives. It was very interesting to speak with people with a variety of narratives, backgrounds, and journeys. The variety in narratives was determined by the respondent’s place of origin in Syria, the differences in decisions made during trajectories, the resources possessed, place of settlement in Jordan they settled and so on. An infographic on the characteristics can be found on the next page.

Furthermore, the ability to formulate one’s experience and feelings varied per person as well. These abilities were essential in constructing narratives. In order to grasp mobility as a meaningful process, it was very helpful to speak with respondents who were conscious of themselves and aware of the meanings assigned to their mobility. Subsequently, the respondent decided whether or not share the narratives and sense-making processes. Some respondents were less willing to share information or paid attention to other topics and by doing so they exerted power on the outcome of the interview.

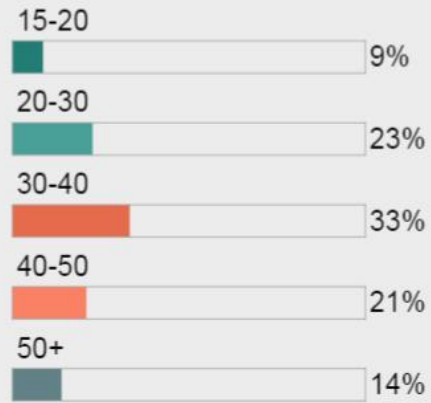


RESPONDENTS

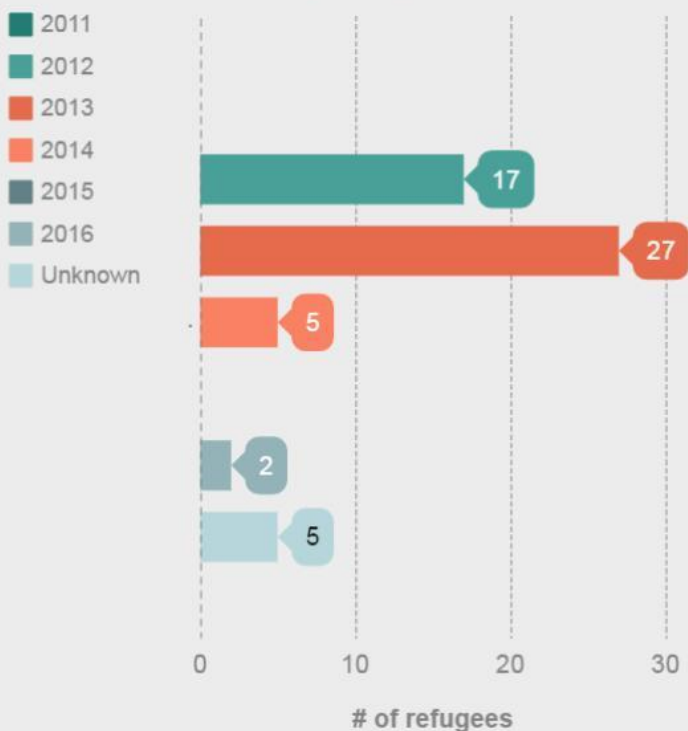
Gender



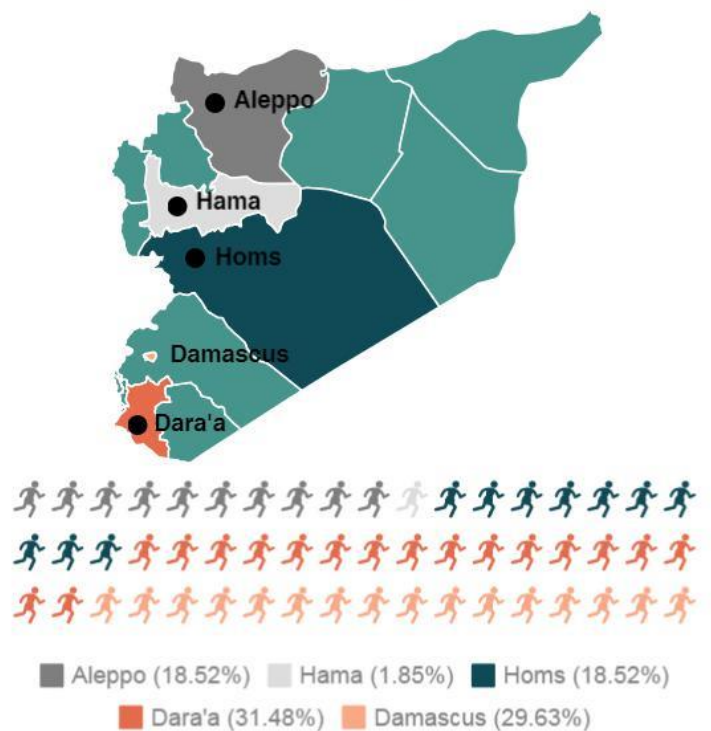
Age



Year fleeing Syria



Residency in Syria



3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In the previous paragraph, the process of data gathering is explained. Subsequently, this paragraph will highlight how the data has been analysed. When I started with the data analysis, it again, reminded me of the large number of interviews conducted in Jordan, which resulted in 360 pages of interview transcriptions and a variety of notes. All these interviews and notes were uploaded to Nvivo, a program that enabled me to easily categorise and code the data. Still, it was a challenge to relevant categories and the overwhelming made it a laborious process. Consequently, I finally decided to have a specific focus within the data analysis, since not every aspect could be part of the analysis. It led to the distinction of 3 main themes, considerably related to Cresswell's theory on mobility: (1) mobility, (2) identity and (3) experiences. This distinction of three themes is both reflected in the coding scheme and in the Result chapter. Although, these categories are presented as separate issues, "these elements of mobility are unlikely to be easy to untangle. They are bound up with one another" (Cresswell, 2010, p. 19). The intertwinements of these categories are part of the data analysis as well. It will shortly be described what I consider as Mobility, Identity and Experiences.

MOBILITY

For describing how mobility will be considered in this thesis, I phrase Cresswell where he says that:

"the word mobility can be defined as the intention to move and the realisation of this movement in geographical space, implying a social change"

Cresswell, 2013, p. 1

As many other scholars agree, central in mobility is the importance of social change as an implication of mobility. It is not merely a physical movement but rather is socially produced. In addition, mobility is highly differentiated in power, access and ways to move (Adey, 2006).

IDENTITY

Many scholars describe identity in a similar way, where "[i]dentity is intended and best described as a relational and contextual process that refers to how individuals and groups consider, construct, and position themselves in relation to others according to social categories such as gender, sexuality, culture, race, nation, age, class and occupation" (La Barbera, 2014, p. 10) In addition, I would like to mention that identity is not seen as static, but as a social process. Identity is in a flux, especially when we physically move and we assimilate into a new environment "our personal and social boundaries shift" with the effect of reinventing and redefining yourself (van Houtum, 2000). So this theme of shifting identities will be about the impact that witnessing a war and consequently fleeing your own country has on your identity and what it means to be considered a Syrian refugee instead of a Syrian citizen. How do the respondents describe themselves, apart from how they are being labelled?

EXPERIENCES

In essence, experiences could be considered as the "direct observation of or participation in events" (Meriam Webster, 2017). Those events can form a basis for your knowledge and feelings, but I do not refer to experiences in the sense of accumulated knowledge and skills. So when, in this chapter, making reference to experiences, the events that people have observed or participated in while being in Syria, along their journey or in Jordan are being pointed out. According to Creswell (2010, p. 25) 'human mobility [...] surely has the notion of experience as its centre', which means that 'human mobility is experienced mobility'. Is moving a painful and tiring act? How did - and still do - Syrian refugees

experience mobility? How did they feel during different phases of their journey? When people were on the move, were they full of hope, fear, uneasiness, courage or despair? How people experience their mobility differs per person and per person: while for the one it was part of their daily lives to travel back and forth to Jordan for jobs, for someone else leaving his or his city was an experience in and of itself.

Where Cresswell focuses on physical movements, ideas of mobility and embodied practice of movement which is strongly in line with the themes of mobility and experiences, I added the theme of identity. I made this decision since the interviews gave me a much deeper understanding of how – for many of my respondents - fleeing from your home country, not only entails a physical transition, but also entails a transition in identity. From first being labelled as Arabic brothers & sisters, now being yelled at as refugees. From having a job to provide for the family, now being dependent on the aid of NGOs and UNHCR. Therefore, the aspect of identity should not be overlooked.

3.5 REFLECTIONS

Conducting refugee research in a complex and political environment of forced displacement and war traumas posed a variety of ethical issues. This section will emphasise the in-depth and ongoing reflection on implementing research among refugees. I acknowledge that my research intervention may have had effect on the respondents (Goodhand, 2000). The aspect of doing no harm will be discussed thoroughly. Following a reflection on the limitations of this research and the collaboration with Jip Bekkers, another master's student of Disaster Studies.

ETHICS: DO NO HARM

During moments of reflection on the impact of this research, the most important issue that continually emerged as the key principle for this research was: 'do no harm'. The aim of this principle is to ensure that the respondents are being protected from harm as a result of their involvement in this research (Goodhand, 2000; O'reilly, 2012). Goodhand stresses the importance of recognising the variety of ethical challenges in order to do no harm and do some good. For that reason, it is pivotal to reflect on "how you conduct research, to whom you talk and what you talk about [...] to avoid putting communities at risk" (Goodhand, 2000, p. 13). In particular, the topics addressed in the interviews required regular reconsideration, in order to continuously assess whether interviewing respondents did not lead to re-opening wounds. More information on this matter can be found in the separate vignette following this chapter. During data collection, decisions were made on whom we were talking to. The data only included interviews with Syrian refugees and officers at the refugee camps. Only at the end, officials from the Jordanian government have been met. By having this meeting as the final interview, I hoped to avoid suspiciousness from Syrian respondents. Especially since many respondents – in particular, the Syrians working illegally - were very suspicious and anxious for the Jordanian government and police. It could affect the trust of respondents in us as researchers (Berger & Luckmann, 1996).

Another aspect of not doing harm, mentioned by Goodhand (2000) and Barakat & Ellis (1996), is the importance of not giving false hope among the respondents. To avoid this, respondents were informed about the purposes, methods, risks and benefits of this particular research (MacKenzie, McDowell & Pittaway, 2007). Next to that, at the beginning of each interview, it was explained that – although I sincerely wanted to – I was not able to help them, in the hope false expectations were not created. During an interview, one respondent walked away, after conveying this information. Although respondents were informed on this matter, respondents could have participated in this research with the aim of receiving financial help or support in coming to Europe. I honestly hope my role in their mobility processes was clear. At last, to secure the respondents' safety, anonymity and confidentiality were

ensured. For these two issues, photos of refugees are not included and names have been changed or left out for the protection of respondents.

LIMITATIONS

I acknowledge that this research has some limitations, although it is tried to limit the scope of it. Those limitations with the greatest impact on the data gathered will be discussed. One of the limits that I have been confronted with is the broad range of data covering many mobility themes. With more narrow objectives and aims the level of focus could be increased. Another aspect is the moment of data collection. Interviews have only been conducted at one moment, that is to say, May-September 2016. However, sense-making is an ongoing process. It would be interesting to conduct a follow up on the data collection, to research how meanings assigned to mobility has changed over time.

Lastly, I would like to emphasise the limits on the level of reflection of respondents. Throughout the interviews, a variety of questions were asked in which reflection on both experiences and themselves was needed. After a few interviews, I discovered I hoped for a deeper level of reflection than respondents were able to share or were even capable of. For example, one of the questions was: How do you perceive yourself? So, preferably I phrased the question somewhat similar to: "How do you perceive yourself?" However, many of the respondents were not able to answer this question. Without any guidance on possible answers, this question was a bit too fuzzy. So when this question was asked – in almost every case – the respondent was looking dazed at me, asked for clarity or said: "*I would portray myself with a mirror*" (Interview 45, Mafrq, women). As a result, I proposed some categories they could possibly think of, such as Syrian, refugee, citizen, victim, strong, etcetera. Unfortunately, somehow, I steered the answer, because almost every respondent chose one of the categories proposed. Although research-wise it would be of added value to ask this question without providing categories, it was too difficult for respondents to answer. The question was still asked, however, I had to adapt my expectations on respondents' level of reflection. In many cases, I further elaborated on whether or not they would describe themselves as refugees. By reason, it has changed the outcome of this question. Although I could not change the level of reflection, this limitation could partly be overcome if I mastered to speak Arabic. It would enable me to discover whether phrasing a question differently could be key for a respondent to come up with an answer.

COLLABORATION WITH JIP BEKKERS

I have been closely working together with Jip Bekkers within this research. The purpose of this cooperation was fourfold; (1) to have two complementary theses with a focus on two different aspects of refugee mobility, (2) to mentally and emotionally support each other in our fieldwork period, (3) to create feedback mechanisms in which we as students would peer review each other's theses (4) to not reinvent the wheel by both when doing research in a similar setting.

After our fieldwork period, it became apparent that the first aspect – two complementary theses as a result - has been taken on a different aspect. In fact, our process – more specifically the speed of analysing and writing the research data – was not in line with each other. Before starting our collaboration, the risk of discrepancy in the writing process has been discussed. Although it did not pose direct problems, it was still unfortunate to notice this happen. As a matter of fact, an additional chapter which would connect both theses could not be written. Moreover, it was not desirable to schedule time for peer review since we both had different deadlines and chapters to work on. So, this collaboration did not have the impact aiming for at the beginning of it, however, I believe it was still of great added value for this research. It was very constructive to share brainstorm sessions for relevant topics and question each other what topics would be both interesting and stimulating. Even more, the collaboration was a

great success value during the fieldwork period in Jordan, resulting in interviewing 59 respondents, including Syrian refugees, UNHCR officer, and government officials. It was really great and inspiring to meet many friendly Syrians, moreover, doing research on refugee mobility also entailed listening to detailed stories about refugee journeys, horrors inside Syria, humiliation by Jordanians and forced separation from family members - including a whole range of emotions - were shared with us. These interviews and encounters sometimes affected me emotionally. In those situations, Jip was definitely the best person to talk with. Another advantage was, in combining our efforts we gathered more data; it enabled one of us to make notes during interviews while the other could have a real conversation with the respondent, it was easier to build up a network, peer review was given on the interview questions asked, that were missing the point and we could motivate each other to be persistent in trying to speak with a government official. In addition, it felt more safe and comfortable meeting new people – without always knowing the intention of the other - knowing we were with the two of us.

Dealing with two refugee mobility topics within one topic list also had its disadvantage. Subsequently, Jip and I both had our own agendas during interviews. Of course, we knew that we both needed to get data from these interviews. In the meanwhile, it was difficult and maybe even inevitable to not tend to focus on your own topic. Sometimes I would have liked to have the interview focus on a specific issue related to meanings of mobility, while at that moment Jip was steering the conversation in another direction. On the other hand, the questions raised by Jip also gave me new insights or interesting data, which I would not have gathered when I would do this research on my own.

To conclude with, the collaboration resulted both in disadvantages as well as advantages, but the added value of working together has definitely tipped the balance towards the advantages.

DO NO HARM

One of the ethical issues introduced is the principle of doing no harm, which means no harm is invoked on the respondents by taking part in this research. Thus, while interviewing refugees, I did not overlook the liability of respondents suffering from traumas, anxiety, bitterness or depression. With this consideration in mind, I felt some uneasiness asking respondents for the most difficult situation they had witnessed during their journey in Syria, Jordan or even other countries. Why would I remind them of the horrible events along their way? One of the difficulties that emerged during interviews was silence of respondents. Manifold intentions could be the reason for respondents remaining silent: a lack of trust, no understanding of the question, thinking about an answer, as a coping mechanism etcetera. Sometimes it indeed did feel wrong to ask, especially when people said nothing and our translator said: *“No need to talk / It is too difficult for them / No comment.”* In cases in which I felt that respondents were not willing to answer this type of question, or the question made them uncomfortable, I decided to not ask supplementary questions. Their safety and emotional well-being was considerably more important than me having questions answered. Hence, at the beginning of each interview, respondents were informed on the possibility to let questions unanswered, for whatever reason.

Although, there was no lack of reflection from my part or information for the respondents, several situations occurred, leaving me with feelings of dismay. I would like to give a few examples. During an interview, the translator started to explain the purpose of the interview and the ground rules. Although, the respondent was informed by Terre des Hommes about the content of the interview, she asked: *“Do you want to remind me of the horrors that happened in Syria?”*. It confused me on the matter of doing no harm. The interview with this woman was still held, however, many questions from the topic list were not asked. I was definitely very careful in what to ask or not to ask. I did not want to “re-open wound by probing into areas respondents may not want to talk about” (Goodhand, 2000, p. 12).

Another example was an interview being held at a barber shop, where a Syrian man was working. This guy did not have a work permit, so he was doing this job illegally. During the interview, I could notice the fear in his eyes for talking to a stranger: Could this stranger – me, as researcher – be an informant from the Jordanian government? Would someone notice this interview being held? To a certain extent, the Syrian guy was put at risk because of this interview. I always tried to comfort respondents and ensured that their safety was more important than collecting data.

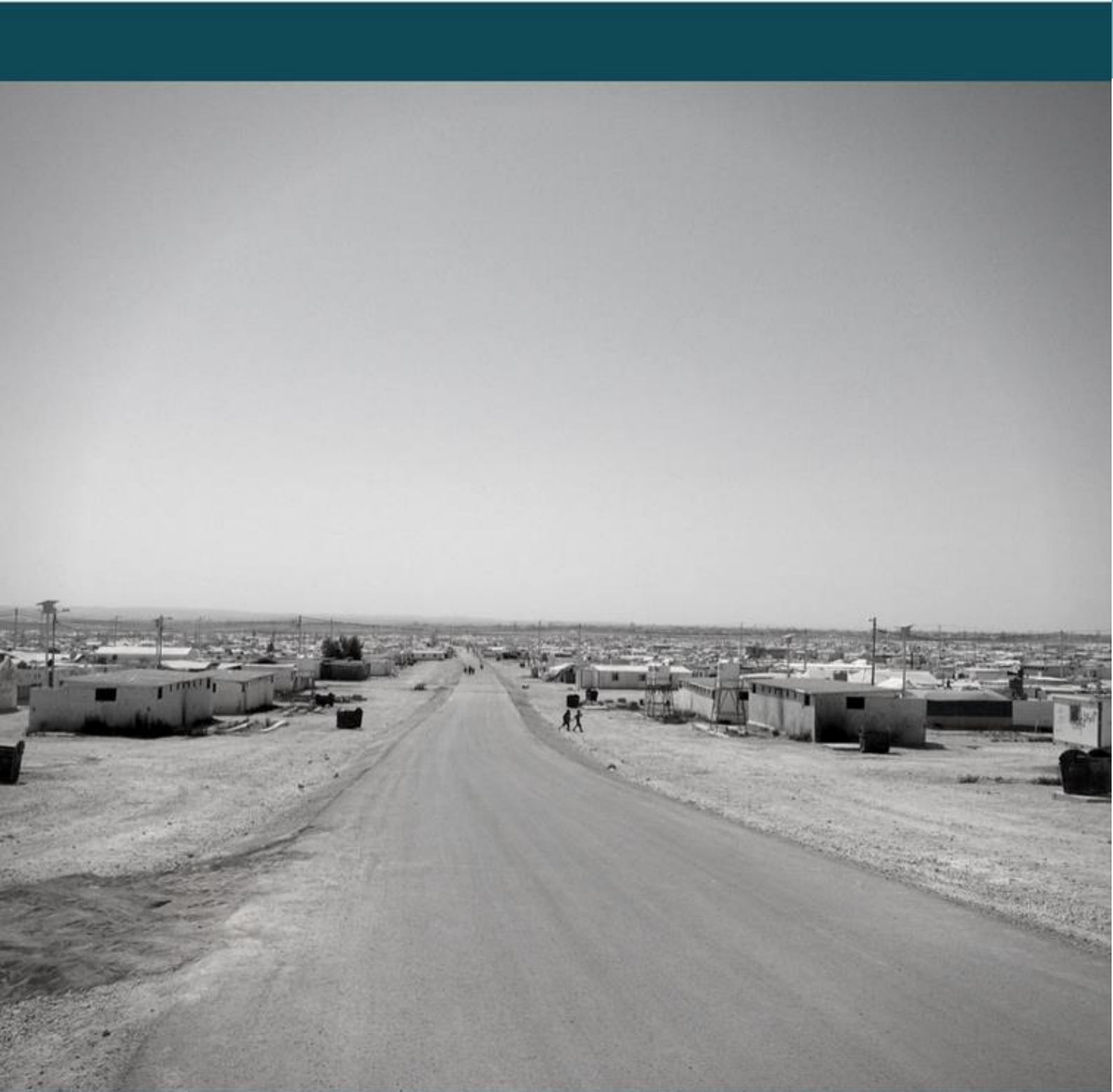
DO SOME GOOD

At a certain point of collection data, I wondered whether it was still justified to conduct interviews among Syrian refugees. Still, many respondents had their reasons to be part of this research. The Syrian barber mentioned above, really wanted to share his life story, so the stories of Syrians should be heard in Europe. With him, many respondents shared this opinion.

Thinking about the value of this research, reminds me of a lecture on Goodhand’s view on research in conflict settings, where it should not be solely about researcher that do “not inadvertently ‘do harm’, [but also] that they remain open to opportunities to ‘do some good’” (Goodhand, 2000, p. 12). I graciously can conclude; the interviews really did some good. Some expressed gratitude by giving a hug or emphasized how the interview felt like a psychological treatment. They indicated they were surprised I did care about knowing their answers. I would like to strike the balance with the following quote:

“in the name of all other Syrians: it means a lot that Europeans come here and ask about our situation. What also means a lot to me is your compassion and making me feel that I am not forgotten and that I am not suffering alone. You make me feel human, especially because you travelled all the way here only to ask about me. That is really huge for me.”

Interview 51 – Mafraq - Woman



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

RESULTS: MEANINGFUL SYRIAN REFUGEE JOURNEYS

-- Chapter 4

4.1 INTRODUCTION

During a 4-month fieldwork in Jordan, 59 in-depth interviews have been conducted. Each interview represented the physical movements from Syrians pushed to flee their country, seeking refuge in Jordan. Even so, the narratives pointed out how Syrian refugee mobility passed beyond the limits of physical movements transcending into meaningful movements. As explained by Cresswell, mobility represents much more than movements from A to B:

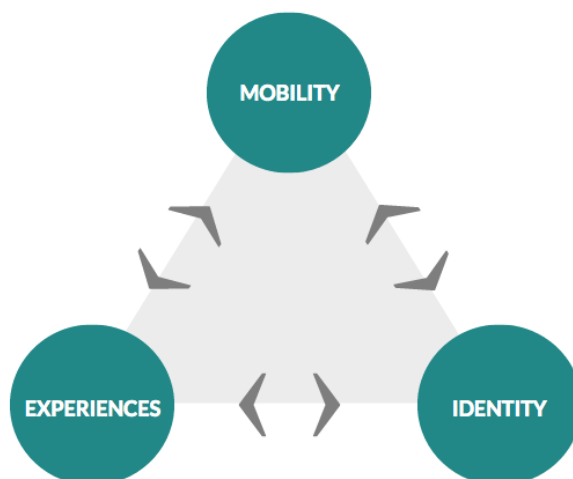
“all of them can be imagined as a line on the map, one place to another. But mobility’s research is about figuring out what fills that line, what makes it significant, what makes it socially important...”

Cresswell, 2013, p.1

While the respondents took me on a journey through their narratives, I would like to take you – the reader – on a similar journey, following the same route as many Syrians did. Therefore, this chapter is structured into a chronological sequence covering the following timeframes: (1) Syria started to change, (2) Leaving your house behind, (3) Journeys inside Syria, (4) Cross-border mobility, (5) Living in a camp, (6) Settlement in urban areas of Jordan. I chose this structure in the hope that the reader will follow the footsteps of Syrian refugees and, in this way, will also discover how each physical step reflects a meaningful process. A short description of each refugee journey can be found in Annex D.

4.2 CATEGORIZATION WITHIN THE TIMEFRAMES

As mentioned in the introduction, the structure of this chapter will be based on chronological time frames. Within those timeframes, a distinction will be made between three different themes, as it emerged as key issues from the narratives of Syrian refugees: ‘Mobility’, ‘Identity’ and ‘Experiences’. The descriptions of these themes can be found in the methodology chapter. Although ‘Mobility’, ‘Identity’, ‘Experiences’ are presented as separate themes, they strongly overlap and interact with each other. Therefore - while reading the rest of this thesis - it would be good to take this intertwinement as point of reference, as illustrated in the graphic below:



INFOGRAPHICS ILLUSTRATING A REFUGEE JOURNEY

To further introduce this theme of Syrian refugee mobility as a meaningful process, I made two infographics, which can be found on the next pages. These infographics illustrate the refugee journey of Hussein and I would like you to follow his journey by reading parts of his life story. Hussein is 32 years old and was born in Busra, a small village in the South of Syria. He has studied English literature in Damascus. At the time of his studies, he went back to Busra every two weeks to see his friends and family. When he was graduated in 2009 he had two options: either joining the military service or looking for a job abroad. He went to Kuwait where his father had a job and tried to get a residency permit, but it did not succeed and, therefore, he went back to Syria. He was obliged to join the military service, so he did until he finished his service in June 2012. Even though, at that time, the war already started, the army only started to shape. Shortly afterwards, his life in Busra changed dramatically in the last few years: it started to become really hard to be part of the Sunni minority in the south of Syria. Furthermore, he lost 2 brothers because of arrestments and shootings (Interview 41, Amman, man). After witnessing those horrors, his family decided to leave Syria to settle in Jordan. A more comprehensive account of Hussein's journey can be found in the infographics.

The first infographic sheds light on the physical movements, while the second infographic elucidates how those physical movements set in motion social and meaningful processes covering mobility, experiences and identity. These infographics will function as a point of reference for the rest of this chapter. I chose to visualise the story of Hussein since he extensively told about his journey and captured many aspects of its meaningful processes, where many other narratives covered less aspects.

JOURNEY OF HUSSEIN

Name | Hussein
Age | 32 years old
Residency | Busra
Study | English

OCTOBER 2012

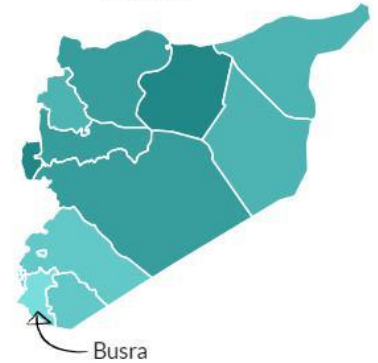
On the 13th of October there was a big attack in the area of Busra. One of my brothers got shot.

The circumstances in the village were very bad at that time. We lost 2 brothers and my mum became in a very bad situation and she didn't want to lose anybody else. That is why we decided to leave to Jordan.

2011: THE START OF THE WAR

I am from Busra. Our relatives, our neighbors, our group of friends they are Shia. Which we never thought of before the revolution started. But when the revolution started, everything changed. At the beginning they stayed calm, but when things started to become more real or more offensive they had weapons to help the regime. Because we had Shia everywhere, it was not safe to get your daily bread.

SYRIA



NOVEMBER 2012

As I said we lived in Busra, which is very close to the border. We waited until we found a calm day without shooting or killing on which we could travel to the border.

START OF NOVEMBER

We moved to the closest point where the car can reach, which is about 2 km from the border. When we arrived there we saw lots of people waiting and we also waited there until we became a real big group. Like 200 people. We had to walk in the middle of the night, so nobody could see us. We were walking for about 45 minutes.

THE NEXT DAY

At the border they took our IDs. The bus took us to a police center in Mafraq. They registered our names. Waited there until the early morning and arrived at Za'atari around 6AM.

ONE NIGHT IN ZA'ATARI

In Za'atari we received a tent, but we didn't go to get our bread. We arranged with a Syrian guy who was in touch with a Jordanian guy [to get out of the camp] and we fled at night - in the middle of the night - outside of the camp where he was bringing us. It was a kind of business. We paid him 50 JD. We took a car and we went from Mafraq to Amman.

DECEMBER 2012

My fathers Kuwaitis friend knew someone in Amman who owned a house. It was a villa. So we went there. But villas are always away from the life. If you want to buy or do anything you need to have a car and look for transportation. That is why we changed our place and moved to Zarqa. Since I arrived I found a job at a grocery shop.

2016: LIFE IN AMMAN

I need to think about my future - to find a job to build my life. This is not available in Syria now. But of course, we will take the first chance to go back to Syria when there is stability and it is able to start business there and to go back to our original lives. But I really miss my village and that is why it is not a big deal for me if they want to send me back - because I am working illegally.

YEAR OF FLEEING FROM SYRIA

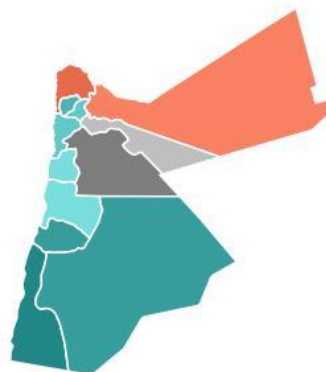


A MEANINGFULL PROCESS

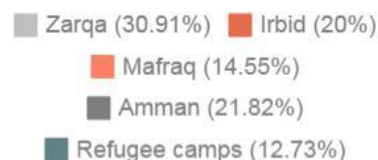


FAMILY

Family is the most important factor which shapes your personality, your behaviour, everything. At that time I used to live in my big family house. They all participated in raising us. You can say that our personalities are a mix from the experiences of all of them. Our childhood is very rich, with lots of things.



SETTLEMENT IN JORDAN



LEAVING BUSRA

Of course we loved Busra, but as you know when you have something good you will not feel how good it is until you lose it.

Leaving the house was very difficult. It was not just a house. It is fully loaded with memories of gatherings with people you loved, and some of them passed away.



BORDERS

I don't believe in borders. It has only been a few hundred years ago, not that long ago and far ago in history. It is just a matter of geographical borders and nationality. It doesn't mean anything. They have the same habits, the same food, the same songs. Everything. It is the same

ONE NIGHT IN ZA'ATARI

I left my house at the same day to live in a tent. To adapt to that in the same day is very hard. That is why people decide to leave in the first days. When people wait for a week or a month they start to say: we can handle this kind of life. We didn't want to wait until that time. I was really glad that I could leave.



INDEPENDENT

I just realized that my UNCHR card expired for 6 months and I did not renew it. I don't want to be dependent on this NGO. Sometimes they tell call us and they ask whether we can come to get some help, money or food. But I don't want to be seen as a refugee, so I don't go



BEING A REFUGEE

Many Syrians don't accept to be refugees and sometimes the host community doesn't accept them. Which means that sometimes when I am in a good place, like a restaurant, a luxurious place or in a good position of work or meeting an important guy in the government they say: is he Syrian? What are you doing here? You are a refugee! Refugees belong to the Za'atari camp. You have to be at the camp. It is not like that, I am only a refugee because I am forced to leave my country.

I try not to become angry. When I am suffering, they are enjoying. But I don't want to fight with the pig in the mud.

LIFE-CHANGING

I start to realise that the meaning of happiness is different from what we used to think about it. At that time, we used to think about happiness as connected to the financial situation. Of course, financial situation is a big part of happiness. But it is not the main important. It is not a matter of money. It is a matter of safety. The safety for your family member and friends. Maybe I start to realise more that happiness is connected with your inner self. You have to find it in yourself and you need to help other to also forget about the misery.



IMMOBILITY

Well, the Syrians are not allowed to go anywhere. Of course, this is very bad in general. But maybe it is easier for me, because I don't have the ambition to go to lots of places for many reasons.

4.3 TIME FRAME 1: SYRIA STARTED TO CHANGE

The conflict in Syria has now entered its seventh year and millions of people have been forced to flee Syria. In March 2011, the civil unrest started with peaceful demonstrations against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, and has now led to over 6 years of conflict. Because of the war, Syria transformed into a country characterised by violence, arrestments, human rights violations and destroyed cities and villages – with many of its citizens forcibly displaced both within and outside Syria (UN OCHA, 2016). However, at the beginning of 2011, all those characterizations were not yet the reality of everyday life. Day by day people saw experiences how daily life was slowly undergoing changes, evolving in a matter of survival, with living conditions becoming worse and worse:

“It happened gradually, things went from bad to worse to even more worse. There was nothing in our power to do about it.”

Interview 37 – Zarqa – 2 ladies

IDENTITY: A SEGREGATED SOCIETY

Syria gradually changed in many ways and one of the changes experienced were rising dissimilarities between sects. Although Sunni, Shia, Alawi and Christians lived together – most of all - in peaceful co-existence for ages, the differences became more apparently during the war:

“These sects have lived together with each other for centuries. They all lived together in the same neighbourhoods and it was not a problem at all. All these sects worked in one direction, which was the development of the country. The problem began very recently. There is an old saying that as long as you don’t hurt other people, the people will not hurt you – no matter which sect you belong to.”

Interview 53 – Mafraq – Man

So, the society transformed into a segmented society and led to profound changes in relations between people from different groups. In Hussein’s story in the infographic he also indicated how he never thought of his friends and families as ‘others’ – as part of the Shia majority, while Hussein himself belongs to the Sunni minority. The uprisings fueled and amplified the existing differences.

MOBILITY: MOVEMENTS CURBED BY FEAR

Daily live altered in many other ways, especially as a result of the bombings and shootings. Movements were being curbed by fear for one’s life. The catastrophic consequences of the war led to the fact that daily activities, such as shopping or visiting friends or family, were no longer without danger:

“It was like a ghost town. If you want to go out from your house you would not be able to because it was very dangerous outside. You have to stay at home always. You could not even buy something from a shop because it was very dangerous. We did not have enough food because the supermarkets did not have enough food to sell to people. When the war started, you could not easily go from Damascus to the village. So all people started starving.”

Interview 38 – Amman – Woman

EXPERIENCES: TRAUMATIC LIVE CHANGES

Daily activities were becoming difficult to carry it. As a matter of fact, many Syrians limited their movements. Although staying inside the house was not a guarantee for safety either. Thaer is originally from Dara'a. In Dara'a he had a safe and stable life, although he faced some financial struggles. He had seen many bad things in the war and experiences how was deprived of safety in his own house:

"There was a list of terrorists and my name was on it. I was not really a terrorist; I was just a revolutionist, which was considered terrorism by the regime. So, the police they searched one house by another. They entered my house and saw my ID-card. He said let's go for a walk. I trusted him because I felt safe. They handcuffed me and started hitting me with stones and guns. I thought I was going to die. They threatened me and said: "Pick up the phone and call our supervisor, tell him that you are the first terrorist we have caught." The entire way to the prison someone stood on my head. Once we arrived they beat the living hell out of me and forced me to eat cigarettes. "Eat it, spit it, eat it again, then spit it, and eat it again." They did this for hours until another prisoner arrived. They took me to an underground cell which was only 1,5 meter by 1,5 meter. The cell was filled with 90 people."

Interview 42 – Irbid - Man

After 2 months Thaer was released, but it was for certain he could not live in Syria any longer. Where many Syrian men feared the regime because of those random arrestments, living in Syria as a guy also obliged many to serve Bashar al-Assad's army or one of the rebel groups as soon as you are over 18 years old. As a result, thousands of men have been pressed into the war. You could not escape the army without facing the risk of execution or arrestment. It did happen that guys around 18 were being arrested by the government and never returned, among them was one of the brothers of respondent Hussein:

"13 October one of my brothers got shot. In Busra there was a big attack in the area. They decided to send him to Jordan to have a surgery for his knee. They asked my youngest brother to come with him. He used to be in the military as well, but he left the military before he finished it. While they are trying to leave the village there was a checkpoint in the city and they shot my other brother. They send them to the hospital for an hour and they took them out of the village. We do not know anything about them from that point."

Interview 41 – Amman – Man

CONCLUSION

This timeframe illustrates how the lives of so many Syrians have turned upside down; startled by bombings, random arrestments, and rapes, dealing with limited food supplies and immobilised by the danger of being outside. With every passing day, the lives of so many Syrians changed into a nightmare:

"It was like sleeping and dreaming a very nice dream and when I woke up I would face a very harsh and sad reality. It is like almost unreal. I do not know how to describe it better than this."

Interview 55 – Mafraq – Woman

At the beginning of the war, little was known about what would happen in the future. The changing living conditions was not a clear indicator for the presage of a war of over 6 years, thus far.

4.4 TIME FRAME 2: LEAVING YOUR HOUSE BEHIND

Ever since the political turmoil, violence, and demonstrations evolved into a civil war, Syrians started to consider fleeing homes. Especially those Syrians living in a city or village that was controlled by rebel forces instead of government forces, like Dara'a, found themselves in a vulnerable position. It made their city or village extremely vulnerable for bombings, tortures and random arrestments from either the government, Nusra, IS or FSA (Interview 1 & Interview 38). Owing to the fact that Syrians faced deprivation and danger, the first Syrians started to seek refuge in other villages or cities. With parts of the Syrian population moving to other cities, villages, or even countries, it invoked others to feel left behind.

MOBILITY: TIPPING POINT

The world seems to be in motion, manifested in an increase in volume and speed of human mobility. It makes moving to another city or another country very common. Albeit, Syrians moving to other places should not be framed on par with the impact of globalisation or freedom of movement. In spite of that, many Syrians felt forced to leave their house - induced by war, fear, and unsafety. So, it should not purely be seen as a choice to be mobile, but much more as being forced into it. In many cases, a trail of horrors and living conditions worsening left people with "no other choice":

"It became extremely unsafe for us. For example, we would walk down the street and suddenly find a head or a dead body. It was very scary; we became really afraid of their lives and everything. Multiple incidents happened that made us decide to leave. We had no other option."

Interview 37 – Zarqa – 2 ladies

The vast majority of Syrian citizen would never have left Syria, if there would not be a civil war making their lives unbearable or unacceptable. Many respondents have said something similar:

"If we would not be forced to leave Syria we would not have. Now that I am here I still wish that I could go back. Even if the war is still ongoing I would like to go back."

Interview 22 – Zarqa – 2 sisters

A great number of respondents gave the impression they postponed the decision to flee Syria as long as possible. In many cases, Syrians were pushed to flee because of serious incidents in their villages, a warning that their village would turn into a battlefield, houses that were destroyed or the continuous fear for the safety of their own lives and those of their children:

"Do you hear the mosques? Through the mics, they would say that people had to evacuate because of upcoming battles. The first time they called everybody to evacuate, everybody in the village left, including my husband. But I stayed, I did not want to leave the house. I stayed there alone with my children and suddenly everything got destroyed. I held my children in the bathroom and I started praying. It was very hard."

Interview 5 – Zarqa - Woman

In many instances, Syrians just fled and there was no time for packing stuff, preparing their journey and in some exceptional situations there was no time to say goodbye:

“It was a matter of survival. I did not really have a lot of time to think about relatives or anybody else. Some of them left without their children. It was so intense, that they had to leave their children behind. Some of them did not have seen them anymore.”

Interview 52 – Mafraq – 2 old ladies

Only a few Syrians mentioned preparation - such as packing stuff, arranging valid passports, getting money withdrawn from the bank - as an essential element of their refugee journey. On contrary, a lot of properties – such as pictures at the computer, certificates from university, legal papers, a lot of clothes – were not brought on their journey. It was not needed - was the predominant thought - because their displacements would only last a short period of time.

EXPERIENCES: LEAVING YOUR HOUSE BEHIND

Hence, with time passing by an increasing number of Syrians realized the urgency of the serious needs to seek safety somewhere else. This decision to flee was not made individually but in consultation with the chief, community leaders, and mainly in close consultation with the family or partner. Information for the decision-making process was gathered from family members or acquaintances who fled before.

Their journeys started with abandoning their houses. I would like to highlight how one of the respondents reflected on this moment. Mustafa was a young Syrian guy, raised in a highly educated and rich family. His father decided that it would better to flee Syria’s civil war, because too many armed actors were getting involved after November 2012. His father knew that peaceful demonstrations did not have any impact anymore since it had turned into a real war. Therefore, his father was convinced they – as citizen – did not have a vital role to play anymore, and that is why they left Syria:

“Leaving the house was very difficult. The hardest thing even. It was not just a house. It is fully loaded with memories of gatherings with people you loved, and some of them passed away. That house meant safety, settlement, and warmth. It feels like leaving a part of your soul there. I was never connected to my house and I used to leave my family for vacations. The difficulty was that someone forced you to leave. You did not have an option. Before the war, I was looking forward to leaving the house and live on my own. But now I was forced to do something I did not want to do. I now dream to live there for a week, to feel the option.”

Interview 24 – Amman – Young man

This quote illustrates how the moment of leaving a house, entails much more than solely a physical movement. Especially, being forced to leave the house, indicates a loss of safety, memories, and freedom. Many respondents, on the other hand, pointed out they left their houses to seek safety somewhere else and thought they would return to their houses within a few weeks or months. Rumours were heard it would end soon. The need to resettle somewhere else was only temporarily. Which made it, for some, easier to abscond one’s home without knowing it would take years to come back:

“Everyone I know only took some things, like clothes. They were planning to go back to Syria after one, two or maybe three months., where it would be normal again. No one thought it would take so long.”

Interview 18 – Amman – Woman

MOBILITY AS A CONTINUUM: BEING LEFT BEHIND OR LEAVING OTHERS BEHIND

The difficulty of being (forcibly) separated from loved ones was pointed out in a large number of narratives. Separation already occurred at an early stage of the war; some families chose to flee, while others did not. They were separated either by leaving loved ones behind themselves or because of the movements of others. So, the impact of the mobility of others, on the people staying behind, should not be overlooked. How is it to be the hindmost? A lady from Homs captured this tremendous situation of feeling stuck and abandoned:

"We were almost the last ones who left Homs. There were many other houses that were destroyed and people started to move to other places. It was really hard to stay. I wanted to leave earlier, but the Syrian army did not allow us to leave. When the first floor of our house was bombed we left our house behind and moved to Damascus."

Interview 30 – Syrian embassy – Old woman

In contrast to feel left behind, one's own movement can also create a situation in which others are left behind. Quite a few respondents were in tears thinking about the family members that were – at that time - still living in Syria. Many women mentioned how their husband made the decision to flee, however, parts of their own family were not about to leave Syria. As a result, the families are now scattered over two countries. The borders are closed and they do not know whether they are ever going to see each other again:

"We did not say goodbye. We did not want to say goodbye. We only called my parents when we were at the border. We said: we are entering Jordan now. After that, my father-in-law was very affected by this news which is why he got ill."

Interview 7 – Zarqa – Woman

"My sister and her husband and kids are back in Syria. Her husband does not want to leave Syria. She cannot leave without him. She can also not leave because her children are above 18 years old and they are obligated to join the army. I am destroyed on the inside."

Interview 44 – Irbid – Woman

CONCLUSION

In general, the moment that Syrians made up their minds and decided to flee their houses was – in many instances – a moment without time to plan journeys or to gather important or precious possessions. Syrians fled to save their lives. This moment can be placed into the larger perspectives of the entire refugee journeys. If so, this moment could be perceived as the start of becoming a refugee. However, at that moment, many Syrians did not oversee the impact of leaving their house and did not know whatever their next step would be. Many of the Syrians – especially those who fled early in the war – did not yet grasp, in the slightest, what this step of leaving their house would mean. Syrians left their house without knowing they would not return to their house anytime soon. Nor that some would be deprived of being able to live in their houses again at all because their houses are now destroyed. To conclude with, leaving one's house is not – by definition – the start of becoming a refugee since it highly depends on future decisions and journeys. Therefore, we will continue to follow the journeys after Syrian left their house behind and started to find refuge in other places.

4.5 TIME FRAME 3: JOURNEYS INSIDE SYRIA

In the previous paragraph, it is pointed out how Syrians reached a tipping point and left their houses. Each family mentioned a variety of reasons why living in their own place was no longer bearable. Some Syrians directly fled from Syria to cross the border to Jordan – in some cases via Turkey or Lebanon. Others were fleeing inside Syria from one place to another, wherever it would be safe for them to stay:

“I used to run from one place to another. I would hide in the street, in the dessert. Everywhere it was possible. I had no relatives because everyone fled. I do not know the names of the places. After I ran for a year I came to Jordan. I thought that one day it would end, but it never ended.”

Interview 19 – Zarqa - Woman

Within this chapter, two aspects of refugee mobility will be examined, namely how mobility is experienced by Syrians on the run and the impact of gender on mobility.

MOBILITY EXPERIENCED: NORMALCY OR TERRIFYING

While being on the move inside Syria, a distinction can be made into two groups of displaced persons: those who experienced moving as equivalent to moving prior to the war and, on the contrary, Syrians who experienced the journey as highly fearful. One aspect that was both framed as normalcy and, in contrast, as fearful were the checkpoints. Checkpoints have been part of Syrians infrastructure for ages:

“From the journey, it was not that bad. From Syria to Jordan it was not really bad. Because it was at the beginning of the war. It was okay for me. The checkpoints, we had them before. Inside Damascus we had them. If you want to go to the village, if you want to go to the centre, we had them. They were always there. So the journey was not really bad for me.”

Interview 18 – Amman - Woman

Several others shared this opinion, and it was often mentioned how fleeing at the beginning of the war implicated less difficulties. Their movements were experienced similar as moving before the war, although moving during the war had far-reaching implications. Especially for those Syrians who, both prior and during the beginning of the war, travelled back and forth from Syria to Jordan to sell products, such as dates, olives, and nuts, did not know that this journey would be different than many other journeys before. However, the largest number of Syrians mentioned the checkpoints inside Syria as the one of the most difficult situation during their journey. At each checkpoint, the fear that their journey would not continue to Jordan, but would stop in Syria was overwhelming. Especially for the following lady, the checkpoints were extremely nerve-racking:

“The police started to question us one by one. But I did not find my identification papers at that time. So when the police gave each woman their identification cards, he told me: ‘I do not remember you gave me any identification cards, so the other can leave, but you are staying here with me’. I told him that I would do my best to find it between the luggage but he said: ‘I do not want your passport or anything; I want you to come with me.’ But after a little while, he said: ‘you can go but do not curse me behind my back’. So he was making a joke.”

Interview 25 – Zarqa – Woman

The checkpoints along the way were making the journeys severely stressful and the fear of being killed or arrested was very much in evidence as well. Not knowing whether you would survive – especially while witnessing dying people on the way, burning villages and arrestments – made this into a horrific experience (Interview 5 & 26).

In the end, after seeking refuge in other places in Syria first, the Syrians involved in this research reached another tipping point and were triggered to flee Syria entirely:

“(crying) The reason that I fled my house the first time was because the massacre that happened in the village nearby. The reason I left Syria entirely was that my neighbours died, who were my best friends. The children often played together, they were playing outside but there was a rocket near their house. They turned into chopped meat. My children were really emotionally hurt. They could not sleep, they cried the entire night. We were very scared. A lot of them had insomnia. It was very difficult for me to maintain my children with a good mental health. This is why I left Syria entirely.”

Interview 28 – Zarqa – Woman

IDENTITY: IMPACT OF GENDER ON ITS MOBILITY

One’s mobility and identity cannot be seen as poles apart, as they are both strongly intertwined. Namely, identity also has its effect on how people experience mobility as well as the ability to move. Among the variables of ones’ identity, gender is an important aspect to distinguish. It is not my intention to compare the heaviness of journeys of men and women, but there appeared to be considerable differences between the sexes. As mentioned earlier, Syrian men were really afraid of being compelled in the army of Bashar al-Assad. One lady explained how she lost several male family members because of arrestments and recruitments. Four brothers of her were arrested, of which two announced dead and two of them unknown. Because of the fear of losing more brothers they left Syria.

For this reason, it has definitely impacted the mobility of Syrian men: with time passing by, it dwindled their chances to continue daily life. So, everything possible was done to avoid recruitment to happen:

“We had 2 houses because one of the friends of my father moved to Jordan already. Every 2 or 3 weeks me and my father switched houses because it was so dangerous. Unfortunately, the army was looking for people who did not used to live in Dara’a. Many more families had to switch houses, because they were afraid of being obliged to serve in the army.”

Interview 24 – Amman – Young guy

Therefore, Syrian men did not have another option than fleeing their country before they would be compelled to join the army. Not only the start of the mobility of Syrian men has been different from that of women. While travelling the way many men encountered other risks as they were really afraid to be targeted by either Bashar al-Assad’s recruitment or the rebels. In addition, with a minor criminal record, they would be thrown in a cell (Interview 22). For some, serving in the army would mean death to them (interview 48). So, if the Syrian government would know that a man was trying to flee the country, the chances were high he would be taken into custody. Therefore, men could not follow the same journeys as women did. There were several strategies to still make it into Jordan. Once Syrian men entered roadblocks they would not say they were fleeing to Jordan (interview 13 – Emirates refugee camp – Family). On the contrary, some said they would travel to Damascus in order to get medical treatment. If

they would not lie about it and would say it was the intention to travel to Jordan, the officials would not let them pass. Another example pointed out by a Syrian woman was that their husband could not travel together with them, because of the risks implied in leaving the country. Together with her kids, she left Syria and her husband behind in the hope it would not take too long for them to be reunited:

“My husband stayed in Syria because at the checkpoints they would ask where you live. Because we are from a village that is against the regime, they would arrest or murder him immediately. Even if you are with the regime.”

Interview 28 – Zarqa – Woman

Women did not face that the same restrictions or risks as men did. Especially since women should not be treated harsh (Interview 5 – Zarqa - woman). For example, when Syrian women entered a checkpoint, they did not always ask the women for an ID card or passport. Above all, I would not say that the journey of women is easier. Women face other risks as men do. Many of the respondents were afraid of being raped:

“I (husband) had some business left in Homs. I wanted to sell some properties in order to collect some money. That is why we stayed. Sometimes when they see a wife and her husband they would rape the woman in front of the husband. As a form of torture. So I decided to let her go alone as it would be safer for her.”

Interview 48 – Irbid – Husband & Wife

The army was easier on women and children; however, it did not automatically lead to an increase in their mobility or to fewer vulnerabilities while travelling to Jordan. Women in Syria are more dependent on their husband and father, so in many cases, the husband or the father made the decision to flee and the wife and kids followed. On the other hand, there are also some cases in which the husband did not want to leave Syria, and therefore the wife was not able to leave as well.

CONCLUSION

So, without being able to settle safely in a place in Syria, it turned out that temporarily settlement until their own village would be safe again was not an option anymore. The first physical steps were made, and now their journey continued in the hope of finding safety and better living conditions inside Syria. Nevertheless, even this hope was shattered and with time passing by and movements being made, Syrians were gradually deprived of living their normal lives. For many of the respondents, fleeing inside Syria turned out to be an intense and extremely difficult experience. For men, their journey was characterised by fear for the regime, for being put in prison or fear for being recruited by armed forces. Among the women there was fear of being raped. Both men and women feared all the bombings that could hit them, had to deal with dashing hope and forced separation from loved ones. Their journeys inside Syria could be summarised by drawing their movements as lines on a map: but it means so much more for those who experienced it. Those journeys did not stop, for many Syrians found refuge in Jordan. While travelling to Jordan, the first obstacle encountered was the border. This next step in their journey – crossing the Syrian-Jordanian border – will be discussed in the next paragraph.

4.6 TIME FRAME 4: CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

A large number of Syrians first travelled inside Syria from place to place, hoping to find a place where they could temporarily settle until they would be able to move back to their house. Safety was only found on a short-term, but not to be found in the long run. Due to deteriorating living conditions and rising levels of fear, refuge was sought in neighbouring countries, such as Jordan. Others directly made the decision to seek safety outside the national borders. Moving to another country entailed much more than crossing the border, and this chapter will be about Syrians making sense of crossing the border as part of one's own mobility. Before the war, a part of the Syrian population travelled back and forth to Syria, mostly to sell Syrian products or for a job as carpenter or wall painter. Crossing the border with Jordan was very common. Therefore, making sense of the border is done for the two different timeframes – before and during the war.

MOBILITY BEFORE THE WAR: THE BORDER AS AN OPEN DOOR

All the Syrians I met were on the very same page when they were asked about the role of the Syrian-Jordanian border - prior to the war: it was just a border and it was very easy to cross it. One of the respondents described the border as an open door. For her, the border was on par with travelling from rural Aleppo to the city (Interview 18 – Amman – Woman). Crossing the border could be compared with the easiness of managing to pass checkpoints inside Syria. For this reason, a part of the Syrian population moved back and forth from Syria to Jordan for labour migration. They went to Jordan to sell their products for a higher price than they could in Syria. So for those Syrians who frequently moved back and forth, the border did not pose an obstacle. Although, it should be noted that, concluding from the interviews, the majority of Syrians – especially women – did not travel outside Syria:

“It was very easy for every Syrian to cross the border before the war. But most of the Syrians never wanted to leave their country before the war. Most people were really happy in Syria, no one wanted to leave. I did not think: one day, I will make a passport to travel anywhere. Because I did not think that I would ever visit a more beautiful place than my city.”

Interview 1 – Amman – Man

Since the eighties, the border changed and became an aspect of securitization. Walls started to erect, which made it impossible to enter anywhere on the border. Only 2 official gates, the Daraa and the Nasib border crossing, provided entrance to Jordan and vice versa:

“Back in the 70s, it was really easy. After that, there were problems in Palestine. It affected the border because they started erecting walls and wire zones with spikes. Between Jordan and Syria and Palestine. A lot of people from Dara’a owned land around the border. It was just land. It was not bordered back then. They had to sell it in order to transform it into a border. There were a lot of land mines. They planted bombs there and if anybody would step on it, it would explode. So they started fearing around the borders. It would very easily take a life. But that was in early stages, before the war.”

Interview 46 – Irbid – Husband & Wife

Jordan and Syria have close relations in many ways, not only for labour migration. Hussein (Interview 41) is involved a project in which Jordanian and Syrian kids are taught about the mutual heritage between

the south of Syria and the north of Jordan. Because of the mutual heritage, Hussein does not believe in the existence of the border:

“The best point is that I do not believe in the borders. A few hundred years ago they did not exist. It has only been a few hundred years ago, not that long ago and far ago in history. Lots of families had brothers having a brother that lived on the Jordanian side and another brother that lived on the Syrian side. The border has separated them. But they are from the same family. It is very much existing in the north. It is just a matter of geographical border and nationality. It did not mean anything. They have the same habits, the same food, the same songs. Everything. They still have the same land. This is the mutual heritage.”

Interview 41 – Amman – Man

So, through the years, the Syrian-Jordanian has erupted. However, it did not limit the daily lives of Syrians. How this has changed during the war is discussed in the next paragraph.

MOBILITY DURING THE WAR: MIXED FEELINGS ASCRIBED TO THE BORDER

As discussed in the previous section, prior to the war Syrian mobility was primarily limited, without many Syrians both wishing and being able to leave Syria. Many Syrians did never leave Syria, neither for travelling purposes nor for labour migration or family visits. However, during the war, a large number of Syrians experienced had no other choice but to leave their house. Some first tried to seek safety in other villages in Syria, but all respondents eventually wound up in Jordan, which made it inevitable for them to either cross the border. On this journey from their home country to Jordan, what did the border mean to them? For a lot of Syrians, crossing the border during the war, meant much more than literally crossing the border. It does not only mark the experience that they entered another country, it also meant leaving Syria behind. In addition, this border crossing entailed a lot of consequences.

The meanings assigned to the border before the war were more or less similar. The meanings attributed to the border during the war is highly differentiated, even within the experience of one individual:

“I had a lot of mixed feelings when I left Syria. I was both sad and happy because I left my own country behind and safe because I entered Jordan.”

Interview 53 – Mafraq – Man

As a meaningful experience of refugee journeys, crossing the border often meant safety. Nevertheless, it was not always at the moment of border-crossing itself sense-making of the border was done in terms of safety. Being in Jordan meant an end to bombings and it enabled people to see a clear sky again. The following quote is an intriguing description of this experience:

“Crossing the border was like I was dead, or that I was not having a soul, but once we crossed, the soul came back to me. I, maybe, felt that my death was certain and when I crossed it I knew that I would not have to die anymore. That also applies to my children. At the border, they opened the gate and the Jordanian army told me: ‘Welcome home. You are with family now. You do not have to worry anymore.’”

Interview 55 – Mafraq – Woman

The journey from Syria to Jordan was often characterised by a lot of fear. Fear to be bombed, fear to meet terrorists or rapist, fear to be stopped at the checkpoint and so on. Being close to the Jordanian border did not automatically mean safety for everyone. Especially for those who fled at a later stage of the war and the Jordanian government did not allow everyone to enter Jordan. Only after entering Jordan, a good treatment or a shelter, it became possible to reflect on the border-crossing as a moment of safety and relief:

"I was stressed from the government at the Syrian border. Because they could [detain] me. When I was at the Jordanian border I could relax. At the Syrian border, they can take you for any reason. So I entered. It was really stressed. They take your passport and go to a room for 2 hours. For any reason, they can send you back. For example, if someone from your family is with the Free [Syrian] Army they take you back to the brother. They do not have any problems in taking another person."

Interview 1 – Amman - Man

"Once I entered the border, the Jordanian soldiers embraced me and my children. I am feeling more at home than that I did in Syria. And what we receive here is greater than what we received in our home country."

Interview 5 – Zarqa – Woman

Only a few did not cross the border during the war. As adduced previously, before the war, being employed in Jordan while actually living in Syria was commonplace among Syrian men. So a number of them were already working in Jordan at the time that they figured out that going back to Syria was not an option anymore. This has placed their entire journey in another perspective:

"When I came the last time here I started to hear that it is more difficult now and Syrians who return to Syria will not be able to come back again, so I stayed here. If you go back to Syria as a Syrian, you can forget to come back again. Ghallas. It will be very difficult. [The journey] was okay for me, because usually, I was doing that. When I did this the last time, I thought I would come here and come back as usual. I did not know that it would take until now. 5 years now."

Interview 40 – Irbid – Young man

EXPERIENCES: DASHING HOPE

In contrast to narratives highlighting the border for providing safety and relief, in other narratives, crossing the borders stood symbol for giving up hope. Once the border was crossed, Syrians started to realise 'Ghallas, life is over'. Therefore, it was not so much the physical border crossing that was difficult, but the mental processes associated with this experience. At the border, Syrians started to realise they would not be back soon:

"I had made plans with my friends for the next week, for example, to meet each other. Once I crossed the border I knew that I would not make it to be there."

Interview 53 – Mafrq – Man

Hence, crossing the border became part of the process of understanding their lives had or would soon turn around. Another aspect – of crossing the border - that would set in motion a chain reaction of changes was the legal status. Syrians fleeing inside Syria were considered to be internally displaced persons. As soon as the border was crossed, Syrians were being classified as refugees in dire need for protection. This again, illustrates how the physical step of crossing national border brings about much more and stands for the transformation from being a Syrian citizen into a refugee in Jordan. A detailed account of this proves will be given in the next chapter about refugee camps. Basima, a lady settled in Za’atari, had heard from other people that entering Jordan as a refugee, would, either way, compel her to settle in Za’atari or Azraq camp. To cross the border as a refugee, she would be forced to stay in Za’atari refugee camp. For this reason, it would be much more comfortable to come as a visitor. At the border, she was not let in as a visitor so she went back to Dara’a. After a while, she concluded, she was out of option and her only alternative was to go back to the border as a refugee. Still, living in Za’atari as a refugee was better than being in Syria (interview 21 – Zarqa – Woman).

MOBILITY AND IMMOBILITY AS A CONTINUUM: MOVEMENTS OF OTHERS

Crossing the border was, in this manner, a statement of leaving Syria behind. On top of that, for several respondents, it was also an experience infused with leaving family members behind. One family – an elderly couple with three sons above 18 years old - told it was allowed to only bring one child above 18 to Jordan. For this reason, two sons were forced to go back to Syria. Hence, the border crossing resulted in a difficult balancing act of protection and forced separation. In the end, this family decided to not enter Jordan and went back to Syria as a family.

For Sharazan, the Jordanian border portended dispersed families. She would flee Syria together with her family. However, her husband changed his mind when he met friends in Mazir:

“When we were on our way to Jordan, there is a small village very close to the border. This village is called Mazir. We stayed at friends who lived there; these friends were trying to talk us out of going to Jordan. “What are you going to do in Jordan? It is very hard, it is very expensive, and Syria is better for you.” They ended up changing the mind of my husband, so he told me: “Go alone with the children, take care of them and I’ll do anything to support you financially.” He really did go back and left me alone with the kids. He has never sent me anything.”

Interview 47 – Irbid – Woman

Although her son first joined her to Jordan, he went back to Syria after a period of 2 months. He soon regretted the decision to live in Syria again, however, with every attempt to cross the Jordanian border, he has not been given entrance to Jordan. Sharazan does not know when she is ever going to be able to see her son again. The only thing Sharazan is now trying to do is to forget all these events.

CONCLUSION

So the border meant much more than just the physical movement. The mental processes related to crossing the border highlights how this specific border crossing symbolised safety, separation with family members and dashing hope. Additionally, in the eyes of many and, in particular by international aid agencies, Syrians were no longer labelled as internally displaced people, instead, they were classified as refugees. While the national border is a border that Syrians faced on their journey, borders should not only be confined to national borders. Other borders that might have played a role in Syrian refugee mobility could be invisible borders of social groups or borders of a camp. These borders will be discussed in the timeframes associated with these borders.

4.7 TIME FRAME 5: LIVING IN A REFUGEE CAMP

As highlighted in the previous section, the national border is a place where Syrians on the move are being stopped and where they wait until they can continue their journey. Waiting at the border could take up to several months, while others could easily cross in a few hours. Crossing the national border was not the only moment that marked how Syrian refugee mobility came to a halt. Syrians who fled at the beginning of the war could easily travel to the urban areas, while people that entered after the opening of Za'atari refugee in July 2012 or through one of the unofficial border openings were forcibly transferred to Za'atari refugee camp (Turner, 2015). Unless someone was able to proof family members were already living in Jordan, there was no other option than settlement in one of the camps.

In the first section, I would like to delineate how the physical move from the border up into one of the refugee camps confronted many Syrians with a harsh and unexpected reality. Their life was about to continue while now living in a refugee camp, which included; dependence on handouts by UNHCR and NGOs, sharing a bathroom with many others and living in a tent or caravan in the middle of a desert. Not only their mobility came to a halt, also normalcy of life was paused. I will first highlight the narratives of those people who decided to stay in one of the camps and subsequently more insight will be given in the journeys of Syrians drifted to the cities. More information about the facilities in the camps, the bailout system and reverse-migration can be found in the vignette after the first section of this chapter.

Living in a refugee camp – as the first place of settlement in Jordan – not only implies a transformation in living conditions and country of residence: it also indicates their legal status being replaced: at that moment, Syrians found themselves facing the transformation from being a Syrian citizen into a Syrian refugee. This alteration of legal status will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

MOBILITY TO A HALT: LIVING IN A REFUGEE CAMP

While the vast majority of Syrians managed to escape the camps and prolonged their fragmented journeys, a small number of Syrians came to the conclusion that living in a camp was, for now, the best solution and they were glad for safely reaching a place suitable for settlement:

“We are somewhat content with the living conditions here. It is better to live in this camp than living in Syria during the war.”

Interview 10 – Za'atari – Syrian women

Another reason for satisfaction with the current living conditions in the camp was the condition of having family members around (Interview 13– Emirates – Family). Not everybody is content with the cramped living conditions and would love to leave the camp, however without enough money they are confronted with immobilities because living outside the camps is too expensive (Interview 15 – Azraq – Family).

“If it would be possible to live in a city we would go to the city. But for us, it is more important to go back to Syria when it is safe.”

Interview 14 – Emirates – Family

This last quote illustrates the attitude of the majority of Syrians residing in one of the camps: living in the camps was on par with their lives being on halt, just waiting until Syria is safe enough to return to. Although, over the years, exile in of the camps is gradually evolving in a permanent settlement.

MOBILITY: LEAVING THE CAMP

At the time Syrians crossed the Jordanian border and were transferred to Za'atari, Emirates or Azraq camp, this specific moment of their journey was, in like manner, a confrontation with other boundaries: the borders of the camp. Only 20 percent (Turner, 2015) of the Syrian refugees reside in one of the camps. So, a great number of Syrians managed to escape the dire conditions in the camps and drifted to the cities. For some, a Jordanian passport offered help in getting out:

"We stayed in Za'atari for 10 days, and then my mother, who is Jordanian, sponsored us and got us out of Za'atari. We travelled together but because my mum also has a Jordanian passport, she was not treated as a refugee. When she went to Za'atari together, she said: "These two are my sons". After that, they quickly made a sponsorship for us."

Interview 45 – Irbid – Man, woman, and baby

A growing number of Syrians have been trying to escape the camps, and negotiating with smugglers was the most common way to get out of the camps. For a price of 50-100 JOD (60-120 euros) per person, smugglers illegally took them out of the camps, albeit by tanks, bribes or other means. By making use of this opportunity the mobility of Syrians increased, although, some money was needed. The option of leaving the camp offered a huge relief:

"To leave your house and to adapt living in a camp - on the same day - is very hard. That is why people decide to leave in the first days. When people wait for a week or a month they start to say: okay, this is good or we can handle this kind of life. But we did not want to wait until that time. That is why we left the camp"

Interview 41 – Amman – Man

"Even though it was a top quality camp and they were really nice to us, I did not want to accept the situation. I did not want to live in a refugee camp and it was impossible to me"

Interview 22 – Zarqa – Two sisters

Accepting settlement in one of the camps was equivalent to accept your refugee status and refugee life. With leaving the camp, Syrians made a statement about the willingness to make a new life, as much as possible. An overwhelming reluctance was experienced in accepting a refugee life; living in a caravan or tent, being dependent on aid organisations, to live in the middle of a desert was not how they wanted to live their lives. It was tantamount to living in hell (Interview 6). Therefore, Syrians felt some freedom living in urban areas and were glad to regain some autonomy in search for normalcy in life. Syrians refrain from dependency on NGOs, in favour of earning a living themselves, often in illegal employment:

"The worse moment was when I was in the camp. But when I went out from the camp I was happy. Because in the camp I thought: no life. When I went out again I was happy because still there is a life. Here it is much better. Here you at least have a light and you have a TV."

Interview 38 – Irbid – Family

VISITING REFUGEE CAMPS

I still remember visiting the camps as a very impressive, interesting but also a heartbreaking experience. It was only a few days before Ramadan would start and I could not imagine how difficult it would be to fast, with temperatures rising up to over 40°C. After wandering around the camp for a few hours and chatting to some people, I felt so weak that I was really glad that I was offered a sweet cup of tea. I could not imagine how it should have been to settle there since 2013 and to gradually accept life goes on. The camps are all located in the middle of the desert and the sand was hitting the walls of the tents like a blizzard. Although I considered the living conditions in the camps (especially in Azraq and Za'atari) as really harsh, a UNCHR officer (Interview 8 – Za'atari) I met, argued that refugees would be better off residing in a camp than in the urban areas:

“Everything is for free. It is very comprehensive, so it covers basics like water and sanitation, food. They have access to energy here, which is quite unique. You have health care, you have clinics, you have hospitals. There are a lot of schools. So education and health care is well covered [etcetera...]. On that basis, the population here would be better served than those off camp, because the people that are residing in urban areas might have to travel longer distances to get to certain services. In the case of health care, they have to pay social insurance fee, so it is not free.”

It was not only me who wondered how you could settle in a camp, with the extremely hot summers and cold winters. Several respondents explained that it is indeed very difficult and inhumane to adapt to those living conditions and told me why people decide beforehand to not permanently settle in the camps. Living a refugee life in one of the camps was the last they wished for. Because of this, Syrian who were informed about the camps, had already decided permanent settlement in the camp would not become their future.

BAIL OUT SYSTEM

Even though the camp is ‘a controlled space, that does not mean that refugees cannot move in and out the camp’ (UNHCR, 2016). Refugees are given the opportunity to apply for a permit that will allow them to be off camp for 7-10 days. Within Za'atari, there is a capacity to issue up to 1000 permits every single day. Syrians can leave the camp for reasons such as business, family visits, medical assistance and so on. Syrian refugees are not restricted to live in one of the refugee camps. The formal process to leave the camp, which was launched early 2014, is called the bail out system. A Syrian can move off camp when a Jordanian sponsor (or someone with a residency permit) will guarantee they will support them in making a living in one of the urban areas. Whether or not this support is given to them is not being controlled, so often these sponsors are only helpful in arranging the paperwork to make sure the Syrians can leave the camp. However, as more refugees ended up living in the urban areas, the Jordanian government has put a hold on the sponsorships to avoid an additional influx of refugees in the cities. Finding a sponsor is one option to leave the camp, but a large numbers of Syrians made the decision to illegally leave the camp. In the camps, big money is made with helping people to cross the ‘borders’ of the camp: *‘There are men that are known for it, they are smugglers. Everyone in the camp knows them. We paid money to the person who would help us out and he brought us to Amman’* (Interview 34 – Amman – Woman).

One of the refugees met was informed on this process of transfer to the camps after crossing the border. For that reason, her brother-in-law decided for her and her husband that it would be better to go to Turkey and take a plane to Jordan. That is how she ended up living in one of the cities and not in a refugee camp.

REVERSE MIGRATION

A Jordanian sponsorship does not mean being protected or receiving support while living in the urban areas and there is not *“such a social safety net as there is in the camps”* (Interview 8 – Za'atari – UNCHR officer). They have to pay rent, the costs for health is often too expensive for many of the Syrian refugees and they are running out of money when they cannot make a living in Jordan. The UNCHR officer we met therefore said that, when time goes by and the living conditions worsens, we could speak of reverse migration: *“So the migration within Jordan is not any longer from the camps to urban areas, but to camps. Not to Za'atari because it is full, but to Azraq or they go back to Syria. Or onwards migration.”* (Interview 8 – Za'atari – UNCHR officers) I have met more urban refugees that were considering going back to Syria, than going back to the camp. Under the harsh circumstances, they would rather die in Syria, than live their lives in Jordan.

IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION: BECOMING A REFUGEE

Ever since Syrians fled the war in Syria and crossed the border of Jordan, they settled in Jordan; be it either in one of the camps or directly in urban areas. As said before, settling in Jordan also included, from a legal perspective, the transformation from a Syrian citizen into a Syrian refugee. Although Syrians might be perceived as refugees once they crossed the Jordanian border, do Syrians perceive themselves as refugees? And how do Syrians define being a 'refugee'? These questions will be answered in the following paragraph.

In the theoretical framework of this thesis, the definition of refugees – as defined by the Convention in 1951 has been pointed out. This definition focusses on being compelled to leave your country, a well-founded fear and the impossibility to return to the country of origin (UNHCR, 1951). In this chapter, I will try not to fall into the traps of finding the right definition, but I would like to shed light on how Syrian refugees define the word 'refugee' and whether Syrians identify themselves as refugees. It is impossible to distill all of its processes, of being a refugee, into words. Notwithstanding, I would like to touch upon some of the essential elements, such as forced to flee, UNHCR registration and having less rights.

DEFINITION REFUGEES

A basic element of being a refugee, which was mentioned quite often in the interviews is that Syrians are being pushed to leave their home country behind and to live in exile. The war caused people to run away from Syria and to look for another safe place to stay, which they found in Jordan. The respondents agreed with mentioning the aspect of 'forced to flee' as characterising for refugees, however, adding up other conditions caused a great deal of controversy:

"I think that this is one of the serious problems. We do not have a definition for the word refugee. Maybe if you want to take the artificial definition I am a refugee, because I am out of my country. We are forced to be out of our country. To this extent it is okay. But I cannot accept any connection with this word when it refers to people who need help. To wait for help and do nothing to help yourself. No, I do not believe in these things."

Interview 41 – Amman - man

So for this man, having some autonomy over his own life is the only desire. Later in the interview, he explained this process of regaining autonomy as one of the reasons why he does not always accept the UNCHR vouchers given to him, if not needed that month. Preferably he is not depending on aid.

For many of the Syrians, being a refugee implies they do not feel at home, they are not surrounded by their parents and/or being a refugee makes them feel like they are only a number. Being a refugee is for many Syrians also strongly related to the UNHCR-paper given to them after registration or because they receive aid. Especially, in comparison to their lives back in Syria, it becomes clear what being a refugee means to them. The consequences of becoming a refugee clarify the harsh reality of a refugee life:

"Refugee means that you do not have freedom to move and work. Compared to the Syrian life, we could work and move everywhere and do whatever we wanted. Now, we cannot leave the house. I feel like a woman."

Interview 45 – Irbid – Husband & Wife

So assimilating into a refugee community is defined by a great number of aspects: immobility, less freedom and rights, loneliness while not being surrounded by family members and loved ones, UNHCR registration, lives on hold, forced to flee, being a number, rely on NGOs, and not feeling at home. Moreover, Syrians know that something else is missing. They are not in their own country:

“A refugee is an infant without a mother. There are a lot of children without a mother now. Whoever would adopt us, it would not help us because it would not be the same. Syria will remain our mother. I will nowhere feel the same as in Syria.”

Interview 35 – Amman – Family

Although I have placed refugee journeys in the perspective of both physically and, especially, socially moving from being a citizen into a refugee, several respondents would disagree with me on this consideration. For a variety of reasons, they would not frame themselves as refugees. A great number of Syrians do not perceive themselves as refugees, but as visitors or guests, for a variety of reasons: ‘because it is my duty to be respectful of the people who took me in and that is why I consider myself as a guest.’ (Interview 19 – Zarqa – Woman), ‘it is our second home’ (Interview 15 – Azraq refugee camp – Woman), ‘because I visited Jordan before’ (Interview 40 – Irbid – Young man) or because ‘I am here only temporarily. After the war I will go back’ (Interview 5 – Zarqa – Woman).

CONCLUSION

Only a small proportion of the Syrian refugee population resides in camps. For those people who managed to get out of the camp, making sense of living outside the camps was done in terms of relief: they didn’t have to adapt any longer to the living conditions inside the camp. At the time of arriving at the camps or settlement in the urban areas of Jordan, little was known yet about how their lives in Jordan would be much different than living in Syria. This will be further discussed in part 2 of the data analysis: settlement in Jordan.

Settlement in Jordan also entailed becoming a refugee. Without the opportunity to safely return to Syria, the legal status of Syrians had changed. Syrians relate the following phrases to the definition of refugees: lacking freedom and rights, immobility, UNHCR registration, feeling alone and not at home and dependence on NGOs. Although, not every Syrian accepts being seen as refugee, for a variety of reasons: familiar with Jordan, treated as less than refugees, not a Syrian passport, living conditions and proudness of Syria.

4.8 TIME FRAME 6: SETTLEMENT IN URBAN AREAS OF JORDAN

After fleeing from place to place, the Syrian respondents in this research all made the decision to settle in Jordan. The majority of Syrians first found a destination in one of the camps, even so the destination in Jordan's urban areas can also be transformed into another place of departure. Although trajectories have come to a halt, refugee mobility is still a determining factor. This chapter will elucidate the continuation of refugee mobility.

In total, 80 percent of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan resides in urban areas, mainly in the north of Jordan. The main reason for Syrian to live in urban areas, instead of in a camp, is the hope for re-establishing a normal and dignified life. As can be read in the section about refugee camps, people fled the camps because it was a bridge too far to accept the living conditions in the isolated camps or to accept a refugee life. What kind of living situation awaited those Syrians who moved to the urban areas? This chapter will give insight in the settlement of Syrian refugees in Jordan, covering the following topics: (1) Living a refugee life, (2) Identity transformation and (3) Mobility and immobility as a continuum.

EXPERIENCES: LIVING A REFUGEE LIFE

While people were on the move inside Syria, they often were clueless on what their next destination would be, how long it would take before they could return home, whether family members were still safe and for how long the war in Syria would last. Syrians did not have an inkling on what it would mean to become a refugee until they became one itself. And as said before, many did not know what to expect of living in Jordan and for how long they would stay in this country:

“At the beginning, let’s say the first six months or the first year, I did not have any expectations. My expectations were only to leave Jordan, one day. We weren’t settled. We didn’t have a lot of things because we only wanted to leave Jordan.”

Interview 18 – Amman - Woman

No one did foresee it would take up to six years so far. With the perpetuating situation of living in exile, for many, daily life in Jordan did not meet their expectations. I will illustrate daily lives of Syrians by looking at the importance of family members, treated as refugee and immobility.

NOT HAVING LOVED ONES OR FAMILY MEMBERS AROUND

When Syrians fled their country, they were often accompanied by family members or friends. Not every respondent was able to leave Syria together with all family members and many families are now torn apart. For example, an older lady from Homs revealed that she did not stay behind in Syria, but actually her husband did for a short period of time. The movement of her husband was more difficult than her own movement to Jordan:

“My husband’s journey was more difficult for me because he passed through the different opening [not the regular one]. But the road to that gate – I heard rumours – was called a death road. I heard that many people died and because my husband had lost contact with me for a week I could not really know what happened to him. Maybe he was ill or death. The road was empty; there was no transportation, no food, no water. That was one of the things that I was worried about.”

Interview 25 – Zarqa – Woman

In addition, because the war and the journeys forcibly separated families, settlement in Jordan without family members and friends led to feelings of loneliness and despair. Without having family members around, several Syrians revealed this particular aspect results in not feeling at home:

"I do know people, but overall I feel really lonely. Compared to my situation back in Syria, I was surrounded by every member of my family and my extended family. All my brothers and sisters, mother and father and all of my uncles and aunts surrounded me. They were living in the same neighbourhood as I. Now they do not. That makes me very lonely here."

Interview 26 – Zarqa – Woman

FACING HARDSHIP: TREATED AS REFUGEES

This thesis builds upon the idea that the physical movements evoke Syrians to moving away from previous lives into living refugee lives. In the chapter about refugee camps, the transformation in the legal status of Syrians has been discussed. Although not every Syrian in Jordan would describe themselves as refugees, they still suffer from being treated as refugees. How do Syrians endure being framed as a refugee by the host country, aid organisations, Jordanians or by us as researchers? For some of them, being called a 'refugee' is extremely hard. It is considered as one of the most difficult word that does exist. Especially, because they do not want to be seen as a refugee and it makes them feel like they are a minority or strangers. Being called refugee stresses the differences between them and the Jordanian people (Interview 33):

"I really suffer emotionally from being called a refugee and from being discriminated against. I do not like the word refugee"

Interview 22 – Zarqa – 2 sisters

"It is like imprinted in me that I am a refugee, I cannot go over that fact. Even though Jordanians are very close to me in terms of geography, language and religion, I still feel like a stranger. When I am walking down the streets, I feel that people are looking at me. I feel that they are looking at me as a stranger. When I knock on the door of my neighbours I can hear them saying: 'The Syrian is here.' They do not call me by name."

Interview 27 – Zarqa – Woman

Overall, Syrians are struggling with being perceived as a refugee, especially because refugees are depicted in an appealing manner, as they are a 'heavy burden for the society' (Interview 34). Not every refugee is perceived as such, but with time passing by and limited resources, tensions between host and refugee communities rise. Over the years, Syrians face difficulties in treated as troubleshooters:

"Day-by-day it is getting more and more difficult for the Jordanians... At first, Jordanians were okay with it, they were compassionate. But now, day-by-day they are feeling more and more uncomfortable. They started feeling crowded and trapped, they had less jobs and water. They started to take the places in schools. I am receiving more aggression and intolerance from the Jordanian people. That is why I feel as a refugee now."

Interview 51 – Mafraq – Woman

Before the war started, a lot of Syrians used to come to Jordan on a regular base, selling Syrian products like nuts, dates and raisins. These Syrians were very familiar with the country and do not only consider themselves as visitors, a better treatment was expected:

"I consider myself a Syrian visitor, because I visited Jordan before. My life was half of it in Jordan, so I do not consider myself a refugee."

Interview 40 – Irbid – Young man

"I am Syrian and I am not a refugee. My nose up. Because they know who we are before we came here. We are always proud of being Syrians. But this is happening to us, so we have to fight with the life now. We have to find peace in our country and to rebuild it. We are Syrians and we are proud about that."

Interview 1 – Amman – Man

It's not all doom and gloom, for a small number of Syrians indicated not being treated as refugees at all. They were treated as family members (Interview 7 – Zarqa – Woman) or as brothers and sisters:

"We feel like Jordan is our own country. I do feel like I am in my country. The people all are very nice. No one ever bothers us."

Interview 52 – Mafraq – 2 old ladies

Following the notion of positive treatment, is the story of a lady met in Amman. I met a lady who lived her whole life in Syria, however, her father was Jordanian so she did not have a Syrian passport. When she was asked about whether she considered herself to be a refugee she said: *"No. Not at all! Because I am not Syrian"* (Interview 18). So, despite the fact that she had been through the same situation of Syrians, her situation was different for her because of her nationality. She did not face the troubles Syrian refugees have suffered from and that Jordanians did not treat her as a Syrian refugee. For this reason, she is able to have a job as a teacher, is married to a Jordanian husband and lives in a nice house. To put it differently: they are 'not living in a refugee situation':

"I feel as a Syrian living in Jordan. Not as a refugee, because we have enough money and we did not come through the camp."

Interview 17 – Amman – Woman

The example mentioned above is only an exception, rather than a rule. In the interviews with Syrian respondents, it has become clear that being called and seen as a refugee indeed transformed their identity. Where many did not know what it meant to be a refugee until they became one themselves. While not all of the Syrians met perceive themselves as a refugee, many still face the negative treatments regarded refugees. The impact on their identity will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

At the time these interviews were conducted, no respondent was in possession of a work permit. Without a permit, Syrians are not allowed to work. However, with financial resources depleted and not

earning any money to make a living, Syrians were desperately looking for jobs, albeit, illegal jobs. Especially, because the costs of living in Jordan are much more expensive compared to Syria, this already soon led to problems in providing livelihoods. On top of that, the need to embark on employment again was threatened by contextual factors. If you would get caught when working illegally, Syrians risked a visit to a local police station, a warning or deportation to one of the camps. Some Syrians even said that working illegally was hazarding yourself deportation back to Syria. I would like to share a story from a man living in Irbid. While he was working illegally, the police caught him and he was sent back to Azraq camp:

"I was working in Ajloun and when I wanted to come back from Ajloun to Irbid I was on the bus. The police went to the bus and they asked for the ID cards. Sometimes the policemen do this. Especially between the governorates. Especially from guys. So they took my ID card and they checked my name and they knew that I escaped from Za'atari. They let me go back to Azraq. They told me: if you do not tell your family to go to Azraq we will send you to Syria. So if you do not bring your wife we will send you back to Syria. So I called her and told her to come to Azraq with the kids and they followed me."

Interview 38 – Irbid - Family

He asked for permission to leave the camp, but only after 3 months the police agreed on the permit. Nonetheless, they could not leave as a family: either he could leave the camp on his own, or his wife with the kids. He sent her with kids and he stayed another 8 months in Azraq before he illegally left the camp. This experience of getting sent back to the camp caused an enormous fear. It made him very 'nervous and tensioned' and the only thing he can think about is the future. If the situation will stay like this and nothing will change, it will leave him no other choice than going back to Syria.

On this point, a difference between men and women can be noticed. Much more men are illegally working in Jordan, while most of the women spend most of their times at home or in community centres:

"We never leave the house. Only once a week we will leave the house when we visit each other."

Interview 53 – Mafraq – 2 old ladies

It was rather an exception than a rule that women had a job, and if so it was in the private sphere:

"My wife is now trying to work at home, like making sweets and pickles. She sells them."

Interview 46 – Irbid – Husband & wife

As can be seen in the examples above, daily life was characterised by immobility. Without having money to travel inside Jordan, without a permit to legally work and the high levels of fear for deportation to either the camps or to Syria, the movements within Jordan were extremely limited. It was not only a minimum of opportunities in terms of employment. Many parents indicated the lack of possibilities for their children to be enrolled in secondary education after finishing primary school. The absence of possibilities to become employed or education not only had its impact on financial resources of Syrians. With agency being thwarted, it is also leading to erosion of skills and dreams, and eventually, the problems are piling up leading to hopelessness:

“When I came to Jordan, I was feeling very safe. Especially since everything that happened back in Syria. But now, all my dreams have faded away. All of my dreams are regarding my children. None of my sons can finish high school and it is absolutely not an option they will enter university or college. All my dreams are death.”

Interview 51 – Mafraq – Woman

“Even for us, the Syrians in Jordan it feels like we are in a prison. We are not allowed to go anywhere.”

Interview 1 – Amman – Man

SHIFTING IDENTITIES

Identity is a social process, which is in a flux, especially when people physically move and encounter a new environment. As is discussed in the chapter about refugee camps, Syrians who fled their home country and sought refuge in Jordan are now considered to be refugees. The transformation from citizen to refugee is only one aspect of the life-changing meaning of displacement. It does not only affect their living conditions or status from a citizen into a refugee, it is necessary to recognise it also affects their personality and their point of view on life. Because of migration Syrians have to re-invent their selves. During the interviews, I asked the respondents: ‘When you look back on your trajectory and all that you have been through ever since, how has it changed your identity or point of view on life?’ One lady asserted that:

“100 percent of the people that left Syria, because of the war, have changed.”

Interview 29 – Zarqa – 2 ladies

It will be specified in this chapter how their identity alternated. First, I will pay attention to negative impact and subsequently, the focus will be on the positive changes. Aspects that will come across include aggressiveness, sadness, anxiety, fear for all kinds of problems, assertiveness and feeling stronger.

NEGATIVE CHANGES

Many Syrian refugees have been forced to live through terrible experiences. They have been in situations in which they were at risk, where they experienced shootings or in which they thought they would probably die. Leaving your house full of memories behind, living in another country while some family members still live in Syria and witnessing arrestments: it has turned the lives of many Syrians upside down. Although only a few Syrians mentioned the experiences have not really affected their life, but they are mainly sad about Syria (Interview 56 – Mafraq – 2 young girls). Another reflection was:

“The experience has only changed me for the first couple of months. Life has to go on and I do not see it as an option to bury myself alive.”

Interview 22 – Zarqa – 2 sisters

Overall, many answers were heartbreaking, because the war had made their life extremely tenuous:

“After the war, everything is making me emotional. I cry over the littlest things. I feel destroyed on the inside”

Interview 44 – Irbid – woman

The answer of this couple will provide more insight on how their identity has changed in a sense that they both become paralysed:

“My personality is that I do not care what happens to me, I would always say the truth. I would say it without being afraid, even if it would cost my life. My husband is usually a quiet and peaceful guy. However, when there is a problem where he feels that he is being faced with injustice, he could explode. Not literally.

I feel changed because in Jordan I do not have that many rights. Before I said, whenever I feel injustice, I would fight it. But now I cannot. I feel like a child being punished here in Jordan – when they misbehave. My husband was changed because he was used to something and now it completely changed. Now he is forced to be quit all the time – even when something bad happens to him.”

Interview 48 – Irbid – Husband & Wife

While some become quiet, others deal with an increase in aggressive feelings and fights, caused by a deteriorated financial situation, not having loved ones around, bad news about Syria or knowing that going back to Syria will not be an option in the near future:

“Sometimes the feeling of powerlessness makes me aggressive. What has changed is a lot of things including love for other people. Before I used to be a very welcoming and loving person, but not anymore. When I cannot get a piece of sweet for my children while they ask me: ‘can I get some sweet’ and I do not have the money to get it, I sometimes feel aggressive towards other people, but I do not act upon it. (Wife) I changed because I am not surrounded by relatives and loved ones like I used to in Syria. It makes me feel tired, homeless and I feel like a stranger.”

Interview 46 – Irbid – Husband & wife

“When we came to Jordan with my husband and kids, after a few months we started realising that there was no possibility to go back. My husband started to become very aggressive and impatient. All sorts of problems arose, even though these things never happened in Syria. He would smoke a lot because it reduces stress and I would try to maintain the situation. My children did not go to school for a year. So I started to work to raise more money for my husband and family. My husband became mentally disturbed because he was witnessing what happened to his country and he watched the news all the time and he was always very afraid for his home, for his country, for his fellow Syrians. Which is why he wanted to return there.”

Interview 7 – Zarqa - Woman

As can be concluded from the previous quotes, there is a variety of reasons for an identity change. In addition, many Syrians now deal with anxiety:

"I have developed some sort of anxiety about everything, like income, future, the past, whether I want to go back to Syria etc."

Interview 45 – Irbid – Woman

The following narrative indicates how the current living conditions have changed her in a person that is mainly focused on conflict prevention. She is so afraid of any trouble because she fears being thrown out of the country and she does not have a husband anymore to protect:

"I am also pressuring myself and my sons to not cause any problems because we are always regarded as refugees. So, when my son got hit by a Jordanian I keep telling him not to hit back because then we get thrown out. You do not have many rights as much as Jordanians, whatever happens, we get thrown out maybe or punished because we do not have the same rights as Jordanians. I have always been this way, even in Syria. I do not like to make problems or trouble. But, here in Jordan, it is even on a higher level because of my refugee situation. Even if it is not my son's fault, I will still tell him to calm down because I am more afraid of trouble than I used to be in Syria."

Interview 47 – Irbid – Woman

Not having a father as result of the conflict also changes the lives of young children. They now grow up without a father. Well, they were much more well-behaved back in Syria, the children do not listen to the mother without a father to respect (Interview 54 – Mafraq – Woman). Many more respondents had to deal with being torn apart from family members who are still living in Syria. Until today, it makes so many people really sad:

"We used to be very happy people. Always smiling. Laughing was the easiest thing to do. Even though I have not been as faithful as I used to be, I still have 0 information about most of my family. Even my mother, brothers are still in Syria and I do not know whether they are dead or alive. My husband has the same issue. We are not happy."

Interview 52 – Mafraq – 2 old ladies

Pessimism is very common among the respondents, especially when they have zero hope for life or do not know whether they will even see their family members again. (Interview 47 - Irbid – Family). Syrians highlighted the impossibility of achieving their dreams. Everything has changed in a bad way and their perspective on life and on the future is now black:

"It did not change my personality, it stayed the same. My view of life has changed. No money, no goals, no life, no studying. Here you only can eat and drink, but you cannot taste. In Syria I had all my rights. Everything I wish for, I will make it. Anything. I would think about it and make it. Trips, going out, buying a house, anything. Life in Syria is simple, but you have to follow your goal and achieve it. Use your mind. I am very weak now. Not strong at all. Now, I do not care about anything. It is on God now."

Interview 39 – Irbid - Family

"I feel lost and I can describe it as a person who is sitting in a swing that goes back and forth and I do not know where it is going to take my next. I am lost between either going back to Syria and risking the lives of my children. I do not care about my own life."

Interview 7 – Zarqa - Woman

POSITIVE CHANGES

While many Syrians have been in the doldrums ever since they left Syria, some still try to be optimistic: despite life in Syria was much better, they try to adapt and look at the positive side. Aspects that are highlighted are the ability to adapt to a new situation (Interview 53) and being much stronger than expected. A woman from Aleppo adds that she currently has much more responsibilities. She is having the role of a mother as well as a father since her husband died in Syria. Because she handles that responsibility, she also started to discover to be much stronger than she ever thought they she was:

"I became a much more responsible person than I was. This is how I have changed. Three words I would describe myself with: I am up to the challenge, I am strong and I am responsible. Before, I used to be a very weak person. I did not know about these three characteristics before I decided to come to Jordan. I told myself I am a weak person, but this has to stop. These three characteristics appeared and gave me the courage to come to Jordan and start a new life."

Interview 54 – Mafraq - Woman

One guy became more aware of his life, which he considered a positive development:

"I start to realise that the meaning of happiness is different from what we used to think about it. At that time, we used to think about happiness as connected to the financial situation. But it is not the main important. It is a matter of safety. The safety for your family members and your friends. The whole situation in the country. To not see sad people. To not see people who are suffering. This will affect you. Maybe I start to realise more that happiness is connected with your inner self. You have to find it in yourself and you need to help others to forget about the misery."

Interview 40 – Amman – Man

There are so many sad stories included in this thesis, but this story of Mustafa is a different one. Although he has experienced a lot of difficulties he is still looking to the bright side of life. Together with his family, he fled to Amman where he is enrolled in studies related to engineering. In the summer of 2015, they moved to Dubai where his father was offered a job in the hospital. Mustafa did stay in Amman because he wanted to finish his semester. He will only go to Dubai in the summer. In his reflection on his journey, he said:"

"Leaving Syria could also be a very good chance to experience new things. Your movement can create or limit your options. You are already out of your home country, so it is easier to make those choices. I would like to be a PhD student in mechatronics in the UK or USA or to get a master degree and work in Dubai. I like the idea of trying new stuff. 'What would be new in Saudi?' A new culture, but it is still an Arabic country. I really want to learn new aspects of life."

Interview 24 – Amman – Young man

IMMOBILITY AND MOBILITY AS A CONTINUUM

Mobility and immobility often find its expression in contradictions: you are either mobile or immobile, mobility is positive and immobility is negative etcetera. The (im)mobility experiences of Syrian refugees further complicate this contradiction. They often give clear examples of situations in which ones' mobilities resulted in immobilising other people. Such as a son who left to Europe in search for a better future perspective, taking with him the resources left to pay smugglers. Without financial resources left for other family members, opportunities to be mobile themselves are extremely limited.

IMMOBILITY BROUGHT ABOUT BY EXPERIENCES

Every respondent has experienced mobility – to a certain extent - because of being able to move from Syria to Jordan, although, many Syrian refugees feel their mobility has now come to an end. The reasons for dealing with immobilities are quite diverse. For example, a woman, living in Zarqa, was relieved for granted asylum in Canada and America, unfortunately, she was compelled to reject this opportunity. As a consequence of the terrific experiences during the war, her parents-in-law have forced her and her husband to stay in Jordan and limit their mobility. Without impediments, they would have gone:

“My husband is now the only child because his brother died during the war. His parents demanded that we would stay. Also because my husband has viewing problems, his parents demanded that we would stay near, so we could keep an eye on each other.”

Interview 19 – Zarqa – Woman

Previously, the story of a man that was sent back to Azraq while he was working illegally has been shared. It was truly horrific for him to be living in a refugee camp for the second time. Especially in Azraq camp, with living conditions even harsher than in Za’atari. Although he is now living in Irbid again, this traumatic experience reinforced his immobility:

“When I am outside of my house, and I see a police car I will change my way. Now I am very nervous and tensioned. Inside it is not a problem, but outside it is. When I want something from the shop I will send my son to get it. When one of my children is sick I would not be able to take him to the hospital. Because at the hospital I have to show my ID cards. And then they would know that I am irregular here and I will be sent back to Azraq.”

Interview 38 – Irbid - Family

This fear of either being sent back to one of the camps or to Syria is playing a big role in the lives of Syrian refugees. Some of them do not even leave the house because of fearing the risks of it. Especially the people that are working illegally are in constant fear and restrict their movements as much as possible.

MOBILITY CONTINUED: MOVING BACK AND FORTH FROM JORDAN TO SYRIA

Despite the hospitality provided by Jordan, Syrians face little prospect in meaningful citizenship. Therefore, the biggest wish of many Syrians is to go back to a post-conflict Syria. Whether Syria will be fully rebuilt or not, in the end, a great number of Syrians are just waiting until they go back. In spite of this wish, the option to return remains remote. Nonetheless, a few Syrians decide to go back to Syria already: to visit family, to attend a funeral or to try to build up their life in Syria. For now, it is possible to cross the border back to Syria, however, it seems impossible to go back to Jordan again since the border is closed (Amnesty International, 2016). In the narrative account of a young woman from Damascus, she explained how her mother was able to travel back and forth from Jordan to Syria:

“My mother went to Syria. She went to the Ministry of Interior; she took a permit, an agreement. But it is not easy, not for everyone. But my mum is old and she has a Jordanian family. Not every Syrian goes to the Ministry to say ‘I want permission’ and they give it. No, it is not that easy. Only with the specific conditions, you can get this permission. She got the permission for 1,5 months.”

Interview 18 – Amman – Woman

Because the border is closed she went by aeroplane to Lebanon and from there to Syria. This mother was the only example mentioned in the narrative accounts who was able to return to Jordan, so this indicates the highly unique situation. Another reason for return to Syria is family reunification. The war in Syria has not only forced masses to leave Syria, it also forced many families to separate and the story of Zeinah is such an example. Zeinah fled Syria’s civil war with her kids, despite the fact her husband remained in Syria. After 8 months in Jordan she witnessed living in Jordan was like squaring the circle: the combination of receiving not enough aid to get by and the grieve over separation from her husband made her reach a tipping point. It was no longer bearable to live a life like that, so she decided to return to Syria. Living in Homs was another disillusionment: it was not safe at all and they were both really afraid, that one day, their kids would die. After a few months, her brother – who was still settled in Jordan – convinced them to leave Syria and live in Jordan again:

“Every day there were attacks on her village. Every time there was an attack my husband was blaming me: why did you come back with our children? They are going to die. It is your fault that they are going to die and you are the reason behind it. [...] This is why I decided to go back to Jordan. I would never leave the country again without my husband. The only way for him was to get smuggled. It would take a lot of time to take another road, without a lot of checkpoints. So I came here and stayed 2 months with my brother and our situation was getting much better. After that, my husband came to Jordan but first stayed in Azraq camp. He stayed there a few weeks and then he was able to come back to Zarqa.”

Interview 28 - Zarqa - Women.

The situations described above are quite rare. In almost every other case, it is impossible to re-enter Jordan. This impossibility of crossing the border at a later stage of the war is underlined by Farida’s refugee journey. Farida left Damascus in 2012 and directly went to Jordan with her kids and husband. Seven months ago, her husband decided to pay a visit to the funeral of his father. He left Jordan, with the assumption that he would be able to return to Jordan, since he had the death certificate of his father. He thought that the border officials would consider it as a humanitarian cause and let him in again. On the contrary, they did not and Farida’s husband is still in Syria. Farida have to rethink a next move:

“I am willing to go back to Syria only on one condition which is if my husband never returns to Jordan. I really have to see him. I already lost everything next to everything. I do not want to lose my husband and children. I am waiting for a miracle, to carry me and my children and put them in one country. If it will take much longer than this, my only choice is to go back to him in Syria. But it is going to be very difficult and very dangerous because I have young children.”

Interview 7 – Zarqa – Woman

A small number of Syrians decide to permanently settle in Syria and re-establish their lives again. Hussein told me his brother went back to Syria when Busra – a village in the South of Syria - was freed in March 2015. Although it is safe to live there – at least up until now – it is a very hard life:

“So my brother took the decision to go back because he spent more than 2 years out of Syria and we love to live in our city. It is very hard and very bad that he is in Syria now. Especially for my mother and father because we really miss them. They have a new life now, but they can destroy everything there. So that keeps us busy. My mum really suffers. It is not an easy thing for us to lose him. My brother hopes he can come back, but it is impossible.”

Interview 41 – Amman – Man

Not only in urban areas, Syrians decide to repatriate to Syria. According to a camp official at Emirates camp, each month 50-60 people go back to Syria. While they know it not possible to re-enter Jordan, they consider it better to die in Syria than in any other country. For the vast majority, returning to Syria is not yet considered to be the best solution to the immobilities encountered in Jordan. Other future plans will be looked at in detail in the following paragraph.

FUTURE MOBILITY

Syrians now find themselves in protracted situations of displacement, with the civil war raging on for over 6 years. Especially because of this perpetuation of displacement along with the impossibility to have the prospect of building up a dignified life in Jordan, Syrians consider their next move. Therefore, ‘What is your future plan?’ was one of the questions on the topic list. Nevertheless, the majority of Syrians indicated that thinking about the future is hard when, at the moment, Syrians feel profoundly stuck:

“We all think about the future here, it is typical, but it is difficult. Living is on hold, basically, there is no future here. In ten years I will be sitting here in the same.”

Interview 3 – Amman – Man

Many Syrians do not have a clear idea how their future will look like and do not know what could be in their power to change their situation. This attitude irritates Hussein, one of the Syrian refugees met in Amman (Interview 41). Life will not be merciful to us, he said, if we are just waiting. This waiting time is gradually becoming their life. Some are not aware of this and are just waiting. For example, some don’t even buy enough furniture, such as cups. They do not buy them, ‘because tomorrow we will go back’:

“I do not have a future. The only thing I can see in the future is my home back in Syria, this is the only thing I want and my only dream. Even my children do not have a future. I have a daughter who is in senior high school, but I do not know what to do with her because I do not have any money for university.”

Interview 42 – Irbid – Woman

With the end in mind, to return to a post-conflict Syria, no plans are made for future mobility. Several Syrians indicated waiting for UNHCR resettlement, without actions undertaken. Many do not have a plan, and as said before, hope with all their hearts it will soon be able to return to Syria:

“Like what can I plan for the future? The only plan I have is a divine plan from God to make everything better. Sometimes I go up for a walk in the street and I cry a lot. I keep praying that Allah has to something about it for my country and every other country.”

Interview 55 – Mafraq – Woman

Without opportunities, Syrians feel trapped. Syrian refugees in Jordan gave me the assumption Jordan will not soon become a place of departure unless their hopeless is reaching such a high level of desperation indicating ‘it is better to die in Syria’.

CONCLUSION

All in all, life goes on, but not wholeheartedly. Many respondents now deal with aggressiveness, negative thoughts about the future, sadness and a fear for everyday issues. I think the following quote reflects how many people now perceive daily life:

“The only way to deal with it is to believe that life goes on and I cannot just die. Life goes on. I have to force myself to live.”

Interview 51 – Mafraq – Woman

The ability to see the opportunities in everyday lives’ difficulties is rather the exception than the rule.

“I feel weak and I see myself as a Syrian refugee. I feel really hopeless. It has changed a lot over time. In Homs, I looked healthier and was not hopeless. There is nothing else that I can do to change my situation.”

Interview 30 – Amman - woman Syrian embassy

4.9 SHORT RECAP OF SYRIAN REFUGEE JOURNEYS

The results, as discussed in each time frame, illustrate how physical and social movements set in motion a meaningful process. Although, it is not to say that *each* movement generates meaning. Throughout Syrian refugee journeys, specific movements have been indicated as having high impact, such as leaving one’s house, crossing the Syrian-Jordanian border, transfer to the camps, the (in)ability to settle in Jordan’s urban areas and the immobilities faced while living in Jordan. The impact of both movements and experiences extends beyond the limits of ongoing refugee journeys, and also affects identities. Not only have Syrians been confronted with their legal status altered from Syrian citizens into a minority as Syrian refugees, they now deal with aggressiveness, hopelessness, pessimism or other mental disturbances. While a few indicated how they discovered to be much stronger than expected, the vast majority of Syrians pointed out their identity has changed in negative ways. This pessimism and hopelessness as characterizing for many Syrian refugee journeys is triggered by immobility faced once settling in Jordan. Without changes in (im)mobility, the future for Syrians is ‘black’: the hope is gone. The only hope that Syrians hold on to is going back to a safe and secure Syria.

SENSE-MAKING IN NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS

In preparing this thesis I was thinking about my own sense-making of meaningful, stressful or life-changing experiences. Making sense of whatever occurred and attributing meaning to those events not only emerges through my own reflections, but even more so, emerges while talking about it with friends or family members. Friends or family members might be able to identify my sense-making through my narratives in combination with non-verbal communication. For example, in the last few months, I could joyfully reflect on the decision to start living together with my boyfriend and people could read this joy from my face. So, I acknowledge that a great deal of my sense-making will be reflected in my emotions.

In this regard, the interviews with Syrian refugees also covers this social process in which meanings are attended to experiences. Talking and reflecting on those experiences can be helpful in one's own understanding of thoughts and feelings related to the specific experiences. In the narrative accounts, Syrian refugees interpret events, enact what is important and frame some of the experiences as meaningful. By doing so, making sense becomes a social activity and it might help people to cope with their losses.

Since meaning-making is an ongoing process which also continues during the interviews, I wanted to be sensitive for both the narrative accounts and the non-verbal communication to analyse emotions. It was definitely of added value to work together with Jip Bekkers. It enabled us to divide tasks; one of us was responsible for conducting the interview, while the other could make notes of both the interview and non-verbal communication. Although this was the plan, in reality it was fairly difficult to identify and distinguish emotions. This has to do with a variety of reasons:

- Conducting fieldwork in Jordan was my first in-depth experience with the Arabic culture. I experienced conducting interviews among people with another culture as a barrier for understanding facial expressions, (hand) gestures, intonation, eye contact, body contact etcetera. Especially the Arabic language is full of hand gestures I am not familiar with. My translator learned us a few of those, but still a lot of gestures eluded me. The same applies to the emotions: did a smile mean someone was happy or was it a sign of sadness or resignation? I might have misinterpreted facial expressions, gestures and emotions.
- Another reason, of a more practical nature, is the difficulty of classify emotions when Syrian women were wearing a hijab or a niqab, which made it hard or impossible to read any changes in emotions.

ADDED VALUE OF EMOTIONS

As is explained above, identifying emotions did not go of as smoothly as hoped. Though, I must admit, a number of emotions were identified. These emotions did underline the importance of their stories and the meaningfulness of the specific occurrences. The expressions of these emotions gave me a better understanding of their narratives.

Sadness: the main emotion identified was sadness. For example, one woman cried when the topics of the interviews were discussed. She did not want to be reminded of the horrors in Syria. Or, thinking about parents or other family members left behind in Syria brought several to tears. So sadness – either expressed through tears or facial expressions - was related to the fact that no hope was left, loneliness and all the sorrow because of the harmful experiences of the past few years.

Fear. Syrians expressed fear for the Jordanian government, but also fear for us as researcher. Some seemed to struggle with whether or not we were to trust. The fear was noticed in their eyes, as they were constantly checking the environment and thoroughly thinking about the answers given.

Joy. Joy was mainly expressed when jokes were made. Jokes to downplay or relativize their situation and because life goes on., such as: *"I just have to change and play two roles: a father and mother. I am a man on the inside [start laughing]"* (interview 54). Most people were having sad faces when thinking about dreams to go back to Syria, however, a few could forget their situation and smiled while dreaming about building a house for their own family.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

-- Chapter 5

5.1 INTRODUCTION

I hope the findings in the previous chapters have moved the readers' understanding of Syrian refugee mobility as a meaningful process substantially forward. In this chapter, I will try to interpret and describe the significance of the results in light of previous research on refugee mobility. Previous research might clarify the findings or even contradict with the results in this thesis. Whether or not this will be the case, this discussion will critically analyse the findings and will abstract the themes discussed, in order to provide a considerably analytical depth. Three themes will be discussed in this paragraph: (1) human mobility, (2) cross-border mobility and (3) disconnection.

5.2 HUMAN MOBILITY

I would like to start with the definition of human mobility, as defined in the theoretical framework by Kaufmann. Kaufmann delineates human mobility as "individual and collective actors who have been intentionality and who are liable to move about" (Kaufmann, 2012). Two aspects of this definition are remarkable and interesting in light of the findings of this thesis, namely the emphasis on both individually and collective actors and the distinction between intention and liability.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTORS

The first aspect to further look into are the actors that are mentioned: individual and collective actors. Kaufmann only refers to collective actors as groups but does not further specify collective actors. Human mobility, as illustrated in Syrian refugees moving from Syria to Jordan, repeatedly emphasises the collective process rather than an individual process. Prior to movements, decisions on whether or not to move were discussed within the sphere of villages, communities, families and especially the households. Therefore, one's mobility was highly dependent on the mobility and decision-making of relatives. In the end, the husband or father made the final decision on whether or not to flee Syria. Whenever it was possible, Syrians fled together with other family members and friends.

DISCREPANCY BETWEEN INTENTION AND LIABILITY

The second aspect I would like to point out is how this definition characterises mobility not only as the movement itself, rather, the intention to move is an important aspect as well. Through the narrative accounts, Syrians indicated how the war has dispersed their families; while parts of families remained living in Syria, other family members left to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan or Europe. The people left behind in Syria were still living there for a couple of reasons. Although not every one of those had the intention to leave, a great number of them was willing to leave, but without enough resources and without the right physical conditions, mobility remained beyond the bounds of possibilities. For example, in the case of elderly, sick or disabled people, Syrians were less liable to move about, even though people had the intention to leave, immobilities were faced. The same processes evolved again, in Jordan. As has been repeated many times throughout this thesis, Syrians inside Jordan were lacking a hopeful and promising future perspective. Especially, after a few years of being in such a marginalised and liminal position, Syrians started to consider their next move. Concerning this future mobility, many Syrians expressed their desires to go back to Syria as soon as possible, to be reunited with resettled family members in the US or Europe, to illegally flee to Europe or to be resettled with UNCHR. For some, it was only a wish, without a

concrete intention or operational plans, while others were exploring the options. Once and again, Syrians were faced with a number of impediments – such as lack of money and connections, legal to flee as a result of refugee management and power geometry – are not able to fulfil dreams in terms of mobility. Hence, a lot of respondents did not look forward to the future.

5.3 CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

Cross-border mobility – in light of theories of transnationalism – “is not the one-time crossing of a border from the home country to escape persecution or conflict but the possibility of circulating between country of refuge and country of origin” (Chatelard, 2001, p. 1). With this perspective in mind, the focus in migration is not so much on the monopoly of the nation states counting its borders, rather all sorts of flows – money, people, information has acquired increasing importance. Cross-border mobility – from the perspective of transnationalism – does not reflect Syrian refugee mobility. Syrian refugees residing in Jordan are now embedded in Jordan as long as cross-border circulation is cut off. By hearsay, a couple of years ago, cross-border mobility was possible with less strict border policies. Cross-border mobility is, nowadays, not yet an option due to the ongoing war, political turmoil and persecution in Syria and moreover, because moving back to Syria is a permanent choice. Ongoing border-crossing has considerably been reduced, although it is unknown whether cross-border mobility still happens illegally at a larger scale.

DEPRIVED OF CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AS A LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY

So, circulating across the borders from Jordan to Syria is excluded as one of the options and limits interconnectivity across boundaries. Syrians should, therefore, better be labelled as occasional transnational migrants. The national border separating Syria from Jordan impedes and hampers Syrians to circulate for the potential of livelihood strategies, to check on (scattered) family members or properties, security, connections with their home country and so on. Chatelard (2010, p. 60) considers mobility as the opportunity to reduce dependency on assistance, “especially when regulations in host countries allow refugees to be mobile between different areas and when they access the labour market”. If borders would only be deciphered as national borders, Syrians are not allowed to circulate across areas and countries. Within Jordan, Syrians are allowed – although lengthy processes within camps might complicate this matter – to move from one area to the other. Only a few Syrians frequently moved within Jordan. Without legal economic opportunities, there is not so much reason to move within Jordan, and in addition, it is vital to financial resources as a necessary condition for being mobile. So, once arrived in Jordan, only a small number of Syrians have moved houses or is commuting across cities. A great number of Syrians left the camp, being relieved to settle in urban areas. Leaving the camp was definitely a permanent decision and the moment that one’s mobility came to a halt in the camps was like the bleakest moment of their journeys. No Syrian refugee mentioned circulating across the borders of the camps by virtue of receiving aid. The reasons may be the locations of the camps, isolated in the middle of the desert, fear for getting caught by refugee camp officials because of leaving the camp illegally or worries for losing UNHCR voucher when the truth would come to light. Although, I admit not mentioning crossing camp border by virtue of aid does not necessarily mean it does not happen.

Although it may not be absolutely clear whether cross-border mobility does occur or not, the Jordanian government aims to curb Syrian refugee movements, both at its national borders as well as the border from the camps. By doing so, Syrian refugees are constantly confronted with immobilities.

5.4 A DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Cross-border mobility has been discussed in the sense of physical borders at camps or at the borderland of nation states. Notwithstanding, crossing social borders also constitutes social (im)mobility. Mobility not only implies movement in physical space but often evolves in social change (Cunningham & Heyman, 2010). There is a tendency to perceive the increasing numbers of movements as vertical, or upward, mobility – indicating a positive social change. Or, as Kaufmann would say, movement in social space. Important to note is that movement in physical space and movement in social space does not always occur simultaneously (Kaufmann, 2012). Bearing in mind the situation of Syrian refugees, their mobility is both a movement in physical space and social space, but often it not to be seen as upward mobility. Quite the reserve, in fact, downward mobility does better reflect the conditions Syrians are brought in by fleeing Syria: Syrians are being deprived of their legal status as citizens, Syrians now make up a minority in Jordan and with time passing by their resources have been depleted. Within the social stratification of society, the majority of Syrians have ended up a lower position in comparison with their positions in Syria. And their lives especially illustrate downward employment mobility. Kaufmann indicated movement in physical space and social space does not take place concurrently, as a standard correlation. While Syrians thought their stay in Jordan was only temporarily – more specifically, for a few weeks or months - the lower stratification was not yet that confronting and survival was the only thing that mattered. Over time, though, Syrians commenced thinking of livelihoods and realised the social change of physical movements: not being in their home country also entailed not being allowed to fully assimilate into Jordan.

Important to note is that moving further and faster does not make Syrians more socially mobile: it mainly depends on the upcoming opportunities or unfavourable circumstances that arise when Syrians arrive at their new ‘destination’. To conclude with, the majority of Syrian refugees are – once settled in Jordan – both immobile in terms of physical travel as well as immobile when it comes to social change and upward mobility.

NO RETURN AND NO ROAD FORWARD

The findings on social stratification correlate with Bauman’s theories on refugees (Bauman, 2004). Bauman expounds that refugees are the absolute outsiders, outcasts, outlaws and, most of all, outside any prospect of assimilation (Bauman, 2014). Refugees have turned into stateless, placeless and functionless refugees: “there is no return and no road forward” (Bauman, 2004, p. 78). To a certain extent, I disagree with Bauman, for many Syrian refugees have indicated resilience through the willingness to work, wishful to be seen as brothers and sisters of Jordanians, and putting a lot of effort in addressing the needs of the family. Examples are mentioned in which Syrians manage to escape a refugee life – although I have to comment these examples are exceptional. For example, Achmed and his family arranged to become resettled to Canada in the hope he will ever be successful in setting up his own Syrian restaurant, just like he had in Syria. During the time span of data collection, Achmed has been the only one who succeeded in arranging resettlement. Another example of showing willingness to remake their lives is Hussein. He had a job as a translator and tried as much as possible not to rely on UNHCR vouchers. Still, I agree these are anomalous situations.

As mentioned before, Syrians considered themselves part of the Arabic family, being brothers and sisters of Jordanians. This consideration also resulted in expectations on how they would be treated by Jordanians. Even in this case, the vast majority of Syrians encountered a decoration in their social position – even as Arabic brothers and sisters.

5.5 DISCONNECTION

Cresswell has been often quoted within this thesis since his theory of mobility as a meaningful process forms the foundation for this thesis. The Syrian refugee narratives indeed illustrate how the importance of moving from one place to another is highly underestimated if it would only be epitomised by several lines on a map. The lines on the map embrace much more. In particular, it embraces a manifest of an increasing disconnection. In the following chapter I will discuss the state of Syrians being detached from normality.

This process of disconnection has evoked with leaving their house. The Syrian refugees stressed their homes as a way of living and a way of being. It was not only a change in place of residency, it meant suddenly being detached from a way of living Syrians were comfortable with. It entailed a disconnection with properties and a compendium of memories. Their home is no longer fixed in space, since their tent or caravan in one of the camps, or a two rooms in a flat will only provide them with a temporary shelter. Not every Syrian would now indicate their place to stay as their home. Although, according to Rapport and Dawson, “home is creating a personal space of identification and habituation, which is first and foremost a cognitive space” (Rapport & Dawson, 1998 in Bek-Pedersen, 2006). Therefore, home is not confined to a spatial location, since mobility is a basic condition of the current world. As such, Rapport and Dawson conceptualise home in a highly hybrid way, so “not only can be at home in movement, but that movement can be one’s very home” (Rapport & Dawson, 1998, p. 27). Home as such a fluid concept does not apply in the situation of Syrian refugees losing their homes. The affiliation with their homes in Syria might not be diminished, rather further reinforced, holding on to their previous living conditions.

Assimilating to a refugee life corroborates this increasing disconnection from normalcy. According to Paul Collier, normalcy includes autonomy and the possibility to take part in economic activities. I do not perceive normalcy as having a normative character as such. Normalcy could be different for each respondent. However, with normalcy, I would like to refer to their previous living situation before the war erupted. Therefore, living in the camp, for example, provided meals, tents, services, and above all, a sense of safety. Nevertheless, acceptance of living a refugee life was required. Exactly this discrepancy between their previous lives and their life in the camp was reason enough to flee again:

“To leave your house and to adapt living in a camp – on the same day – is very hard. That is why people decide to leave in the first days. When people wait for a week or a month, they start to say: we can handle this kind of life. But we did not want to wait until that time.”

Interview 41 – Amman - Man

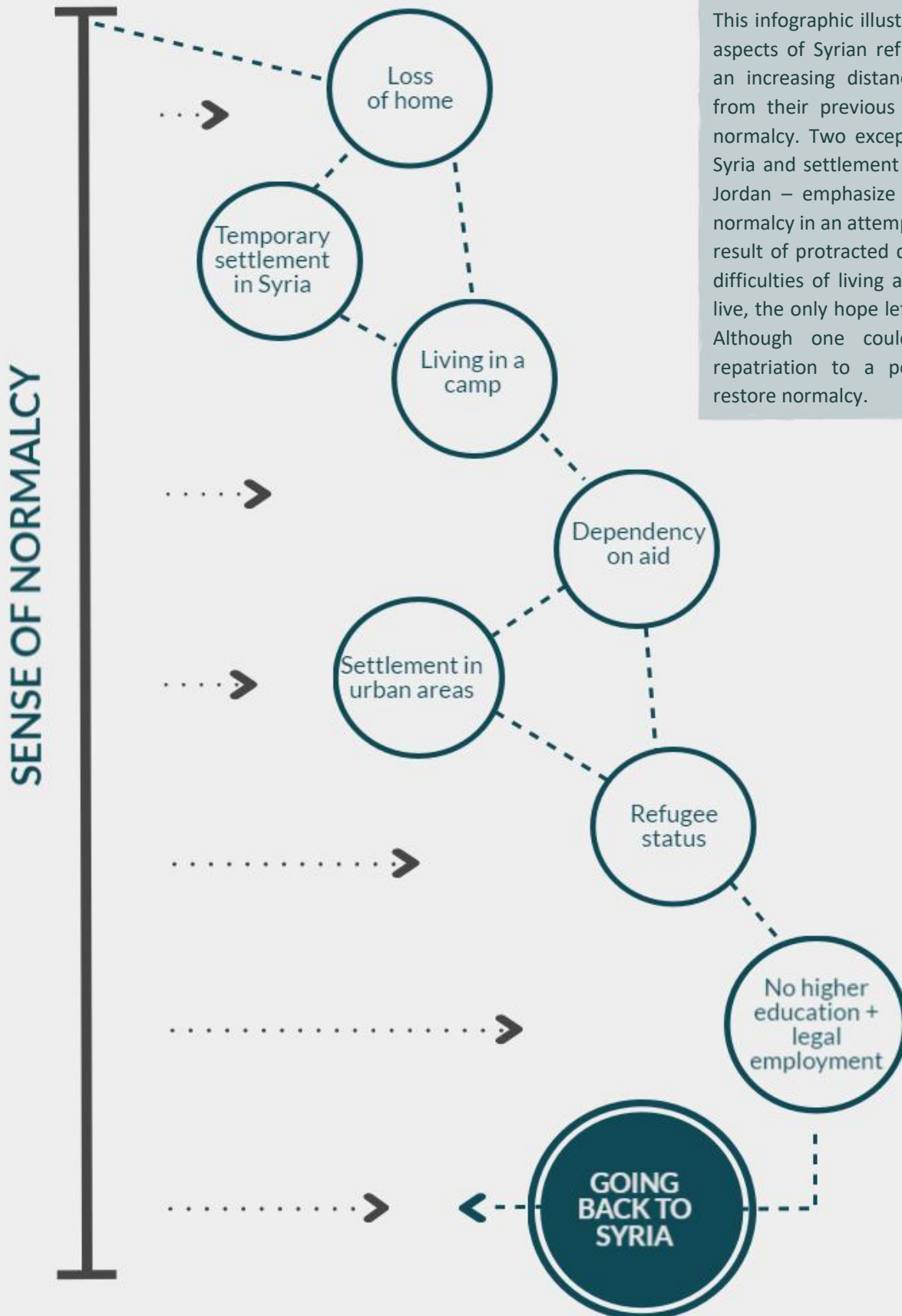
Displacement further perpetuates and a discrepancy from both their home and host country is encountered. Syrians were pushed to flee Syria, but are now faced with the impossibility of fully integrating in Jordan. Again, I would refer to Rapport & Dawson, stating that “distance is no longer a parameter in feeling disconnected – in today’s world of movement” (Rapport & Dawson, 1998 in Hadjiyanni, 2002, p. 39). Not so much the physical distance in itself is so much characterising this disconnection, rather the social distance from normalcy is emphasising how their worlds have altered. Syrians are not hampered by language barriers, but are not allowed to take matters into their own hands. Social and legal constraints prohibit Syrians to become normal citizens and remake their lives in Jordan by processes of marginalisation and alienation. “It places refugees somewhere along the continuum of their country of origin and their host country” (Hadjiyanni, 2002, p. 39). Therefore, the only point of reference is on restoring normality till a return to post-conflict Syria becomes possible. This process of disconnection from normalcy is illustrated in the infographic on the following page.



DISCONNECTION

CONTINUUM OF DISCONNECTION

This infographic illustrates how a variety of aspects of Syrian refugee journeys implies an increasing distance and disconnection from their previous living situation, their normalcy. Two exceptions – settlement in Syria and settlement in the urban areas of Jordan – emphasize how Syrians long for normalcy in an attempt to rebuild lives. As a result of protracted displacements and the difficulties of living a marginalized refugee life, the only hope left is to return to Syria. Although one could question whether repatriation to a post-conflict Syria will restore normalcy.



DISRUPTION

This process of dealing with an ever increasing disconnection from previous lives could also be described by theories on disruption. As the result of some major changes or extensive alteration in life – evoked by for example traumatic experiences, critical situations or experiences of violence – one’s life is being disrupted bodily, spiritually or socially (Berghs, 2012). Within Syrian refugee mobility, I choose to only focus on social disruption. This disruption is not only temporarily changing one’s life, however, it is a violation of continuation of one’s daily life (Berghs, 2012). With the experiences of a shattered communal life, families being torn apart, and experiences of violence in warfare, daily lives are turned upside down and need to be revised and re-invented. However, as can be concluded from the narratives of Syrian refugees, the possibility to re-invent daily lives remains a challenge, facing contextual factors that make it extremely difficult to “become economically self-sufficient under conditions when self-sufficiency is structurally undermined” (Butler, 2015, p. 25). As a matter of fact, daily lives are being re-invented, but not in the way Syrian refugees hoped for. Re-invention is not only needed on the level of daily lives, because Syrians are also faced with the difficulty of re-inventing themselves. Especially, since Syrians are both labelled and treated as refugees, their identity has been transformed. Again, revised daily lives and identities display a disconnection from hopes and dreams about settlement in Jordan and their previous lives and identities in Syria.



CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

-- Chapter 6

6.1 CONCLUSION

It has been just over a year since I arrived in Jordan for my fieldwork. Every now and then, Facebook reminds me of the pictures that were posted exactly one year ago and I recently received a message from a Jordanian friend including a picture from the first Iftar during Ramadan last year. It takes me back to memories of living in Amman; visiting the camps, crossing the border with Palestine, the bi-weekly walks to downtown for fruit and vegetables, the trips to the community centres to meet Syrian refugees and the need to travel by taxi all the time, missing my bike. This journey to and within Jordan, ultimately, meant much more than those physical movements: it raised my awareness on the kindness and hospitality of Arabs, I started questioning my own views on religion, the meetings with Syrians touched my heart and resulted in even more sympathy for the victims of Syria's civil war and it made me thankful for the gender roles in the Netherlands. These examples only offer a glimpse in how this journey has given me insight in – among other things - another culture, myself and refugee systems. Although my journey was in general a very positive one it is not my intention to compare my journey with those of Syrian refugees. However, in a similar way, the journeys of Syrian refugees did not only consist of physical movements.

This thesis has hinged on the following question: *“How does Syrian refugee mobility transcend from the physical movements into a meaningful process?”*. This research has proved that Syrian refugee mobility is indeed much more than a collection of physical movements. The physical movements put in motion a meaningful process. Throughout this thesis, three themes were examined, namely mobility, experiences and identity.

MOBILITY

Throughout lengthy, fragmented, fearful, hopeless or easy journeys from Syria to Jordan, Syrians have proved to be mobile. I would argue that Syrian refugee mobility should be seen as a continuum. This means that mobility is not fixed, but is fluid on the range of an interval, which is partly explained by the (in)abilities to have control over movements. In terms of Massey's power geometry, Syrians have proved to be mobile, although not always with full control over their own movements. For example, there appeared to be differences in the speed of movements, the variety of journeys available, the easiness of moving around, the duration of journeys and the control over one's own movements. During journeys, Syrians arrayed along this continuum with moments of control over movement and at other times without control. After successfully crossing the Syrian-Jordanian border, Syrians ultimately ended up in Jordan and entered a new or other continuum of mobilities. For the vast majority, movements were restricted once they were transferred to one of the camps. Although strict camp policies aimed to restrict Syrians to take up residence in urban areas, the greater number of Syrians managed to get out of the camps. By becoming an off-camp refugee, Syrians showed the ability to mobile. So, strict control in the camps were overcome through sponsorships or illegal ways to get off camp. Over the years, the Jordanian government adapted its refugee policies – on response to the large refugee influxes, with the impact of curbing refugee movements. Therefore, the options to be mobile – to move within cities, to leave Jordan for searching better living conditions or to take up employment, or to move up the social ladder – has been increasingly diminished. Syrians now face immobilities through daily life: the possibilities to commute between places in Jordan or to consider a next move are restrained and their

freedom of movement is systematically limited. This specific theme did not solely have its focus on describing Syrian refugee journeys, additionally, how Syrians represent their journeys those journeys was examined as well. Their refugee journeys were often framed as an (ongoing) downward spiral since their journeys from Syria to Jordan has triggered a process of downward mobility. As a result, daily life is a confrontation with a harsh reality characterized by immobilities and downgrading on the social ladder. The circumstances continuously undermine Syrian's agency to use (cross-border) mobility as a livelihood strategy, to rebuild lives and to take matters into one's own hands.

EXPERIENCES

As elucidated by Creswell: mobility is embodied and experienced and so are Syrian refugee journeys. As explained in the result chapter, each journey is experienced in highly different ways; where some Syrians possessed the ability and resources or had luck to travel by plane to Jordan or experienced travelling to Jordan as normalcy - others experienced their journey as a journey marked by fear and danger or experienced they were taking a risk with every move. The experiences of their journeys added up to the experiences of the war – the reason to flee at all. Throughout Syrian refugee journeys, specific movements have been indicated as having high impact and being meaningful, such as leaving one's house, crossing the Syrian-Jordanian border, transfer to the camps and the (in)ability to settle in Jordan's urban areas. Above all, especially those harmful experiences that reminded Syrians of the loss of, or the separation from, friends and family members has an enormous impact. Experiences is not to be perceived isolated from both mobility and identity. In almost every case, the experiences resulted in decreased mobility. One of the respondents alluded to immobility caused by fear for another transfer to one of the camps as punishment or warning for taking up illegal employment. Especially the Syrians that already had experiences such a transfer to the camps were afraid to move about. Only a limited number of Syrians perceived new opportunities opened up as a result of their journeys: *"Your movement can create or limit your options"* (Interview 24). It was easier for him to decide to study in Europe since he was not living in his own country anymore. The experiences can hamper or make way for one's mobility. Experiences also sets in motion identity transformations, which will be discussed below.

IDENTITY

This theme 'identity' has focused on the identity transformations as a consequence of forcibly displacement resulting in living a refugee life. *"I did not know what it would mean to be a refugee until I became one myself."* This is just one of the quotes reminding me of the limited ability to understand the situation of Syrian refugees. Yet, Syrians gave me some insight in the transition from being regarded as a citizen into a refugee. Living a life as refugee includes forms of downgrading: Syrian refugees have less rights, have to deal with the inability to find a lawful job, are being seen as a minority and it definitely impacted the treatment by Jordanian 'brothers and sisters'. Especially because of this process of downgrading – or put differently, moving down the social ladder - Syrians discard this representation of refugees, and prefer to be seen as guests, visitors, brothers/sisters or just as Syrians. In particular, when their refugee status did not grant them humanitarian assistance. So, the movements of Syrians across the borders have not only set in motion this process of becoming a refugee, it rather impacted their identity in many other ways. Not being able to buy candies for the kids impacted their identity as a parent. By not being able to provide enough food for the family, Syrians do not meet their own expectations of being a good head of the households. Or without the resources to visit friends or family scattered over Jordan, they may not fulfill their role as friends as they wished to be. So, their identity changed in many ways. Only a few indicated their movements to Jordan had increased their strength, the majority of Syrians highlighted how their movements – and especially the impact of those movements – has transformed their identity in negative ways.

SYRIAN LIVES ON HOLD

The fixed hope on the opportunity to go back to Syria, meanwhile dealing with disappointment in the impediments that hampers Syrians to restart living, transforms their stay in Jordan into waiting time. The opportunity for Syrians to rebuild their own country remains remote, all the more so, the opportunity to rebuild their own lives. Interventions from both humanitarian actors as well as the host government put constraints on the freedom for refugees – such as barring refugees to work or entering urban areas. So, while feeling far from home without opportunities to successfully assimilate into another society, Jordan is only seen “as a temporary strategy pending their return to Syria” (Achilli, 2016).

As this research provided insight in refugee mobility as a meaningful process, it has examined refugee mobility looking at it from the viewpoint of refugees themselves. To listen to refugee narratives, I gained more understanding of what it means to endure the harsh daily realities from living in a country at war, to fleeing and settling in a country in which you are structurally undermined. As said at the very beginning of this research, refugee influxes are currently debated in terms of threats: they pose a threat to our security, our constructed national identities or our economies. Within those debates, its point of reference are the products of state-centered organisation of power (Cresswell, 2010). In contrast to this discourse, this research aims to concentrate on the stories of ordinary people. I sincerely hope not only researchers will research refugee mobility from this perspective, even more, I hope policy makers show willingness to better understand the situation of Syrian refugees.

By looking at the Syrian crisis and settlement in Jordan from a refugee point of view, I hope officers responsible will not bypass the dire situations of Syrians paying the costs of the Syrian conflict. I sincerely hope more efforts will be made to provide better living conditions – such as education for Syrian children and teenagers or legal employment - to prevent lost generations and lives put on hold, insofar as possible. If so, Jordan can still be a temporary strategy pending their return to Syria, however, in the meantime Syrians can start over to remake their lives.

AT THE APEX OF HOPELESSNESS

This thesis cannot be read without noticing the myriad of terms such as ‘dashing hope’, ‘no prospect for the future’ and ‘hopelessness’. I also struggled with the refugee situations imbued with hopelessness and desperation. Listening carefully to manifold narratives was, over and over again, a confrontation with my easy and safe life in the Netherlands and my privileged situation in Jordan. For example, I could rebook my flight back home at any time. Whenever the security situation in Jordan – or the region – would deteriorate, I had conducted enough interviews for my thesis, I would simply be fed up with living in Jordan for a few months or I missed my family and friends excessively I could take the plan and alter my place of residency back to Holland. This situation is in such a contrast with Syrians longing to reunite with family members scattered over the region, wishing to go home or looking forward to see their mobility increased. It is not in my power to change their situation. The only thing I could during my time in Jordan was to give some advice on NGO or UNHCR procedures and carefully listen to narratives to make Syrians feel like humans or to give some food or money. Now I can only spread their refugee stories, so more Dutch people will be given insight in the desperate situation of Syrians living in Jordan.

RESTORE NORMALITY

Last November (2016) I joined a conference, organized by Spark, on Instability, Radicalisation and Forced Migration. Paul Collier, professor of economics and public policy, argued how, in the current refugee system, refugees are being treated as passive victims and dependent recipients of aid. The current system enforces refugees to put their lives on hold, while actually, refugees would like to restore normality - as much as possible (Collier, 2016). Part of this normality means taking up autonomy and earn a living. Refugees should not be cornered in dependent positions in which it leaves them no other choice than just waiting until going back home will become reality (Collier, 2016). I totally agree with Paul Collier on this point and I think about the numerous examples of Syrians showing power and resilience; people that did not want to rely on UNHCR but wanted to provide in their own livelihoods, an old woman that was selling pickles at home to provide their family with income plus regaining some dignity, Syrian barbers who were willing to take the risk of getting caught by the police, so at least they could feed their children. At last, it reminds me of a Syrian woman that muddled her way through – every day again – taking care of three disabled sisters, with her three sisters never saying thanks. So many stories remind me of the resilience and the power of Syrians, but still this power is being limited by the refugee systems.

Whenever I felt hopeless about the Syrian refugee situation myself, I read the poem written by Coot van Doesburgh which is included at the very beginning of this thesis. This poem – imbued with hope - was the cover page for my folder with research notes. I sincerely hope the dreams of so many Syrians to go back home will come true and even more Syrians dare to have dreams again, while sorrows will gradually vanish. Until then, I hope Syrians will be offered more opportunities to restore normality and by doing so the post-conflict economy is partly incubated.

It is not my intention to exaggerate the hopelessness of Syrian refugee narratives or to portray Syrians only as poor and pathetic people. Or to emasculate and bring down Syrian refugees. No, not at all. I have experienced the capacity and the agency of people to take care of one's life again. Nevertheless, doing fieldwork in Jordan allowed me to understand how little opportunities Syrians are given to take up autonomy. The freedom to make a living themselves is continuously being impeded which often leads to hopelessness and despair. So, the contextual factors undermine Syrian's agency and willingness to rebuild lives.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

As said before, I hope this research has been successful in its attempt to gain a better understanding of Syrian refugee mobility. Although, this research dissertation, withal, has its limitations. Therefore, I would suggest two research recommendations, concerning the time frame of conducting interviews and the range of topics included. In addition, this thesis provided valuable insights into the implications of refugee management policies on Syrian refugees temporarily settled in Jordan. I would suggest a recommendation towards refugee management policy.

CHANGES OVER TIME

The research dissertation manages to address how Syrian refugee mobility encompass not only physical movements from Syria to a new place of (temporary) residency in Jordan. Refugee journeys also entail a variety of social processes, such as the transition from citizen into a refugee, experiences stressful, life events that have changed point of views, crossing the border that marks the change of living in a war zone into a safe country etcetera. For Syrian refugees, looking back on a refugee journey after the first month of settlement in Jordan, will probably not be the same when it is placed in the larger perspective of residing in Jordan for over 5 years (BRON). Sense-making of refugee journeys changes over time. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study at different time intervals to gain insight in how time will put the meaningful process of refugee journeys into another perspective or add up other dynamics to the mobility process. Especially when Syria remains mired in war and voluntary repatriation remains or integration in Jordan is not allowed; how would this change Syrian refugee mobility? Or as far as I have heard, the Jordanian government is opening up specific sectors of its labour market, such as agriculture, services, construction and industries (BRON so Syrians to become legally employed. This processes of issuing work permits for Syrians could make a difference in how settlement in Jordan is being experienced. Do Jordanians accept Syrians becoming employed and would it change the treatment of Syrian refugees by the host population? Further research could cover these dynamics.

FOCUS FOR MORE IN-DEPTH INSIGHT

The second recommendation concerns the scope of this research. This research has been focusing on a wide variety of aspects of refugee journeys, such as fleeing inside Syria, border crossing, refugee camps and settlement in Jordan. A broad range of topics have been included, however, topics could only be touched upon. A narrower focus on one or a small number of aspects would give more in-depth insight and would allow conceptualising specific issues.

One of the aspects that would be interesting to further examine is mobility as an exclusively social process. Refugee trajectories are not isolated and it is formed in interactions with other peoples' journeys. In this research, though, the interviews have been conducted with individual respondents and exceptionally a daughter or partner was present too. Nevertheless, conducting interviews among both the husband and wife, or father and son, or other close relatives and friends would add another perspective to the same life story. It would be riveting to better map this extensive social process and to approach mobility as a social system.

ALLOW SYRIANS TO BUILD UP A DIGNIFIED LIFE

This thesis concludes with a specific suggestion for refugee management policies. Syrians had the notion that settlement in Jordan would only last for a couple of week or months, until one year at the latest. This notion was retained by Syrian refugees for a long time. With time passing by, Syrians were confronted with an ongoing war in Syria and the option to return to their home country remains remote. At the beginning of their temporary residency in Jordan, Syrians made use of their resources additionaly to aid

from UNHCR, NGOs and the Jordanian government. With this development over time, Syrians faced their savings being deployed and started to yearn for citizenship and settlement. In contrary to this hope, a great number of narrative accounts illustrate how they feel dejected for this desire has not been (fully) fulfilled. Real options for building up a successful and satisfactory life, which requires conditions such as work permits, human rights and an equal treatment remains unforeseen. Feelings of hopelessness, sadness and anger become overwhelming when no work permits are granted. People feel trapped and living in Jordan feels like a prison, making everyday life into a confrontation with living a refugee life. In such manner, a disconnection is experienced between their lives as Syrians citizens in Syria and Syrian refugees in Jordan. It is strenuous and unrealizable for so many Syrian refugees to successfully integrate in Jordan's society. It is a fairly compelling and unfortunate conclusion that Syrian refugees only hope to go back to Syria: not only to be back home again, but also to be dignified citizen having little prospect for the future. I hope the Jordanian government as well as UNCHR and NGO's who are responsible for refugee management in Jordan, acknowledge the dire need for solutions and prospects for Syrians. I would recommend the Jordanian government – without underestimating the importance of local labour market and national security - to move away from refugee policies forcing Syrian refugees to be dependent on aid, sitting at home, without a hopeful perspective for the future - while the majority wishes to become part of the host economy by taking up employment and provide for their own livelihood. I hope shifts in refugee policies will enable Syrian refugee to build up their lives again instead of living in a limbo, or as one of the respondents described poignantly:

"I feel lost and I can describe it as a person who is sitting in a swing that goes back and forth and I do not know where it is going to take my next. I am lost between either going back to Syria and risking the lives of my children. I do not care about my own life."

Interview 7 – Zarqa - Woman

I hope Syrians refugee agency will not be structurally undermined by refugee management agencies such as governments, NGOs and UN agencies. I hope their policies will change in such a way that Syrians are being tapped into their potential, by taking up employment and continuation of educational careers. In this way, Syrians are allowed to truly build up dignified lives. And as Paul Collier (Collier & Bets, 2017) has said before, if, at one day, it is time to resettle back to Syria, their lives have not been on hold, but they will be powerful citizens to reconstruct Syria and their own lives. Once Syrians feel home again, I hope they will recover from becoming a refugee once.

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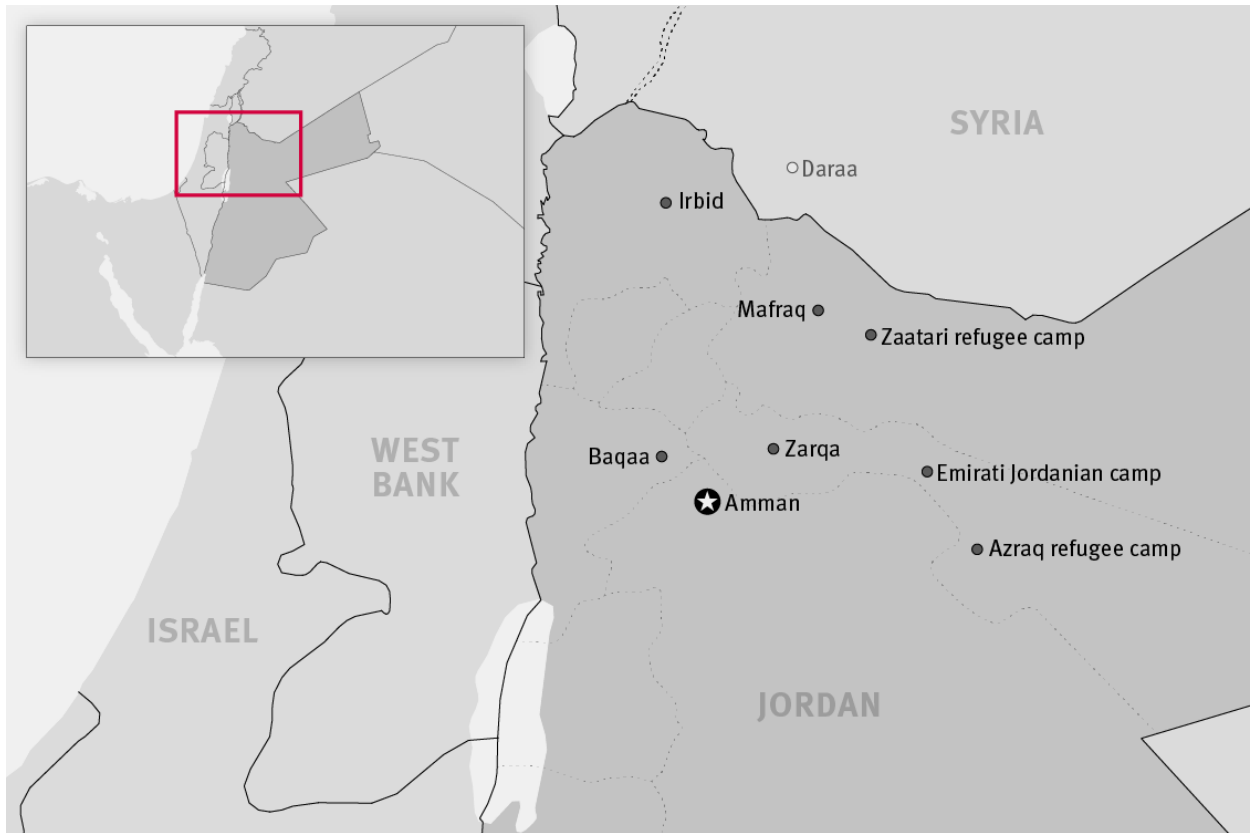
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ANNEX A: MAP OF JORDAN



Map of Jordan (Van Esveld, 2016)

ANNEX B: TOPIC LIST | INTERVIEWS SYRIAN REFUGEES

The following topic list was used, covering the topics of both Jip Bekkers and me. The topic list was a guidance in the interviews, but was not strictly followed as presented below, as it was also dependent on interesting topics that respondents came up with themselves.

1. OPENING

- Introduce ourselves
- Purpose of our research + managing expectations
- Recorder (consent would need to be signed for voice recording too)
- Confidentiality (stating that the information provided will only be used for your research and that names will not be published)
- Discuss ground rules ('comfort the interviewee')

2. BACKGROUND

- Can you tell us a little bit about your life back in Syria before the war?
 - Where and with whom did you live?
 - How did your home look like? (e.g. tent, informal, formal, house)
 - What kind of job did you have? Was this an informal or a formal job?
 - Did you make enough money to have a happy life?
 - What were the difficulties/problems that you were facing before the war? (e.g. financial, education, living conditions)
 - Can you tell me something about your biggest dream before the war? How would it look like? (e.g. in terms of education, dream job, family, house, kids).
- Did you already have pre-existing networks before the war started?
 - Did you already know - Jordanians or Syrians in Jordan - before the war started? (Related to families or businesses) Did you (frequently) cross the Syrian-Jordanian border before the war?
 - Did you already have contacts with people in the countries surrounding Syria before the war started?
 - Have you kept in contact with these people during the war?
 - Did these pre-existing contacts help you in any way?
- What was your role in the community in Syria before the war?
 - Did you have an active role in the community back in Syria?
 - For which things would people in your community ask your help? (family, friends, neighbours)
 - How could you help them? (e.g. talents, contacts, money, listening, advising)
 - Did your role in the community change when war broke out?
 - Do you still keep in contact with the people from your community?

3. INITIAL MOVE (USE MAP OF SYRIA - ASK THEM TO DRAW THEIR TRAJECTORY, IF POSSIBLE).

- When did you decide to move? Why did you decide to move? Did you first move to another place inside Syria?
- Was there a certain incident which caused you to leave?
- Which things did you need to leave behind to undertake this journey?
- Have you planned your move at forehand? Did you receive any help?
- How was it for you to leave your home behind?
- When you fled to Jordan, did you think it would only last for a few weeks/months?
- When close family members or friends fled the country before you did, how was it for you to stay behind?

4. JOURNEY ITSELF

- How did you organise your journey? Did you receive help from others? Even if you only had one hour to prepare: what did you do?
- How long did your first journey take? Did you travel further or is this your first place of destination?
- Where did you cross the border between Jordan and Syria? How was it to cross the border?
- Did you run into any obstacles at the border?
- Have you run into obstacles in Jordan? (e.g. government restrictions, borders, money issues)
- What did you expect of living in Jordan? (E.g. treated as brothers & sisters).
- Were there any restrictions in your movements? (think of money, lack of relations)
- What made you decide to go here (current place of residence)?
- Why did you decide to go to a camp/urban area? Do you have the feeling that this is a permanent choice or could you move between camps/urban areas?
- If you look back at your journey, which (personal) capacities/resources helped you during your journeys? (e.g. money, network, information, talents)
- Which moment on this journey will you never forget, or was most important for you? What was most life-shaping?
- When you look back at this trajectory, what was the most difficult situation to face or to deal with? When you look back, what would you do differently in your trajectory if you would be in a similar situation again?
- How did you experience your movement? What is most applicable to your movements: very scared/threatening/relieved to leave the bombings behind/other?
- Do you have family members that are still living in Syria, or in other countries?
- Do you share issues or experiences of your trajectory with family members or friends? If so, where do you talk about? Do you now talk about it differently compared to when you just experienced the movements?

5. CURRENT DESTINATION

- Can you tell us a bit about your current living situation in Jordan?
 - Where and with whom do you live at this moment?
 - How does your house look like? (apartment, villa, informal, formal, house)
 - How are the living conditions? Do you face any difficulties?
 - Do you have a job? What kind of job are you doing? (e.g. formal, informal, seasonal, voluntary, paid, unpaid, sector).
 - How do you deal with the restriction to work?
 - Do you receive any help from NGOs/UNHCR?
 - How do you feel at the moment? (Angry, tired, hopeful, happy to be safe, exhausted)
- Which things do you like/dislike about the place you are living now?
- Could you tell us why you decided to stay at this place? (e.g. network, kinship ties, money, etc).
- Do you feel like you can access all necessary things to foresee in your livelihood? Which things do you miss? (e.g. education, health care, work). How will you try to get these things?
- If you have any problems, for example with your house, who do you turn to?
- What is your role in the community here in Jordan?
 - Do you know many Syrians/Jordanians? Do you consider them to be your friends?
 - How are these contacts able to help you? (e.g. offer informal settlement, provide you with food, money, contacts, a car?)
 - Are you able to help fellow Syrians or Jordanian people? If so, in which sense? (e.g. money, contacts, facilities).
 - Do you join activities in this community?
 - How do these activities help you?

- What is your legal status granted by the UNHCR? Do you think this status helps you?
- How would you portray yourself: as a refugee, a guest, a victim, as brave, a Jordanian, etc? Has this image of yourself changed over the last few years?
- How is for you to experience the difference from being considered a Syrian civilian and currently labelled as a refugee?
- Do you feel like you can always leave this place? Or have you ever felt stuck?
- Looking back on your move, what was the most important thing to influence your decision to go to this specific place? (e.g. money, friends, family, etc.)
- When you look back on your trajectory, do you see it as a life-changing experience? Has it changed your expectations of life, or changed your identity? Is it an essential element of your life?

6. FUTURE PLANS

- What are your plans for the future?
- Are you planning on moving further (to Europe or another city)/staying or move back to Syria? (if the answer is no, why not?)
- What are your reasons for this planned move?
- What do you expect if you move further to Europe? What do you expect if you decide to move to another city? What do you expect if you move back to Syria?
 - What would you need if you wanted to move to another city or another country? Which of these things are you lacking?
 - Would you consider returning to Syria? At which point would you decide to return?
 - Do you have the feeling that you have the control over your own movement? If not, who does?

7. WRAP UP

- Can we return to have another conversation?
- Would you be interested in another conversation with us?
- Now it is your turn to ask questions
- Do you have something to add?
- Thank you very much.
- Give little present.

ANNEX C: CODING SCHEME

I considered two different approaches for conducting the data analysis: an analysis based on chronological time frames, or based on the themes Mobility, Experiences and Identity. At first, I coded the data chronologically, however, in consultation with my thesis supervisor the result chapter would be written based on the three themes. Therefore, a new coding scheme was established, focusing on the three themes. However, taking these themes as outline proved to be problematic in structuring the theses. At the end, the result chapter has been written chronologically. As a matter of fact, I made use of the two different coding schemes. The first scheme is the coding scheme based on time frames and the second illustrates the coding scheme based on the three themes.

FIRST CODING SCHEME: CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1. LIFE IN SYRIA – BEFORE THE WAR	
▪ Important background information	
▪ Satisfaction life in Syria	
▪ Dreams	
▪ Mobility	
2. LIFE IN SYRIA – DURING THE WAR	
▪ Changing community	
▪ Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Movements of others ▪ Forced to flee ▪ Reason to flee ▪ Movements within Syria
▪ Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaningful moments ▪ Leaving your house behind
3. JOURNEY FROM SYRIA TO JORDAN	
▪ Essential experiences during the journeys	
▪ Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes in mobility ▪ Fragmented mobility ▪ Deportation to the camps
▪ Cross-border mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaning of the border
▪ Meaningful moments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most difficult situation
▪ Expectations	
4. CURRENT LIVING CONDITIONS IN JORDAN	
▪ Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Movements within Jordan ▪ Immobility
▪ Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perception of themselves ▪ Changes in view on life ▪ Identity transformation
▪ Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (Perceived) treatment in Jordan
▪ Insecurity	
▪ Politics – power geometry	

5. FUTURE	
▪ Accept or reject living in Jordan	
▪ Dreams	
▪ Expectations	
▪ Mobility as a continuum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling stuck or mobility ▪ Movements of others ▪ Possibilities
▪ Going back to Syria	
6. EMOTIONS	
▪ Fear	
▪ Anger	
▪ Relief	
▪ Happiness	
▪ Safety	
▪ Threatened	
▪ Sadness	

SECOND CODING SCHEME: THEMES

1. IDENTITY	
▪ Impact on the journey	▪ Gender ▪ Nationality
▪ Perceptions of themselves	▪ Definition refugee ▪ Group identity
▪ Life-changing meaning of displacement	▪ Personality ▪ View on life
2. EXPERIENCIES	
▪ Essential experiences	▪ Syria - Changing community - Leave their house behind ▪ Journey ▪ Jordan
▪ Meaningful moments	▪ Most difficult situation
3. MOBILITY	
▪ Cross-border mobility	▪ Fragmented journeys ▪ Meaning of the border
▪ Immobility	▪ Changes in mobility ▪ Deportation to the camps ▪ Feeling stuck or mobile ▪ Leaving others behind
▪ Mobility	▪ Future mobility - Dreams - Expectations - Options - Going back to Syria ▪ Movements - Mobility before the war - Movements within Syria - Movements within Jordan - Movements of others

ANNEX D: DESCRIPTIONS INTERVIEWS

In this annex, you can find a very brief summary of each interview including a few personal details of the respondents. Names of the respondents have been omitted to secure their safety and anonymity.

INTERVIEW 1

DESCRIPTION

- Man
- 32 years old
- From Dara'a to Amman
- Fled in September 2013

This man was the owner of a Syrian restaurant in Dara'a. It was a successful restaurant and he almost started to work in his new restaurant. He never thought of leaving his city: *"It was like paradise. I did not think that I would ever visit a more beautiful place than my city"*. His mother, wife and kids left to Jordan before he did. It was difficult to not live together with them, so after 4 months he fled to Jordan as well. In Jordan, he did not live as a refugee and was still proud to be Syrian. During the 3 years he has spent in Jordan he was committed to helping Syrians still living in Syria by sending money and food buckets. Currently, his family is being resettled to Canada.

INTERVIEW 2

DESCRIPTION

- Man
- Mid-thirties
- From Aleppo to Amman
- Fled in 2013

In Syria, he was working in the music business as a drummer and producer. He decided to flee Syria for the sake of his kids: *"I didn't want them to grow up there."* Their journey was notably fragmented: he first went back and forth to Lebanon to find work. Later they went to Latakia for 15 days, and he was looking for a job in Damascus. He couldn't find an established job and he knew he had to leave Syria. After one day in Za'atari he has been smuggled out. His journey came to a halt in Amman. He is now working illegally, but he is not scared: *"There is a lot of police around here, but if someone sees them coming there are immediately phone calls everywhere."*

INTERVIEW 3

DESCRIPTION

- Man
- Mid-forties
- From Damascus to Amman
- Fled in 2012

We had this interview in a Barbershop to Amman. He was very scared for Jordanian authorities and was continuously vigilant whether it was safe for him. In Damascus he was running his own barbershop. At one day, one of his best friends was kidnapped in his shop. They kidnapped him for a few days and asked a lot of money. This situation was a sign for him that it would only become worse. He didn't take anything with him because he thought that they would come back. He took a taxi from Damascus to Beirut. His stay in Beirut only lasted for 2 hours, before his flight to Jordan departed. Because of his legal border crossing he didn't need to go to Za'atari. Although he doesn't face any discrimination because he is Syrian, his kids do experience it at school. Thinking about the future is everyday business, however, he perceives it in a way that his life is on hold now. It feels like being trapped, without any future at all.

INTERVIEW 4

DESCRIPTION

- Mother with 2 kids
- Early-thirties
- From Hama to Zarqa
- Fled in April 2012

In Syria she lived together with her husband, son and in-laws. They didn't make a living anymore and therefore they took a bus to the Jordanian border. She found it very difficult to leave the border because not everyone would be permitted to enter. She arrived without her loved family members and belongings and without any hope of seeing them again. It was only by chance that they moved to Zarqa. Life in Zarqa is tough: everything is very expensive and she *"cannot leave the house because everything she goes somewhere she needs to pay everything she has, either for transportation or for groceries."* She doesn't feel at home, because she is not surrounded by family members.

INTERVIEW 5**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother and small daughter
- Late-thirties
- From Aleppo to Zarqa
- Fled on May 22nd, 2013

She lived in Aleppo, together with her husband who was a farmer. Through the mosque, the revolutionists would warn that a battle would begin in a short period of time. So everybody did evacuate, except the woman and her kids. Suddenly everything got destroyed, except her house. Once she left the house was attacked immediately. First, they fled to a lot of places inside Syria. But every place got attacked by IS, the rebels or the regime, although she did not really know which side attacked them. Once she crossed the border she felt so relieved: they were fed, they were given clothes and they don't face any discrimination: *"I am feeling more at home than I did in Syria."* Sharing her story felt like a heavy burden falling off her shoulders.

INTERVIEW 6**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- Late-twenties
- From Damascus to Zarqa
- Fled in 2013

She used to live in Damascus together with her mum and two brothers. She studied agricultural engineering, but she didn't work in this field. She had a shop in which she sold clothes for women and children, but sadly enough the regime destroyed it. Once Damascus was sieged and they suffered from famine it was time to leave. She left her mother and brothers behind when she went to Turkey. After 7 months she was reunited with them when she came to Jordan by plane. She went to Turkey so she wouldn't have to go to Za'atari when she would enter Jordan by plane. She was afraid for rape incidents close to the Jordanian border, sexual harassments and bad living conditions in the camp. The only restriction she is facing in Jordan is not being able to work, because she "is not considered a refugee but a seeker of refuge".

INTERVIEW 7**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- Mid-twenties
- From Damascus to Zarqa
- Fled in June 2012

She used to live in the middle of Damascus in a beautiful house and they were financially comfortable. She studied Arabic literature. During the war she felt unsafe because she heard explosions and her husbands' shop was attacked. They went to Zarqa because it was close to the border. She was hopeful that they would soon be able to go back to Syria. 7 months ago, her husband decided to pay a visit to Syria for his father's funeral and now he is not allowed back in. Now *"she is lost between either going back to Syria and risking the lives of her children"*.

INTERVIEW 8**DESCRIPTION**

- UNCHR officer Za'atari
- Mid-thirties

In Za'atari refugee camp I spoke to a UNHCR officer. In this interview he took the lead and he didn't want to share controversial data. He definitely was convinced that Syrian refugees were better off residing in one of the camps than in the urban areas. We discussed the facilities inside the camp, the formal leave passage system, the 'bail-out' system and the reverse migration from the urban areas to the refugee camps in Jordan. The UNHCR doesn't support the return to Syria, but it is facilitated by the Jordanian government.

INTERVIEW 9**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman and sister-in-law
- 40 years old
- Za'atari
- Fled early 2016

She used to live on a farm in Syria. She was a single woman, which made it more difficult for her both during the war as well as in the camps. After crossing the border, she was brought to Azraq, but after 2,5 months her brother arranged paperwork so she could be reunified with her family in Za'atari.

INTERVIEW 10 DESCRIPTION

- Woman and 2 kids
- Around 40 years old
- From Dara'a to Za'atari

It was only a very short conversation with a woman that was sitting next to her small shop. They made a living by farming. She is very willing to stay in Za'atari and is content with the living conditions. It is a better life than life in Syria during the war. Sometimes she will visit her sister in Irbid.

INTERVIEW 11 DESCRIPTION

- Family: parents and 6 kids
- Around 40 years old
- From Dara'a to Za'atari
- Fled in 2013

The father was the owner of a plastic factory, however, it was completely bombed and destroyed. When a bomb at school injured their daughter they decided to leave Syria and they ended up in Za'atari. They first lived in a tent, but luckily they could buy a caravan once it started snowing. The living conditions in the camp are very difficult and they hope to get resettled to the US: *"we hope to live a nice life in the US, even better than in Syria."*

INTERVIEW 12 DESCRIPTION

- Security officers
- Emirates camp

After we entered Emirates refugee camp we first had to speak with a few security officers. They gave us some more background information about the refugees residing in this camp: only families that are all together or female-headed households are allowed to live here. People can easily go in and out the camp if they follow the official procedures. According to one of the officers, applications for permits are never refused. Only 6700 refugees have found refuge in this camp, although it is easy to extend because it is located in the desert. They really take care of the refugees living here, and it is also called a 5-star refugee camp: *"everything is provided for them. They enjoy their life here"*. They were very picky in which information they shared with us and they often replied with: *"No answer"*.

INTERVIEW 13 DESCRIPTION

- Husband & wife
- In their fifties
- From Dara'a to Emirates camp
- Fled on the 4th of May 2013

During this interview one of the security officers joined us and kept a close watch on the interviewees and us. The man liked everything about Syria: it was a very nice and peaceful live, until the war started. The man suffered from psychological distress and they had to get out of Syria. Their journey was easy and they didn't face any problems. They first lived in Za'atari for 5 months before they could reunite with his sister in this camp. In Emirates *"everything is provided, the only thing we miss is our own Syrian home."*

INTERVIEW 14 DESCRIPTION

- Husband & wife
- In their sixties
- From Damascus to Emirates camp
- Fled during the summer of 2013

A security officer joined this interview. The man was married to 2 wives, but the other wife was yet in Syria with all their kids. In 2012 they fled from Damascus to Quneitra – a city close to the Israeli border. After 1 year it was not safe anymore and they travelled to Jordan. They could easily cross the border because his wife needed medical treatment. After one month in Za'atari they were reunited with their son in Emirates refugee camp. Unfortunately, they were separated again, since their son illegally went to Germany. Even though they never leave the camp it doesn't feel like a prison and they don't feel stuck.

INTERVIEW 15 **DESCRIPTION**

- Mother & daughter
- In her fifties
- From Damascus to Azraq camp
- Fled in early 2016

A police officer was sitting in the tent as well and made some notes so he could facilitate more aid for this family. In the first month of the war her husband died of a heart attack. During the war all her brothers-in-law left Syria before she did. Eventually, her brothers-in-law convinced her to come to Jordan. It took her 25 days waiting at the border before they were brought to Azraq. Living in Azraq is characterized by dismal living conditions and she is only thinking about going home.

INTERVIEW 16 **DESCRIPTION**

- Mother & daughter
- From Dara'a to Azraq camp
- Fled in Aug 2014

And again the police officer guided us to this interview. The husband was arrested by the regime but escaped the prison. Their houses in Dara'a got destroyed and his life was not save anymore so they fled. They could easily cross the border by reason of their sick daughter. They really would like to get out of the camp, but the sponsorships have been stopped.

INTERVIEW 17 **DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- In her fifties
- From Damascus to Amman
- Fled on the 3rd of November 2012

It was an interview with the mother of our Syrian translator. She used to live around Damascus. Sometimes she faced financial difficulties. Before the war, two of her children left to Denmark, one went to Austria and another one is in Belgium. She only lived with her youngest daughter. In 2012 they went to the Danish Embassy in Lebanon to go to their family, but it didn't work out. So they prepared to go to Jordan. At that time it was really easy to come here and they could directly go to Irbid, but they did not like it so they now rent an apartment in Amman. She is dependent on the money she receives from her kids. Recently she went back to Syria for a month to visit her sister.

INTERVIEW 18 **DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- Late-twenties
- From Damascus to Amman
- Fled on the 3rd of November 2012

This woman was also one of our translators, but first, she shared her story with us. She was raised by a Syrian mother and Palestinian father and has lived her life in Syria before she fled. She grew up in a camp, but her father was really bad so her mother decided to live apart with her kids. She didn't feel like a real Syrian or Palestinian and even now she is in Jordan, she doesn't feel like a Jordanian. She wouldn't consider herself to be a refugee: she is not Syrian and she doesn't have a connection with the country. Before they fled to Jordan, she paid a visit to Jordan but she did not like it. But back in Syria they didn't have another option. Now they are living in a nice apartment in Amman. She is having a job as a private teacher and she is married to a Jordanian man. Her life is good now and: *"it is my dream now to live in a very beautiful house in a very quiet area."*

INTERVIEW 19 **DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- Mid-forties
- From Aleppo to Zarqa
- She doesn't know when she fled

She lived in Aleppo and worked as a farmer. Her husband had weak eyes, so she was the only one who could work. Life was okay, but not really good. They lived in one room together with her 8 kids. At that time she did not have any dreams: *"it was hopeless"*. For over a year she fled inside Syria. She went from place to place in the hope that the war would stop. They spend over 20 days waiting at the border and there they were poisoned by food from the rebels. Because they were really sick they were given entrance to Jordan. After 2 months they sneaked out of Za'atari. Even though she is sponsored she is still very afraid of being sent back to the camp so she doesn't leave the house.

INTERVIEW 20**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman + sister-in-law and child
- 21 years old
- From Damascus to Zarqa
- Fled in 2012

She lived in the rural areas of Damascus. She took courses in nursing, but she stopped when she was getting married – at the age of 17. Financially her life was good, but she wasn't at good terms with her husband. That is why in Jordan they got divorced. Because there was no plane going from Damascus to Amman they first went to Beirut and it was an easy journey. She thought that she would go back in 2 or 3 months, but now it has been 4 years already. Now she is doing fine; she is remarried, has another child and has a house to live in.

INTERVIEW 21**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman with baby
- 32 years old
- From Aleppo to Zarqa
- Fled on the 5th of May 2014

"We were living a good life in a very big house", is what she told us. Since 2000 her husband came to the south of Jordan to tile floors. Their neighbours' house got hit in an attack and their neighbours were all dead, so they were making plans to leave. Within their family they were the first once to leave which was a difficult decision. Because of her husbands' job he had built up a network before they came here and it was very helpful – friends in Tafila had an empty apartment where they could live. The community was really nice to them, until a Syrian murdered a Jordanian. At that point they had to leave the city and went to Zarqa. She considers herself a refugee because *"basically I don't have any rights here."*

INTERVIEW 22**DESCRIPTION**

- Young lady and sister-in-law
- 17 & 20
- From Dara'a to Zarqa
- Fled in 2013

She lived in a huge house together with her in-laws. She quit school when she got married at 14. She would describe her life as *"almost perfect"*. The problems started to come with the beginning of the war: 4 of her brothers were arrested. Two of them were announced dead and the other two are unknown. Her father was persistent to stay in Dara'a, no matter what happened. They thought that it would calm down. Her father is still in Dara'a and he was really sad of ever leaving, but now that they are here he asks them when they will come back. In Jordan they were first brought to Emirates Refugee Camp and even though it was a top-quality camp they didn't want to live in a refugee situation and moved to Zarqa. They have a big house in Zarqa, but the continuous discrimination of their neighbours is painful. They only wish that one day they can go home.

INTERVIEW 23**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- 38 years old
- From Aleppo to Zarqa
- Fled at the end of 2013

When we started to explain the topics that we would discuss she started crying: *"Would you remind me of the horrors in Syria?"*. She lived with her husband and her 8 children as farmers in rural Aleppo. In the summer it was fine, but during winter it was hard to make ends meet. She didn't have any friends, anywhere in the world. Due to the war, they encountered starvation and they left. Following the water stream is what they did, until eventually Jordan was reached. *"We were brought to Za'atari and just like everybody else they left"*. Life in Zarqa is marked by independence on aid from NGO's and private donations.

INTERVIEW 24**DESCRIPTION**

- Young guy
- 20 years old
- From El Hrak to Amman
- Fled on the 23rd of November 2012

He lived in a villa close to Dara'a called El Hrak. His mother owned her own pharmacy and his father worked as a doctor. *"Life was really easy and comfortable."* He dreamt about an IT or programming master. In 2012, his father was arrested for 57 days because his uncle used to be in the army but ran away to Jordan. The entire family was in danger. Having a lot of connections helped him to get out of prison. They moved to another house in Dara'a and every 2 or 3 weeks they had to switch houses.

He was 14 years old when he was involved in translating documents linked to the demonstrations. From November 2012 and onwards, actors with guns were getting involved in the war. Therefore, they left the country. They stayed in a very big and nice house, but his father was not allowed to work. In June 2015 his family left to Dubai because his father got a job as a doctor, but he is still in Amman for his study.

INTERVIEW 25

DESCRIPTION

- Woman
- 23 years old
- From Homs to Zarqa
- Fled in June 2013

She lived in a village in the outskirts of Homs. She was a farmer and her husband a carpenter. It brought a smile on her face when she was telling about her dream to live in a big house with her husband. Her husband was building one, but it was not yet finished when the war erupted. She left her village against her will. Her husband told her to do. He could not join because he couldn't pass the roadblocks. 2 months later he came to Jordan by smuggling. Her brother-in-law helped her to get out of Za'atari by taking IDs with him of his Jordanian neighbour who looked similar to them. What caused a lot of anxiety was her husband's journey. The road to the gate was called death road. She didn't hear anything from him for over a week. She was started to get emotionally and physically really tired. Her husband gave her phone number to the policeman who let him in and he let her know that he arrived safely.

INTERVIEW 26

DESCRIPTION

- Woman
- 23 years old
- From Aleppo to Zarqa
- Fled in 2013

Before the war, her husband was working in Jordan for 10 years, where he had a variety of jobs. When the war happened and he wanted to go to Syria for a visit he could not easily go back to Jordan so that is why he stayed in Jordan. Her in-laws went to Lebanon and she joined them and her uncle joined her on the 3-month journey to Jordan. It took so long because at the border they were told, for many times, that they should go back. She and her uncle were very persistent in trying to cross the border. One of the contacts of her husband sponsored her, so they could leave Za'atari. Overall, she feels very lonely now compared to her life in Syria.

INTERVIEW 27

DESCRIPTION

- Woman
- 28 years old
- From Homs to Zarqa
- Fled in April 2014

She used to live with her parents in Homs. 1 day after the war started she got divorced. She only finished 6th grade until she got married and became a housewife. She was always looking for opportunities to live in a private home, away from her in-laws. Her mother and fathers (who are cousins) are still in Syria, but she fled to Jordan with her 3 disabled sisters because their conditions did not allow them to run to a safe house during an attack. When they faced checkpoints she lied by saying that her sisters would receive medical treatment in Damascus and they let them pass. Her sisters now keep nagging her to go back and they are blaming her for taking them away from their parents.

INTERVIEW 28

DESCRIPTION

- Woman
- 32 years old
- From Homs to Zarqa
- Fled in 2012 & 2014

She is from Homs, where she lived a stable life. She has built her house with her husband during 15 years of marriage. When the project of building the house was finally finished they had to leave it. Her husband worked in Aleppo and was only at home during the weekends. During the war he was not at home to protect them. Her neighbours, who were her best friends, were hit by a rocket and "*turned into chop meat*". That is why she left to Jordan with her kids. Her husband stayed in Syria because he thought that we would not pass the checkpoints. She only stayed in Jordan for 8 months and went back to Homs. Her husband blamed her for doing so: "*You know what, this is your responsibility. If anything will happen to the kids, it is your fault.*" Living in Syria was unbearable and they decided to flee to Jordan, but life in Jordan is hard too. Her husband has been arrested once while working illegally.

INTERVIEW 29**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- 24 years old
- From Aleppo to Zarqa
- Fled in June 2013

She lived in rural Aleppo with her husband who was a farmer. They lived in a 1-room apartment. Their village was being attacked constantly so they left. They were the first ones who left the village. It was very difficult but she didn't have a choice. The most difficult thing to do was to leave her parents behind, but happily, they followed them later. Crossing the border was a moment full of fear. One of the policemen told her her ID was not authentic so he had to send her back. Well, that was not true but he was joking with her. They arrived at Za'atari and the next morning they were smuggled to Zarqa. She is not facing that many difficulties here in Zarqa. She sees herself as a refugee because they are strangers in this country.

INTERVIEW 30**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- Mid-fifties
- From Homs to Amman
- Fled in 2013

We met this lady in the area of the Syrian Embassy. Living in Syria was like a paradise to her. Because of the war her house in Homs was destroyed, she was really afraid for raping incidents and they did not feel safe anymore. That is why they left. They were almost the last ones who left. Yarmouk camp in Damascus was their first stop on their journey for a 9-months settlement. The bombing of the mosque in Yarmouk made them decide to leave Syria. They stayed at the border for about 3 months, which was really hard: no food or water and a lot of scorpions and rats. Now they are living in Al Hussein Camp in Amman. She feels really hopeless and there is nothing she can do to change the situation.

INTERVIEW 31**DESCRIPTION**

- Man
- 32 years old
- From Dara'a to Amman
- Fled in September 2013

This was the second interview with the man met during 'interview 1'. As mentioned in the description of interview 1, it was his plan to be resettled to Canada. In this conversation he told us that it was only to wait on the final confirmation that their tickets have been booked. Within 10 days they have to be ready to leave so they were already preparing a lot. Although it is a nice opportunity, it is also unknown. He will miss Amman, miss downtown, and miss the people here. He speaks English but he is worried about his mother, wife and sister who only speak Arabic. The kids are really forward to their departure to Canada. He also adds more about his story of their journey: *"At first I didn't agree that people left Syria. Then I saw the bombings myself, then I agreed."* It was his idea to go to Jordan for 2 or 3 weeks, but in the end it would be impossible to live in Syria much longer.

INTERVIEW 32**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- 40 years old
- From Damascus to Amman
- Fled in June 2013

Living in Damascus was very beautiful especially because her husband was still alive. She liked the nature: rivers and mountains surrounded her village. No words could describe its beauty. Being a generous person was a shared value in her village but during the war it became much harder to think about others when they had barely enough for their own family. Her husband was working in the construction sector, but became one of the fighters during the war and that was also the reason why he died in 2013. The worries over her kids started to be overwhelming and because her kids had a Jordanian nationality she sought safety in Jordan. *"I didn't say goodbye to her brothers since they would not let me go."* She is experiencing more freedom in Jordan: now she doesn't care about others and is allowed to work, but still here mind is always in Syria, with her relatives.

INTERVIEW 33**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother with 4 daughters
- 43, 23, 21, 17 and 15 years old
- From a village close to Damascus to Amman
- Fled in 2013

'A luxury life' pops up in their mind when they look back on their life in Syria: *"we had a car, used to go to parks and had a very big house."* Although the war was raging on for some time already, leaving Syria was no option. Until their neighbourhood was under siege and a bomb hit their brother's house it was time to leave. Because they have the Jordanian nationality it was easy for them to cross the border. They knew that living in Amman would provide them with more job opportunities and that is why they decided to settle in Amman. One of the difficulties faced in Jordan is the mean treatment by the Jordanian people. They make them feel that they are different. They all dream about going to Europe to find their beloved husband and continue studying. Going back to Syria is not on their mind *"because it would be unsafe. It would not be any better."*

INTERVIEW 34**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother + grandma and 5 kids
- 37 years old
- From rural Damascus to Amman
- Fled in June 2013

It was June 2013, when Samar and her kids came to Jordan. Her husband was already in Jordan to sell Syrian nuts. He could not go back to Syria anymore because a report said that he took part in demonstrations against the regime. It was better for his wife and their kids to come Jordan, so they did. However, he was not able to sell the nuts anymore and it started to become very difficult to find a job in Jordan. The government did not give him a work permit and as time passes, the emotions were running high: *"Jordanians always make higher prices for Syrians. Even though that we went from Syria and that we have nothing, people didn't bring us any clothes. People treat us in a very bad way"*. 2 years ago, her husband decided that they could not live this life any longer and illegally fled to Sweden. It was an extremely dangerous journey and along the way he has seen many miserable events. Although he now has a residency permit, it takes more than 2 years already to arrange the family reunification. In the meantime, Samar and her kids are living in limbo and their lives are on hold. Her kids are not going to school, *"because they are not thinking about settling here."*

INTERVIEW 35**DESCRIPTION**

- Syrian family: father, mother and 2 kids
- Mid-forties
- From Damascus to King Hussein Camp in Amman
- Fled in 2013

"Life in Syria was beautiful, almost perfect. Everything was affordable for everyone, from rich to poor. Everything was cheap." He worked in the Syrian military, but during the war he did not want to pick a side. It was dangerous for him from both sides. He decided to leave the army, but he told them he would go on vacation with the intention to go back to Damascus when things would become better. He went to Homs for 5 months, but it was only becoming worse, which forced his family to leave Syria as well. He has lost all hope of going back to Syria and he is definitely not willing to stay in Jordan: *"I am not able to blend in here. Everything is too expensive and education is bad and my eldest son cannot continue his study because he needs to help me to earn money"* And he adds the following, strikingly quote about living in Jordan: *"Life here is like basic food: it is just what you need, but you want more."*

INTERVIEW 36**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother & daughter
- 49 and 24 years old
- From Dara'a to Zarqa
- Fled in 2012

Her life Dara'a was fine, but had a very little income. She had multiple jobs as well. In Dara'a, expressions of religion were not allowed: her husband was not allowed to pray during office hours. They would only express their religious beliefs in secret. During the war you would be cut from water and electricity if you practised religion. She has lost everything: her house, one of her sons because of an attack and her health. She was so afraid for the random arrestments, kidnapping and raping. Especially since her husband was tortured by the regime for a few days, by putting a

chair on his back and sit on it for hours, she didn't feel safe and they left Syria. In Jordan it makes her really helpless that she can't work or communicate with her home country.

INTERVIEW 37

DESCRIPTION

- Young woman and sister-in-law
- 17 and 20 years old
- From Damascus to Zarqa

Living in Damascus was *"really safe, really comfortable and we had a lot of freedom and our houses were very big."* The war has gradually changed their community from bad to worse, but there was nothing in their power they could do about it. They both didn't want to leave their house and country, but they knew they were too young to die. One of the ladies was engaged in Syria and her fiancée left Syria before she did. She was afraid that anything would happen or that he had to serve mandatory in the army. There was no time left to share info on their lives in Zarqa.

INTERVIEW 38

DESCRIPTION

- Man
- 38 years old
- From a village close Damascus to Irbid
- Fled on the 2nd of June 2013

His job was to sell Syrian nuts in Lebanon & Jordan and he reflects on his life as not very good, not very bad. The biggest problem he faces was to live with his entire family in one big house: *"Because the women in the house were fighting together. He was looking to comfort his head from fighting."* So after the bombings became more intense, and with that the weeping of the kids, they left Syria. They didn't go to Lebanon because it is much more expensive and Syrians are not treated well. While he was working illegally in Jordan, the police caught him and he was sent back to Azraq with his family. In the end, his family made it to move back to Irbid, after staying in Azraq camp for 3 months. Right now, he is extremely worried to get out of the house and without any other options he is thinking about going back to Syria.

INTERVIEW 39

DESCRIPTION

- Syrian family (8 members)
- From Dara'a to Irbid
- Fled in September 2012

In Syria they were living a happy life: they had a house, a car and an own place for carpeting. *"It was beautiful in all its meaning. Before the war, if I would like to have a glass of tea in Damascus, I would go with my wife even it was very late. I used to ride bicycle with my wife. I am not conservative"* The war made an end to this peaceful life when he was arrested in May 2011 and May 2012. In September 2012 he was released and he saw 35 bombs a day. At that moment he decided to flee. They journey was fragmented where they were brought to Za'atari. They only stayed there for a few days until by accident they ran into a friend who was making papers for Jordanian sponsors. Now they are living in Irbid. Having a work permit would make their life much easier. They feel very weak now.

INTERVIEW 40

DESCRIPTION

- Young man
- 26 years old
- From the countryside of Damascus to Irbid
- Fled in 2012

'If you would give a mark to his life back in Syria, what would it be?' An 8 out of 10: *"I did not have all the perfect things, that is why it is not 10. But still I lived in good conditions: we had a big house, with a garden, a fountain and a farm"*. This peaceful life came to an end when he was forced to do military service because he turned 18. As soon as he finished his military service, he went to Jordan. Although the war had not yet spread to Damascus, he had this feeling that it would spread all over the country. At that time, the border was still open and it was just a regular crossing. This journey was uncomplicated for him. He didn't expect his stay in Jordan would last for more than 5 years and that is what makes him really sad. He is now living in a house that belongs to his village: it was a kind of hotel for guys that travelled back and forth from the village to Jordan to work. The Jordanian people knew him before so he is treated very well.

INTERVIEW 41**DESCRIPTION**

- Man
- 32 years old
- From Busra to Zarqa
- Fled in November 2012

Hussein is 32 years and is now living in Zarqa, but he was born in Busra, in the South of Syria. He has studied English literature in Damascus. Every two weeks he went back to Busra to play cards with his friends and to see his family. When he was graduated in 2009 he had two options: either joining the military service or looking for a job abroad. Although he went to Kuwait and tried to get a residency permit – where his father had a job – it did not succeed and therefore he went back to Syria. He was obliged to join the military, so he did until he finished his service in June 2012 but it was not really complicated yet. However, their life in Busra had changed dramatically in the last few years: it started to become really hard to be part of the Sunni minority in Busra and they lost 2 brothers because of arrestments and shootings. That is why his family decided to leave Syria and move to Jordan. After an intensive journey to Jordan they ended up in Za’atari where settlement was no option at all: *“We didn’t want to get used to it”*. He is now working as a translation and is enrolled in several projects. He doesn’t have the ambition anymore to go to lots of places.

INTERVIEW 42**DESCRIPTION**

- Man
- 44 years old
- From Dara’a to Irbid
- Fled on the 27th of July 2012

Another man came together with the man we had an interview with, however after making clear that we couldn’t help him he left. This man was having a wide variety of jobs and it resulted in a stable and safe life, but not rich. His family consisted of 2 adults and 8 kids and they were all living in a one-room house. He used to go to Lebanon for small jobs and visited Jordan twice. *“The border itself was not an obstacle for me. They border guards was really nice to me, but this was before the war.”* *“As a Syrian I have seen man bad things before and during the war, but this was not the reason that I left. Two months after the war started I got arrested. I was tortured in prison. I wanted to come to Jordan alone, without my wife and kids, but they refused to let me go alone. Then I started thinking that it would not end, so we all came together”*. Although he is really glad that they are safe now they are living in Jordan it will always be less great than living in Syria.

INTERVIEW 43**DESCRIPTION**

- Husband & wife
- 35 years old
- From Dara’a to Irbid
- Unknown when they fled

The man was raised in a very democratic clan, and that is why his father – who was very liberal and democratic – was put in prison for 11 years. Their mother raised the kids on her own until one day: *‘There was a knock on the door. I opened the door and my father stood there. He was released but he was not allowed to teach anymore. He cared about talking about the freedom of Syrian citizen more than he cared about his own freedom.’* The reason that they came to Jordan was the mass arrestments of young man and women. Fear was running their lives. After crossing the border they went to Za’atari: *“When we arrived in Za’atari it was horrible. I could not imagine myself living there. I didn’t want to stay there for one minute.”* His brother was already in Irbid and helped him out. The most difficult situation of their journey is their financial situation because they are always struggling.

INTERVIEW 44**DESCRIPTION**

- Husband & Wife
- 30 & 35 years old
- From Dara'a to Balila
- Fled at the end of 2012 or the beginning of 2013.

"Our life was excellent because we owned a house and had 2 cars instead of 1. I worked in communications and I even had a diploma for communications. But our life now is literally hell for me", was the answer when asked for background information. The day that they decided to leave was the day that 150 rockets landed on their village: *"There were bodies and arms all over the streets. I cannot stop thinking about it. That is why we left."* Because her husband has been arrested 2 times, he was wanted and leaving to another safe city was no option anymore. Their 45-minutes journey wasn't complicated at all and after the border crossing they were transferred to Za'atari and within the same day they were helped out. The customs of the people in Balila are similar to Southern Syria so they don't face any problems but they look forward to be resettled to the US. That is the place where they can finally built up their lives again.

INTERVIEW 45**DESCRIPTION**

- Husband & wife & 1 kid
- 26, 20 and 1 year old
- From Dara'a to Irbid
- Fled at the end of 2012

Living a medium quality life is how they describe their life in Syria. They were very much neglected by the government and all they could dream of was a better income. They were not the first ones to leave the community. It gradually changed over time: *"The village was small, 100 percent of the people knew each other. It changed because a lot of people fled. At the same time, it changed because a lot of people took the empty houses and lived in them. We did not know the people anymore."* During one of the attacks, her sister died. Her mother decided to leave. Now they are living together in Jordan, where they met each other, but living in Jordan is not a happy life: *"I miss Syria, my neighbourhood, friends, family. I left everybody behind, I miss being surrounded by friends and family."*

INTERVIEW 46**DESCRIPTION**

- Man
- Mid-forties
- From Dara'a to Irbid
- Fled in October 2012

"When you live in Syria you always needed to have connections with powerful people in order to make your life easier and to get a job or an income, which he didn't." Still, as long as they didn't offend the regime they had a good and easy life. He was having a speaking disorder, because a rocket hit him and caused him a brain stroke. At that time, he was still receiving treatment in the hospital when his family already found safety in Jordan. At the border they said that they came as guests, to visit her sister and that was to avoid being brought to Za'atari first. Their situation now is bad, but they are not complaining. She is working at home and tries to sell some sweets and pickles. Some of the problems that he is facing is that his young children ask for toys or candies, but he cannot give it to them: *"I am always trying to tell them: not today, maybe tomorrow. It is really difficult to lie and not bring them what they want."*

INTERVIEW 47**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- 49 years old
- From Dara'a to Irbid
- Fled on the 16th of April 2013

"I come from Dara'a. We had a really nice life with my husband and children. In 2012, my son of 17 was coming home from school and was shot in the head. The same day there were many explosions surrounding our house and my whole house fell down. One of my children who was 5 years old at that time had to be dug out of the ground because he was buried under the house. Luckily he was alive." The horrible stories continue throughout this interview: she was coming to Jordan as a family, but her husband changed his mind at the border and went back to Syria. After 15 days in Jordan my son went back to his father in Syria, and later on, he told her on the phone that her husband re-married another woman. She has zero hope for life now. She lost everything.

INTERVIEW 48**DESCRIPTION**

- Syrian family (mother, father + 4 sons)
- 41 years old
- From Homs to Irbid

Back in Syria, the father worked as a wall painter. Sometimes he couldn't find a job, but they could borrow some money from friends and family. They were dreaming of buying a bigger house than the 2-bedroom house they had. Where she has a personality in which she says everything without being afraid, he is the quiet guy. Within Homs they moved 6 times in order to live with nice neighbours. When their house was destroyed they decided to flee to Damascus for a one-year stay where they could live in an empty house of a rich family. Now they are torn between fear of being sent back to one of the camps or not having enough money to feed their kids. They don't feel welcome in Jordan and they miss their lives in Syria.

INTERVIEW 49**DESCRIPTION**

- Husband & wife
- 56 & 48 years old
- From Damascus to Irbid
- Fled on the 15th of January 2013

Describing his life back in Syria was a difficult exercise for this man, since it reminded him of his very luxurious and perfect life: *"I owned a very big house with a very big swimming pool. I had a lot of businesses: I had a carwash, a furniture shop, a bakery and a small farm."* His wife's background is in sharp contrast to his; her father was killed during the Hamaa massacre against the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982. She had to watch how they killed her father. After this massacre they found home in Damascus where she got engaged to her husband at the age of 14. At the time that one of their children reached the mandatory age to serve in the army they packed and left. So many things in his life are gone, *"my only asset is his brain. I am a very smart man; I have knowledge of everything"* is what he told us. Although he is very keen to bring some project alive, he is very much restricted by the Jordanian government and not allowed to work.

INTERVIEW 50**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother with 2 kids
- 38, 17 and 1 year old
- From Aleppo to Mafraq
- Fled in 2012

Before the civil war started to shape the life of this Syrian family, Jordan was often visited by her husband to sell the products that they were farming on their own land. They never had to buy anything but could eat their own cheese, milk, eggs and wheat. Everything was provided. When their area was attacked they fled immediately. They had connections in Jordan and heard that the Jordanian people would better treat them than the Lebanese. That is why they fled all the way from the north of Syria to Jordan. She was very scared and when they finally crossed the border of after days of walking, but in the end, Jordanians provided them with shelter, so it meant safety for her. Everything is very expensive for her and that makes her intense stressed and aggressive.

INTERVIEW 51**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother with daughter
- 42 and 9 years old
- From Aleppo to Mafraq
- Unknown when she fled Syria

This family was very poor in Syria and her husband used to come to Jordan as a daily worker. Two of her daughters married at the age of 18 because she was not able to support them anymore. Raping incidents and a lot of attacks made their life very insecure. It was not a hard decision to choose which country to flee to: *"My husband liked Jordan as a country and we consider ourselves as the same people. Jordan and Syria are like the same people. We have very similar accents and the same religion."* Along her entire journey, the only moment she felt safe was when they reached the Jordanian border. All her dreams faded away. All her dreams are death. She is only thinking about putting food on the table for my children. It meant a lot to her that we had this conversation. We made her feel human and that was really huge to her.

INTERVIEW 52**DESCRIPTION**

- Two ladies
- Mid-fifties
- From Homs to Mafraq
- Fled in 2014 and late 2013

These two ladies were from the same clan in rural Homs, in which they were both housewives. Their husbands were having several jobs as a freelancer. They both haven't seen their husbands since one day they left the house but did not return: killed or arrested by the government is what they think of as the reason for their disappearance. Life during the war changed a lot and dealing with insecurity was the most important aspect of the day and leaving the city was the only option suitable for them. Although they were first brought to Za'atari it felt almost like freedom compared to Syria. They did not accompany each other on their journeys from village to village, however – without any phone or number after three months these ladies bumped into each other. The biggest obstacles faced in Jordan are the rent that has to be paid every month and the sadness over family members that are still in Syria.

INTERVIEW 53**DESCRIPTION**

- Young man
- 25 years old
- From Homs to Mafraq
- Fled on the 26th of April 2013

This young man was involved in studies and what just about to change from community college to university but then the war started. In 2012, Homs was in the middle of battles between rebels and the regime, so they moved to the rural areas and brought their parents there. He himself went back and forth from the city to the rural areas for over a year and at that time it was understood that it would not become safer. Entering Jordan brought him with mixed feelings for he was sad about leaving Syria but glad about his safety. He is now working at Terres des Hommes, but goals and dreams for the future are still uncertain: *"It was my dream to graduate from university, but now I am torn between the country and the university.*

INTERVIEW 54**DESCRIPTION**

- Mother with 2 kids
- 39, 8 and 9 years old
- From Homs to Mafraq
- Unknown when she fled

She was a poor family and lived in a 2-bedroom house in Homs, however even the poor were happy and at least they were alive. She really appreciated the safety and everybody tolerated each other. The war made it really difficult to find a job and earn a living. The incident, which made them flee, was the attack on their house by people they knew. They fled to Bedouins in the desert where her husband got a heatstroke and died. As a tradition, she was not supposed to leave the tent for 4 months and 20 days. After that period her brother took her and the kids to Jordan. After 1 night in Za'atari they were helped out of the camp. Ever since she is in Jordan as a widow she has much more responsibilities: *"I just have to change play two roles: a father and mother. I am a man on the inside."* It is big responsibility. For now, her biggest dream ever would be to buy a house.

INTERVIEW 55**DESCRIPTION**

- Woman
- 44 years old
- From Aleppo to Mafraq
- Fled on the 1st of January 2013

This lady is having 8 kids in the age range of 6-20. For 22 years her husband worked in Jordan and came back to Syria for a few days to bring and spend the money and to spend some time with the family. At that time, living in Jordan was not an option because of the expensive living conditions. *"It was like sleeping and dreaming a very nice dream and when she woke up she would face a harsh and sad reality"* is how she describes the conditions of the war. Going to Jordan since the war seemed a reasonable choice because of the job of her husband, however, all her brothers and sisters went to Turkey because it was closer to Aleppo. When her husband suggested her to go to Jordan she said: *"we will follow you to hell, but take us out of here!"* And indeed, Jordan sometimes feels like hell to her: it is not safe and it is an Arabic country but it will never be the country of your origin.

INTERVIEW 56**DESCRIPTION**

- 2 cousins
- 20 and 21 years old
- From rural Homs to Mafraq
- Fled in March 2014

Living in Homs was really easy for them: *“It was very safe and we had everything we ever would have needed.”* Their dreams were to have her father build her a very big house or to become a teacher or nurse. One of the ladies was just married when the demonstrations started to occur more often. At first, her husband was very nice and friendly but over time he became very aggressive and started a lot of fights with her. I started to avoid him. Her husband wanted to move to Jordan and she was supposed to follow, although the rest of her family is still in Syria. The other lady had family members in Syria as well, but they all died because of plane attacks. In Jordan they don't feel like strangers, because the Jordanian neighbours are very friendly.

INTERVIEW 57**DESCRIPTION**

- Owner of Books@Café
- Amman

It was an informal conversation with the owner of Books@Café. It is café where they hire all kinds of minorities: Syrians, Yemenis, Egyptians etc. The Syrians that work for him don't have a work permit. When someone from the government is in the streets or in the shop they will receive a call. All the illegal workers will hide somewhere in the building to protect themselves. However, they did not need to use this system for over 1 year since the ministry probably focuses on other issues. The Syrians in Jordan do have a lot of fear, however, this fear might be exaggerated. He himself is a Jordanian-Palestinian from Kuwait and gay, which makes him a minority himself.

INTERVIEW 58**DESCRIPTION**

- Dr Yaseen
- Amman

It was the intention to also have an interview with his Syrian employee, however, it was too much to ask from him and the fear was not bearable. The owner of this business is working with Syrian guys because they cannot find a job easily while they are really good workers: *“he tried to serve me more than my own wife”*. They are professionals and they serve you loyally unlike Jordanians. Although Syrians employees deal with a lot of fear, the employers don't face any risks.

INTERVIEW 59**DESCRIPTION**

- Dr. Ali from SRAD
- Syrian Refugee Assistance Directorate of the Jordanian government
- Amman

It took us a lot of effort before the meeting with Dr Ali was finally there. We had a very long list of questions concerning the work permits of Syrian refugees and in almost every case we got the reply: *“We do our best to encourage them to apply for a work permit, but the Syrians don't do that.”* We were told that Syrians will only be sent back to Syria (when caught while working illegally) if they don't accept to be brought to a camp or by violating the law in other ways. Ali told us that they have been working on campaigns to encourage Syrian to apply for a work permit: it is for free and the procedures aren't complicated. He couldn't believe that actually a lot of Syrians would like to have a work permit but don't know how to get it. When we explained that a lot of Syrians did not leave their house and were really afraid to be sent back, that was really ridiculous according to Ali. This whole interview was in sharp contrast with the information provided in interviews with Syrian refugees.