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REFUGEES FROM SYRIA CAUGHT BETWEEN WAR AND BORDERS: A JOURNEY TOWARDS PROTECTION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the global crisis of protection through the lens of the Syrian refugee crisis and the particular experiences of refugees' journeys to Sweden.

In doing so, the dissertation challenges the dominant narratives that represent refugees either as victims who deserve aid in their regions, or as threats when they exert their agency and journey towards the global north. In the same vein, the dissertation problematizes the dominant narrative of the "European crisis of migration" and proposes that the "unauthorized" arrivals of refugees in Europe are reflections of a global crisis of protection, a crisis that develops as a result of a failing protection regime and bordering practices against refugees from the global south. These practices are based to a large degree on government policies designed to contain refugees in their regions and deter them from reaching the states of the global north where they believe they can have better access to rights. The dissertation proposes that such practices do not deter desperate refugees from arriving in the global north, but rather increase the "human cost" (Spijkerboer, 2007) of their journeys by reducing the legal and safe pathways and forcing refugees into illegality and precarity.

The dissertation examines the journeys of refugees from Syria towards Sweden. These refugees escaped the war in their homeland, only to find themselves trapped between a failing protection regime and a global system of border controls. Those who decide to journey towards other destinations are transformed from being refugees, who deserve protection, into "irregular migrants", who are criminalized for challenging the regime of borders. Due to such precarity and illegality, refugees arrive at their intended destinations with a heavy load of pain, fear, and confusion, which influences their sense of identity and belonging and affects their ability to integrate into their new localities.

Informed by the knowledge of refugees and through their stories, the dissertation develops a conceptual framework of the refugee journey. It addresses the journey as an act of survival and resistance that is messy and complex and involves high degrees of agency but also precarity, which entails a transformative impact on a refugee's role, positionality, and identity.

The dissertation centralizes refugees as the prime source of knowledge and presents them as real individuals with various backgrounds and aspirations. It focuses on people's own experiences and stories which are often left out of policymaking, and absent from high-level discussions between government leaders, policymakers, and international organizations including the United Nations.

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 I dedicate this work to the memory of those refugees who lost their lives during their search for safety and a better future for themselves and their families. May your souls find peace in a better place!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS AND IMAGES

Introduction

وَنَحْنُ نُحِبُّ الحَيَاةَ إِذَا مَا اسْتَطَعْنَا إِلَيْهَا سَبِيلاً

وَنَرْقُصُ بَيْنَ شَهِيدْينِ نَرْفَعُ مِئْذَنَةً لِلْبَنَفْسَجِ بَيْنَهُمَا أَوْ نَخِيلاً

نُحِبُّ الحَيَاةَ إِذَا مَا اسْتَطَعْنَا إِلَيْهَا سَبِيلاً

وَنَسْرِقُ مِنْ دُودَةِ القَزِّ خَيْطاً لِنَبْني سَمَاءً لَنَا وَنُسَيِّجَ هَذَا الرَّحِيلاً

وَنَفْتَحُ بَابَ الحَدِيقَةِ كَيْ يَخْرُجَ اليَاسَمِينُ إِلَى الطُّرُقَاتِ نَهَاراً جَمِيلاً

نُحِبُّ الحَيَاةَ إِذَا مَا اسْتَطَعْنَا إِلَيْهَا سَبِيلاً

وَنَزْرَعُ حَيْثُ أَقَمْنَا نَبَاتاً سَرِيعَ النُّمُوِّ، وَنَحْصِدْ حَيْثُ أَقَمْنَا قَتِيلاً

وَنَنْفُخُ فِي النَّايِ لَوْنَ البَعِيدِ البَعِيدِ، وَنَرْسُمُ فَوْقَ تُرابِ المَمَرَّ صَهِيلاً

وَنَكْتُبُ أَسْمَاءَنَا حَجَراً 'أَيُّهَا البَرْقُ أَوْضِحْ لَنَا اللَّيْلَ' أَوْضِحْ قَلِيلاً

نُحِبُّ الحَيَاةَ إِذا مَا اسْتَطَعْنَا إِلَيْهَا سَبِيلا...

And we love life whenever we can… We dance and throw up a minaret or raise palm trees for the violets growing between two martyrs.

We love life whenever we can… We steal a thread from a silk-worm to weave a sky and a fence for our journey.

We open the garden gate for the jasmine to walk into the street as a beautiful day.

We love life whenever we can… Wherever we settle we grow fast-growing plants, wherever we settle we harvest a murdered man.

We blow into the flute the color of far away, of far away, we draw on the dust in the passage the neighing of a horse… And we write our names in the form of stones.

Lightning, brighten the night for us, brighten the night a little.
We love life whenever we can. (Mahmoud Darwish)

Research Overview

It was July 2012 when I heard my mother's broken voice over the phone, telling me about her escape with my father from our house in the Yarmouk neighbourhood of Damascus. My mother, who is in her mid-seventies, had been collecting the laundry from the balcony that morning when the fighting approached the house and forced her and my eighty-year-old father to leave. I could not stop my tears while listening to the details of their frantic rush from one street to another in Yarmouk until they found a car that took them to my brother's house in the west of Damascus. My mother ended the phone call weeping, "The house came under fire… We had to run away … We had to leave ... We became refugees."

As I was born and raised in Yarmouk, where I lived among Palestinian refugees and studied in UNRWA schools,[1] I have always been surrounded by stories of war, statelessness, displacement, and journeys, and yet also by resilience and agency. Through these stories, I learnt that refugeehood is an emotional and political state of being as well as a label or legal status. I was exposed constantly to the pain of loss and uprootedness in my daily interactions with my Palestinian neighbours and friends, and with my own family.

I was reminded of my mother's words of July 2012 and all the stories I had heard over the years about uprootedness while I watched the faces of exhausted men, women, and children arriving at Lesvos in overcrowded, inflatable boats. The images of these arrivals summarized the tears and broken voices of millions of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes in search of protection – unable to find it in their own regions. But it was one image – that of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was found washed up on the Turkish coast in

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[1] UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Neat East.

September 2015, as he and his family journeyed to Greece seeking asylum - that captured the world's attention, if only temporarily.

Despite the tragedies of these people and their need for protection, politicians and far-right representatives across Europe perceived the arrivals as constituting a "European crisis of migration" that needed to be managed and controlled (*BBC*, 2015; European Parliament, 2017). Some politicians referred to refugees as "others," who threatened the political, social, and cultural identity of Europe. These types of fear-mongers railed against the newcomers and what they perceived as the "open door" policies implemented temporarily by German Chancellor Angela Merkel during the summer and autumn of 2015. The British National Party, for example, accused Chancellor Merkel of committing "a genocide against Europeans" (*US News*, 2015), while British Home Secretary at the time, Theresa May announced her reluctance to assist the refugees, whom she considered "the ones who are strong and rich enough to come to Europe" (*Spiegel Online*, 2015). Certain eastern and central European governments explicitly challenged the European Union's (EU) relocation scheme for 160,000 refugees who were in Greece and Italy in 2015, a project that was advocated mainly by Germany. The Slovakian prime minister, Robert Fico, announced that his country would accept only Christian refugees (*New York Times*, 2015), and his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán, described the arrival of refugees as a "rebellion by illegal migrants" (ibid.). The Director of National Intelligence in the United States went so far as to term the situation in Europe "a disaster of biblical proportions" (*Fox News Politics*, 2015), questioning the background of refugees arriving from Syria and Iraq and linking them to possible future terrorist activities.

Informed by my personal knowledge of refugees' experiences during war and displacement, and inspired by stories I heard from refugees about their journeys in search of protection, in this dissertation I challenge this negative type of official narrative and argue rather that the arrivals of refugees along Europe's shores, as well as of the bodies of those who did not survive the journey, reflect in fact an underlying, structural crisis. This is a crisis of protection that is caused by the failure of the international refugee regime to protect refugees fleeing from war in their homelands, forcing them instead to experience sometimes extreme conditions of precarity as they seek refuge in other destiantions.

In this dissertation, I focus on people's own experiences and their stories, which are more often left out of the policy-making process and largely absent from high-level reports and discussions between government leaders, policy makers, and international organizations responding to the crisis. I propose that it is critical to examine the crisis of protection by listening to and understanding refugees' stories about their own experiences of fleeing war, encountering borders, and undertaking difficult, even tragic journeys in search of protection. By undertaking these journeys, refugees have refused to wait passively for borders to open and third-country resettlement to provide them with the promised protection from the international refugee system. Instead, refugees have made myriad decisions to improve their situation, sometimes making dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, thus engaging the world as political subjects.

By focusing on the journeys of refugees from Syria, this dissertation examines refugees' decisions to undertake such journeys as acts of survival and resistance, thus also resisting the dehumanizing conditions of displacement in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, and

Turkey and choosing instead to risk their lives by undertaking life-threatening journeys towards destinations in northern Europe, where they believe they can find protection and access to rights. It is against the background of the failure of the international refugee regime that this dissertation explores the journeys of these refugees so that we can grasp the untold impact the global crisis of protection has on refugees' lives and their future trajectories. The chapters of this dissertation aim to uncover the actual "human cost" (Spijkerboer, 2007) of the crisis by addressing the following questions:

- Why is this a "crisis of protection" and not a "crisis of migration"?
- How did this crisis develop despite the existence of the international refugee regime?
- How does the refugee journey reflect the "human cost" of this crisis, and what are the implications for the lives and choices of refugees? What are the conditions of the journey, and how do refugees create their own spaces and passages, and at what cost?

To answer these questions, I address the failure of the international refugee regime and the limitations of official policies of containment and deterrence. I illustrate how deterrence policies, imposed by several states of the global north, do not deter refugees but rather eliminate legal routes and safe pathways for them towards destinations such as Europe, where they may seek access to the structures of international protection. I reflect on the way refugees challenge these deterrence policies by deciding to leave and undertaking their escapes. In other words, I look in detail at the global crisis of protection through the lens of the Syrian refugee crisis and the individual experiences of refugees from Syria, including Palestinian refugees, in their search of protection.

Background and Context

The War in Syria

In mid-March 2011, peaceful protests against the regime started in Syria, which escalated within months into a devastating war. The protests were inspired by the wave of uprisings in the Middle East that began in Tunisia in December 2010 as an expression of the frustration of marginalized and oppressed people (Hinnebusch, 2015). Despite the differences that existed between socio-economic policies in Syria and those of other countries in the region, such as Tunisia and Egypt, in the early 2000s the Syrian government adopted neoliberal economic policies. Combined with chronic institutional corruption and severe political oppression, these policies exacerbated economic and social inequalities between Syrians. Economic development was centralized around the urban centers of Damascus and Aleppo, with little for large rural communities. These trends increased demographic pressures on major cities and created poverty and marginalization in their outskirts (Azmeh, 2016). When peaceful protests started in some of these neglected areas in March 2011, protestors demanded the overthrow of President Bashar Alassad and his oppressive regime, which has controlled the country with an iron fist since the early seventies, when the current president's father, Hafez Alassad, took power. The regime responded brutally to these protests. Government security forces attacked protesters with batons, and later with open gunfire. Thousands were detained and tortured, and dozens were killed, on the streets and inside the prisons, during the first few weeks of the protests (Human Rights Watch, 2012; International Crisis, 2011).[2]

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[2] In addition to the cited resources, this section is based also on my personal observations during my time in Damascus and during my work as a senior trade officer at the British embassy there.

Most of the protests in Syria in the spring of 2011 started in areas with Sunni Muslim majorities, which added a sectarian dimension to the uprising.[3] Protesters initially began their activities after Friday prayers at major mosques -- the only spaces where spontaneous public gatherings were allowed. The regime used this sectarian element to support its accusation that the protestors were extremists who threatened the country's national security and the safety of other minorities, such as Christians and Alawites. These government claims were reinforced by slogans and statements issued by some opposition leaders inside and outside the country, which targeted mainly Syria's Alawites, including the president and his family. The sectarian nature of the uprising was also exacerbated by the immediate sympathy and support the uprising received from several regional states, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, with close links to political Islamist groups (Hinnebusch, 2015). Many Western states announced their support for the uprisings in Syria. Foreign diplomats in Damascus, including the French, British, and American ambassadors, participated in public activities in support of the protesters, including Friday demonstrations and Saturday funeral visitations (Van Dam, 2017).

The protests expanded to other Syrian cities and towns, and the regime continued to respond brutally.[4] In less than six months, peaceful protests turned into armed clashes between the Syrian army and armed fighting groups, and the country was dragged into a destructive war (Fisk, Cockburn, and Sengupta, 2016). Since then, Syrians have been trapped between a ruthless regime struggling for its existence and a fragmented armed militia, controlled mainly by

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[3]The Assad family are Alawites, members of a sect that branched out from and broke with Shia Islam.
[4] Due to official restrictions on media and lack of independent resources in Syria, it was difficult to document the actual numbers of people killed and detained during the first months of the conflict. In its 2012 report on Syria, Human Rights Watch admitted such challenges and used (unidentified) local groups' estimates of deaths, which it documented at 3,500 as of 15 November 2011 (https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/syria).

extremists who are loyal to regional powers. This opposition force includes Islamic State fighters (ISIS), Al Nusra Front, affiliated with Al-Qaeda, and some Salafi-Jihadi militias with no clear structure or leadership. These groups have often fought with each other as well as against the regime. Groups such as Hezbollah, from Lebanon, which Iran supports, and the Kurdish militia, which aims for autonomy in northeastern Syria and has U.S. backing, are also active in this conflict. Countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates back various armed militias in their battles against the Syrian regime, which receives support from Iran and Russia (Perra, 2016). The United States, France, Britain, and a number of other countries became engaged in an international coalition against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. These interventions turned the Syrian conflict into a complex, vicious war, where multiple and opposing agendas have made any political settlement or attempts at de-escalation unattainable to date.

The war worsened throughout most of the country and turned major towns into rubble. Many parts of Syria have been destroyed, and large communities still remain beyond the reach of aid and are therefore experiencing acute shortages of basic supplies for survival, including food, water, and medicine. Millions of Syrians have found themselves trapped and forced to live under precarious conditions and subject to horrific atrocities, human rights violations, and severe forms of physical, economic, and political insecurities. As of February 2016, the war had killed in excess of half a million people, with more than 117,000 missing and believed to be either detained or kidnapped (Human Rights Watch, 2016a).

As a result, more than 12.6 million Syrians were forcibly displaced by the end of 2017 – over half of the country's population, which was estimated at 22 million before the war (UNHCR,

2018). Of this number, more than 5.6 million became refugees, seeking protection in neighbouring countries, including Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, where large numbers have continued to struggle, often under appalling conditions, and frequently without even the minimum standards of protection (ibid.). Because of these challenging circumstances, many of them have considered leaving the region for other destinations, primarily in Europe, in search of protection. In this dissertation, I examine the experiences of these refugees. I also focus on Palestinian refugees from Syria, who are uniquely vulnerable because they are stateless and hence excluded from the structures of international protection.

Palestinian Statelessness and Palestinian Refugees from Syria[5]

About half a million Palestinian refugees who lived in Syria when the conflict started in 2011 have been affected by the conflict (UNRWA, 2016a). Thousands of them have been forced to undertake journeys towards Europe to seek asylum and refuge, as I will discuss in this dissertation. Their statelessness subjects them to special consideration in some European countries, such as Sweden – for example, a shorter waiting period (four years, as opposed to the normal five) for receiving Swedish citizenship (Swedish Migration Agency, 2018). For many Palestinian refugees with whom I spoke, such factors influenced their choice of final destination of their journeys. Examining the situation of Palestinian refugees from Syria also can help us understand the situation of Syrian refugees in general, because Palestinians from Syria are excluded from the refugee regime. During their displacement in Syria's neighbouring countries,

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[5] This section is based on my article, "Relived vulnerabilities of Palestinian refugees: Governing through exclusion" published in *Social and Legal Studies (2018)*. See Almustafa, M. (2018). Relived vulnerabilities of Palestinian refugees: Governing through exclusion. *Social and Legal Studies*. 27(2): 164-179.

they are often treated differently from, or experience more precarious conditions than, Syrians. Yet, before discussing their journeys, we should understand why the structures of the refugee regime excluded them.

The enduring crisis of Palestinian refugeeness, which formally began with partition of their homeland in 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, exposes starkly the limitations of the global refugee regime and its failure to resolve their statelessness. This existential crisis illustrates the imposition of political and legal restrictions on a certain group of non-European refugees, thereby excluding them from the international refugee regime. This conundrum flowed directly from a refugee-resettlement program that sought to end the displacement of refugees in Europe after the Second World War ended in 1945. It is because of this connection that I examine how Palestinians became stateless, their exclusion from protection available to other refugees, and the impact of this exclusion on their lives and trajectories during the Syrian conflict.

The establishment of Israel in 1948, and the events of 1947 in Palestine, created a new wave of statelessness, forcibly displacing more than 750,000 Palestinians. At the time, this crisis was peripheral to the larger concern of resettling millions of European refugees. Arendt (1951: 290) addresses the link between resettling Jewish refugees in Palestine and making Palestinians stateless:

> After the Second World War it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved — namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory — but this solved neither the problem of minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people.

According to UN data, by the end of 1948, more than 726,000 Palestinians were displaced (UN, 2016a), or approximately 70 per cent of the total population. After its official establishment, Israel was determined to prevent them from returning to their homes and towns. Consequently, those who refused to leave were subject to systematic and institutional policies that aimed to erase any sense of a Palestinian nation (Piterberg, 2001). Israel has issued laws that dispossessed Palestinians of their land[6] and then institutionalized and normalized this situation through the ideological and political foundation of a radical denial of Palestinians' rights (Habib, 2011). This Israeli institutional rejection of their rights as a nation involved the systematic denial of Israeli responsibility towards the creation of Palestinian statelessness (Pappé, 1998) and a rejection of any international solutions that recognized them as refugees deserving of protection (Pappé, 2018; Piterberg, 2001). None the less the international community has since recognized Palestinians as deserving of humanitarian assistance.

Yet the involvement of the United Nations (UN) in the creation of Palestinian statelessness has helped prolong this crisis. Palestinian refugees have been subject to a special relief regime that cannot invoke refugees' usual protection by the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR) – or UN Refugee Agency -- and lacks the power to repatriate them. UN Resolution 194 (III) in 1948 called for a peaceful return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and compensation for those who did not want to return (UN, 2016a). The resolution led to formation of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) as the first

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[6] Israel implemented a set of policies and recommendations entitled Retroactive Transfer: A Scheme for the Solution of the Arab Question in the State of Israel. These policies provided the basis for Israel's systematic prevention practices. Akram (2011: 3) explains: "Among the measures recommended and implemented were destruction of Palestinian Arab population centers, settlement of Jews in Arab towns and villages, and the passage of legislation to prevent refugee return. Israel also passed a series of laws defining Palestinians who had been forcibly removed from their lands or had fled as 'absentees', and their land as 'absentee properties' which were then confiscated. Subsequent Israeli legislation converted vast amounts of confiscated Palestinian properties for the exclusive benefit of Jews, and prohibited restitution of such land to Palestinian Arabs in perpetuity."

step towards a separate regime of humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) emerged in December 1949 "to prevent conditions of starvation and distress … and to further conditions of peace and stability" (UNRWA, 2016b). UNRWA was responsible for carrying out direct relief and work programs for "Palestine refugees," including education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, and emergency assistance in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (UNRWA, 2016c). Thus UNRWA's mandate was operational and did not offer these refugees any legal status that would entitle them to international protection (Khalil, 2009). In other words, UNWRA could offer them humanitarian assistance but not legal protection. Its mandate was designed mainly to protect their social and economic rights, leaving protection of their physical security, human dignity, and human rights to the discretion of their host governments (ibid.). As a result, UNRWA became the sole international agency responsible for assisting them, yet there was no reference to any protection and no authority to facilitate their "right of return," as stipulated by UN Resolution 194 (III).

The 1951 Convention for the Status of Refugees became the founding document of an international regime for refugees but excluded Palestinians, who were subject to the mandate of UNRWA (see article 1D of the 1951 Convention). Accordingly, Palestinians were excluded from the mandate of the UNHCR as the main international agency responsible for coordinating the international protection for refugees, and the main UN agency that can facilitate the solution for their statelessness through the implementing of UN Resolution 194 (III). Stateless Palestinians, who were not represented during the Convention's drafting, were left with only UNRWA as the only relief agency operating in certain areas of the region but one which also had no protection

mandate. Their legal status therefore continues to be subject to the discretion of host states, resulting in various forms of politicization, discrimination, and social marginalization.

Thus, the exclusion of Palestinian refugees from the 1951 Convention and from the UNHCR mandate denied them access to the international refugee regime and its promise of protection and offered them no alternative sources of protection. The Convention's drafters did not distinguish between UNWRA's relief mandate -- mainly providing material assistance -- and the UNHCR's mandate -- protecting the safety, security, and human rights of refugees. Furthermore, Palestinian refugees' exclusion from the Convention and the UNHCR's aegis left them without any systematic route to repatriation under UN Resolution 194 (III). This lack of international support reinforces Israel's persistent rejection of their "right of return" and keeps them stateless. These factors have prevented any genuine attempt to end the statelessness and multiple displacements that Palestinians have suffered since 1948 (Habib, 2011; Pappé, 1998; Said, 2011).[7]

The impact of Palestinian refugees' exclusion has re-surfaced through their re-victimization during the current Syrian war. Palestinian refugees from Syria have been subject to often-unbearable displacement and may experience extreme vulnerability in the neighbouring countries where they have sought protection (UNRWA, 2014a). Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt have all systematically discriminated against, criminalized, and detained many of them (Human Rights Watch, 2014, and 2015). Hundreds were detained there and, in some cases, forcibly deported to Syrian war zones, which is a clear breach of the international principles of refugee protection (Amnesty International, 2014a; Human Rights Watch, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2013). As a result,

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[7] I focus on the events of 1948 because they directly affected the current status of Palestinian refugees from Syria whose experiences I explore.

thousands have been forced to consider resettlement in other destinations, with many favouring

northern Europe because of special considerations (as in Sweden) as I noted earlier.

It is worth noting that on their way to destinations in the global north Palestinian refugees lose

their unique characteristics as stateless individuals and join other desperate refugees who search

for protection beyond their regions. They are perceived by the global north as a part of one

homogeneous group of illegal migrants who challenge the border regime and need to be deterred

and controlled. This is why in this dissertation, I discuss the new displacement of Palestinian

refugees from Syria in the region separately as they are subject to particular forms of

discrimination (chapter three), but I do not distinguish between them and other refugees from

Syria when I study the details of their actual journeys to Europe (chapter four).

Theoretical Approaches and Concepts

To examine the experiences of refugees from Syria as they search for protection, I employ a

multidisciplinary approach. My inspiration has come from critical social science theory and

scholarly debates in political science, sociology, and anthropology that focus on refugees and

their encounters with bordering practices and failing protection policies (Habib, 2011; Ilcan,

2013; Johnson, 2014; Khousravi, 2011; Malkki, 1996; Mountz, 2015; Rygiel, 2011; Schuster,

2011; Squire, 2011; Stierl, 2016). I review scholarly work on the global governance of migration

and the international refugee regime and on policies and practices that have normalized certain

groups of refugees' exclusion from international protection. For example, I explore

governments' containment and deterrence policies and analyse how these – as well as offering

humanitarian assistance to refugees -- aim to keep them far from Europe. This body of

scholarship explains the emergence of conditions that have led to a global crisis of protection

that forces many desperate refugees to make frequently precarious journeys looking for protection and acceptance.

Inspired by Malkki's (1995) "ethnography of rejection," my work brings the stories of refugees to the fore and situates them at the center of my analyses. Malkki explains that refugees challenge the Foucauldian "national order of things" and the "categorical order" rooted in the contemporary power structures of the nation-state. Within such structures, refugees are perceived as "anomalies," "a threat to national securities," and "an attack on the categorical order of nations." They are classified as "no longer, not yet," struggling through an imposed status of irregularity and "a systematic invisibility" (Malkki, 1995: 7). My work is also informed by Edkins's (2011) argument about the significance of voices. Edkins demonstrates how, in the aftermath of the Second World War, displaced persons ('DPs') were treated "as bare life – life with no political voice – lives to be saved, nothing more" (2011: 195). This order was challenged "when people at DP camps made their voices heard" (ibid.). Building on Malkki's and Edkins's theses, I argue that refugees' stories are significant because they challenge their invisibility in official narratives and I present their stories as alternative sources of knowledge about their own predicaments.

In her work on borders and asylum, Heather Johnson (2014) proposes engaging with unauthorized voices and making them heard. Inspired by her arguments, I position refugees from Syria as the prime source of knowledge about their own journeys and about the crisis of protection more generally. By doing so I hope to challenge policy formation based on representations of refugees that assume their "abstract nakedness" (Malkki 1995: 12), rather than seeing them as real people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations. I harness

here the principles of standpoint theory, as Sandra Harding (1993: 63) explains: "Marginal lives

ground knowledge for standpoint approaches." Marginalized people's experiences, she maintains

(1993: 54), offer "a source of objectivity-maximizing questions" for research and scholarship.

Harding confirms that answers for such questions exist in policies and control practices against

these people:

> The activities of those at the bottom of such social hierarchies can provide
> starting points for thought -- for everyone's research and scholarship -- from
> which humans' relations with each other and the natural world can become
> visible. This is because the experience and lives of marginalized peoples, as
> they understand them, provide particularly significant problems to be
> explained or research agendas. These experiences and lives have been
> devalued or ignored as a source of objectivity-maximizing questions -- the
> answers to which are not necessarily to be found in those experiences or lives
> but elsewhere in the beliefs and activities of people at the center who make
> policies and engage in social practices that shape marginal lives.

This explanation relates to my work, which centralizes refugees as the prime source of

knowledge about the crisis of protection, a knowledge which official narratives often ignore. By

using refugees' own stories, I reveal how policies and practices of governing them affect their

lives and decisions. In so doing, I aim to encourage scholars, policy makers, and the public to

adopt more humane and inclusive frameworks of protection and acceptance of refugees.

Emphasizing this 'positionality' of refugees also challenges the dominant "methodological

Europeanism," which places Europe at the centre of migration analysis and sees it as "the

blueprint for migration epistemology" (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013: 247). This positionality is also

informed by scholarly debates that aim to challenge and correct the state-centric perspective of

mainstream migration scholarship, which focuses on states' perspectives on governing categories

of people, numbers, flows, and policies. I refer here to Jasmin Habib's (2018: 187) call for

shifting our engagement with old nationalist political frameworks:

> Given the dangers as we already know them, debates and actions about migration should no longer be made on grounds that assume the legitimacy of nation-state arrangements. That is, nationalist arrangements must not be taken as the parameters for those debates. If anything new is to come in response to the new old fascist nationalist political ecologies, it is that the very bases on which we can meaningfully resist and engage must shift.

By using refugees' stories, I hope also to challenge the dominant narratives about refugees, which portray them either as victims, or as criminals, when they exert their agency through their "unauthorized" crossing of borders. Both types of narrative serve to support containment and deterrence policies that many states in the global north impose against refugees from the south. By victimizing refugees, states aim to contain them in their regions and provide them with humanitarian aid from a distance, but subject those who dare to cross borders to deterrence and border control. Centralizing refugees' stories as the prime source of knowledge about the journey and the crisis of protection undermines both 'victim' and 'criminal' narratives by providing alternative account about refugees' experiences, decisions, and aspirations. The stories present them as real people who act politically while they experience often extreme precarity. This approach relies on several theoretical concepts and terms – refugees, agency, precarity, crisis, borders, and journey -- that I now outline.

Refugees: According to the UNHCR (2017: 56), the term "refugees" refers to "individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, individuals granted complementary forms of protection, and those enjoying temporary protection. The refugee population also includes people in refugee-like situations." Unlike the

category "refugee," "asylum seekers" refers to "individuals who have sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined" (ibid.).

In this dissertation, I choose to use the term "refugee" in a broader sense, in effect to cover both categories. I focus on individuals' need for protection rather than on their legal status and therefore use "refugee" for individuals needing protection, including both asylum seekers and officially recognized refugees. Both categories are subject to the same containment and deterrence policies and may experience similarly precarious conditions during their journeys in search of a protection unavailable in their home regions.

My work here draws on scholarly debates about the political implications of categorization. For example, in their work on crises and who should 'count,' Allen and Anderson (2018) refer to the impact of a politics of categorization and discuss how labels such as "migrants," "refugees," and "asylum seekers" create the binary of visibility and non-visibility and are used by states as tools to govern people's mobility. In the same vein, I use "protection" to refer to what Hathaway describes as "sufficient protection" -- "conditions of independence and dignity which enable refugees themselves to decide how they wish to cope with their predicaments" (2007: 364). This notion of protection underscores the elements of independence, dignity, and decision making that the stories I heard have shown to be refugees' central aspirations during their search for protection.

Agency: As refugees' stories show, the decision to undertake what may become dangerous journeys requires enormous agency. These stories provide a different picture of refugees than those from media and policy makers, which sometimes depict either victims or criminals. Instead, their own stories tend to portray individuals hoping for better lives and therefore

challenging conditions of war and displacement and willing to undertake journey beyond their regions and, usually, against their will in search of rights and protection. These acts reflect a high degree of resistance, which exemplifies refugees' agency.

This understanding of "agency," which is political per se, speaks to Johnson's (2011: 29) definition: "the capacity to be political: to contest and demand participation in the practices that shape a life and the meaning-making discourses that shape a world." In this sense, it means the ability to refuse and resist. Yet, because their journeys may be precarious, severe restrictions affect refugees' ability to decide and act. Mainwaring (2016) examines the dynamics between this particular notion of migrants' and refugees' agency and border controls. She refers to overrepresentations of agency in the literature of migration, exemplified through complex acts in moments of vulnerability and ambivalence. This point may illuminate refugees' decisions and actions during their journeys, which can often seem irrational and confused. Thus, we must not overromanticize refugees' agency and need to separate it from the notions of free choice and intentionality. This is crucial because of the political implications of representing refugees as political figures with a high degree of agency.

This approach may provoke hostile responses against refugees by the receiving states, which may treat them as undeserving of protection. This reaction may be a volte-face from policy discourses that victimize refugees and render them powerless, unable to decide or act, who ideally remain in their regions, subject to humanitarian aid. Those refugees who challenge border controls and search for protection and better lives elsewhere, perhaps in Europe, then become "illegal migrants" to criminalize and deter. Scheel and Squire (2014) discuss the problematic representation in policy discourse of forced migrants as "illegal," which may lead to their

criminalization and deterrence when they act. Additionally, overemphasizing refugees' agency often undermines their often-precarious conditions and the emotional toll of the journeys and the heavy load of scars many carry even after resettlement. Vicky Squire (2017) presents a framework of "acts, interventions, effects" in her work on unauthorized journeys, avoiding the notion of intentionality and addressing instead the political actions of creating new and unexpected spaces.

Precarity: As I noted above, while it is vital to examine the agency of refugees during their search for protection, we must also acknowledge the precarious conditions under which they may live and seek to exert their agency. The literature traditionally used the term "precarity" to refer to labour insecurity and the socioeconomic status that results from insecurity and unpredictability in the workplace (Papadopoulos, 2016; Paret and Gleeson, 2016; Wall, Campbell, and Janbek, 2015). More recently scholarly usage has expanded to cover other vulnerabilities in the lives of marginalized groups. For Banki (2013), as an example, exploitation related to the lack of security, and for Butler (2009: 25), "the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks … becoming differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death." Scholars have also used it to refer to extreme "social vulnerability" during war, as with Khosravi (2017: 5) on life in Iran, where he sees it as "a broad range of social vulnerabilities that Iranians are struggling with: from insecure work conditions and physical insecurity to hopelessness, purposelessness, alienation, and disconnectedness from a sense of social community."

This notion of precarity describes a state of social and political marginalization and refers to the uncertainty and unpredictability that may affect people during wartime. It effectively

characterizes the insecurity, uncertainty, and unpredictability that continue to urge people from Syria to flee the war -- the emotional, socio-economic, and political insecurities of war. It involves the risk of losing property, jobs, and loved ones, even one's own life. Displacement in neighbouring countries brings other forms of marginalization and social exclusion. In this sense, precarity stands for an everyday, existential state of vulnerability and temporariness with little or no access to social rights of protection, education, health care, and employment. Such circumstances may engender pervasive uncertainty and unpredictability. For example, Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel (2016: 5) examine the precarious legal status of Syrian refugees in Turkey and illustrate how it can affect various aspects of their lives. They refer to precarity as:

> involving a lack of security and instability in how people experience their lives in diverse fields, such as citizenship, employment, housing, education, health, mobility, social protection, and social rights …, and in how such experience can marginalize or displace them or unite them for collective action.

This notion of precarity helps explain the acute helplessness some people experience in wartime Syria and during displacement in the region, with few choices and little ability to act.

   Crisis: Some European governments have spoken of "crisis" -- chaos or disorder – vis-à-vis the unauthorized arrival of large numbers of refugees. Critical migration scholars have challenged this usage by addressing its imbedded elements of governance and control (De Genova, 2016; De Genova and Tazzioli, 2015). Writing about the "crisis" in Europe, De Genova and Tazzioli (2015) find the term implies "emergency politics" and "control": "What is commonly called the 'migration crisis' or, the 'refugee crisis,' actually reflects the frantic attempt by the EU and European nation-states to control, contain, and govern people's ('unauthorized') transnational and inter-continental movement" (2015: 20).

I apply the term to the human suffering of many refugees and the conditions that have forced many of them into illegality and vulnerability in search of protection. I thus reframe the "crisis of migration" in Europe as a "crisis of protection" rooted in the intrinsic paradoxes of the international refugee regime, which fails to protect refugees from the global south. I argue that the crisis exists in the global south, where millions of refugees are governed through deprivation as they are contained with insufficient protection and no access to their rights as refugees or as persons. They are subject to what Liz Feket (2009: 29) describes as "a system of warehousing the displaced in large camps in their region of origin until a conflict has been resolved to the satisfaction of western powers."

Within such conditions, refugees who seek their rights, in effect, must leave their regions for the global north. But, since that route is blocked, they see no safe or legal pathways to their intended destinations. To avoid confrontations with control, many risk their lives through often-precarious journeys that may sometimes end in death at the global frontiers. While Europe is the focus of this dissertation, the crisis occurs elsewhere and is visible most acutely in the bodies of those who have not survived the journey across borders, for example, between the United States and Mexico or in the sinking of boats between Indonesia and Australia. In Europe, however, the crisis can be traced through the thousands of bodies of victims of perilous journeys across the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas and washed up along the shores of Turkey, Greece, and Italy or inside sunken boats near Lampedusa.

This crisis continues even for many survivors, transformed into illegal migrants who challenge the structures of control presented by borders and yet need to be 'securitized.' Many experience illegality and rejection at the borders and also on arrival at their final destinations due

to the shrinking asylum spaces and states' reluctance to honour their international commitments to protect refugees. It is because of such suffering and tragedies that I reframe this refugee crisis as a crisis of protection instead.

Borders: During their search for protection, refugees may cross multiple borders and be subject to various forms of border practices. In this sense, borders represent sites where the crisis of protection is manifest through deterrence and illegalization. Refugees' stories show how their interactions with borders affect their decisions about their routes, means of transport, even final destinations. This study, informed by refugees' experiences, treats borders not as static, territorial demarcations, but as excluding and including practices and performances that also produce reactions and resistance. In other words, borders are not merely sites of inclusion and exclusion but are rather spaces of life, resistance, and political actions. In this sense, borders embody "complex social relations" or "complex social institutions, which are marked by tensions between the practices of border reinforcement and border crossing" (Mezzadra, 2015: 9). The dynamics of borders and border crossing are relevant to refugees' experiences during their journeys. It is borders and their encounters with border control that may turn refugees into "illegal" figures that are deterred and criminalized. Loyd and Mountz (2014: 23) understand borders as "paradigmatic symbols and material manifestations of the efforts of nation-states to regulate and deter irregular migrants and asylum seekers." Processes of border enforcement often criminalize and dehumanize refugees, make them more vulnerable, and exclude them from and deny them their basic human rights of access to food, water, and free mobility. Their stories show that they often resist such conditions and exert high degrees of agency and resilience. This is also true for refugees in the Occupied Territories, as Habib shows in her studies of Palestinian communities in Israel/Palestine (2007, 2011).

This reconceptualization of borders acknowledges refugees' engagement in new forms of political power "that cross the walls of borders and detention centers consistently [and] expose the limits of state sovereignty" (Loyd and Mountz, 2014: 37). In this sense, refugees become political (Johnson, 2013) through actions such as hunger strikes, burning tents inside detention centers, and protesting in front of media cameras at closed borders, as I show in the coming chapters. Such political acts transform borders and camps into "sites of intervention" (Johnson, 2014: 15) and spaces of "contested politics of mobility" (Squire, 2011), where politics emerges as controlling structures that engage with vulnerable individuals, who continue to claim substantial agency while searching for protection.

Journey: It is through these interwoven notions of agency, precarity, and (reconceptualised) borders that I study the actual details of refugees' journeys as a reflection of the global crisis of protection. By positioning refugees as the prime source of knowledge, I explore their suffering as they search for protection, and, in doing so, I aim to contribute to migration and refugee studies by bringing into the scholarship knowledge about refugees' daily experiences during their journeys. This is invaluable because accounts of the journeys provide first-hand knowledge that demonstrates how bordering practices can produce illegality and make refugees more vulnerable in their search for protection. Situating refugees at the centre of analysis reveals the impact of policies aiming to govern their movement and showcases the inadequacy of protection over their lives and identities. By focusing on refugees and their perceptions of border control and protection, my work aims to challenge the dominant state-centric narrative in mainstream migration studies and to contribute to the developing literature on refugees as real people.

Despite the recent and growing body of scholarship on refugee journeys (Briden and Mainwaring, 2016; Crawley et al., 2018; Gill, Caletrioa, and Mason, 2011; Hassan and Biorklund, 2016; Kaytaz, 2016; Khousravi, 2011; Squire et al., 2017), migration and refugee studies still do not cover them adequately. Scholars tend to concentrate on the causes and consequences of refugee movement rather than on the process in between, which is the journey, and on refugees' experiences in the process. This neglect short-changes our understanding of the emotional and transformative processes of the journey and hides the real "human cost" of the crisis of protection. Refugees' journeys change their lives, reflect the crisis of protection, and influence refugees' lives in their new destinations – all dimensions to explore.

To address this lacuna, I examine the journey through refugees' stories and their own words. I take the discussion deeper to reflect on the emotional toll of the journey, where detention spaces, smuggling practices, borders, and fences travel with refugees, occupy their memories, and transform their identities. Thus, I develop a conceptual framework that examines three significant and yet underappreciated aspects of this complex and transformative experience, addressing the "refugee journey" as:

1) an act of resistance and survival that demonstrates the vulnerability, but also the agency, of refugees on the move

2) a messy, complex, and non-linear passage that encompasses extreme elements of precarity

3) an emotional and transformative process that can reshape refugees' positionality and identities

Methodology

My research uses several methods deriving principally from ethnographic work and builds on the stories of refugees who have made the journey from Syria to Sweden. It also includes site visits and observations, policy critique, and a literature review of scholarly debates and literature on the global governance of migration and the international refugee regime using critical migration and refugee studies scholarship, as I noted earlier.

My policy critique is informed by types of 'grey' literature that are "produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers" (New York Academy of Medicine, 2016). For this dissertation, I examine policy documents, government reports, and related publications by international organizations (e.g., IOM, OCHA, UNHCR, and UNRWA), human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Watch the Med, and reports from various regional and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in refugee assistance and humanitarian activities.

By examining such policy documents critically, I uncover the political rationalities and the emergence of the crisis of protection through the lens of the Syrian crisis of refugees. This literature assists me in grasping some of the circumstances surrounding refugees' decisions to leave and to journey towards Europe. For example, I have analysed the international and national responses to the Syrian refugee crisis through UNHCR reports, including its regional plans for resettling Syrian refugees and providing them with humanitarian relief since 2011. The documents examine states' responses to the UNHCR's multiple pledges for resettlement and illustrate the funding gap in humanitarian allocations received from states in response to the

Syrian refugee crisis. The reports have also shown me how protection policies have shifted to containing and immobilizing refugees. For example, I have analysed border control practices by regional and other states in reaction to the Syrian conflict since March 2011 and demonstrated how they are designed to contain refugees and have thus rendered them more precarious and vulnerable.

Ethnographic Methodology

My research also benefited from my position as a research assistant for a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (of Canada) (SSHRC) on Syrian refugees in Turkey. In the summer of 2015, I travelled to Turkey and conducted interviews with some Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Kilis for the project. The visit enabled me to observe the actual conditions of displacement of these refugees, which drove many of them to push on towards Europe. My work for the project also included conducting interviews with three refugees from Syria who travelled through Turkey. Two of these individuals (Khaled and Ammar), whom I interviewed via Skype, ended up in Germany after travelling through the Balkans in the summer of 2015. I interviewed the third person (Arad) in Kitchener, Ontario, in Canada, while he and his family were being officially resettled as government-assisted refugees after a journey of displacement in Turkey.[8]

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[8] The SSHRC-funded project, "Humanitarian Aid, Citizenship Politics, and the Governance of Syrian Refugees in Turkey," involves the following faculty members: Dr. Feyzi Baban, associate professor at Trent University, Dr. Suzan Ilcan, professor at the University of Waterloo, and Dr. Kim Rygiel, associate professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. The stories of these three journeys appear in "*Resisting Precarity and Precarious Resistances: Claiming Rights to Belong, Stay, and Leave*," which I co-wrote for The Precarious Lives of Syrians: Living under Temporary Protection in Turkey (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, under review).

Rather than using refugees' stories as one of several qualitative research methods to collect data on refugees' experiences, I position these stories as the *main* source of knowledge about refugees' journeys and the crisis of protection. In learning from, and basing my work on, their own stories, my methodology is inspired by narrative inquiry principles in documenting and further analyzing the actual experiences of the journey. Calddinin and Rosiek (2007: 50) argue that narrative inquiry "values the stories of people as the ultimate insight as to how people live in the world." It is a mode of knowledge that helps us understand not only the stories but also how and why participants construct them according to their status or identity (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009). It is "the study of experience as story, [and] first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006: 477). I use the terms "narrative" and "story" interchangeably in this dissertation, applying "narrative" generally to a structural and technical form of speaking about refugees' experiences, and "story" more casually and individually.

In my research, I follow an ethnographic method with a participant observation approach that is mainly informed by stories of refugees from Syria when they encounter bordering practices and failing protection structures. Alpa Shah (2017: 51) captures the essence of this approach: "Participant observation centers a long-term intimate engagement with a group of people that were once strangers to us in order to know and experience the world through their perspectives and actions in as holistic a way as possible." My research expands from open-ended qualitative interviews to an ethnographic study that builds initially on my personal knowledge as a member of the community and engages intimately with its experiences and actions. I lived in this community for most of my life and was separated from it only because of the war in 2011.

Julie Peteet (2005: X) writes about the anthropologist's role when studying people, such as refugees, in emergency situations: "Our task is also to analyze not just how violence and suffering of refugees are enacted, experienced, narrated, and coped with, but also the historicity and the structural conditions, local, regional, and global, that underpin their displacement." She claims that anthropologists should "humanize those otherwise marginalized and demonized" and address their agency. "Working with populations at risk or in a state of emergency heightens the anthropological imperative to forge beyond the constitution of the refugee by a traumatic history to explore refugee agency" (ibid.). This understanding of the anthropologist's role speaks to my work as I examine how refugees exert their agency when navigating war, displacement, and often-precarious journeys in search of protection. My work also addresses the failure of the international refugee regime to protect refugees from Syria; the effect of containment and deterrence on their lives, their decisions about travel, and their choices of means and routes; and the way in which such policies transform them into illegal subjects, even criminals.

My work finds inspiration as well in the methods of autoethnography, where Elizabeth Dauphinee (2010) calls for a new way to produce knowledge via unheard, unathorized voices: "An academic voice that allows for certain elements of autoethnography has the potential to re-centre our attention on the individual lives and deaths of people whose names we would otherwise not know" (2010: 806). I bring my personal insights on the refugees' journey, much like those in Khosravi's (2011) *Illegal Traveler* -- "an ethnography of borders." This scholar examines the politics of borders and the human experiences of them through his own journey and those of other "undocumanted," "illegal" travellers. For Khosravi, "auto-ethnography links the world of the author with the world of others. It bridges the gap between the anthropologist's reality and the reality of others" (2011: 5). I bring to my research my insights and experiences of exile and

reconceptualization of home and identity. My understanding of identity owes much to Arturo

Escobar's (2008: 203) representation of identity as a dynamic and fluid concept:

> Identities are constructed through everyday practices at many levels. From the realm of daily tasks and activities, which create micro worlds, to the construction of more stable, albeit always changing, figured worlds, identity construction operates through an active engagement with the world. There is a constant tracking between identity, local contentious practices, and historical struggles that confer upon identity construction a dynamic character.

I reflect particularly on my own journey and experience as a mother of two stateless

Palestinian children and as a migrant to Canada, who then became a refugee from Syria and a

citizen of Canada, both at the same time. In June 2011, I arrived in Canada as a Syrian migrant,

married to a stateless Palestinian refugee, along with our two children. During my exile, I

experienced the pain of loss and uprootedness, when returning home became impossible because

of the war in Syria. I have often felt as if I were a refugee while I was struggling through my new

life in Canada. Despite my new citizenship, I have often experienced "homelessness," where

"achievements … are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever"

(Said, 2000: 173) -- my house and my lifelong community. My house in Yarmouk was first looted

by army soldiers and was later turned into a base for the opposition militia. When the Syrian army

launched its military operation in Yarmouk in April 2018, I lost my house and my belongings as

most of the district turned into rubble.

During the same period, I maintained close connections with my extended family, friends,

neighbours, and community members who experienced similar forms of pain. To do so, I used

phone calls and social media, including facebook, Messenger, Skype, and Whats App. I stayed in

close contact with hundreds of friends and acquaintances from Yarmouk who were forced to

depart in 2012 and ended up journeying to various destinations in search of protection. My personal experience and the extensive knowledge from these links facilitate an ethnographic approach which provides an important body of scholarship that is missing in refugee studies. By reflecting on my own journeys and the knowledge I gained in seeking protection for my family and me, I am able to position myself in a more connected fashion to those I interviewed than are many researchers.

Research in Sweden

I conducted my interviews in Sweden during the summer of 2016. I visited the country three times; in June, July, and August 2016 where I conducted 45 interviews with 60 Syrians and Palestinians who made the journey from Syria to Sweden between 2012 and early 2016. My interviews took place in Hässleholm, Laxå, Malmö, Stockholm, and Uppsala. Most of these (40) were individual interviews but five interviews consisted of more than one individual, two of which were with husband and wife couples and three with larger families with five people including children who came in and out of the room and while not directly interviewed, at times interjected their thoughts as well.

I used an open-ended interview technique with opening lead questions about the journey and the experiences of escape, displacement, and the actual journey to Sweden; What was the situation in your area in Syria? How was your life in Lebanon (Egypt, Jordan, or Turkey)? Why did you travel through Egypt (Turkey or Libya)? Can you tell me about the conditions of the actual journey? The questions offered my interviewees the freedom and the authority to tell their stories in their own way. They were able to choose their moments of departure, discuss their decision-making process, and provide details about their negotiations and encounters with various

actors during their journey including their family and community members, smugglers, border controls, and other refugees.

It is worth noting that the Appendix includes 20 interviews which are featured as the principal stories in this dissertation. The stories are featured because they are stories that contain the most complexity. They are also chosen because they are representative for capturing stories common to most people with whom I spoke. In making decisions about which stories to share, I have selected those that I believe to be most representative of many others' experiences I heard about regarding the journey from Syria to Sweden. These stories demonstrate the messy, unpredictable, and often-disastrous nature of refugees' journeys while also exposing their commonalities.

I benefited from my extensive personal network within the Palestinian and Syrian communities in Sweden. I was able to interview people from my community in addition to other individuals and families to whom relatives and friends introduced me. That is, I was able to apply a snowball method, as some families willingly invited their friends to their houses for them to meet with me and to share the details of their journeys as well.

Politically, Sweden presents a powerful example of shrinking asylum spaces in the global north as well as the wide gap between the numbers of resettled refugees and in-country grants of asylum, all while the state shifted protection from permanent to temporary. Sweden is also an interesting case because of the special consideration (noted above) it offers to Palestinian refugees from Syria because of their statelessness. Additionally, Sweden was the first European country to grant asylum and permanent residence to Syrian refugees. In September 2013, Swedish Migration Minister Tobias Billstroem called on European countries to assist Syrian refugees. Then Swedish Migration Agency spokeswoman Annie Hoernblad declared: "All Syrian asylum

seekers who apply for asylum in Sweden will get it" (DW, 2013; SBS, 2013). She explained that the "vast majority of Syrian nationals, who today have provisional status, would apply for permanent status" (ibid.). "No other conflict on earth today," she added, "is as terrible as the long and bloody conflict in Syria. That should make many politicians, inside and outside the EU, think about our responsibilities" (ibid.).

Word of these developments reached desperate refugees trapped in either the war in Syria or in displacement in neighbouring countries. Many perceived them as an open-door invitation to Sweden. Although the Swedish and other European governments did not facilitate their movement, some refugees decided to risk their lives to reach Sweden for asylum and permanent residency.

The minister was also addressing his fellow Swedes perhaps more than people in distant Syria. Paulin de los Reyes from Stockholm University observed:

> He [the minister] was talking to the people in Sweden, making them think that they have humanitarian government; we are a humanitarian country; we show solidarity. But in his imagination, the "others" are so other and this speech is not dedicated to those people, because those people are so different that in his imagination they will not react … they are not his target. (De los Reyes, 2016)

In 2015, Sweden received approximately 160,000 asylum seekers, a third of them from Syria, and accepted between 90 and 100 per cent of them (AIDA, 2016). With a total population of 9.6 million, Sweden took in more asylum seekers per capita than any other European state (ibid.). During the same period, Sweden undertook to resettle 2,700 Syrians per year (up from 1,900) in response to the UNHCR's calls for resettlement and humanitarian admission of Syrian refugees (European Resettlement Network, 2016). During the same period of 2015, some 50,000 people

from Syria entered the country "illegally" as asylum seekers. Nevertheless, Sweden was the first

European state to grant Syrians permanent protection (AIDA, 2013), thereby entitling them to

permanent residency as well as residency permits for immediate family members. However, as of

November 2015, the government tightened its regulations for protection and recognition of

asylum applications in favour of EU minimum standards of protection, as set out in the EU

Temporary Protection Directive of 2001 (Orchard and Miller, 2014). That document defines

temporary protection as:

> a procedure of exceptional character to provide, in the event of a mass influx
> or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who are
> unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary
> protection to such persons, in particular if there is also a risk that the asylum
> system will be unable to process this influx without adverse effects for its
> efficient operation, in the interests of the persons concerned and other persons
> requesting protection. (EC, 2017)

These new measures aimed to deter asylum seekers from choosing Sweden as their final

destination, as Prime Minister Stefan Löfven made clear: "We are adapting Swedish legislation

temporarily so that more people choose to seek asylum in other countries ... We need respite"

(*The Guardian*, 2015b). As a result, a new Swedish Aliens Act (20 July 2016) stated that

individuals granted asylum will receive temporary residency, varying with their status. Persons

with refugee status will receive a residency of three years, and those with subsidiary protection,

thirteen months. The law also limits family reunification to refugees or people given subsidiary

protection before 24 November 2015. Later recipients may apply for family reunification if the

case is exceptional (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). The new law was a response to far-right

demands and was criticized by various civil society organizations for undermining the rights of

asylum seekers. The law seemed to hinder the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, as it

targeted mainly the right of refugees to be joined by their family members (Folkkampnj for

Asyllratt, 2016). Further, the changes in protection standards were to be accompanied by deportation of larger numbers of rejected asylum seekers – some 80,000, the state announced in January 2016 (*The Guardian*, 2016) -- while it offered other asylum seekers cash payments to return voluntarily to their countries (*The Independent*, 2016).

Ethical Sensitivities and Reflections

In order to be ethically sensitive when conducting my research, I avoided interviewing refugees still on the move, due to their extreme vulnerabilities and hardships. I decided instead to interview refugees who had reached Sweden and achieved a sense of safety and a degree of settlement. I conducted my interviews in the summer of 2016, and all my interviewees had arrived in Sweden between 2012 and early 2016. Many were already permanent residents, while some were still waiting for the results of their asylum applications.

I also explained to my interviewees that their participation in my research was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time prior to, during, or after the interview. I offered to stop the interviews at any moment if they felt uncomfortable. Although recalling the details of their journeys and previous experiences of displacement and wartime caused some of them to feel vulnerable and emotional, none of them asked me to stop the interview or asked to withdraw from the research. On the contrary, I was amazed by their willingness to talk about their experiences and to share the details of their journeys. There were occasions where families gathered to tell me their stories. This was particularly the case in Hässleholm (near Malmö*)* and in Laxå (near Örebro) -- two small towns that host some families from Syria. I felt that people wanted their stories about the journey to be heard and understood. They appreciated the fact that

someone from their own community was doing this research and trying to present them as real individuals with aspirations for better lives.

Most of my interviews took between three and four hours, but some more than six. Some lasted longer than six hours, and a number of people were willing to meet with me more than once to continue sharing their stories. As I mentioned above, most of the interviews took place at interviewees' houses, where I was able to meet and interact with many family members at the same time. Even though I did not intend to interview children (and never interviewed them directly) because they are especially vulnerable, some joined the storytelling after their parents invited them to participate and told their part or shared their insights about certain stages of the journey.

Some men preferred to talk to me individually and shared tense, emotional moments of their journeys with me, including stories about detention, humiliating experiences, torture, pain of separation, and loss of loved ones. Many wept as they recalled these moments, and some admitted to me that they had never before shared these feelings, even with their partners. Refugees normally do not speak about such sentiments with foreign researchers, but they chose to do so with me probably because I am a Syrian researcher married to a Palestinian refugee, have undertaken such a journey, and have been through similar experiences. Most of my interviewees treated me as an insider, in ethnic terms, and also as a person who could feel their pain and who shared the same sentiments of loss and helplessness, but also determination and hope. My unique situation facilitated my access to the interviewees and created a friendly research environment (Morosanu, 2015). This positionality also allowed me to overcome various ethical challenges

often facing this type of ethnographic research, including power dynamics vis-à-vis interviewees, trust building, and cultural sensitivity (Johnson, 2011; Puvimanasinghe et al., 2014).

My fluency in Arabic permitted me to conduct all the interviews in Arabic without the need for interpretation, which reduced one type of cultural barrier frequent in such research and enhanced mutual trust. I was able to audio-record my interviews after first obtaining interviewees' permission.

I transcribed their interviews verbatim and used pseudonyms throughout my work to protect their identity and confidentiality. I then analysed the narratives thematically, identifying differences and commonalities with regard to wartime experiences and displacement in the region, which I discuss below in chapter three. I also identified details about chosen routes and encounters with smugglers and bordering practices during the actual journeys – see chapter four. I focused on indications of particular sentiments during the journey – elements that affected refugees' emotional and physical conditions while on the move and after arrival at their destinations. I was also able to identify expressions and indications that reflected the transformation of refugees' roles, positionality, and identity. I discuss these emotional and transformative elements of the journey in chapter five.

In fact, due to the messy and complex nature of refugees' journeys, I faced difficulties in defining certain moments of departures and arrivals. It was also a challenge trying to study the journeys through a chronological framework (departure, actual movement, arrival). Most of the journeys developed as a series of departures and included several loops of mobility and immobility. Thus, in chapter four, on the conditions of the journey towards Europe, I followed the

storylines of refugees' journeys and held my reflections until chapter's end. I thereby avoided breaking the flow of the stories and allowed refugees' voices a central place in my analysis.

My position as a researcher did not save me from emotional stress during and after my interviews and also when I revisited those stories as I transcribed and analyzed them. I was subject to various emotional moments during my research, as I shared similar feelings of pain, loss, and grievance that most of my interviewees experienced. This was exacerbated by my position as an insider and was particularly intense when I interviewed members of my own family, who told me about moments of fear, humiliation, and pain during their journeys. It was also emotionally challenging for me whenever I involved my own experience and personal insights. However, despite the emotional toll of taking an autoethnographic approach, rather than reflecting on these experiences from the outside looking in, such moments allowed me to engage deeply with all of the individuals whom I met and with the stories they told.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter One – The Global Crisis of Protection and the International Refugee Regime: In this chapter I challenge the dominant narrative that frames the "unauthorized" arrival of one million refugees on the shores of Europe in 2015 as a "crisis of migration." I propose rather that the arrivals reflect a global crisis of protection, which emerged as a result to bordering practices and policies that restrict protection for refugees from the global south in order to protect the order of the global north. I further address the global conditions of mistrust and rejection that govern and control refugees. I show how refugees from the South may be victimized, represented as nameless and powerless masses of people, who suffer in their distant camps, yet are often demonized with their arrival in the global north.

To capture the nuance of this crisis of protection within the international refugee regime, I discuss the regime's intrinsic paradoxes and focus on its state- and Euro-centric orientations to show how it was established mainly to deal with post-1945 refugees in Europe while protecting the international state system. I examine the performance of the regime's normative principles under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the regime's institutional structures, especially the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

I show that the practices and strategies against refugees from the global south do not deter them from arriving in the global north in search of protection. Rather they increase the "human cost" of the journey by reducing legal and safe routes and rendering refugees illegal and precarious.

Chapter Two – Conceptualizing the Refugee Journey: This chapter examines the concept of the refugee journey as a reflection of the crisis of protection and a result of containment and deterrence practices of governments in the global north vis-à-vis refugees from the global south. I discuss refugee journeys as part of the "human cost" of the crisis of protection, where refugees may experience illegality as cogs in a global system of border controls, based largely on policies designed to immobilize them. This process may transform individuals from refugees who deserve protection into "irregular migrants," who may be criminalized for challenging borders and border controls. By reviewing critical migration and refugee studies scholarship, and learning from refugees' personal stories, I develop a conceptual framework of the journey as an act of survival and resistance that can become messy, complex, and very precarious and transforms refugees' roles, positionalities, and identities. I discuss these three significant, yet underappreciated, elements of the journey in the following chapters.

Chapter Three -- Stories of Escape and Survival: Refugees' stories of escape and displacement relate to the first aspect of the journey, which I depict as an act of survival and resistance. I examine their experiences of insecurity and fear during wartime and their subsequent displacement, where they are often subject to social marginalization and exclusion, with limited access to rights. I show how many refugees, who may be socially marginalized, have no other choice than to continue to other destinations in Europe in the hopes of finding protection and acceptance.

Drawing on refugees' stories of escape from the homeland, I discuss insecurity, fear of detention or conscription, and loss of income as the main reasons for their fleeing their homes to seek safety in neighbouring countries. Refugees' stories of displacement in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey provide a comparative perspective of their social marginalization and limited access to rights in these countries. I examine the case of Palestinian refugees from Syria whose statelessness traps them in particular peril and exclusion.

Chapter Four -- The Non-linear, Messy, Complex Journey to Europe: In this chapter, I investigate the conditions of the actual journey towards Europe. I discuss the unpredictability and messiness of refugees' journeys as they experience various forms of violence and precarity. These elements present the second aspect of my conceptual framework of the refugee journey as it develops through multiple loops of non-linear movements that are often chaotic and unexpected. I show how refugees may exercise high degrees of agency, which comes at a high price because their journeys are so precarious. Through my discussion I aim to answer the following questions: a) How did refugees from Syria decide who should go and who should stay? b) How did they choose certain routes and pathways? c) How did they travel from Syria?

What types of transportation did they use? And how did they negotiate border crossings with a variety of border actors such as smugglers, coast guards, and other actors while on the move?

Chapter Five -- The Emotional Toll of Refugee Journey: In this chapter, I take the discussion to another level and focus on the journey's emotional toll and its transformative impact on refugees' roles, positionalities, and identities. I argue that many refugees who survive the precarious journey arrive at their new localities with a heavy burden of scars and painful, even tragic memories that affect their perceptions of themselves, their family, and their lives. The transformations they undergo en route affect their ability to integrate within their new 'homes.' Here I also look at mothers and their intense emotional experiences. I explore the transformation of refugee identities through the experiences of Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk in Syria, who, as we saw above, relive the trauma of their statelessness through their new displacement from Syria. Their journeys in search of protection result in penetrating cases of identity affirmation as refugees with multiple losses.

Conclusion: In the conclusion, I review recent developments in the crisis of protection. While the world's attention shifts away from refugees' predicament, we witness individuals facing ever-harsher deterrence that increases their exposure to inhumane conditions at border crossings. I propose that these conditions necessitate our focusing on refugees' stories and knowledge about the crisis and the journey. It is by examining their words and their real-world experiences that we can help create a more inclusive and humane protection framework. Building on this argument, I discuss future research that will expand on ideas developed in this dissertation to examine unanswered questions about refugees' experiences and perspectives in their new localities.

Featuring

Ammar: A Syrian tourist guide from Damascus. He escaped to Lebanon in 2013 after multiple detentions. He travelled to Thailand and then to Turkey, where he crossed to Greece and travelled through the Balkan route to Germany in the summer of 2015. He lives in Hanover, Germany.

Arad: A Syrian Kurdish man from Aleppo. He left Aleppo in 2012 with his wife and two sons. They lived in Istanbul, Turkey until they were resettled as a government-assisted refugee in Canada in 2014. They live in Kitchener, ON, Canada.

Fares: A textile merchant from Hama. He was detained in 2012 and then travelled to Egypt with his wife and two-year-old son. He then moved to Libya and lived there until 2014. He and his family undertook a journey from Libya to Sweden through the Libyan route. He lives in Stockholm, Sweden.

Hania: A Palestinian mother who travelled from Damascus with her six children to join her husband in Sweden. She travelled through the Balkan route in 2015. She lives in Laxå, Sweden.

Issam and Qamar: A Palestinian couple who travelled with their five children from Damascus to Egypt and undertook a journey to Sweden through the Egyptian route in 2013. They live in Stockholm, Sweden.

Karam and Jenna: A Palestinian couple from Homs. They travelled with their three children from Homs to Turkey and crossed to Greece in 2014. They had to send two of their children with smugglers to Italy on their way to Sweden. They live in Hässleholm, Sweden.

Khaled: A Palestinian refugee from Daraa, Syria. He departed Syria in 2012 and lived in Amman, Jordan for two years. He left his wife and two sons in Amman and travelled back to Syria, crossed to Turkey, and undertook a journey with his sister and her family through the Balkan route in the summer of 2015. He lives in Berlin, Germany.

Mahmoud: A Palestinian refugee from Homs. He travelled with his two sons to Sweden through the Egyptian route in 2014. His oldest son had to stay in Germany and Mahmoud, and the rest of his family live in Hässleholm, Sweden.

Rahma: A Palestinian mother from Homs. In 2015, she travelled with her three-year-old son to Turkey to join her family in Sweden. She lost her son during the crossing to Greece. She lives in Hässleholm, Sweden.

Rana: A Palestinian mother from Yarmouk near Damascus. She travelled with her husband and two sons to Irbil, North Iraq and then undertook a journey with one son and her mother to Turkey and crossed to Greece in 2014. She had to send her son with smugglers to Copenhagen, Denmark. She had several failed attempts at Athens airports before her departure to Sweden. She lives with her son in Katrineholm, Sweden.

Rasha: A Syrian widow from Damascus. She undertook a journey with her three children to Sweden in 2015 through the Balkan route. She lives in Laxå, Sweden.

Rawan: a Palestinian refugee from Syria. He used to work as an engineer with the largest petroleum company in Syria. Rawan crossed into Turkey, found a way to travel to Malaysia in order to be smuggled into Germany from where he was finally able to continue his journey to Sweden. He lives in Uppsala, Sweden.

Safieh: A Palestinian refugee from Yarmouk. She and her husband undertook a journey through Turkey to Greece where they flow to Oslo, Norway. They live in Ramnes, Norway.

Salam: A Syrian teacher from Lattakia. He travelled to Turkey in 2013. He crossed to Greece and flew to Sweden from Athens airport in 2016. He lives in Avesta, Sweden.

Wassim and family: A Palestinian refugee from Damascus. He moved to Egypt in 2013 with his wife, Rajaa and two sons, Rami and Shadi. Rami travelled to Sweden through the Egyptian route. Shadi travelled to Turkey and reached Sweden after a long journey through the Balkan route. Wassim and his wife Rajaa travelled to Turkey and flew from Greece to Sweden separately. They live in Stockholm, Sweden.

Yamen: A Palestinian refugee from Homs. Travelled to Sweden with his four-year-old daughter via Libyan route. He lives in Hässleholm, Sweden.

Youssef: A Palestinian refugee from Damascus. He lost many relatives in the war and was detained for a number of months. He travelled to Europe via the Libyan route. He lives with his family in Hässleholm, Sweden.

Map of Syria: (https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/syria-map.htm)

Map of Sweden (https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/sweden-map.htm)

Chapter One: A Global Crisis of Protection and the International Refugee Regime

Introduction

In 2015, an unprecedented number of people around the world were suffering displacement because of war and persecution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – in effect, the United Nations Refugee Agency -- recorded a total of 65.3 million displaced individuals, of whom 21.3 million were refugees -- its highest number since its founding in 1949 in the aftermath of the Second World War (UNHCR, 2016). In response, however, only 107,000 refugees received official resettlement. This number is far fewer than the 3.2 million who applied for asylum globally (ibid.), a situation former United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki Moon called "a crisis of solidarity" (ibid.). More than half of these refugees were from three countries: 4.9 million from Syria, 2.7 million from Afghanistan, and 1.1 million from Somalia (ibid.). Other conflicts also produced internally displaced people, refugees, and asylum seekers, again in record numbers. The large-scale displacement because of the conflict in Yemen, for example, has seen almost 3 million people internally displaced or seeking protection in neighboring countries (ibid.). The majority of these refugees are staying in developing regions, including sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, where Turkey, Iran, and Lebanon host millions of refugees (ibid.).

Despite these overwhelming statistics, global media focused on the so-called migration crisis in Europe, as more than one million asylum seekers arrived by sea during the summer of 2015 (UNHCR, 2015). Every day that summer, 4,000-10,000 refugees reached the continent (*BBC*, 2015; *The Guardian*, 2015). Almost 4,000 of them went missing, believed to have drowned at sea (UNHCR, 2015). Bodies of little children, such as Alan Kurdi, were found washed up along

the shores of Turkey and Greece. Thousands of refugees who survived the sea trip found themselves trapped in the overcrowded, often-appalling reception facilities in Greece or stranded and detained at heavily militarized razor-wire fences along the borders of the western Balkan route through Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary. This sobering reality led many commentators to invoke a "refugee and migrant crisis" (*BBC*, 2015; European Parliament, 2017; *The Guardian*, *2015*), a crisis described variously as "existential" (*US News*, 2015), "biblical" (*Fox News Politics*, 2015), and completely "political" (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

In this dissertation, I challenge this dominant narrative and argue instead that this is a "crisis of protection" revealed through the refugees' suffering and tragedies during their search for protection. What is shocking is not the number of asylum seekers reaching Europe, but rather the precarious conditions that have denied them protection in their home regions. This lack of protection forces them to undertake risky, sometimes life-threatening journeys to Europe hoping for protection and access to their rights as refugees. In a sharply divided world, globalization acts as "a system of inclusion and exclusion of specific areas and groups, which maintains and exacerbates inequality" (Castles, 2003: 16). Within these asymmetrical power dynamics and inequalities, countries in the global north decontextualize refugee crises in the global south by evading their own historical roles in creating the political and economic crises there, instead blaming the people there for their own hardships (Chimini, 1998; Ferguson, 2006). In the same vein, the global northern states are reluctant to honour their commitment towards refugees from the global south and design and practise containment and deterrence policies to exclude them. Yet many refugees, who escape wars and conflicts in their home countries and cannot find protection in their regions, challenge such practices and journey northwards, seeking protection and acceptance.

In this chapter, I provide a policy context to governing refugees in general and for the Syrian refugee crisis in particular. I present states' perspectives on the crisis of protection, which I then reconsider through refugees' own experiences and stories in later chapters of this dissertation. Yet, to capture the nuance of the crisis, in this chapter, I examine the historical development of the international refugee regime to identify its limitations, which have allowed the recent global crisis of protection. I argue that this crisis is produced by the reluctance of many countries in the global north as they refuse to honour their commitments to the international refugee regime and to protect refugees. This reluctance is especially clear in their policies of containing and deterring refugees from the global south and restricting space of asylum and protection for refugees who reach the global north. I examine these practices and show how these governments have altered the norms and practices of protection to contain refugees from the global south and deter them from reaching the global north and claiming refuge and access to their rights as refugees. I discuss how these practices affect the lives of refugees who do not find sufficient protection in their regions and are forced to search for protection in other destinations while often enduring extreme precarity. I start the chapter, however, by examining the global crisis of protection and its development.

A Global Crisis of Protection

The harrowing images of refugees in Europe during 2015 illustrate the extent of what has become a litany of human suffering, even tragedy. This nightmare, however, reflects a larger crisis of protection. Understanding this crisis to be about protection focuses attention on the countries in the global north that are reluctant to honour their international commitments towards refugees, as affirmed in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Instead of protecting refugees, many governments in North America, Europe, and

Australasia have recently reduced their assistance to and support for refugees from the global south by creating various frameworks of governance and control that aim mainly to contain them in their own regions and to keep them away from the global north. Those refugees finding inadequate protection in their home regions, are forced to look for protection elsewhere. Yet to do so they usually have to challenge daunting border practices, where they may become subject to illegality and sometimes be left to die, as a result of government actions to stop them.

The current practices of refugee protection reveal how international systems, as reflected in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol – whatever their limitations -- have given way to alternative practices, such as externalization of borders, containment, and deterrence. This in turn has resulted in the current protection crisis for millions of refugees around the world. Powerful states, in particular, have reduced their obligations towards refugees to a bare minimum, reshaping the norms and practices of protection to serve the perceived national priorities of security and selective migration, in addition to – in some countries – a move towards more social and cultural homogeneity. U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order of 27 January 2017 offers a telling example of how powerful states can withdraw from their international obligations towards refugees. Titled "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" (The White House, January 2017), the order denied entry to citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The order suspended admittance of refugees for 120 days while banning all refugee from Syria. Despite domestic opposition and international criticism of the document, a follow-up, on 6 March 2017, reinforced

the previous order but excluded Iraqi nationals from the travel ban (The White House, March 2017).[9]

Such actions resonated across the globe, as far-right governments suggested similar policies. For example, Viktor Orbán's government in Hungary rejected the European Union's (EU) plan to relocate refugees within Europe in 2015 according to a quota scheme. It also erected walls along its border with Serbia to stop refugees and decided to detain all asylum seekers during the lengthy processing of asylum applications. Orbán described migration as "a Trojan horse for terrorism" (*The Guardian*, 2017). These official policies stem from extreme nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiments that problematize refugees and perceive them as "anomalies," "a threat to national security," and "an attack on the categorical order of nations" (Malkki, 1995: 7). In other words, they present patterns of "securitization of nationalism" (Sparek, 2006) against "others" (i.e., groups of migrants and refugees from certain regions), by rendering them a security threat and therefore attempting to deter and exclude them.

The concerns raised here arise because many states are limiting their commitments towards refugees despite their adherence to an international convention guaranteeing refugee protection. By so doing, they are undermining the international protection regime, which depends on states' willingness to honour those commitments. Dennis McNamara, director of the Division of International Protection at the UNHCR, insists: "The essential institutions of refugee protection – including the Conventions and the UN structures -- are ultimately only as strong as States allow. State responsibility is at the heart of this problem" (McNamara, 1997). By their neglect, such

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[9] Executive Order 13780 was reviewed in September 2017, and the list of countries subject to entry restrictions was modified. The new list includes Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen (The White House, September 2017).

states are creating a global crisis of protection that seriously harms millions of refugees. The current Syrian refugee crisis, widely referred to as one of the world's most disastrous humanitarian emergencies and the largest forced displacement since the Second World War (UNHCR, 2014a), reveals starkly this global crisis of protection. With all its complexities and implications, it acutely reflects the effects of global policies of containment and reduction of protection. It graphically illustrates the failure of the international refugee regime to protect the millions of refugees who have escaped the brutal Syrian war and have found themselves trapped in the inhumane circumstances of displacement.

Syrian Refugees and the Global Crisis of Protection

The conditions of the Syrian war (see the Introduction) have forcibly displaced more than 12.6 million Syrians, about 5.6 million of whom became refugees (UNHCR, 2018). They are displaced in neighbouring countries, including Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, where many struggle to live, often in shocking conditions, without even minimum protection (ibid.).

The official international response to the Syrian refugee crisis has seen chronic shortages in aid funding and very limited resettlement. Allocations for humanitarian aid in Syria for 2018 were $5.6 billion (U.S.) short of what was needed (UNHCR, 2018). For 2016, the UNHCR had estimated humanitarian needs for Syrian refugees at $4.5 billion but received only $2.8 billion, for a funding gap of 62 per cent (ibid.). In 2017, the requirements stood at $4.6 billion, against only $2.4 billion coming in (ibid.). Consequently, in June 2017, the agency announced a series of aid cuts. It had to halt monthly cash assistance for 60,000 Syrian refugee families in Lebanon and Jordan, along with winter assistance for 209,000 families. It also cancelled 192,000 health consultations for Syrian refugees in both countries (Relief web, 2017). These chronic funding

gaps reflect the global "crisis of solidarity" (UN, 2016) and "responsibility shifting" vis-à-vis the international community's collective duty to protect refugees. As a result, Syrian displaced persons, victims of a brutal war in their homeland, often experience dire conditions of displacement either internally or in neighbouring countries where infrastructures are already weak and resources are strained (Mercy Corps, 2016).

This "crisis of solidarity" (UN, 2016) and "responsibility shifting" have expanded to affect even the handful of international efforts at resettling Syrian refugees. The UNHCR has pleaded many times for assistance with resettlement and humanitarian aid, but by the end of April 2017 fewer than 260,000 Syrian refugees had been offered resettlement (UNHCR, 2017). This total equaled about half of the 10 percent of the Syrian refugee population, a population perceived by the UNHCR to be the most vulnerable group in need of resettlement by the end of 2018 (ibid.). As well, since the conflict began, many countries of the global north have tightened their border controls and imposed a "non-entrée" regime against people from Syria. This regime, which I discuss in the next section, betokens "a commitment to ensuring that refugees shall not be allowed to arrive" (Hathaway and Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2015: 241). Generally speaking, it controls refugees' mobility and to prevent them from reaching the global north, where they might seek asylum and protection. It distances them spatially and isolates them in Syria and neighbouring countries, without adequate protection and legal or safe routes to other destinations such as Europe. Yet, rather than reducing the actual numbers of refugees, these restrictions have eliminated safe and legal routes for them. As a result, many pursue more dangerous routes towards other destinations, where they believe they can find protection and refuge. Thus, about one million Syrian nationals applied for asylum in the EU between 2011 and June 2017 (UNHCR, 2017), creating an alleged "European crisis of migration" (Bundy, 2016: 51).

However, as I explained earlier it is not so much their numbers as their precarious conditions of travel that make this crisis unique. I examine those journeys below in chapters two, three, and four, and five, where I focus on individual refugees' perspectives and draw on their own stories in order to reveal the impact of the global crisis of protection on their lives. The reminder of this chapter examines, first, historical development of the international refugee regime, to understand how its limitations have allowed the current, massive crisis, and, second, governance today: how states today limit their international obligations towards refugees and circumvent them by strategies of containment and deterrence, leading to such a widespread crisis of protection.

Governing Refugees Historically and Today

The historical development of the international refugee regime

The contemporary refugee regime emerged in the aftermath of the First World War when the map of Europe was redrawn and the populations of old empires were reorganized (Gatrell, 2013). After the war, Russians fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 were looked upon as the main contributors to a 'refugee crisis' in Europe (Bundy, 2016). Armenian and Greek refugees escaping the Ottoman Empire formed another 'refugee crisis' that attracted the attention of the League of Nations, which sought solutions through the Minorities Protection Treaties. Hannah Arendt (1951: 275) argues that these treaties were designed to preserve the new European politics of nationalization and the state-system order:

> The Minority Treaties said in plain language what until then had been only implied in the working system of nation-state, namely that only nationals could be citizens, only people of the same national origin could enjoy the full protection of legal institutions, that persons of different nationality needed some law of exception until or unless they were completely assimilated and divorced from their origin.

Through this hypothesis, Arendt links the new states and the production of stateless individuals. She explains that individuals who left their countries of origin to seek refuge elsewhere became "stateless" and lost their rights as citizens. Their 'refugeeness' made them "foreign" and "exceptional." The League of Nations appointed a High Commissioner for Refugees (Fridtjof Nansen), which issued travel documents such as the "Nansen passport" to facilitate refugees' mobility, but the provision of refugee aid was mostly voluntary and ad hoc, with no effective institutional framework (Gatrell, 2013).

During and after the Second World War, the numbers of refugees displaced across Europe increased dramatically. Jews fled the German atrocities, and Italian and Spanish citizens escaped the Fascist regimes in their respective countries (Bundy, 2016). By mid-1945, there were more than 40 million displaced individuals, in addition to 13 million ethnic Germans expelled from the Soviet Union and other central and eastern European countries (UNHCR, 2000). In response, many European states sought to control their movements by introducing restrictive procedures such as nationality screening and eligibility checks (Lui, 2004). The institutional structures of today's refugee regime began to emerge. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) had been established in 1943 and managed refugee camps and resettled millions of refugees within Europe (Bundy, 2016). UNRRA was then replaced by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in April 1946. The IRO facilitated asylum applications and large-scale mobility of European refugees, including groups of Soviet citizens and Greeks who fled their countries before the Second World War, in addition to the thousands of Jewish refugees who were transported from Europe to Palestine under the British mandate there (Marrus, 1985). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

was set up in 1949, and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 1951, codifying international obligations towards refugees.

These origins of the world's refugee regime reveal its Eurocentric nature. It emerged to help European states manage the large numbers of postwar refugees (Barnett, 2002), which, according to Lui (2004), challenged the new order of the European state system. The system, she shows, is state-centric and helped forge the modern state system and national citizenship. Her thesis suggests that its creation was as much about preserving the international system of nation-states as about assisting refugees (ibid.).

This Eurocentric focus of the regime resulted in the neglect of millions of refugees elsewhere who were dramatically affected by the war and other regional conflicts, including China, India, and Pakistan. According to the UNHCR, "It was the movements of people across the European continent, which had been so devastated by war, that most concerned the Allied powers" (UNHCR, 2000:13).

Marrus (1985) proposes that the 1951 Convention's narrow definition (in article 1) of "refugee" reflects European influence vis-à-vis the concept of protection. It related to individual reasons for fearing persecution and focused on the cause of flight (Kushner and Knox, 1999). It related only to people from Europe who became refugees as a result of the Second World War (Johnson, 2011). Consequently, article 1 defined a refugee as a person who:

> as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself 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. (UN, 1951: 152)

Article 1 thus clearly presents political instability as a legitimate cause for flight but ignores economic reasons. The Convention's 1967 Protocol removed the earlier document's time and geographical limitations.[10] The Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984) of the Organization of American States (OAS) expanded the legal definition of refugee in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol to include "persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order" (UNHCR, 1984: 36). Yet, according to refugee-law scholar Audrey Macklin (1996: 119), the definition still excluded massive groups: "Simply through adopting this legal definition, millions of women (and men) are already eliminated, not because the impetus for their flight was gender-specific, but because war, starvation, and environmental disasters 'don't count' for purposes of the legal definition." The Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Refugee Convention (1969) described a refugee as:

> Every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality. (UNHCR, 1974: 3)

The additional definitions by the OAS and the OAU addressed issues such as "external aggression, occupation, (and) foreign domination" as well as referring to "persons who have fled

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[10] Article I of the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967) states that "the term, 'refugee' shall, except as regards the application of paragraph 3 of this article, mean any person within the definition of article I of the Convention as if the words 'As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and …' and the words '… a result of such events', in article I A (2) were omitted" (UNHCR, 2010: 46). The same article also states that 'The present Protocol shall be applied by the States Parties hereto without any geographic limitation" (ibid.).

their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence" (ibid.). Consequently, and despite the universal application of the 1967 Protocol, the limitations arising from the 1951 Convention have facilitated the continuing exclusion of millions of refugees from the global south from the international protection regime.

The case of Palestinian refugees, which I discussed above, presents a powerful example of how the original design of international protection failed them. Since the formation of Israel in May 1948 eased the pressure of refugees in Europe, the statelessness it created for another people received short shrift. The latter's exclusion from the international refugee regime illustrates manipulation of protection policies to serve powerful states' interests and leave certain groups of refugees to suffer through, as it turned out, a series of displacements and vulnerabilities. The establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in 1949 appeared to offer a solution but provided these refugees little legal protection or access to social rights. Their historical exclusion helps explain the failure of international protection for millions of refugees who have no access to permanent protection or social rights because of the circumstances of their displacement, which I will discuss in the chapters that follow.

The three solutions sought by the regime -- repatriation, return to country of origin, or resettlement and integration in a third country -- were also Eurocentric by definition, tailored to align with the political and economic interests of European states (Chimni, 2004). They were designed to "re-order" refugees (Lui, 2004) and govern migration as part of a state-centric regime. They seek to return refugees to their former subjectivity as "citizens" of a state, reflecting sovereign political, demographic, and economic priorities that relate to protection not

of refugees but of international state system (ibid.). Chimni (2004) explains how, after 1945, Western states did not favour repatriation of refugees due to Cold War politics and to the economic needs of reconstructing Europe. UNRRA, for example, helped repatriate refugees, but the United States opposed its work of repatriating Soviet refugees to the Soviet Union. As the major donor, the United States could refuse to renew the organization's mandate (UNHCR, 2000). As a result, UNRRA was replaced in this effort by the International Refugee Organization (IRO), founded in 1946, which mostly resettled refugees rather than repatriating them. During its mandate, which lasted until 1952, the IRO facilitated repatriation of 73,000 people and helped resettle one million (ibid.). The IRO gave way in 1952 to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), set up in 1949 under the control of the UN General Assembly (UNHCR, 2000). The UNHCR was created to act as the main international agency to protect refugees and seek permanent solutions for their displacement (ibid.). Yet it operated under extreme restrictions and limitations, due to "the desire of the United States and its Western allies to create an international refugee agency that would neither pose any threat to the national sovereignty of the Western powers nor impose any new financial obligations on them" (UNHCR, 2000: 19).

Since its establishment, the UNHCR has been subject to "non-humanitarian" factors including the economic needs in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, as outlined above, in addition to the politics of the Cold War. The United States, for example, refused to contribute funding to the organization due to the UNHCR's activities behind the "Iron Curtin", which dramatically affected the organization's ability to achieve its mandate (UNHCR, 2000). Yet, the two significant moments in the UNHCR's history, as identified by the organization itself, were in fact rooted in the politics of the Cold War. The first "defining moment" was the involvement of the UNHCR in the crisis of Hungarian refugees in 1956 (ibid.) and the second was the UNHCR's

initial operation outside Europe when the organization assisted Chinese refugees in Hong Kong in 1957. In both cases, people were escaping communist governments and assisting them enabled the organization to secure more support from the United States (ibid.).

These "non-humanitarian" factors continue to influence the UNHCR's performance and the international refugee regime. The UNHCR received a start-up, temporary three-year mandate in 1949. Its founders sought mainly to resolve the postwar European refugee crisis. The mandate was renewed every three years until 2003, when the UN recognized that this periodic renewal was unnecessary and made its mandate permanent (UNHCR, 2014a). Its decades of uncertainty clearly contradicted its assigned goal of finding permanent solutions for refugees, particularly when refugees no longer were temporarily "out of place" and their displacement had become a structural feature of the international state system.

Also limiting the UNHCR's effectiveness are its lack of financial autonomy and its lack of political impartiality. It receives a small administrative budget from the UN General Assembly and depends mainly on voluntary, often-unpredictable contributions from donor states. As well, the top ten donors contribute up to 75 per cent of its budget (Milner, 2008). Consequently, the UNHCR's endeavors to assist refugees have always been subject to economic, political, and cultural factors and the need to accommodate the interests of major donors, most of them from the global north (Betts, 2013).

This section has addressed the deficiencies in the regime as a universal system of protection and humanitarian assistance for refugees. Migration and refugee scholars debate the roots and causes of those deficiencies. Hathaway (2016), for example, confirms that refugees are experiencing less protection at the global level. He explains that the 1951 Convention astutely

"gives priority to allowing refugees to make their own decisions about how best to respond to their predicament" (Hathaway, 2007:364), But, he points out, many states' performances and practices vis-à-vis international norms of protection relate directly to their desire to reduced their commitments to protect refugees -- hence the global crisis of protection. Hathaway argues that states' deterrence and containment of refugees are the main source of the current crisis. He thus opposes attempts to "renegotiate" the 1951 Convention and calls for better strategies to "operationalize that treaty in a way that works dependably, and fairly" (Hathaway, 2016: 99).

Against Hathaway's argument, critical refugee and migration scholars note that a number of intrinsic limitations impede the regime's performance and have engendered the global crisis of protection (Lui, 2004; Scheel and Squire, 2014; De Genova et al., 2015). For example, De Genova et al. (2015: 71) see the regime as "highly political," "partitioning," and "authoritarian." First, according to De Genova, its political nature flows from the 1951 Convention's definition of "refugee," which he finds state-centric and territorial, since the right to claim refuge requires crossing a state border. Second, the regime creates an either/or partition through its determination of status, which either grants or denies refugee status. Third, it is "authoritarian," since it requires individuals to behave according to a set of disciplinary norms and to follow governance rules in their camps and displacement zones in order to receive protection as refugees. For example, long processes of determination may finally reject refugees' applications and deny them protection. The "well-behaved" refugees are expected to return voluntarily to their countries when they are asked (ibid.). Further, in the camps, refugees must obey the regime and are subject to programs of assistance and aid allocated according to donors' priorities, regardless of refugees' actual needs and aspirations.

Governing Refugees Today

The refugee literature extensively addresses the role of sovereign states' interests in shaping protection of refugees and has linked it to the limits the regime enforces, which lead to exclusion of millions of refugees from the structures of international protection (Betts, 2011; Gamlen and March, 2011; Lui. 2004). For example, Lui (2004) explains how in a world articulated around the order of nation-states and citizenship, the regime acts as a model of "policing the non-citizens" (ibid.), where refugees are "anomalies" vis-à-vis the state-citizen order and need governing so they no longer subvert the international order and its pillars of the nation-state and the territoriality of citizenship (ibid.). Theoretically, international human rights and refugee law guarantee refugees access to universal human rights. Yet it is almost impossible for them to realize these rights when they are not members within a state. In fact, refugees, who leave their countries because their state is unable or unwilling to protect them, lose their privileges as citizens and enter a status of "rightlessness." This notion of "rightlessness" brings to the fore Arendt's argument about rights – that they can be protected only within the structure of a nation-state, which is the only political community that can guarantee its citizens' rights and well-being (Arendt, 1951). As a result, the right of asylum, as an international concept, is actually subject to the politics of nation-states (ibid.). This state-centric notion of rights grounds a system that subjects refugees to states' sovereign decision to deny them entry to the state-citizen framework. Thus the sovereign structures protecting the rights of a state's citizens simultaneously exclude refugees and deprive them of their "right to have rights" (ibid.). They do so by making refugees "non-citizens" with no access to political membership and therefore to rights.

According to Hathaway (2007: 353), the presence of refugees outside their own state brings them within "the unconditional protective competence of the international community." Yet, I maintain, some states of the global north, despite their international obligations, are trying to evade this "unconditional protective competence" by containing refugees in their home regions and by deterring those who would search for protection elsewhere. This unwillingness derives substantially from their perception of refugees as a burden (Hathaway, 2007) -- "uninvited migrants" who cross a state's borders irregularly but whom, by the 1951 Convention, they should protect rather than subject to discrimination, penalization, or refoulement (UNHCR, 2010: 3). According to the Convention, states should protect refugees so as to guarantee their rights, including access to education, work, health care, legal services, and all necessary documents, such as travel papers to facilitate mobility (UNHCR, 2010: 3). In reality, however, they perceive refuges as "irregular migrants" who challenge states' abilities to decide who may cross their borders and harness social welfare and citizenship rights.

It is this unauthorized movement that concerns states (Johnson, 2011): refugees challenge a "state's sovereignty and authority over migration" (Hathaway, 2007). They undermine states' bordering practices, which are, as Schuster and Solomos (2002) describe, "Selective by nature." These notions -- of governing migration selectively and of refugees as threatening this ability -- lead some states of the global north to treat them as "unwanted" people to contain and keep in their own, home region. Many states tend to govern migration in a way that protects domestic markets, national security, and sovereignty, social cohesion, and, in some countries, even cultural homogeneity (Casetles and Loughna, 2004). They may see refugees as a threat and potential burden.

An official narrative against refugees and irregular migrants may result in what Koser (2010)

calls "protection gaps," leaving millions of irregular migrants and refugees without protection

and vulnerable to human rights abuses and exploitation. Koser (2010) relates these gaps to the

absence of a global authority on migration, and Castles (2003), to embedded elements of

globalization. Refugee protection policies thus reflect asymmetrical structures of power between

wealthier countries in the global north and those in the poorer global south. In this sense,

governance of global migration, including of refugees, is a complex set of norms, structures, and

actors, which facilitates this global process of inclusion and exclusion of people through control,

division, and policing. This understanding of migration governance speaks to Walter's definition

of migration policy as "a form of dispersed police that is exercised over the world's population,

ordering, dividing, distributing but also connecting populations and territories" (Walter, 2015:

13). Thus refugees who journey in search of protection become subject to discriminatory

structures of governance and in effect "an issue of international relations" (Lui, 2004: 121),

where norms of "burden shifting," or "refugee exporting," prevail. States may invoke or create

mechanisms to minimize their obligations towards refugees and neglect "the unconditional

protective competence of the international community" (Hathaway, 2007: 352). They may

categorize refugees as "irregular migrants" to manage and control, even marginalize, criminalize,

and/or fully exclude them (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008).

Since the 1960s, many countries in the global north have increasingly restricted and excluded

refugees, particularly in response to decolonization struggles and conflicts in the south after the

1960s. Refugees from Africa and Asia were fleeing war zones but did not serve the ideological

and political contestations of the Cold War. As a result, many European states saw refugees not

as victims of a larger ideological struggle but as social and cultural threats and an economic

"burden." The terminology of "genuine" refugees and "bogus" asylum seekers surfaced increasingly in the public discourse of refugee protection. As Bloch and Schuster (2002: 399) argue, "The 'morally untouchable category of political refugee' has been deconstructed and replaced with the figure of exploitive and criminal 'bogus' asylum seeker." Refugees were perceived as opportunistic migrants who move to the global north to improve their living conditions, attracted by generous welfare schemes (ibid.).

Restrictive policies often went hand in hand with a shift in the public perception of refugees. Some people may regard refugees as simply victims in need of charity or humanitarian assistance rather than as human beings who have demonstrated political agency in challenging and fleeing war and other forms of oppression and persecution (Johnson, 2011). As Johnson proposes, this reframing of what it means to be a refugee reflects a shift in perception from that of "a heroic male, fleeing for his politic beliefs," to that of a passive group easy to govern, ideally away from the global north (ibid.). Such depoliticization transforms refugees from political figures who have "found (their) ways of mastering an uncertain future" (Arendt, 1943: 111) to individuals whose lives are "desperately simple, and empty. No homes, no work, no decision to take today" (Johnson, 2011: 1029, quoting Soguk, 1999: 9). This new representation means that the public, media, and policy often imagine them as powerless masses of women and children who deserve aid and humanitarian assistance. It is critical to note, however, that this aid is expected to occur yet in their home regions (Johnson, 2011). Such images of refugees are employed in the global north to engage public support for humanitarian aid to the global south (ibid.). Johnson (2011) explains how this political act of representation shapes refugee policies and stems from the perception of refugees from the global south as the "other," who presents a potential threat to the state-order of the global north. Johnson refers to Chimni's (1998) notion

of a "myth of difference," whereby refugees lose their individualistic features in a constructed mass of powerless and nameless people, essentially different from European refugees. States of the global north, Chimni (1998: 351) maintains, may use this "myth of difference" to decontextualize refugee crises in general. This reframing of the narrative ignores historical backgrounds and conditions of instability and inequality, which are the main causes of refugee movement. These conditions, which Chimni relates to the "geopolitical spread of capitalism and the politics of imperialism" (ibid.), underlay refugee crises initiated by the two world wars and the anti-colonial struggles in the global south. Yet some states in the global north tend to decontextualize and belittle the refugee crises arising from the global south. They may present such conflicts as emerging from local political or social concerns, largely ignoring the power dynamics of political and cultural subordination, in addition to the economic inequalities imposed on the global south by the global north (ibid.). Further, the "myth of difference" normalizes their rejection and deterrence vis-à-vis refugees from the global south.

This mistrust -- a "crisis of authenticity" (Johnson, 2011) -- means that refugees from the global south must prove themselves "genuine" refugees, who suffer from persecution. Refugees are increasingly less welcomed in parts of the global north and may be subject to restrictive measures designed primarily to reject them and return them to their regions of origin -- they become "undesirables" subject to institutionalized exclusion and distancing (Agier, 2011). This systemic rejection has helped engender a public "culture of fear" and increasing xenophobia against them (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008), especially since the "war on terror" and the events of '9/11' (in New York, 11 September 2001). The more recent overall securitization of societies in the global north has subjected refugees from the global south to new forms of restrictive governing policies, which often lead to extreme vulnerabilities and exclusion for them (Bigo,

2002). After 9/11, notions of asylum and protection moved gradually from the purview of

international law to frameworks of national security – a sea change. Hyndman and Mountz

(2008: 253) perceive "a shift from a paradigm of refugee protection to prioritizing the protection

of national security interests." They note that the existing legal norms of protection for asylum

seekers and refugees have been limited significantly, whereas rejection and violence prevail and

have been normalized. Hyndman and Mountz (2004: 254) explain:

> The threat of migrant invasion is underwritten by securitization; a
> governmentality based on mistrust and fear of the uninvited other. The
> mobilization of fear to securitize asylum serves a politically powerful
> resource for states that need legitimate grounds for extraordinary measures,
> such as exclusion from their territories by potentially legitimate legal
> subjects, namely asylum seekers.

A Shift of Emphasis

Global northern states have been re-prioritizing the three solutions for refugees -- repatriation,

return to country of origin, or resettlement and integration in a third country -- with a shift of

emphasis from resettlement towards repatriation (Chimni, 2004), regardless of the poor, even

inhumane conditions in refugee camps and hosting communities in the global south. The

UNHCR has been influenced particularly by global northern states' strategies of containing

refugees in their own regions (through camps, for example) (Chimni, 1998).

In recent years, UNHCR operations have favoured mass repatriation over resettlement.

Resettlement clearly relies on states' willingness to provide space for refugees, which

governments can easily reduce by letting in fewer refugees. In response, the UNHCR

rationalized its operations as "emergency or crisis relief" (Hayden, 2009: 258) -- humanitarian

aid in crisis zones and homeland protection. States can appear to uphold their international

commitments while reducing them in practice, by containing and deterring refugees through "non-entrée" regimes (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Hathaway, 2015). These authors see a "schizophrenic approach," where such governments avoid their obligations towards refugees but uphold the global regime. Some have even convinced states in the global south to take in more refugees as part of their own international commitments, thereby containing refugees within the region (ibid.). Further, a number of states have found ways to control refugees' movements in order to keep refugees away from the global north. Restrictive policies include: containing refugees in their home regions through humanitarian assistance, applying protection in refugees' regions of origin, using "non-entrée" regimes to keep asylum seekers out of the global north, and deterring refugees by enforcing physical borders.

Containment through humanitarian assistance

Policies designed to contain refugees in their regions of origin rely on humanitarian relief and homeland-oriented solutions (Crips, 2001). Humanitarianism here shifts from traditional caring for refugees' welfare to governing policies and practices to control refugees in the first place. Hyndman (2000: 3) describes an "increasingly well-funded and politicized process of balancing the needs of refugees and other displaced persons against the interests of states." This combination of care and control crystallizes through a set of social and cultural relations (Ilcan, 2013). At the international level, humanitarianism serves to control certain groups of the world's population and keep them out of the global north (Agier, 2011). It thus safeguards the global north's perception of the world order by erecting barriers that close off the northern world to outsiders. Agier (2011) suggests that, the more globalized our world becomes, the more walls we see around us. In this sense, refugees from the global south are not forgotten but instead subject

to a global mobility regime designed principally to maintain the nation-states of the global north. This governing process excludes and spatially distances the "undesirables," who await their fates, however dire, in their camps, far from the global north (ibid.).

Many countries in the global north are normalizing such containment of refugees by supporting international humanitarian assistance in regions of origin rather than resettlement as a way to protect refugees. For example, the UNHCR is increasingly offering humanitarian aid to refugees in their home regions with less involvement in resettlement activities. The UN's allocations for that purpose, however, illustrate a massive gap. In January 2017, the global requirement was $22.5 billion (U.S.) needed by 93.5 million people in 33 crisis-affected countries, whereas UN appeals for aid generated only $77.2 million, for a shortfall of $22.4 billion (OCHA, 2017) – a minimal commitment, showing how unsustainable are the containment strategies implemented by the global north.

Protection practices at refugees' regions of origin

A second way for governments in the global north to control refugees' movement is by re-prioritizing the first two of the three "durable solutions" of the protection regime -- repatriation to the home country, integration in the host country, and resettlement in a third country. Johnson (2011) argues that this change emerged because of the preponderance of refugees coming from the global south. UNHCR records for 2015 show 21.3 million refugees globally, most of them hosted in the global south, and 107,100 people resettled worldwide (UNHCR, 2016).

Furthermore, global northern states are creating new norms for protection to contain refugees, as in the "right to remain" approach, which encourages them to stay in their areas under UNHCR

supervision. Yet, according to Hathaway (2001), this practice actually does little to protect people in "imminent danger." Thus the "right to remain is in essence not a right of refugees at all, but is the right of governments to avoid confrontation with the needs of refugees" (ibid. 43). Hathaway refers to other such practices, including "safe havens" in the Bosnian war, "no-fly zones" for the Kurds in northern Iraq, and the situation at the Kibeho refugee camp in Rwanda (ibid.). The horrifying events and lack of protection in such zones exemplify how these norms do not protect refugees but rather serve the political agendas of powerful states, which aim primarily to govern refugees and control their mobility in their own, home regions.

Non-entrée regimes and externalization of borders

States are also working to circumvent their international obligations by creating "non-entrée" regimes. Territorially oriented systems of national asylum require refugees to cross a state's borders in order to claim asylum there (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Thus, to cut back on their obligations while sustaining the global refugee regime, some states in the global north attempt "non-entrée" regimes, which Hathaway and Gammeltoft-Hansen see as "ensuring that refugees shall not be allowed to arrive" (2015: 241). This system limits refugees' access to protection by controlling their mobility and excluding them from the global north (Johnson, 2011). Its conventional form uses legal and administrative strategies such as restrictive visa regulations and sanctions on carriers. Its restrictions on mobility include externalization of border controls and linking trade and development agreements to migration control, which effectively outsources and shifts the refugee burden. For Hathaway and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2015), "non-entrée" regimes deter would-be refugees in their countries of origin, which act as gatekeepers in exchange for trade and development assistance: "With poorer states of origin and

transit often willing for economic, political, and other reasons to serve as the gatekeepers to the developed world, wealthier countries believe that they can insulate themselves from liability for refugee deterrence by having such action take place under the sovereign authority of another country" (2015: 249). Such policies spatially distance refugees from the global north, where they may believe they can have better access to protection and rights.

In another element of the regime, externalization of borders, states outsource border control to a third party or stretch its operations beyond national boundaries (Casas et al., 2010). Hyndman and Mountz (2008) see this as a "geography of exclusion" or "respatialization of asylum," which shifts protection from the "legal" to the "political" domain of governance (ibid.), so as to deter asylum seekers. Some global northern states are immorally offering "cash for containment," whereby, according to Chimni (2004: 68), they "pay for the care of refugees in exchange for being refugee free states." The most notorious instance perhaps is Australia's "Pacific Solution," in effect since the 1990s (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008), however, in 2001, Prime Minister John Howard announced publicly, during his re-election campaign, that he would not allow asylum seekers to reach Australia's shores (Mountz, 2011). Following the election, Canberra instructed the Australian navy to intercept vessels in territorial waters and transfer asylum seekers to offshore detention centers it had set up in the Christmas Island, on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, and in Nauru (Parliament of Australia, 2012). It signed agreements with Fiji, Nauru, and New Zealand for them to accept asylum seekers under the aegis of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (ibid.). Since asylum seekers could not enter the Australian mainland, they could not apply for asylum. Although the "Pacific Solution" ended officially in 2008, the outsourcing of detention facilities on Pacific islands continued, and new agreements arose for such places on Nauru and Manus Island (Parliament of Australia, 2012).

Readmission and safe-third-country agreements between states in Europe and the global south also externalize and outsource border controls, using a third country to deter and detain refugees and irregular migrants (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008; Rygiel, 2011). Since the Tampere European Council Summit in October 1999 and the EU-African Summit in Lisbon in 2007, the EU has worked closely with governments in the global south, mainly in north and west Africa, on migration control and policing through strategic partnerships and neighbourhood policies that link migration control to aid, trade, and development (Casas et al., 2010). The Global Approach to Migration (GAM), for instance, which the EU initiated in 2005, links migration to other sectors of international relations and development by extending border controls into a third country – a neighbour or a non-neighbour country of the EU (ibid.). Within that framework, the EU controls border policy and immigration by cooperating with other states, which manage regional protection and refugee movements (ibid.). Hence the GAM framework keeps refugees away from the global north, with a third country protecting them that may not have signed the 1951 Convention to guarantee it is 'safe.'

Through the 'EU-Turkey deal,' signed 18 March 2016, the EU shifts protection to a third party (Turkey) and keeps out refugees. Starting 20 March 2016, Greece (an EU member) would return illegal migrants from Turkey without assessing their claims. By the deal's "one-to-one initiative," for every Syrian whom Turkey readmitted from Greece, the EU would resettle another Syrian from Turkey (European Council, 2006). Turkey agreed to enhance security "to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration opening from Turkey to the EU" (ibid.), while the EU would liberalize visa restrictions for Turkish citizens and disburse €3 billion for the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (ibid.). Various human rights and civil society organizations argued that all parties to the deal were seeking to evade responsibility for refugees (Rygiel,

Baban, and Ilcan, 2016). Some criticized it particularly for "undermining the right to asylum" and jeopardizing the rights of refugees detained in Greece with limited access to asylum (DRC, 2016). On the deal's first anniversary, Amnesty International announced: "The EU-Turkey deal has been a disaster for the thousands who have been left stranded in a dangerous, desperate and seemingly endless limbo" (Amnesty International, 2017). This status includes detainees on the Greek islands and Syrians returned to Turkey, where more than 2.7 million Syrian refugees live, many of them with insufficient protection and limited access to education, health care, and employment (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Rygiel, Baban, and Ilcan, 2016).

In February 2017, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) reported a French and German proposal for "a crisis-resistant Common European Asylum System (CEAS) to face any potential new 'migration crises'." The policy note cites the EU-Turkey deal as a "blueprint for future European asylum policy," as Europe seeks to cooperate with its neighbours to protect its external borders. The note also proposes: "All those entering the EU would be removed to non-EU countries willing to host them, and kept there in conditions which minimally guarantee their survival and non-removal to unsafe countries" (ECRE, 2017).

Enforcing physical borders

Despite all their attempts at containment, governments in the global north have been unable to prevent refugees from arriving at their borders, seeking asylum and rights. In response, some securitize their borders with walls and fences to physically keep out "irregular migrants," including refugees. In Europe, even though the Schengen agreement (1985) lifted most internal borders, some states have reinforced their external borders and harmonized the legal frameworks of border control and asylum standards (Vaughan-Williams, 2015), securitizing

migration to transform borders and further limit access to asylum and to protection (2015: 20). This process spread globally after 9/11 and the multiple bombings in European capitals, especially in Madrid (2004) and London (2005). However, it was the political unrest in the Middle East after 2010, which led masses of individuals to escape the violence for protection in Europe. By the end of 2012, Greek authorities completed a four-meter-tall fence, equipped with thermal cameras, at the land border with Turkey, along the Evros River -- the "shortest, and safest route for migrants and refugees" (*World Post*, 2015). In 2015, Bulgaria constructed a fifty-mile-long razor-wire fence, fifteen feet tall and five feet wide and equipped with infra-red motion-sensitive cameras and monitored with armed guards, to seal its borders with Turkey and block 'illegal' crossings (*Mail Online*, 2015). The UNHCR spokesman in Bulgaria explained that "the fence is there to keep people out but it means asylum seekers undertake more perilous journeys and pay higher rates to smugglers" (ibid.).

In response to the massive arrivals of refugees in Europe in 2015, European territories constructed additional walls and fences, stranding thousands of refugees at militarized and heavily securitized borders inside Europe. In November 2015, Macedonian soldiers erected a metal fence at the border with Greece (*The Guardian*, 2015). In September and October 2015, Hungary had sealed its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia (*CNBC*, 2015). In August 2016, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced an additional fence at Hungary's border with Serbia "to keep out major new waves of migrants" (*Reuters*, 2016). The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, was formed in 2004 to manage operational cooperation at Europe's external borders, but it focuses on prevention and deterrence. Critics have often accused it of abusing migrants and refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2011, 2015, 2016).

Europe's practices of containment and deterrence keep refugees in their home regions and control them by "burden-shifting." The official narrative about "unauthorised" arrivals in Europe during the summer of 2015, which I discussed above, illustrates this approach. Accounts often presented refugees as "others" who threatened Europe's political, social, and cultural identity and reframed their unexpected arrival as a "European crisis of migration."

Shrinking Spaces of Asylum

I explained above how governments develop practices to control the movement of refugees in order to deter them from entering the global north. They may tailor humanitarian aid, offer protection in home regions, and set up "non-entrée" regimes. Nevertheless, such procedures do not stop desperate refugees from seeking protection and new opportunities for better lives, but rather limit safe pathways for them and significantly increase the "human cost" (Spijkerboer, 2007) of border crossing. As a result, refugees may undertake precarious journeys through often-treacherous routes that can lead to their illegalization and criminalization. Refugees continue to risk crossing the Aegean and Mediterranean (Tazzioli, 2015). If they survive, they must then cross through several countries in southern and central Europe, where they will encounter heavily securitized borders and inhumane detention. This journey transforms them from refugees, deserving of protection, to illegal migrants, supposedly needing control (Schuster, 2011). Arrival in the global north does not guarantee them access to rights and protection. Macklin (2005) refers to refugees' "discursive" disappearance in the West: states reduce their international duties to protect refugees while "doing everything possible to repel the spontaneous arrival of migrants likely to seek asylum" (2005: 367). Governments are increasingly reducing standards of protection and asylum so as to discourage asylum seekers. Such practices create legal limbo for asylum seekers and limit their access to social rights. Liza Schuster (2011) outlines some of the

mechanisms European governments use to restrict asylum seeking. According to Schuster, the Dublin Regulation (Dublin III, 2013), which governs assessment of asylum applications and involves EU member states and the EURODAC database (which stores fingerprints of asylum applicants), aims to "reduce the number of those able to apply for asylum to an absolute minimum" (2011: 401). The Swedish case, which I discussed above, presents a stark example of shrinking asylum spaces in the global north, which is in effect turning refugees who travel to Europe irregularly into asylum seekers, subject to national domestic asylum rules. As Hathaway (2001: 43) explains, "Under the current international regime, refugees who arrive in an asylum state are solely the legal responsibility of that state. As such, the distribution of state responsibility towards refugees is based primarily upon accidents of geography and the relative ability of states to control their borders." It was the unauthorized mass arrivals in 2015 that some officials perceived as a crisis but actually reflected a global breakdown of protection because the global north shirked its international commitments.

Conclusion

Some European officials' perceptions in 2015 reflect how the arrival of more than one million people caught states in the global north offguard, as they had anticipated that refugees would remain in camps and hosting communities in the global south. The situation has in fact proved that refugees continue to challenge global frameworks of migration governance and decide to claim international protection as refugees and as humans in the global north. They do this despite the daunting combination of containment practices and "non-entrée" regimes that have sought to deter asylum claims. Such challenges have upset the global order and created what some officials term "the migration and refugee crisis in Europe." Reece Jones (2016: 180) concludes: "By refusing to abide by wall, map, property line, border, identity document, or legal regime, mobile

people upset the state's schemes of exclusion, control, and violence. They do this simply by moving."

In this chapter I have shown that the arrivals of refugees in Europe in 2015 reflect a global crisis of *protection* emerging because the international regime for protecting refugees seems not to be working. Further, I have illustrated how states in the global north have altered the norms of protection to serve their own priorities and reduce their international duties towards refugees and to that end have reshaped the protection regime to contain and deter refugees. The UNHCR's increasing focus on aid and relief, its re-prioritization of durable solutions for refugees, with less emphasis on resettlement, and its insufficient humanitarian aid and minimal quotas of resettled refugees all reflect the global crisis of protection through the structures of the international regime for protecting refugees.

In this chapter, I have critically examined the regime's historical development and its performance in order to explore the roots and relations of the more recent global crisis of protection. I showed the links between the crisis and the regime's intrinsic deficiencies, present at its creation. Set up to resettle European refugees after the Second World War, it has continued to operate substantially according to the interests and preferences of the global north. I also showed protection norms and structures shifting frequently in tandem with the politics of the global north, even though most refugees since the 1960s have come from the global south. These historical developments help explain the "crisis of solidarity" in responses to the Syrian refugee crisis and some European officials' construction of the arrival of more than one million "unauthorized" individuals in 2015 as a "crisis of migration." These unexpected arrivals disturbed the sense of order by contesting states' ability to govern refugees. They exposed the failure of the global

refugee regime and revealed not a "crisis of migration" but rather a crisis of protection, as some European countries failed to honour their international commitments and refused to assist refugees.

The regime's inability to respond was painfully visible. According to its own standards, it was supposed to contain refugees in their own regions and govern them remotely through humanitarian operations -- which, not incidentally, proved woefully inadequate. Yet these refugees dared to confront the norms of containment and deterrence. They managed, despite all odds, to reach the global north to claim protection. In so doing, they posed an unexpected challenge for those states and forced them to reconsider and reframe their policies of protection and asylum, as Sweden did. By their unauthorized movement, they exposed the regime's intrinsic paradox: refugees, who deserve protection, face states' sovereign decision to (not) allow them in. In fact, such government decisions force refugees to risk their lives and travel in unauthorized ways and through challenging, sometimes-inhumane conditions in order to seek asylum and claim their right of protection as refugees, and that exercise of political agency transforms their positionalities and identities, as we see in the following chapters, about refugees' journeys in search of protection.

As well, this chapter has considered the system of protection through the eyes of government leaders and policy makers and of migration and refugee scholars. Later chapters add further complexities by showing what this system looks like from the ground, as I hear from those people actually affected by it. I use their stories to challenge the official narrative of refugees as powerless victims or as a threat. Their accounts provide alternative knowledge of the crisis, as people whose lives have been affected by the failing regime of protection and the bordering

practices of states. Examining the concept of the refugee journey draws our attention towards the actual lived experiences of refugees, as they move in search of the type of protection sorely lacking in the system. As I discussed above, examining refugees' stories on the journey shifts our focus from policy discussions to the narrative of people who are often ignored by international policy makers. I challenge this neglect by positioning refugees as the prime source of knowledge for my work about the journey and the crisis in general. Their stories of their journeys will reveal the impact of war, lack of protection, and deterrence against refugees during their search for safety and acceptance. Their words illustrate the "human cost" of the crisis of protection.

Chapter Two: Conceptualizing the Refugee Journey

Introduction

In chapter one, I challenged the dominant narrative favored by countries in the global north about "the European migration crisis." I showed that advocates have reconstituted the structures of international protection to contain and deter refugees in their own regions so they will not threaten the international state order. I explored the shifts policies and practices for international protection in an increasingly divided world, which often subverts protection to put people "back in place" in the global south, with or without protection. I showed how some countries in the global north are backing away from their international duties towards refugees and block their access to Europe. In the resulting "global crisis of protection," failing protection, containment, and deterrence lead to immense suffering, sometimes tragedy, when refugees from the global south, including Syria, dwell in poor, even horrific conditions. When their lives become unbearable, refugees may undertake "unauthorized" journeys, which only make them more vulnerable. It is this notion of "crisis" that I seek to discuss in the following chapters, as I explore the experiences of desperate refugees who see no option but to journey towards asylum and rights.

As I discussed above, examining refugees' experiences during their search offers us alternative, real-life knowledge from people who have lived through the failing regime of protection and the bordering practices of states. This new, rich, primary source challenges the official narrative, which usually omits or misrepresents refugees. Instead, I bring their voices to the fore and present them as real individuals. This approach situates refugees as the prime source of knowledge about their journeys and experiences en route. Their first-hand accounts enrich the scholarship of migration and refugee studies by adding their insights and perspectives, and, as I

noted above, they show how bordering practices create illegality and increase the "human cost" (Spijkerboer, 2007) of crossing.

As I suggested above, a refugee journey that starts as a simple response to the horrors of war and persecution, or as a survival move in a search for protection, may evolve into a complex act of resistance, even of political agency, which involves various transformations of identity and positionality. By deciding to leave their home regions for the global north, refugees exercise agency and reject the sometimes-precarious status and often-dehumanizing conditions of camps and host communities. Though vulnerable, they practise a "right to escape" (Mezzadra, 2015), refusing marginalization and aiming to reach other, more accepting destinations.

In this chapter and those that follow, I examine the conditions of these journeys to reveal the "human cost" of the global crisis of protection. These journeys reveal how a global system of border controls traps refugees, largely through government policies designed to immobilize them. Those who survive are trapped again in their new localities in the global north, where protection is usually temporary and opportunities for starting new lives are shrinking. This process transforms refugees who deserve protection into "irregular migrants," sometimes criminals, challenging the state's sovereignty at its borders.

Critical migration and refugee studies have increasingly embraced the journey with new attention to the journeyers' perspectives. In this dissertation, I examine these journeys by using refugees' own stories. Building on their accounts, and learning from various migration literatures, I develop a conceptual framework of the journey and study it as a precarious, complex, and messy act of survival and resistance that entails multidimensional transformations of refugees' identities and positionalities in their new localities. In this chapter, I discuss this

concept of the journey focusing on the three elements: survival, messiness, and transformation. In the following chapters I explore in turn each of these aspects, weaving in the actual experiences of refugees from Syria. In chapter three, I study the journey as an act of survival and examine refugees' vulnerability during war and displacement in neighbouring region of Syria, a situation that pushes some to leave. Chapter four deals with the refugees' messy, complex, non-linear journey, facets emerging as refugees recount the conditions of their movement towards Europe. Chapter five discusses the emotional and transformative dimensions of the journey.

In the next section, I explore how the concept of the journey has developed in the literature of migration, especially in critical migration and refugee studies and in mobilities scholarship. Through this review, together with my knowledge from experience and field research, I articulate my own understanding of the concept of refugee journey and its three significant, yet undertheorized dimensions: survival, messiness, transformation.

Conceptualizing the Journey

The migration literature has usually treated the journey as a linear and planned move from one point to another, or as a temporary passage from country of origin to that of destination (Brigden and Mainwaring, 2016; Collyer, 2007). Yet migrants frequently undertake fraught, multiple-stop journeys in several countries. Various concepts and literatures have attempted to better capture this non-linear experience. For example, much migration literature speaks of "transit migration" (Collyer, Düvell, and de Hass, 2012) -- migrants and refugees who aim to reach certain destinations but make a series of stops and detours en route. The term implies temporary transitions or even brief interruptions to an otherwise-smooth journey. Düvell, however, recognizes that restrictive policies of control affect migrants' routes and actions: "It is

the destination countries' policies that contribute to the emergence and construction of transit migration" (2012: 422). Hence, he sees transit migration more critically as "a strategic response to the constantly changing control regime and part of the complex interaction between migrants' autonomy and states sovereignty" (ibid.). So too, de Hass stresses border control as a major cause of "illegal" mobility and notes the "vicious circle of more restrictions – more illegality – more restriction" that absorbs migrants (2008: 16). Yet, writing about African migrants' journeys to Europe, he refers to their high sense of agency and determination on the move, criticizing the stereotypical image of "African misery" as the root causes of this migration (ibid.).

Some critics feel that "transit migration" aims to fix or stabilize the actions of migration, which are fluid and unpredictable by nature (Collyer, Düvell, and de Hass, 2012). Düvell (2012), for example, refers to its politicized, policy-driven, and Euro-centric orientations, as it serves migration control and externalization of borders against migrants and refugees on the move. Düvell (2012) calls for careful analysis of in-migration as complex and changeable categories and patterns of migration, which include transit migration, "These kinds of dynamic migrations can be subsumed under the umbrella typology of in-migration of which transit migration would be a sub-category" (424). Such a call allows for play of various dynamics and patterns of migration that capture complex and unpredictable migration acts, including refugees' journeys towards protection.

Like Düvell and de Hass, Collyer (2007: 668) also opposes a linear logic for the journey, emphasizing the "places in-between origin and destination." He also replaces "transit migration" with "fragmented migration" (2010), to better reflect current reality. He grants that border controls and mobility restrictions initiate and prolong these forms of migration, but notes roles of

social networks, advanced technologies, and modern communications. Collyer and de Hass (2012) argue for "fragmented journeys" to reflect migration's fluid nature, with often-indeterminate starting and ending points and people's status transformed while on the move. This argument supports my drawing on refugees' stories of moving when I analyse the journey, as it reflect its messy, non-linear, and transformative nature, characteristics which eliminate some of the problems in terms such as "transit migration."

Just like transit migration, mobilities studies has wrestled with the complexity and unpredictability of mobility and human movement, which can help explain refugees' journeys. For example, it complexifies the study of movement and migration by incorporating the more nuanced experiences of potential movement and stillness. Mimi Sheller (2011: 6) explains: "Mobilities research in its broadest sense concerns not only physical movement but also potential movement, blocked movement, immobilization, and forms of dwelling and place-making." This understanding captures the refugee journey, with its moments of emotional and physical departure, phases of stillness, and loops of movement, often unintended, as I illustrate in the following chapters when I discuss refugees' stories. Other mobilities scholars, such as Tim Cresswell, address the complex and diverse nature of mobility and examine the impact of individuals' identities and status on the politics of mobility, which he defines as "the ways in which mobilities are both productive of such social relations and produced by them" (Cresswell, 2010: 21). Cresswell treats mobility as a resource that is "differentially distributed" and subject to different politics of representation. He proposes: "The representation of movement can certainly impact the experience of its practice" (2010: 22). In other words, one act of movement may hold different representations when different groups of individuals of varying identities and status practise it. This argument speaks to refugees' experiences at borders and explains how

officials may present their movement as "illegal" and "unauthorized," because they are "unauthorized," but treat the same act of border crossing as regular and welcome for compliant individuals. Cresswell further demonstrates how choice is crucial in the discourse of mobility, yet he realizes the interactions between will and enforcement: "Mobility, as practices [,] brings together the internal world of will and habit … and the external world of expectation and compulsion" (2010: 20). In this sense, mobilities scholarship helps us move beyond the journey's details (who went where and when) and allows us to incorporate the subject's experiences and expectations. It particularly helps us theorize the concept of refugee journey, as it explores aspects of this complex form of mobility and its interrelated politics of physical movement, representations, and practices.

   Yet the traditional mobilities paradigm often associates movement or the ability to move with notions of progress and freedom. Cresswell (2006) criticizes the romanticization of mobility and its association with positive notions of freedom: "The romanticization of the nomad, for instance, is infected with the discourse of Orientalism. It is also the outcome, historically, of deep-rooted ideas about mobility as a progressive force, as a form of relative freedom, as a break from earlier, more confused, spaces and times" (Cresswell, 2006: 56-7, cited by Gill et al., 2011). According to Gill, Caletrio, and Mason (2011: 302), viewing movement positively reflects a "partial geographical concern." This tendency may exclude the movement of millions of forcibly displaced people in the developing world, as well as the mobility of asylum seekers and refugees who long for stillness and stability but have to go on complex and uncertain journeys. Gill, Caletrio, and Mason (2011) recognize uncertainty and insecurity in the movement of forcibly displaced populations and emphasize those groups' reluctance vis-à-vis "an undesirable necessity" (2011: 304).

Mimi Sheller (2018) calls for a new way of thinking about mobilities, power relations, and different mobility capabilities that disconnects mobility from freedom and permits a more inclusive paradigm: "Mobility justice is an overarching concept for thinking about how power and inequality inform the governance and control of movement, shaping the patterns of unequal mobility and immobility in the circulation of people, resources, and information" (2018: 30). Sheller proposes: "A more robust and comprehensive theory of mobility justice can help us address the combined 'crises' of climate change, sustainable urban transitions, resource depletion and global migrations. These 'crises' are part of a common phenomenon, which shares its origins with other uneven mobilities that impact everyday life" (ibid.). Understanding the impact of asymmetrical power relations and inequalities on the patterns of mobilities and immobility can help us fathom refugees' complex decisions and actions on their journeys. Such complexities have also received analysis from critical migration scholars such as Brigden and Mainwaring (2016), who look at migrants and refugees' clandestine journeys and their encounters with structures of control at borders. They worry that the literature tends to neglect migrant journeys. Indeed, many scholars focus on migration policies and practices before and after arrival, downplaying the crucial phase in between.

In recent years, it is journalists who have explored the refugees' journey most extensively, with many travelling alongside them after awareness skyrocketed in 2015. Examples include: Wolfgang Bauer's *Crossing the Sea: With Syrians on the Exodus to Europe* (2016), Charlotte McDonald-Gibson's *Cast Away: Stories of Survival from Europe's Refugee Crisis* (2016), and Patrick Kingsley's *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis* (2016). All of these works draw attention to the lives of people and the difficulty of their journeys. Migration and refugee scholars should examine refugees' journeys and experiences as complex social and

political acts. Brigden and Mainwaring (2016: 247) explain, "The journey is not simply a space in between arrival and departure, a temporary moment of mobility between more 'normal' static existences, but a social process that shapes migrants and societies alike." I discuss this notion of the journey and how it shapes refugees' positionality and sense of identity in chapter five.

With this understanding, Brigden and Mainwaring (2016) look at the journey not as a linear process but as a multifaceted series of non-linear movements, with many moments of "im/mobility." "Migration journeys are rarely a linear passage, traveled from point of origin directly to destination. Rather, migrants make these journeys in broken, unplanned stages; a failed stage may give rise to another unexpected leg of the journey" (2016: 415). Thus journeys incorporate various typologies of movements and stillness that start before they begin and continue after they arrive. Through this viewpoint, I shed light on refugees' experiences. In chapter three I show how for most of my interviewees, the journey begins before their physical departure. In chapter four, about the conditions of actual journeys, many refugees ended up in unintended destinations.

Like Brigden and Mainwaring, Alexandria Innes depicts the journey as much more than a linear pathway of travel from one place to another. Looking at asylum seekers in Greece, Innes (2016) finds that refugees, when not moving forward, may well be immobile. However, such moments of "stillness" may allow for the vital acts of "negotiation" and "navigating" (ibid.). Like Brigden and Mainwaring, who describe the journey as a "social process" (2016: 247), Innes (2016: 266) uses "state of being" to reflect on the journey's complexity, which stretches from a temporary passage, or a direct crossing, to a transforming "political act" that shapes the lives and trajectories of migrants and refugees.

A Conceptual Framework of the Refugee Journey

In what follows, I build on the work of these critical migration scholars and others, and focus on refugees' journeys from Syria to Sweden. I use the concept of the journey to reflect on their individual experiences, facing war, lack of immediate protection, and – because of the failure of the international refugee regime -- insufficient protection through their passage and resettlement elsewhere. Some of them cross borders illegally, becoming "illegal migrants," who then begin more precarious journeys that in many cases, resulted in human tragedies (Striel, 2016). En route, most refugees experience anxiety, fear, even violence in a series of intense, sometimes-traumatic experiences. Yet, despite being highly vulnerable, many display true resilience and agency. Their journey transforms their identities and prospects for life in their new localities. Thus, learning from refugees' own stories, I develop a three-part concept that reveals the journey to be variously:

- an act of resistance and survival

- a messy, complex, and non-linear passage

- an emotional and transformative process

This dissertation applies the insights I noted above. My use of the term "journey" here, while I think critically about refugee mobility, develops from my method, which draws on refugees' stories and their experiences during their journeys. I call as well on the knowledge I acquired during my fieldwork, where I conducted 45 interviewed with 60 refugees from Syria who made the journey to Sweden. Their stories and words have helped me to develop this conceptual framework of the journey and explore its three aspects.

The Journey as an Act of Survival and Resistance

> We were surrounded by death. It was everywhere. We escaped death back home to find death in Libya. Death is around us. The way ahead might bring death or life. We did not know. We were not sure. We were not sure of anything, except of the death that was around us. (Fares, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

As Fares, who journeyed to Sweden via Libya, indicates starkly, the journey can become an act of survival, in which refugees attempt to protect themselves and their loved ones through a series of traumatic events. After the intensifying war in Syria undid social networks in their home communities, and finding insufficient protection in neighbouring countries, refugees may conclude that the journey is the only route to rights and protection. As I noted above, governments seeking to contain and deter them transform the journey into an experience of illegality and precarity. Examining the journeys is a way to analyse the impact of the crisis of protection on refugees and to engage with their stories. This study challenges refugees' "structural and systematic invisibility" (Malkki, 1995) and provides a counter-narrative to migration studies that, as scholars have noted, have often presented refugees as powerless, speechless victims (Malkki, 1996). Further, this account of personal experience challenges the state-centric view of refugees as a burden or a threat (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008). Refugees are rather political subjects whom circumstances force them to challenge sovereign borders to claim their rights. They are able, as Johnson (2014: 19) suggests, "to contest and demand participation in the practices that shape a life and the meaning-making discourses that shape the world." We can understand their journey as "taking politics through which refugees assert their own capacity to decide their own life conditions" (Johnson 2014: 181).

Yet, while interviewing refugees, I noticed that agency and resistance became most visible while they recounted acts of survival that they did not intend or understand as political, which

downplays any intentional agency on their part. In most such cases, refugees did not aim to defy state sovereignty by crossing a border illegally. They were looking for safety and acceptance and the rights that such border controls denied them. In fact, most did not want to leave their homes and communities in the first place. The conditions of war forced them to do so and when neighbouring regions failed to offer support, they set out on their fraught journeys in search of protection. In addition to fearing a perilous journey and lacking adequate finances, many expressed shame and humiliation about having to travel illegally and about the stigma of becoming refugees in need of protection. They found uprootedness extremely hard to accept, and possible illegality even harder. For Palestinians, leaving Syria meant another painful episode of statelessness that further distanced them from their homeland, Palestine.

Yet extreme conditions left these refugees from Syria with no other choice. Thus we must examine their agency and political acts separate from the notions of choice and intentionality. Some migration scholarship tends to overemphasize refugees' agency, which may well romanticize their choice to leave. This view may depict refugees as deliberately challenging states' sovereignty by crossing borders, and observers may thereby seek to justify harsher treatment of them. In reality, almost all refugees seek principally and ultimately protection and safety. As well, overplaying their agency may undermine the dynamics of control and its painful impact on their lives. Their stories show that they decide about their journeys in a precarious and restrictive atmosphere, which constrains them and further problematizes the notion of their agency.

Vicky Squire's (2017) framework of "acts, interventions, effects" seems very apposite here. It opposes the political simplifications of the binary "agency – structure" vis-à-vis refugees' actions

and positionality and offers new ways to analyse the politics of their "unauthorized" journeys and their ability to act and resist while on the move. Squire adapts Foucauldian structure of power and resistance to focus on "action" rather than on the actors and their uncertain intentions. Building on Isin's (2008) definition of political action, she explores how certain activities disturb "established scripts and subjectivities" and create unexpected "political subjects" (Squire, 2017: 265). The model reflects on the transformative nature of refugees' "unauthorized" journey when they create new trajectories and spaces while they struggle for survival. Particularly useful, it addresses their agency while also examining the lack of protection that forced them to leave. It avoids the actors' intentions and strategic orientations and gives space to examine the actions of people who did not intend to act politically. Even so, they managed to create new and unexpected spaces and trajectories through their journeys while interacting with control structures. Refugees become political through their acts of resistance and survival, which stance develops within a highly precarious atmosphere, as revealed by Fares.

I examine the survival and resistance dimensions of the journey in chapter three through refugees' stories of escape and displacement. Their experiences of escape unpack the key motives that force refugees to leave their hometowns in search for protection. These motives include insecurity and violence, fear of detention, fear of conscription, and loss of income. Through their stories of displacement, I examine the lack of sufficient protection that refugees suffer from in their camps and host communities in the neighbouring countries of Syria and how these conditions force them to consider journeying towards destinations beyond their region. The journeys are, however, conducted in disastrous circumstances, which turn them into messy, complex and non-linear passages as I discuss in the next section.

The Journey as a Messy, Complex, Non-linear Passage

> I could not evaluate my decisions at the time. For example, the smugglers I chose were too bad but I did not know that at the beginning. No one can judge me since I was too desperate. I was totally trapped. (Yamen, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016)

Yamen's degree of confusion reveals another theme that emerged in the stories refugees shared with me. The journey's complex and unpredictable events occur in the midst of challenging conditions that escalate when refugees encounter structures of control. The journey is rarely linear, but rather messy, with moments of "im/mobility" and "resistance/surrender." "Messy" best captures the journey's true nature. Since this dissertation presents the personal, and harrowing, stories of individuals, I wanted some of its language to reflect the emotional intensity of their experiences.

I grasped the journey's complexity when I tried to identify its specific starting and ending points for each refugee. I could not readily delineate clear stages of departure, physical movement, and arrival. Many refugees went through multiple moments of departure and disconnection that were emotional rather than physical. After leaving their hometowns, most faced multiple borders, often failing to cross and waiting long periods. Many became stranded at points of their journey for weeks, months, even years -- detained, subjected to new border controls, or having to wait for additional finances from families or friends. They experienced in effect "a trajectory of wandering" (Khosravi 2011: 51).

Three striking examples illustrate this nightmare. Ammar is a Syrian refugee who was a successful tour guide in Damascus. He speaks Arabic, English, German, and Persian. Fearing further detention, he fled Syria in search of protection abroad. After 2011, several security departments had detained him for participating in peaceful protests, later releasing him on bail.

However, in March 2013, through connections, he learned that Syria's notorious military security was still looking for him, so he crossed illegally into Lebanon. He was unable to access the facilities of the UNHCR there so lacked protection. He then journeyed to Thailand to apply for UNHCR resettlement there, a process that would take years and with no guarantees of success. He found life in Thailand hard and when his residency status there expired, he again had to leave. He considered an "illegal" journey to Germany to seek asylum. However, his finances were limited, and, even after borrowing money from family and friends, he could not afford smugglers' services so set out on his own. This "do-it-yourself" process took him through Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan route (accessible at the time), to Germany, where he now lives. Rawan, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, experienced similar circular mobility. He crossed into Turkey, found a way to Malaysia, was smuggled from there into Germany, and pushed on to Sweden. Shadi, a Palestinian refugee, was 17 when he spent more than nine months moving between countries on his way to Sweden. Egypt detained him when he tried to leave illegally with family. As a Palestinian refugee, he risked deportation to Syria, but he was released after his family paid a huge bribe to a mediator. He then travelled to Turkey with help from his father's business connections there. He crossed then by boat to Greece, which detained him for months for trying to leave illegally with a smuggler. After his release, he continued north on the Balkan route, but Macedonia detained him for a few weeks. He crossed into Hungary and then into Germany with the aid of relatives in Europe. He arrived in Sweden in February 2014; nine months after he left Egypt and two years after departing Syria. Egypt, Greece, and Macedonia had detained him, and his journey cost more than €40,000. I explore the conditions of journeys such as those of Ammar, and Shadi in the following chapters.

Arrival at the intended destination does not end the journey for many refugees, who may have to seek asylum and wait months for residency permits. Sweden, with its Aliens Act of 20 July 2016, has lengthened the process for arrivals after November 2015. As I noted in the introduction of this dissertation, the Swedish law states that asylum will mean temporary residence -- three years for persons with refugee status, and thirteen months for those with subsidiary protection. The law also limits family reunification to people who became refugees or received   subsidiary protection before 24 November 2015. Later recipients may now apply for family reunification only in exceptional cases (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). Thus refugees who left their families behind now have limited hope for reunification. For them, the journey has not ended, even at their intended destination and with asylum.

Family reunification takes a long time and is exhausting even for those who arrived before the law came into effect. Rana, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, reached Sweden in November 2014 following a journey of four months, after being stranded in Greece and sending her younger son with a smuggling network to Sweden before her. She had already left her eldest son and her husband in Irbil, Northern Iraq, as they could not afford the cost of traveling as a family. When I met Rana in Stockholm in July 2016, she was learning Swedish, applying her skills working in the aviation industry, and waiting for family reunification – her journey continues.

The examples I considered suggest refugees' multiple departures, unpredictable conditions, loops of im/mobility, and unmarked arrivals. Such intense experiences, as in Yamen's words, reveal the journey as a messy, complex, non-linear passage. Exploring these elements assists us with understanding the impact that the containment and deterrence policies imposed by countries in the global north have on refugees from the south, especially where there is a lack of sufficient

protection in refugees' regions of origin. I study these elements of the journey in chapter four through refugees' experiences during their actual movement to Europe via the three popular routes where they are subjected to extreme violence and precarity.

The Journey as an Emotional and Transformative Process

> I lost my country to save my family … I lost my family and saved myself
> … I lost myself … (Mourad, Canada, 2018)

Experiences of uprootedness affect people's lives and shape their perceptions about their identities and their lives. Refugees' journeys, complex and messy, stand as "highly intensive" (Benezer, 2002) or "life-changing events" (Benezer and Zetter 2014). As I outlined above, the journey may expand from a temporary moment of movement to a process of transformation that reshapes the person's state of being and perception of home and belonging. My research has uncovered the complexity and fluid notions of refugees' positionalities and identities both during their journeys and in their new localities. Their stories present the journey as an intense emotional experience, involving separation pain, loss, guilt, and shame. Their physical and psychological challenges affect their mobility and their perceptions of life in general. Many refugees live with fear of detention and of losing their own life or that of a loved one. They may experience humiliating treatment by smugglers, disastrous conditions at gathering points, sea crossings in unworthy boats, and passage through the wilderness in the dark of night. Yet most are still able to celebrate moments of joy, excitement, and accomplishment.

The intensity of these emotional experiences is overwhelming and unforgettable for them. I heard stories of frustrated men who were humiliated during their detention or unable to protect themselves and their families from violence or physical danger during encounters with smugglers or while crossing borders. I met mothers who lost their babies at sea, or who had to send their

children ahead with smugglers. Some told me about the shame they internalized when they had

to teach their children to lie about their identities in order to pass through airport controls. I

explore these stories in the following chapters – notable elements of refugees' journeys that

profoundly affect their perceptions of self and life.

Additionally, the often-messy and -unpredictable journey may transform refugees'

positionalities and roles within their families and communities. As illustrated in the quote above,

refugees who could not protect their families from the horrors of war or from the devastating

conditions of their journey may feel they have lost their most important role as protectors.

Arrival at their destination turns refugees into asylum seekers with limited ability to work. They

may become dependent on social services and stop being providers, which affect their familial

and community relations. I examine these major changes in chapter five.

Their journeys alter refugees from war victims to political subjects whom authorities may

brand "illegal migrants." At their destinations, they become asylum seekers and protected

persons, perhaps eventually permanent residents, even citizens with rights and responsibilities.

Thus a series of complex moments of transformation take them from one status to another. This

differs from the legal definition of a refugee, as I discussed in chapter one:

> individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of
> Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization of African Unity
> (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in
> Africa, those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR status, individuals
> granted complementary forms of protection, and those enjoying temporary
> protection. (UNHCR, 2010: 3)

Their stories show that being a refugee transcends legal status to become an emotional state of

being (Khosravi, 2011). In fact, most of my interviewees were not officially recognized as

refugees, despite their need of protection. Lack of sufficient protection had pushed them to consider journeys despite their uncertainty and vulnerability, though also great aspirations and determination. They decided to claim their rights as humans and seek protection elsewhere as refugees, changing in the process from passive victims to vulnerable political figures creating their own spaces and trajectories (Scheel and Squire, 2014). Thus, as I explained above, I use "refugee" for any individual in need of protection, regardless of legal status. Edward Said (2000), my inspiration here, distinguishes between the limited international political concepts of "refugee" and the emotional notion of the lonely and isolated "exile." Said sees exiles as uprooted and existing in the "territory of not-belonging." This emotional status renders identity, belonging, and home fluid and changeable.

The journey of displacement and search for protection reshape a refugee's perception of home and exile. The case of Palestinian refugees from Syria, particularly from Yarmouk, in Damascus, which I explore in the following chapters, exemplifies how multiple displacements during war and the journey towards Europe reshape these refugees' ideas about identity, home, and loss. Palestinian refugees' families have long experience with journey and exile. Much of the writing on Palestinians and exile deals with reconstruction of identity in the refugee journey and exile. Said acknowledges the dialectical relationship between exile, borders, self-awareness, and national identity for Palestinians, addressing (1986) its uniqueness as it has been reproduced repeatedly since 1948, through the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1982. Their current suffering in the midst of the Syrian war is exacerbated by their exclusion from international protection, as I discussed in chapter one, and by neighbouring countries' discrimination and rejection against them. I discuss these policies in greater detail in the next chapter.

The case of Yarmouk reflects the new sense of loss since Palestinian refugees were forced to leave that community in December 2012 and have been prevented from returning to it again. This new displacement has affected their sense of identity. They reaffirm their identity as Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk rather than as Palestinian refugees from Damascus or Syria. They attempt thereby to reassert that they belong to Yarmouk -- their home, according to the diasporic notion of multiple-home identity in exile (Chimni, 2004), and which they have lost like their first diasporic home, Palestine. A young Palestinian refugee, now a resident of the Netherlands, summarized this experience on his facebook page after the bombing of Yarmouk in April 2018: "This is the smoke of my burning tent. This is my father and grandfather's tent. I am now a stateless refugee with no tent (facebook, 20 April 2018). Said (1986) refers to this reconceptualization of identity as a communal affirmation of collective identity.

Syrian refugees do not share the same type of reconceptualization of communal identity as Palestinians. To add to Syrians' vulnerability, the current and complex conflict in their country, often perceived as a civil war, has sharply divided them. While the nature of the conflict is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it has, like most civil wars, destroyed any common sense of identity among the people of Syria. In the midst of such strife, people suffer personal grief and loss, while divisions between them add more pain and vulnerability to their experience in exile. I examine the emotional toll and transformative impacts of the journey in chapter five where I discuss in detail the set of sentiments that refugees suffer from during their search for protection. Their stories reveal the heavy load of scars and traumatic memories they carry with them during their journeys which influence their ability of settlement in their new localities.

Conclusion

Referring to critical migration and mobilities literatures and to my own knowledge from refugees' stories, in this chapter I have explored the concept of journey as a consequence and a reflection of the global crisis of protection. Lacking protection in their home region, refugees decide to seek protection in the global north, thereby challenging government policies of containment and deterrence.

Hearing refugees' own stories, I developed a conceptual framework of the journey that highlights three crucial dimensions. First, the journey is an act of survival against precarious conditions and lack of protection. Refugees, who suffer from insecurities and violence during war, escape their hometowns and seek refuge in neighbouring counties. Yet, when during displacement, they do not find "conditions of independence and dignity which enable refugees themselves to decide how they wish to cope with their predicaments" (Hathaway, 2007: 364), they decide to journey elsewhere to gain their rights as refugees and as humans. Examining the journey as an act of survival and resistance is significant as it shifts the focus of analysis towards refugees' agency and their ability to act unexpectedly despite the disastrous circumstances of war and displacement. The stories show that, by deciding to leave, many refugees resist their own desire to stay home or closer to home. In the case of Palestinian refugees, resisting having to leave is, in itself, also an act of agency as it is also a way for Palestinians to assert their unique political claim as stateless refugees. This approach also demonstrates how, through their survival attempts, refugees are subject to illegality and imposed invisibility which in many cases results in restricting their agency. Thus, this understanding of the journey challenges the perception of refugees as powerless victims, presenting them instead as people with agency and the ability to act unexpectedly. Yet, the approach avoids the misperception and

overrepresentation of refugees' agency in romanticized ways because it simultaneously

recognises the conditions of control and marginalization imposed on refugees during their

journeys.

Second, the journey turns out to be frequently non-linear, messy, and precarious. The notion

of agency is also useful in this context. I illustrated how problematic ideas of choice and

intention may be, particularly when making decisions to leave under such harrowing situations.

These conditions suggest that refugees' journeys are often a series of complex loops of non-

linear, unpredictable, uncontrollable movements. Yet these same experiences can transform these

highly vulnerable refugees from powerless victims into political actors, who are able to create

new spaces and trajectories for themselves and their families. In this sense, examining the

journey as a messy and complex process can challenge states' narratives that often render

refugees as powerless victims or as criminals when they challenge the bordering practices. It also

challenges states' claims about their ability of controlling "unauthorized" migration, including

the movement of refugees. It problematizes the way that states often reject "unwanted" migrants,

including refugees, by securitizing their borders and the way that this response to the refugee

crisis has become normalized within the international community. This approach to refugee

journeys demonstrates how state practices fail to deter desperate individuals, pushing them

instead to travel through dangerous routes, which transform their journeys into messy and

complex passages that in many cases end tragically.

Finally, the third key dimension of conceptualizing the journey is as a highly emotional, and

transformative act that often reshapes refugees' understandings of identity, self, home, and

belonging. Examining these feelings and transformations reveals the human cost refugees pay for

their acts of resistance. These feelings are the price of challenging policies of containment and deterrence, which mainly aim to keep refugees in their regions without sufficient protection. In other words, these feelings demonstrate at the human level the emotional toll of the global crisis of protection and how it invades the intimate space of refugees' bodies and minds. In this sense, understanding the journey as a transformative emotional experience enhances our understanding of refugees' predicament and challenges the dominant perception of them as faceless and voiceless people. By focusing on the emotional toll of the journey, we are more able to understand and treat refugees as humans. In fact, bringing the emotions to the discussion challenges the absence and marginalization of emotions and feelings in social research, in general and in refugee studies, in particular. Conceptualizing the refugee journey in this way thus expands the idea of a journey from away from simply physical movement from one land point to another to include the intense emotional experience that influence the lives of refugees in their new localities. My unique positionality, as I explained above, helped me to grasp the reality of this change. In my field research, many refugees saw me as a member of their own community whom they trusted and therefore graciously offered me intimate and personal insights about their painful experiences during the war and throughout their respective journeys.

In the following chapters, I draw on those individual stories and insights to reflect on the impact of war and the absence of protection on the lives and trajectories of individuals. These personal stories help us see refugees' journey as a complex, messy, and life-changing experience that involves often-acute precarity but also resists passivity as refugees exercise agency. This viewpoint reveals the complex nuances of the global crisis of protection as reflected in the human suffering of these refugees in their search for protection. We can then perhaps visualize

the refugee journey as both a complex passage from the local to the global and a friction between structures of governance and the intimate space of refugees' bodies.

I will examine these elements of the journey as experienced by refugees from Syria who made the journey to Sweden. In chapter three, I focus on the conditions of refugees' journey during wartime and in displacement in Syria's neighbouring countries. I show how Syrian refugees receive inadequate access to their rights in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. Yet I also describe the challenges they raise to as they seek to claim their human and refugee rights. Many reject the dire circumstances of displacement by risking dangerous journeys to pursue protection in Europe, thereby finding what Hannah Arendt evocatively terms "ways of mastering an uncertain future" (1943: 111). Such acts allow refugees to take the lead in establishing new trajectories and new lives for themselves. Following Arendt's observation, the following chapters show the agency of refugees who wrestle with the precarity that results from war, displacement, and strategies of containment and deterrence to reach destinations where they aim to claim their rights and start new lives.

Chapter Three: Stories of Escape and Survival

Introduction

In chapter two, I examined the refugee journey as a reflection of the global crisis of protection and proposed a conceptual framework to study it. I proposed that the journey evolves as an act of resistance and survival, which leads to escape and displacement (this chapter). The journey then develops as a non-linear, messy, and complex passage (chapter four); and, in the process, may well transform the individuals who are undertaking it and impact their identities and roles (chapter five). In this chapter, I look at the first dimension of the journey, resistance and survival, as refugees decide to leave their homeland (escape) and begin a stay, perhaps temporary, in a neigbouring country (displacement). I explore people's reasons for leaving and the conditions of their displacement as they cross borders into neighbouring countries.

To understand refugees' journeys one must examine their choices, as well as their interactions with various policies and actors during their escape, their displacement, and their travel towards northern Europe. The details of their daily lives during wartime and displacement help explain the motives for their journeys. Months or even years before they depart physically for Europe, precarious wartime conditions and severe vulnerability in Syria, and displacement into neighbouring lands, disconnect them emotionally from their communities. The absence of safe and legal routes out leads many to risk their lives with smugglers.

The stories refugees told me ground this chapter's first part, "Stories of Escape." They seem to indicate four key motives for leaving Syria: insecurity and violence, fear of detention, fear of forced military service (conscription), and loss of income. The chapter's second part – "Stories of Displacement" -- analyses their conditions of displacement in each of three neighbouring

countries -- Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. This discussion provides a brief comparative perspective of how the conditions for refugees differ between countries. The third part considers a distinctive case: the subset of stateless Palestinian refugees from Syria and their particular conditions of precarity and rejection during both escape and displacement.

The stories in this chapter highlight aspects of resistance. Most of the refugees I interviewed first tried to cope with wartime life in their country. Yet, especially after the violence intensified and conditions worsened, all the interviewees left the country in search of protection elsewhere. These departures were acts of both survival and resistance, as refugees rejected marginalization and sought alternatives offering – they hoped -- greater rights and safety. As Johnson (2014: 19) explains, refugees "contest and demand participation in the practices that shape a life and the meaning-making discourses that shape the world." And, as I discussed above, and explore here, refugees' agency, despite their vulnerabilities, reflects their ability to act when action is not expected or even, perhaps, permissible.

The findings in this chapter, and those that follow, emerge from the stories of 60 Syrian and Palestinian refugees who journeyed from Syria to Sweden between 2012 and 2015. I met and interviewed them in the summer of 2016 in Hässleholm, Laxå, Malmö, Stockholm, and Uppsala in Sweden. In addition, in the spring of 2016, I interviewed two refugees in Germany through Skype and one Syrian family the Canadian government resettled in Kitchener, Ontario, after a journey of displacement via Turkey.

Stories of Escape

In chapter two, I referred to refugees' feelings of helplessness in the midst of the Syrian war, which limited their choices and their ability to act. Since the crisis began in March 2011, people

in Syria, lacking networks of support or protection, have daily faced vulnerability, insecurity, and unpredictability as conditions threatened properties, jobs, loved ones, and life itself. As a result, more than 5.6 million individuals have left in search of protection and support in neighbouring states (UNHCR, 2018). They cite as principal motives insecurity, fear of detention, fear of forced military service (conscription), and loss of income.

Insecurity

I personally witnessed the first three months of unrest in Damascus before I left with my family for Canada on 4 June 2011. I recall the fear that I shared with my husband as we drove through central Damascus one Friday evening. It was the end of March 2011, when weekly protests at mosques followed Friday noontime prayers. Security forces often brutally attacked protesters. The silence in the empty streets was unnerving in this usually crowded and lively capital. There was a moment when I had to ask my children, in the back seat, to lower their heads to avoid any bullets that might come from the dark corners of the empty streets. This was the moment when I felt that things had changed and Damascus would never be the same.

Our concerns about insecurity and violence increased as military operations escalated and fighting intensified throughout the country. I spoke later with many individuals from Syria who had similar stories to my own of fear. As insecurity deepened, daily activities became harder to maintain. Constant bombing, explosions, and kidnappings haunted residents and made them afraid of going to work or even sending their children to school. Many families moved several times within the same city in order to maintain their jobs. All these stories cited conditions of violence and insecurity, fear of detention, and loss of employment and income, which all help create economic insecurity and social vulnerability.

These and other types of precarious conditions have forced millions of people to leave their communities in search of stability and new opportunities elsewhere. The stories of Rajaa, Rana, and Rasha, three women who lived in Damascus, and whom I met in Sweden after their long and complex journeys, illustrate the insecurity and violence typical for people in wartime Syria.

Rajaa is a well-known Syrian actress. She is married to Wassim, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, and they have two sons, Rami and Shadi. Initially, Rajaa did not want to leave Syria, but her family insisted she depart with them to Egypt because they were concerned about her mental and emotional condition. She explained:

> From the beginning of the crisis, I was terrified by the war, the bombing, the burnings, and the sounds. Our area was relatively safe but we were at the borders with Daria, which was a hot zone. There was a particular bombing that happened near our place, which caused me a kind of nervous breakdown … I could not bear the situation anymore. I was terrified. I started using medication. I used to hide in the corners of my house whenever I heard something. I even stopped sleeping in my bedroom because it had big windows … I continued rejecting the idea of leaving but I almost lost it. I was not able to focus on anything. I lost my appetite. I was totally paranoid as a result of the bombing. (Rajaa, Stockholm, July 2017)

Rajaa and her family fled to Egypt in 2012 to start new lives there. Yet after two years in Egypt, they chose to journey to Sweden (see the next chapter for details).

Like Rajaa's story, Rana's reflects these elements of precarity. Rana and her family left their home in Yarmouk in December 2012 for a safer part of Damascus. After more months of suffering, they felt they had to leave Syria and moved to Irbil, northern Iraq, where her husband found a job through some contacts. As I explained above, Rana ultimately headed to Sweden with her younger son, leaving her husband and older son behind in Irbil. She described conditions in Damascus:

> We left Yarmouk camp on 16th December 2012 when the air fighters bombed the camp. We rented a house in the suburbs of Damascus where we lived in continuous fear and instability. There was a lot of fighting and bombing on daily basis on our way to work in addition to suffering at the checkpoints. We used to face lots of difficulties in reaching our offices. I used to work at the airport, and my husband was an accountant at Benetton Company, near Damascus. The checkpoints were very scary, as we were never sure that we would be able to pass and reach home. We stayed like this for six months. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

Such insecurity was common to millions of individuals who have lived through the war in Syria, as illustrated acutely in the story of Rasha, a widow from Damascus, whom I met in Sweden after her horrible journey there with her three children. Rasha decided to escape with them from Damascus after a bombing of the children's school while they were in class. When she got there, she found her daughter totally covered with broken glass. She observed about Sweden:

> At least we can sleep peacefully here … I can close my door and go to sleep. I do not have to wake up in the middle of the night to rush to the basement because of the bombing … We witnessed lots of horrors in Syria … bombs, explosions, kidnaps, chopped heads … We have seen it all. Whatever we face here, at least it is safe. Back in Damascus, I used to say my final goodbyes to my parents every time I used to leave the house to go to work because I was not sure that I will be back again … Do you remember the explosion of Al Hayat hospital, downtown Damascus? I was there. I survived. It was a miracle. (Rasha, Laxå, Sweden, July 2016)

The stories of Rana, Rajaa, and Rasha illustrate the common insecurity during the war. Their stories reveal how Syrians have lived, and still live, in precarious conditions, whether destruction of houses and communities or direct targeting of people's bodies.

Many individuals have been subject to direct violence and threats of detention or death. Khaled's story reflects such danger. Khaled is a Palestinian refugee who lived with his wife and two sons in Daraa in southwestern Syria. After March 2011, security conditions in the city

deteriorated, and Khaled decided to send his family to Jordan to live with his wife's parents. She

is a Palestinian refugee from Jordan who held a Jordanian travel document, and their children

had multiple entry visas. They moved in November 2012, and the youngsters had to renew their

residency permit every two months. After only six months that was no longer possible because

Jordan blocked admission of all Palestinian refugees from Syria (as of January 2013; see Al-

Monitor media site, Washington DC, 2014). Without documents the children became illegal

residents, but their registration with the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) allowed them to stay in school and receive basic medical

care. But the older son, who was seven, was epileptic, and UNWRA did not cover his daily

medication, for which the family now had to pay.

Khaled had remained in Syria, unwilling to leave his home. He had often heard his parents'

stories of displacement from Palestine in 1948 and feared living as a displaced person. However,

violence in Daraa grew. Members of the Syrian security forces attacked and assaulted him when

they invaded his house during a check of the area. They then attacked Khaled's neighbour and

took him to a detention centre, where he died a few weeks later. Khaled's parents decided to

leave, but not without their son. Khaled finally decided to go with his parents to Jordan, but its

new restrictions kept them out. The family decided to cross illegally, and Khaled chose to travel

separately. He gave his parents fake identity documents as a Syrian couple with a disabled young

son (actually a cousin), while he posed as the son of an elderly woman (also a relative). As with

other refugees, Khaled had experienced severe insecurity and violence and decided to start a

journey in search of protection and safety.

Fear of Detention

As was the case with Khaled, many refugees from Syria had to leave their home because they fear detention. Youssef, whom I interviewed in Hässleholm, Sweden, had a desperate story of detention and lost many relatives during the war. His three brothers and nephew died in prison, where Youssef was also detained for two months in 2012. During that period, four of his cousins were also killed. All of the men in his family were wanted by the security forces. During temporary release, Youssef bribed a security officer to help him obtain a passport so he could move to Egypt.

The continual threat of detention indicates Syrians' extremely precarious situation. Like Khaled and Youssef, Fares had to leave Syria to avoid a very dangerous detention. Fares is a young textile merchant from Hama. He arrived in Sweden with his wife and two-year-old son after a long journey through Egypt, Libya, and Italy. I met Fares in Stockholm in July 2016, and he spoke with me for more than six hours about his journey. In his opinion, his journey began long before he physically left Syria. His wedding day marked the turning point: that day security forces killed his best friend. Fares had no interest in politics, but his friend's death drove him to become active in the protests and start helping families in the besieged areas of the city.

His actions resulted in his detention in a prison run by one of Syria's most brutal national security services. Fares shared with me the details of the horrible torture that he experienced during his detention which deserves attention beyond the scope of this dissertation. His detention furthered his emotional departure from his homeland. He internalized the shame of helpless humiliation during his detention. His words captured his shame, which undermined his identity

as a man and as a husband, and his later reunion with his wife after his release reflected his severe trauma. He wept while he asked me:

> What should I show her? The blisters of my skin, the cigarette burns on my legs, on my back, and on other parts of my body? She is too young to understand this … How could I describe the humiliation I experienced in prison? Would she still see me as the man who could protect her from the whole world? Would she still be able to respect me? (Fares, Stockholm, July 2016)

Only a few months after his release, Fares learned that he was still wanted by the security forces. Fear of further imprisonment, and the ever-present risk of death there, pushed him to leave the country in less than 24 hours. He had to pay one million Syrian pounds (roughly $15,000 U.S.) to bribe a security officer in Hama for details from his security record. Having confirmed that he was wanted by security forces, Fares paid more money to obtain passports for himself and his family and also to guarantee that security forces would not stop them at the airport. Yet, and despite his legitimate fear of further detention, Fares was ashamed of leaving Syria in such circumstances. I could sense his deep sorrow and guilt when he told me: "I did not have a passport before. I never thought of obtaining a passport. I never thought of leaving Syria. Never. I adore Syria. I adore Hama" (ibid.).

The entire journey came as a shock for Fares. He had not prepared for it and had no idea about its trajectory. He sometimes looks back and is puzzled by the way it unfolded: "My journey has been a complete shock for me. After all this time, I am still confused about its events. I have not yet understood how did it happen, how it developed and how I managed through it all." This shock and confusion affirm the atmosphere of violence and precarity surrounding the refugee journey. Refugees like Fares act out of fear and need of protection, and, despite the substantial agency their departure represents, they act essentially to survive. As I

illustrated in chapter two, although refugees may be creating their own trajectories and unexpected scripts (Squire, 2017), any observer's invoking of their agency problematizes their choices and intentions within such extreme conditions.

As with Fares, Ammar, whom I introduced in chapter two, feared detention and fled to seek protection abroad. When I asked Ammar about his detention, he summarized it:

> If you want to document the sufferings of refugees, I would tell you that all the risks and the hardships I faced during my journey from Syria to Europe which took me through Lebanon, Thailand, Turkey, and the horrible sea journey to Greece cannot be compared with the experience of detention in Syria, particularly during the first two months. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

Ammar summarizes the horrors of detention and the emotional scars it left. The experience often launches an early emotional departure, where refugees disconnect from their community as they lose control over themselves and their conditions. This acute status of precarity affects how refugees see self, home, and life in general. I analyse this transformation in chapter five.

Fear of Military Service and Conscription

In addition to insecurity and detention, possible military service pushed many people to leave Syria. Many families with young men left to avoid military service, which is mandatory for males who are eighteen and older. They needed passports for their sons, who otherwise could be stopped and detained at any Syrian army checkpoint. As well, many families living in areas controlled by opposition groups left to prevent their sons being forced into the militias. These forces also frequently stopped young men at checkpoints and forced them to fight against the

regime. The story of Mahmoud, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, illustrates this fear. Mahmoud

left his home near Homs with his two sons to keep the older one from military operations.

> In fact, the main reason that forced us to leave was my concern about my oldest son who had to choose between joining the Syrian army or the Free Army. Both options were totally refused. My younger boys were at school at the time, but my fear of seeing my oldest son joining the military operations forced me to leave the country as quickly as I could. (Mahmoud, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016)

Salam, a Syrian teacher from Lattakia, also had to leave the country to avoid joining the army

or the militia:

> People at my age are supposed to get armed and are forced to fight. This was the main reason for me to leave. In fact, I am from the coastal area, from Lattakia, but I used to work as a teacher in Al Hassakeh, in the east of Syria. When the revolution started in 2011, I moved back to Lattakia, and there was lots of pressure on me to fight with one side against the other, which I totally refused. I did not want to be a part of the war and did not want to participate in any fight. This was the main reason that forced me to think about departing, but I had no idea where to go. (Salam, Stockholm, July 2016)

By refusing to fight and deciding to leave, such young men exercise their "right of

escape" (Mezzadra 2015), distancing themselves from the horrors of war. They disconnect

themselves from their realities and attempt to create their own scenarios and trajectories

(Squire, 2017).

Loss of Income

If the fear of having to fight inspires many departures, so does loss of income. Arad went

through multiple internal displacements. He lost his shop and thus his income. He is a Kurdish

Syrian who lived in Aleppo with his wife and two children, seven and ten years old. He repaired

automobiles and owned his shop, managing a number of workers. In 2012, when the opposition

Free Syrian Army (FSA) militia entered the area, it became a target for the regime's barrel bombs. Arad lost his shop and decided to take his family to his village near Afrin, close to the Turkish border. They stayed there for nine months, but he could not find a job and had no income. He then decided to return to Aleppo. In March 2013 the FSA and the Kurdish militia entered Arad's former neighbourhood, and the regime started bombing again. Arad and his family escaped back to the village and stayed with his father for two months. The house had no power, no drinking water, and no public services. There were no jobs, Arad still had no income, and the schools had closed. Since returning to Aleppo had become impossible, Arad considered Turkey. Lacking travel documents, he crossed the border illegally.

Arad's case represents a chronic condition for millions of Syrians. Loss of jobs and income has, in fact, affected the whole population. As well as greater insecurity, people in Syria have faced a collapsing economy, which forced millions of them to leave in search of protection, safety, and support. In 2017, the World Bank estimated that Syria lost about 538,000 jobs per year 2011-15 and had unemployment of 78 per cent, as more than 9 million Syrians were jobless (World Bank, 2017).

Stories of Displacement

In this section, I examine the conditions of displacement that refugees describe in their stories. In particular, I look at their fleeing to Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, so we can compare their situations in each of those states. Syria's neighbours, including Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt, have put up border controls to keep out Syrian refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Thus these refugees' precarious wartime conditions include crossing borders to those states, where they may become illegal for that very act. Further, their illegal transit worsens their

living conditions as displaced people in those states. They encounter new forms of vulnerability and unpredictability by engaging with smugglers and border control.

The story of Arad, from Aleppo, and his family shows how this illegality amplifies refugees' vulnerability and affects their displacement conditions. A smuggler guided them from their village near Aleppo into Turkey through a Syrian military area that contained land mines. There was a dam on the Turkish side near the border crossing, and when Turkish authorities open the dam gates the river often becomes too deep and too dangerous to cross. That day the water was above Arad's knee, making the passage quite risky:

> It was very difficult at the borders. We waited for about two hours and were then ordered to run without looking back. We had to run through a rocky river. I carried a suitcase on one side and my son on the other, running and jumping from one rock to another. My kids were too young to keep up the pace, and my wife was hardly able to manage her way. It took about half an hour to reach the borderline, which was a razor-wired fence with holes in it made purposely by smugglers to allow people to cross through to the other side. (Arad, Kitchener, Canada, March 2016)

The image of the foursome passing through fields with land mines and crossing a treacherous river captures the plight of refugees escaping a brutal war, only to cross a border illegally at great personal risk. During the interview, Arad's voice reflected his shame at crossing illegally, and his wife wept when she recalled the mud that covered them when they reached Turkey.

As with its border with Turkey, Syria's border in the south with Jordan also made refugees more vulnerable. The official border exit was closed, so refugees had to cross illegally through unofficial exit points under the supervision of the Syrian opposition militia, which coordinated with the Jordanian army, to receive them at the other side of the border. For example, Khaled and his parents used an illegal crossing three kilometers from the official exit, amid constant

bombing. They waited six hours before trucks arrived to take them to the border. They crossed

with another 200 people. Once they were on the other side, the Jordanian army took women and

children in one truck, and men had to walk for about 45 minutes to the first military checkpoint,

where border authorities inspected their identity documents. Khaled did not have a passport so

presented civil records of his new, fake identity as a Syrian citizen. He begged the officers to

allow him in and asked a woman pretending to be his mother to intervene, but she was already

having trouble remembering her new name. She was not a good actor. His father then intervened

as a stranger and begged the army officer as well. The official finally accepted Khaled, who told

us:

> Jordanian authorities sent men with no passports back to Syria. They loaded
> them in what refugees called "expelling buses" and pushed them back through
> the borders … At 5:00 a.m. I started losing hope. We were told by the
> intelligence forces that we will be thrown back to Syria, including my parents,
> the disabled young man, and the old lady. No one was allowed without
> passports. (Khaled, Berlin, April 2016)

This encounter is typical of dehumanizing practices at the Jordanian border. Despite needing

protection, refugees without official travel documents were immediately deported back to Syria's

war zones. Refugees like Khaled, whom authorities allowed in, could be deported at any time --

an extreme precarity, which makes refugees more vulnerable while displaced in neighbouring

countries.

During their displacement, the majority of refugees from Syria share similar vulnerabilities

and social marginalization. They do not receive the "sufficient protection" they deserve as

refugees, "fundamentally oriented to creating conditions of independence and dignity which

enable refugees themselves to decide how they wish to cope with their predicaments"

(Hathaway, 2007: 364). As I showed in previous chapters, this definition entails dignity,

independence, and autonomy for refugees, who are "the victims of fundamental social disfranchisement and uniquely within the protective ambit of the international community" (ibid. 350). This notion of protection, enshrined in international human rights standards and the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, entitles refugees to a set of social and economic rights, including the right to stay legally, to work, and to receive education and health care (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Yet Syrian refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries lack access to these rights and the protection they deserve as refugees. Instead, they are subject to the domestic regulations of each country (Akram, 2014), where ad-hoc policies give them precarious legal status and few rights. Even worse, Lebanon and Jordan have not signed the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol and make no attempt to implement international standards of refugee protection (ibid.). Egypt, which has signed the 1951 Convention and the OAU Convention, places refugees in legal limbo, as its domestic regulations do not adhere to the norms of international refugee protection (ibid.).

Turkey applies such standards, but only to individuals of European origin, while most asylum seekers in Turkey are non-European (Soykan, 2012). It processes asylum applications from the latter group in an atmosphere of uncertainty and vulnerability and requires them to leave in the long term (ibid.). Its Law on Foreign and International Protection Act (LFIP, 2013) created statuses of "temporary protection," "secondary refugee," and "secondary protection," which exclude Syrian (and other) refugees from permanent residency (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel, 2015). The act maintains the geographical distinction European/non-European and offers refugees no path to integration or naturalization (Soykan, 2012). Temporary protection has rendered Syrian refugees more precarious by making international protection in Turkey or in a third country more

unlikely for them. Furthermore, it has reduced their ability to claim international protection if they register for temporary protection in Turkey and then go to Europe hoping to settle there (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel 2016).

To summarize, refugees from Syria become extremely vulnerable and precarious during wartime and as displaced persons living in neighbouring states. Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, which do not recognize them as refugees and deny them many social, economic, and political rights, present dramatic examples of this precarity through systematic discrimination and marginalization. In the midst of such conditions, thousands of families have developed "negative coping strategies" (LCRP, 2015) to survive, such as arranging early marriages for young girls, withdrawing children from school, putting some to work, and eating less(ibid.). Such strategies exacerbate their social, economic, and emotional vulnerability.

In the following three subsections, I examine their new forms of vulnerability and intense hopelessness in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Their stories reveal harrowing details of their displacement and allow us to compare conditions in each country, which in turn force many to continue on towards other destinations, mainly in Europe, where, they believe, better access to rights is available.

Lebanon

There are more than 1.5 million refugees from Syria in Lebanon, with only one million of them registered by the UNHCR (LCRP, 2015). Lebanon has about 4.5 million people, including more than 450,000 Palestinian refugees, so one in every three residents is a refugee (ibid.). While the UNHCR recognizes escapees from the Syrian war as refugees worthy of international

protection, the Lebanese government does not, referring to them instead as "displaced individuals" (ibid.). This precarious legal status (ibid.) limits their access to aid and basic rights, such as health care, education, housing, and work. Further, it subjects them to domestic regulations concerning residency and mobility. For example, in 2013 Beirut restricted the flow of Syrian refugees into the country. Would-be entrants must show a flight or a hotel booking in Lebanon or obtain supporting documents from a Lebanese sponsor. Those who plan to stay must obtain a residency permit and renew it frequently, with fees too high for most refugees to afford (Amnesty International, 2015). As a result, entering the country has become harder, and people already there face new forms of discrimination and precarity. In January 2015, the government began requiring Syrians to obtain visas to enter Lebanon, making it almost impossible for those already there to renew their residency permits (Akesson and Badawi, 2017). Syrian men unable to renew their permits could be detained and deported. These regulations make them more vulnerable, particularly as authorities reject most renewal applications, further marginalizing thousands of families (HRW, 2016b). As well, thousands of unregistered Syrian children born in Lebanon lack documentation proving their identity – some 50,000 of them in 2016; legally they do not exist (Reuters, 2016).

Syrian refugees, because of their precarious legal status, face rejection, discrimination, and harassment in many areas of the country. Denying their refugee status, Beirut refuses to set up official camps for them, forcing most to live in the most vulnerable areas, including the Bekaa Valley and Akkar (Akesson et al., 2017), or in unrecognized, makeshift camps such as those around Arsal, close to the Syrian border. These places offer deteriorating living conditions and extreme insecurity (HRW, 2017). Organizations including *Médecins sans frontières* (MSF) (2013a) and World Vision (2013) have frequently reported on these shocking conditions. People

struggle to find shelter and food, and many have no access to health care or schools. This situation hits unregistered refugees especially hard, as they have no access to aid. Furthermore, the escalating conflict in Syria has created more refugees, increasing social and political tensions against Syrians in some areas of Lebanon, which started in the mid-1970s because of Syria's role in the Lebanese civil war. Such hostility forces refugees to maintain low profiles and avoid interaction with local populations.

Many Syrians in Lebanon work in seasonal farming and building, but most are exploited and many receive no pay, as employers exploit their precarious legal status, which affects every aspect of their everyday life (Banki, 2013; Sigona, 2012), including housing. Such status of precarity negatively impacts their socio-economic and subjects them to severe marginalization and exploitation in the absence of protection and support structures. For example, Ammar, who crossed into Lebanon, moved into an old abandoned building in the north, 10 km from the nearest village. Despite its inaccessibility, the rent was high. Because of widespread hostility against Syrians, Ammar found it best to avoid the locals. Like many of his compatriots in Lebanon, he found work in building and farming, but received virtually no pay. He was mistreated and abused by the Lebanese police, but could not complain due to his illegal status. Ammar therefore considered resettlement in a third country. He tried to register as a refugee at the UNHCR offices in Beirut, but the massive crowds of applicants every day, and the abusive Lebanese security forces there, discouraged him, so he thought about leaving for another country. He explained:

> My situation was very miserable in Lebanon; I was hungry and cold most of
> the time and thus started planning to leave to a third country where I could
> claim asylum. I thought of going to Europe through Libya, but my mother
> strongly rejected the idea, given the high number of casualties through that

route. Then I heard from a relative, who had moved to Thailand that the UNHCR are accepting refugee resettlement applications there. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

Ammar's words show how illegality can shape daily life for refugees in Lebanon. Lack of adequate international protection pushes many refugees into illegality, which further marginalizes them and leaves them open to exploitation. Ammar, desperate for social acceptance and protection, considered Thailand after he learned that the UNHCR there had resettled some refugees from Syria. He borrowed money from family members and friends for a new phase of his journey, and he headed to Thailand. But he found life there different from what he had expected, creating new forms of vulnerability for him:

> I was not legally allowed to work due to my tourist visa, so I maintained a low profile and found a job at a Pakistani restaurant for a minimum wage, which barely covered my rent and daily expenses. Working conditions were tough. I worked 13 hours a day, seven days a week. After two months, I found another job at an Iraqi restaurant. The conditions were not better. In fact, it was a kind of slavery, but I had no other alternatives. Time, as well as my illegal status, were not on my side. My visa had expired while I was trying hard to look for better working conditions.

> I registered with the UNHCR hoping that I will be resettled in a third country … After a year of waiting, I was informed by the UNHCR that my second interview was postponed for another seven months. Moreover, my resettlement application will require three years at least to be complete. At that moment, I had to consider other options; I thought about turning myself into the Thai police, where the UNHCR is supposed to interfere six months after my detention, but I was discouraged due to the horrible conditions at Thai prisons.

> Instead, a friend of mine offered to assist me to travel to Germany through Turkey. The journey would cost $5,000 U.S., which I didn't have. My friend, whom I helped many times before, offered to give me $3,000 U.S., and another friend in Egypt gave me $1,500 U.S. So I started a journey towards Germany via Turkey. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

Ammar summarizes some of the factors that push refugees to consider an expensive and risky journey to Europe. Living illegally, social and economic marginalization, and lack of protection

may lead them to conclude that Europe is their only choice. Yet such a journey may be messy, complicated, and unpredictable, as it was for Ammar, who travelled from Syria to Lebanon, then to Thailand, only to head back to Turkey in order to reach Europe.

Jordan

Jordan displays exploitation similar to Lebanon's -- poor workplace conditions, risk of detention and deportation, minimal access to social rights, and absence of support. The UNHCR (2016) reported that Jordan had more than 600,000 Syrian refugees. It worked with the national government to establish four official camps for them, locating 115,000 of them near the Syrian border in Zaatari, one of the region's largest camps (Akram et al., 2014). Conditions in the camps are shocking – no schools for children and people crowding into small tents with no privacy (UNICEF, 2013). The catastrophic conditions in the camps has pushed some desperate families to marry off their daughters very young, creating new levels of victimization and vulnerability (Save the Children Fund, 2014). Urban refugees in Jordan, about 80 per cent of the total, frequently face rejection and discrimination, since it's an expensive country to live in, and refugees have few job opportunities and limited aid and humanitarian support (Akram et al., 2014).

For example, Khaled, who left Daraa, Syria, and crossed into Jordan illegally, spent two years in Amman without humanitarian assistance. His Jordanian employer humiliated and mistreated him. Khaled explained to me that the situation was so desperate that many families were willing to return to the camps. He believed that the majority of Syrians were mistreated in their jobs, because of their illegality. Many put up with this, fearing detention or deportation back to Syria:

"In Jordan, we had no rights, we were not allowed to work, which is essential to survive" (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016).

In July 2014, Jordan, assisted by the UNHCR, introduced biometric scans, including of the iris, to facilitate registration of Syrian refugees (*Jordan Times*, 2014). Khaled worried that such measures, especially the iris scan, might reveal that he was a Palestinian refugee from Syria, since the authorities had previous scans from his pre-war visit to the country. He returned to Syria in order to avoid detention. At the border, he found himself among hundreds of Syrian families exiting Jordan. That day, Jordanian security forces assigned three buses to transport people to Syria through the same illegal border point where they had entered Jordan. Khaled re-entered Syria to start another chapter of his journey.

Turkey

Turkey is often held up as one of the more promising options of escape for Syrians, yet living conditions there can be very precarious, creating differential inclusion (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel, 2016). Since the Syrian crisis began in 2011, Turkey has received more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2018) and opened camps for more than 200,000 of them, although most Syrians live in urban centers. Yet, as I noted above in this chapter, refugees in Turkey – officially "neither refugees nor guests" -- have precarious and problematic status and so limited access to health care, education, permanent residency, and work permits (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel, 2015). Many families live in crowded places with poor facilities. In Gaziantep, in southern Turkey, many rent dilapidated houses with no running water or electricity. Humanitarian assistance amounts to minimal quantities of food, and children collect plastic from the garbage to gain some money (my field observation as a research assistant, Gaziantep, June 2015).

Arad, who crossed illegally into Turkey, found charities selective in offering aid: "They preferred to support Arabs over Kurds and more favourably Muslims … It wasn't hard to tell that they were affiliated with the Syrian opposition coalition, like most charities in Turkey" (Arad, Kitchener, Canada, March 2016). Arad and his family found social interactions very awkward:

> We moved to Avcilar district in Istanbul …[11] Syrian refugees were badly treated by the officials at that area. They prejudged all Syrian refugees as traitors for escaping their country; instead, they thought we should have stayed in Syria to fight the extremists. Some locals even refused to rent houses to Syrians and kept questioning us about reasons for leaving Syria. They persistently asked us to return, but how is that possible? There is war there, our house was destroyed, how can we go back? Municipalities managed by [President Recep Tayyip] *Erdoğan*'s [AK] party treated Syrians a little bit more humanly and provided some assistance. (Arad, Kitchener, Canada, March 2016)

Many Syrian refugees are subject to stigma, humiliation, even rejection while they struggle to establish new lives. Such barriers may affect work too. For example, Arad's boss refused to pay him for five months and forced him to work non-stop for many hours. Arad found another job but was again at his employer's mercy. He could not complain to the authorities because he had no legal status:

> In Turkey, they do not recognize us at all; our existence is simply not acknowledged … My employer was generous with me but expected me to work very long hours; he would wake me up early in the morning and kept asking for more working hours. He was nice, but the working conditions were pretty tough. Many people could not continue working in such circumstances. (Arad, Kitchener, Canada, March 2016)

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[11] Avcilar has a majority population of Alevis, who generally oppose Turkey's policy vis-à-vis the Syrian conflict. Alevism is a branch of Shi'a Islam practiced in Turkey and the Balkans among ethnic Turks and Kurds and is related to —though distinct from—Alawism in Syria. Alevis make up 20 per cent of Turkish Muslims and comprise the country's largest religious minority (Harvard Divinity School, https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/alevism).

Such conditions exploit refugees in the absence of security and social protection (Banki, 2013). This legal limbo also affects access to health care:

> Hospitals refused to accept us because we are Syrians. When my daughter broke her arm, I took her from one hospital to the other (three hospitals in total), only to be denied by all three. I was desperate and contacted my employer, who drove us to a hospital near Aksaray [in Istanbul],[12] but when they found out she is Syrian, they referred us to another place and a third place … It was a public hospital, and if you are not registered within the system, they won't let you in. (Arad, Kitchener, Canada, March 2016)

The government introduced identity cards (*kimliks*) for Syrians in order to ease access to social services such as health care. But, Arad explains: "There was no kimlik when we arrived in Turkey. We were among the first people who had the kimlik. But it did not help much and did not make any difference. We were still denied access to health care even after we received it." Kimliks did not help with schooling either. Arad's children could not attend Turkish schools because they could not speak Turkish. To study Arabic (Syria's language), they would have to attend private schools, which Arad could not afford, so they missed school for two years:

> I wanted to move to another country just to secure education for them. I wanted them to go to school. I was ready to go back to Syria. I did not care about the war there. I wanted to see my kids attending schools. They have been out of school for more than three years. I could not see them roaming the streets without any education. (Arad, Kitchener, Canada, March 2016)

Arad became one of the few lucky Syrians in Turkey to register with the UNHCR's resettlement program in Istanbul in 2013. The UNHCR interviewed him in Istanbul and in Ankara, and a few months later the Canadian embassy in Ankara accepted his resettlement application. While he and his family waited for the paperwork, they remained in legal limbo, with no social assistance or schooling and minimal access to health care and other public

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[12] Aksaray is a district in Istanbul.

services. A year later, when they arrived in Canada, they received permanent residency at the airport, which gave them full access to social rights, including education, employment, health care, and social welfare. His wife cried tears of joy and relief watching her children enter their Canadian school for the first time.

For Arad, displacement had given way to resettlement. Acceptance by the UNHCR's program had launched him and his family on a long process of applications, interviews, and waiting, but his journey towards protection was now legal and regulated (Johnson, 2014). They arrived in Canada legally, as Convention refugees. Thousands of other refugees, including Ammar and Khaled, were desperate to achieve the same but, unable to become Convention refugees, lived, often in rough conditions, as displaced persons, experiencing "mobility in ways that are outside the strict policies and procedures of management and control governing border regimes" (Johnson, 2014: 3).

During this process, many find themselves captives of a global system of border control that prevents and deters them rather than protecting them (Johnson, 2014; Mountz, 2010; Squire 2011). Many aiming for Europe encounter the EU's "non-entrée" regime as irregular migrants (Hathaway and Gammeltoff-Hansen, 2015), as I discussed in chapter one -- hence their precarious journeys to circumvent restrictive border controls. They have failed to gain international protection through asylum after fleeing war in their homelands, but reject the uncertainty of displacement, and their illegal journeys towards Europe show them to be both extremely vulnerable yet acting politically, "taking politics through which refugees assert their own capacity to decide their own life conditions" (Johnson 2014: 181). Yet, as chapter two

explained, these acts of survival and resistance are also moments of extreme vulnerability and uncertainty.

The particular case of Palestinian refugees from Syria illustrates the devastating impact of regional political unrest, restrictive border controls, and social marginalization on these stateless refugees, who, fleeing war in Syria, endure acute precarity and rejection.

Escape and Displacement: Palestinian Refugees from Syria

In this section I examine the case of Palestinian refugees from Syria who experience wartime and displacement in neighbouring states. I do so to illustrate the acute precarity and rejection that statelessness imposes on these refugees. It is worth noting here that Syria was considered home by many Palestinian refugees who, as illustrated earlier, were forced out of Palestine in 1948. Until 2011, they enjoyed better living conditions than their compatriots in neighbouring countires. They integrated into social and economic life, faced few barriers to work or mobility (Brand, 1988), and had full access to public services, such as education and health care. They also received assistance from UNRWA, which provided Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria with education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, and emergency assistance (UNRWA, 2016a).

Since March 2011, security has deteriorated for Palestinian refugees in Syria, as for their hosts. The intense fighting has affected all the Palestinian camps in Syria and displaced most of their residents, adding to their vulnerability as stateless persons (UNRWA, 2014a). More than 160,000 of them lived in Yarmouk (Mukhayyam al-Yarmouk or Yarmouk Camp), the largest Palestinian refugee community in Syria (UNRWA, 2002). It was my home all my life before coming to Canada in June 2011. Thus my notes and observations about the crisis there derive

from my life there and from my daily interactions and communications with my family, friends, and community members who witnessed the events before and after being forced to leave Yarmouk on 17 December 2012.

Yarmouk was not a refugee camp in the standard sense, but rather a densely populated district at the southern edge of Damascus, with a diverse demographic that included impoverished neighbourhoods and also thriving commercial areas, home to thousands of Palestinian and Syrian middle-class professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and wealthy merchants. During the first months of the conflict, Yarmouk seemed a safe haven for thousands of Syrian families seeking refuge from the intense fighting in the surrounding areas, and the population mushroomed. On 16 December 2012, however, a Syrian fighter jet attacked a local mosque, killing tens of civilians. The next day, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) opposition militia and fighters of the extremist Jabhat Al Nusra entered the district from the south. Fearing the consequences, on the morning of 17 December thousands of inhabitants fled towards other parts of Damascus. People dragged their families and carried their small suitcases and plastic bags, leaving everything else behind, and started a long journey of displacement and vulnerability. Safieh is a Palestinian woman from Yarmouk, whom I interviewed in Sweden. She reported:

> We lost everything. We used to live in Yarmouk. The armed groups attacked the area in December 2012, so we had to leave. It was impossible for us to stay with them because the area will be a hot zone and we will be under fire from both sides. We will lose our lives. We were mainly afraid about our kids. (Safieh, Stockholm, July 2016)

For many, leaving Yarmouk was a painful reliving of the memories or the story of the Nakbeh (Catastrophe) of May 1948, when their parents were forced to leave their homes and towns in Palestine and later became stateless refugees. After fleeing Yarmouk, people shared

126

overcrowded apartments with relatives or neighbours, often in dire conditions, while others with fewer resources slept in the public parks or streets of Damascus. Returning to Yarmouk quickly became impossible because of the intensified fighting there and regime forces' subsequent siege in July 2013. In April 2015, UNRWA announced that lack of safe access had crippled its humanitarian efforts there for the thousands of civilians trapped inside and under the control of two extremist fighting groups, including ISIS (UNRWA, 2015a).

What is distinctive about the Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk, and from other Palestinian camps in Syria, is the collective sense of loss that they have shared since their statelessness began in 1948. They and their descendants are now reliving this through the Syrian conflict, yet again leaving everything behind and seeking refuge elsewhere. In fact, as I showed in chapter two, this new displacement once again challenges their conceptualization of home, identity, return, and visibility as refugees. For the young generation, born and raised in Yarmouk, leaving it created a new crisis of loss, with the district as the "home" to "return" to. For these young people, Palestine had always been the lost "homeland," which they knew only through the stories of their parents, whereas Yarmouk presented their actual "home," where they lived and belonged.

Estimates suggest that more than 50 per cent of Palestinian refugees from Syria are now displaced (BADIL, 2015). This new diaspora flows directly from their precarious legal status and unresolved statelessness, as the Introduction outlined. Palestinian refugees have been unable to practise their right of repatriation, arguably the only way to achieve recognition for and preserve their collective identity, national narrative, and right of self-determination (Said, 1986). The systematic denial of their right of return is imposed by Israel and is maintained by

excluding them from international protection. Ironically, this denial is sustained at a time when some governments in the global north increasingly encourage repatriation as the ideal solution for refugees, even against their will (Chimni, 1998). Thus Palestinians demonstrate how stateless refugees become subject to other states' (un)willingness to accept them as citizens and how proposed solutions are the result of political and authoritarian calculations and international relations, regardless of refugees' rights and well-being. Even so, UNHCR statistics omitted Palestinian refugees from Syria when it estimated that 10 per cent of the 3.2 million refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries were "acutely vulnerable individuals and need resettlement elsewhere" (UNHCR, 2014b). Thus they could not resettle elsewhere or exercise their historical "right of return" (an idea anathema to Israel, which made them stateless).

Those Palestinian refugees who left Syria for neighbouring countries entered legal limbo, with no protection, restrictions on their movement, and social marginalization (Human Rights Watch, 2014a, 2014b, and 2014c). Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt criminalize, detain, and discriminate against some of them (ibid.). Hundreds have been detained and, on some occasions, deported back to Syrian war zones, in a clear breach of the international principles of refugee protection (Amnesty International, 2014a; Human Rights Watch, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c).

Since 1948, Lebanon has been host to approximately 450,000 Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2014a). Today more than half of these people live in refugee camps, all much poorer than Yarmouk. In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees have always faced legal restrictions and structural discrimination (Amnesty International, 2014a, 2014b), engendering poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing, and lack of infrastructure. Lebanese political tensions towards Palestinian political factions, a legacy of the mid-1970s' civil war, make a bad situation worse.

Officials in Lebanon often treat Palestinian refugees as a security burden and a political threat (Nayel, 2013), and the xenophobic rhetoric against them is clear in, for example, politicians' public statements (ibid.).[13] Palestinians in Lebanon are prohibited from owning property, entering a number of professions, including medicine and law, or obtaining social security (ILO, 2012), making them marginal socially and economically, so they crowd in slum-like camps that lack even basic infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2014b).

The general Lebanese disdain for Palestinians extends to Palestinian refugees from Syria (IRIN, 2012). The government was reluctant to receive them (IRIN, 2012), so they had to obtain special visas and pay large fees before entry (UNRWA, 2014b). New rules of August 2013 restricted their mobility within the country and totally blocked any more of them from arriving (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Further, authorities have detained many who were using forged documents to leave Lebanon through Beirut Airport. These Palestinians are often deported to Syria, which may detain, torture, even kill them (Human Rights Watch, 2014a).

Even Palestinian refugees from Syria who entered Lebanon before the total blockade of August 2013 have no legal status or protection (ibid.). They lack the basics, including food, housing, health care, and schooling, although UNRWA, which was already badly stretched (BADIL, 2015; IRIN, 2012), offers them limited assistance. Even though Lebanon does not recognize them as refugees, the UNHCR won't deal with them because they are under UNRWA's umbrella, as I explained above. Yet in May 2015, even UNWRA, short of resources, halted cash assistance to them for housing (UNRWA, 2015b). Severe poverty and costly housing

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[13] For example, Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil announced on twitter that he "supports giving citizenship to children of Lebanese female nationals, except if they were married to Palestinians and Syrians" (17 September 2016). He later added: "This restriction will preserve Lebanon's entity," (An-Nahar, 2018).

forced many families to share overcrowded shelters without furniture, clean water, and sewage utilities. The adults may not work in Lebanon, leaving them on the margins.

In Jordan, Palestinians from Syria face similar restrictions and discrimination. Since the Syrian conflict began, Jordan has further restricted their mobility (UNRWA, 2014c). In January 2013 the prime minister announced: "Jordan has made a clear and explicit sovereign decision to not allow the crossing to Jordan by our Palestinian brothers who hold Syrian documents … They should stay in Syria until the end of the crisis" (Al Monitor, 2014). Authorities would now detain illegal entrants and deport them to Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2014b and 2014c), so any such arrivals from before January 2013 would need to keep a low profile to avoid the same fate (Al Monitor, 2014). This state of fear prevents such refugees' integration within host communities and increases their chances of facing exploitation and discrimination.

Making matters even worse, Palestinian refugees from Syria lack official legal status in Jordan. Like Lebanon, Jordan does not recognize them as refugees, and – they are ineligible for UNHCR protection as they are subject to UNRWA's mandate. Thus they may not settle in UNHCR refugee camps or seek humanitarian relief outside the camps. As well, lacking legal status and UNHCR recognition, they may not work or receive Jordanian social services (Al Monitor, 2014), all of which makes their situation almost unbearable.

As in Lebanon and Jordan, so in Turkey: the 10,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria who went there experience similar precarity and illegality. Authorities there often refuse to recognize their Syrian travel documents (BADIL, 2015). A Palestinian refugee whom I met in Kills, in southern Turkey, had entered Turkey illegally with her family through a 3-m-deep tunnel:

As Palestinians, we face another tragedy on the top of the horrible journey that we went through to reach the borders -- they won't allow us to enter. The Turkish government does not recognize our travel document as Palestinian refugees from Syria. They do not accept us as refugees the way they accept the Syrians. (Palestinian refugee family in Kills, Turkey, June 2015)

Like other states in the region, Turkey does not recognize Palestinians as refugees. They have limited access to health care and education and may not obtain work permits or legal status (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel, 2016). Families lack aid and a sustainable income, and, although there are no UNRWA services in Turkey, the UNHCR is outside their grasp (BADIL, 2015). The husband of this Palestinian refugee described the struggle for survival:

I am now in debt of about $600-700 U.S., and I am not the only one. All of us, all the families here, are suffering and are in debt for their food bills. I was supposed to pay the rent two days ago. I do not have the money for that, and many, if not all, the families are in the same position. (Palestinian refugee in Kills, Turkey, June 2015)

As in Turkey, so in Egypt: Palestinian refugees from Syria who arrived after 2011 also lack protection. In fact, the country's political tensions have hurt them, particularly the close links of such Palestinian political factions as Hamas to the currently banned Muslim Brotherhood. The politicization of their situation affects their living conditions and limits their access to schools and health care (Relief Web, 2014). Wassim, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, moved to Egypt with his wife, Rajaa, and their sons, Rami and Shadi, in March 2013. Wassim explained to me:

The main thing was the legal limbo in Egypt. According to the Egyptian law, if you are an Arab who is living in Egypt and you enrolled your kids at local schools, you are eligible to receive a renewable temporary residence for one year. Palestinians who came to Egypt at the early stages of the Syrian conflict when Muslim Brothers were in power [June 2012-July 2013] were issued with such residencies and were able to renew them. When Muslim Brothers came out of power, there was a total mess. No one could take a decision, while restrictions started to increase on the entry and residency of Palestinians from Syria. For example, members of my family who arrived in Egypt before me were able to obtain and renew their residencies. This was not the case for me.

I used to check on my status regularly, and the officers used to send me away without an answer. At the end, I had to pay a bribe in order to obtain a residency. (Wassim, Stockholm, July 2016)

Political unrest in Egypt has affected Palestinian refugees from Syria, as it has for other refugees. Wassim, for example, wanted to set up a business and stay, but political events interfered:

During this time, I established a business with an Egyptian partner. However, while I was waiting for my residency, the partnership agreement was not officially recognized. We were involved in exporting frozen vegetables from Egypt to the Gulf States. I invested the amount of $300,000 in that business and I was still without a residency. Things went really bad when the military forces came in power [July 2013] and Gulf States stopped importing stuff from Egypt. We were affected badly as the value of our products went down by about 80 per cent. Electricity rates went up madly when President Sisi came in power [June 2014]. The cost of freezing our product increased dramatically from 200 Egyptian pounds to 700 pounds and we were not able to sell it. This situation lasted until I left Egypt in July 2015. It lasted about two years. (Wassim, Stockholm, July 2016)

The UNHCR, as I discussed above, may not help Palestinian refugees from Syria living in Egypt to resettle outside the region (UNHCR, 2014b), and, as stateless refugees, they lack the means to facilitate their "right of return." As a result, thousands of them join other desperate refugees from the region who seek protection and acceptance elsewhere, most of them in northern Europe (Almustafa, 2018). As Wassim explained, "We were determined to try leaving Egypt … We had no other choices. We were left with only one option, which was to depart for Europe" (Wassim, Stockholm, July 2016). Yet "non-entrée" regimes there have restrictive border controls and visa policies against would-be arrivals from Syria, so such measures forced them to travel illegally and through dangerous routes.

Such restrictions hit Palestinians from Syria hardest of all. In fact, restrictions against their movement started early in their journey. For example, Egypt criminalizes refugees who attempt

to depart illegally towards Europe (Amnesty International, 2014c), and while it might release Syrians quickly, it often detains Palestinian refugees in shocking conditions and then deports them to Syria (Amnesty International, 2014d; Human Rights Watch, 2013). The case of the "Karmooz Refugees" is notorious. A group of 74 Syrian and Palestinian refugees fled Turkey by boat on 23 October 2014 hoping for refuge in Europe. After a dispute, the smugglers left them on Nelson Island, close to Abu Qir, Alexandria. Egyptian coast guards then arrested the group, which included 15 women and 15 minors, seven under 10, and one only 10 months old. The group was detained in poor conditions in the Karmooz police station in Alexandria for almost a year and released in the summer of 2015 after being accepted as resettled refugees in Germany, Sweden, and France.[14] The last group departed the police station in September 2015, leaving behind one Somali refugee, 17, whom no resettling country would accept (Center for Refugee Solidarity, 2015). This example, like other similar cases, illustrates how lack of sufficient protection and legal routes to claim refuge and rights has pushed many refugees into multiple forms of precarity and irregularity. Their precarity expands from wartime Syria to include its neighbours and all phases of their journey towards their destinations in Europe. The conditions of these journeys are the focus of the following chapters.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated, using refugees' own stories, the circumstances of wartime that pushed them to escape Syria. Thereby displaced, they first sought to settle in neighbouring countries. Later they journeyed to Europe in search of protection (see chapter four). Through their words, I have examined the severe precarity that many experienced and that in turn shaped

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[14] I followed news of this particular group of refugees through a facebook page set up for them:
https://www.facebook.com/search/str/%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A6%D9%8A+%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B2%23karmooz+refugees/stories-keyword/stories-public

their decisions about the journey. By using their stories and words, I have shown their experience of insecurity, fear, and uncertainty during the war in Syria, and then their conditions of limbo and inadequate protection during their displacement in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. In the distinctive case of Palestinian refugees from Syria, I have showed how leaving added another painful episode of statelessness and further distanced them from Palestine, their homeland, which they or their families lost in 1948.

These precarious and vulnerable conditions emerge in the absence of protection and because of restrictive policies on asylum and border control. Such circumstances turn refugees into a "disposable commodity" (De Genova 2004:179), subject to normalized violence and marginalization, all of which make them more socially vulnerable through further displacement. It is these chaotic conditions that they reject when they decide to leave the region in pursuit of greater protection and security. Their decisions to depart – first Syria, later the region -- are in fact acts of survival that they make to protect themselves and their families from the horrors of war and the vulnerabilities of displacement.

Through this understanding of the refugee journey, I aim to challenge the negative portrayal of refugees as merely victims and show rather how their decisions to leave reflect high degrees of agency. Their stories reveal their refusal to accept a vulnerable and marginal situation when they decide to journey towards other destinations in search of greater safety and access to rights. In other words, and as I noted in chapter two, they emerge as political actors, who reject wretched conditions and strive for more rights and security, despite their reluctance to leave their country or their region. Their agency is visible through their ability to create unexpected scripts and trajectories (Squire, 2017). Yet, as their stories make clear, this agency is not a deliberately

political move, as most did not wish to leave their home. They acted out of their fear and need for protection as they sought to escape the precarious conditions and violence around them. They usually decided to leave in extremely vulnerable and constrained circumstances. Thus their agency here is interwoven with precariousness. Consequently, because of those unsettled conditions, we should not overemphasize the notion of agency or romanticize the act of leaving. Nevertheless, this approach to the journey can inform our understanding of the global crisis of protection and reveal its harrowing impact on the lives and trajectories of refugees who escape war for the confines of structures of control and a failing refugee regime incapable of protecting them, as they deserve. I develop this discussion of the refugee journey hoping to help create new ways to think about refugees and protection based on the human experience, which can ultimately inform refugee studies and global frameworks of protection and acceptance.

As refugees continue their journeys towards northern Europe, they encounter European "non-entrée" regimes, which, as the previous chapters revealed, many states have set up to keep refugees away. The resulting legal and official blockade leaves refugees with few choices but to try risky, illegal routes, which further mess up their journeys and increase the human suffering en route, as chapters four and five reveal.

Images of Yarmouk

Yarmouk June 2012: https://arunwithaview.wordpress.com/2012/07/24/yarmouk-damascus/

Yarmouk (January 2014): https://www.unrwa.org/crisis-in-yarmouk

Yarmouk (April 2015): https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20773651

Yarmouk (May 2018): http://www.actionpal.org.uk

Chapter Four: The Non-linear, Messy, Complex Journey to Europe

Introduction

In chapter two, I developed a three-part framework for exploring the refugee journey: survival and resistance, leading the refugee to escape from Syria and to displacement within the region (chapter three); the non-linear, messy, complex journey to Europe (this chapter); and the emotional, transforming, life-changing experience (chapter five). Chapter three examined the escape from Syria and displacement within the region – as forms of survival and resistance. Refugees talked about their insecurity and fear during wartime and their marginalization and exclusion in displacement. I showed how refugees' decisions, while in displacement or still in Syria, to leave the region reflected a refusal to live with such poor conditions. Their devastating situation, combined with restrictive border control shaped refugees' decisions on how and where to head, often through dangerous, illegal routes, to find protection and acceptance. A number of the refugees I interviewed were determined to avoid the humiliation of displacement in neighbouring countries and decided to journey towards northern Europe directly from Syria, but they too had illegal and precarious journeys.

Through the refugees' stories, I examine the messy, sometimes-violent unpredictability of their journeys, notably the multiple loops of their non-linear movements. My approach speaks to the literature of non-linear, precarious, "unauthorized" journeys made by forced migrants, including refugees (Briden and Mainwaring, 2016; Crawley et al., 2018; Gill, Caletrioa, and Mason, 2011; Hassan and Biorklund, 2016; Kaytaz, 2016; Khousravi, 2011; Squire et al., 2017). Such endeavours often prove costly. Journeys often end with death, and survivors may emerge with transformed identity, self-awareness, and positionality (discussed in chapter five), all of which affect their new lives and trajectories.

As I explained in the Introduction, I follow the storylines of refugees' journeys and hold my reflections until the end to avoid breaking the flow of the stories and to place refugees' words at the center of the analysis. I draw on the stories I collected during the spring and summer of 2016, when I interviewed 60 refugees from Syria who made the journey to Sweden, and two of whom ended up in Germany during 2012-16. I focus on a few of these stories -- for example, on one family's multiple routes, as they became separated and took multiple routes -- a powerful instance of refugees' messy, unpredictable, often-harrowing journeys in search of protection.

I consider these stories I concentrate on to be representatives of the many others I heard about the journey from Syria to Sweden and treat them as such. I selected them because they reflect clearly and deeply the intense messiness and unpredictability of refugees' journeys and share much in common with other journeys refugees made during the study period. Through these stories, I explore the realities of the journeys, especially three. First, how did they decide who should go and who should stay? Second, how did they choose certain routes and pathways over others? And, third, how did they travel from Syria? what types of transportation did they use? and how did they cross borders and engage with smugglers, coast guards, and other actors while on the move?

I follow the refugees' stories during their actual movements towards northern Europe, through three main pathways (see maps of routes and journeys):

- the 'Egyptian route': by sea from Egypt to Italy and thence with smugglers or by train to Sweden
- the 'Turkish route': by sea from Turkey to Greece and thence by air or on land through the Balkan corridor to Sweden

140

- the 'Libyan route': by sea from Libya to Italy and thence with smugglers or by train to Sweden

Migration and border scholars have examined these routes to map and document refugee journeys towards Europe. "Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat" (Squire et al., 2017) examines the impact of European policies 2015-16 on the journeys to Europe, especially through the European Agenda on Migration, which aimed to provide legal routes and improve reception facilities. "Unravelling Europe's 'Migration Crisis': Journeys over Land and Sea" (Crawley et al., 2018) explores patterns of migrant journeys to Europe and decision-making conditions. It challenges the so-called European migration crisis and the notion of migrants' linear journeys from country of origin to that of resettlement. Both research projects explore Mediterranean routes and shed light on conditions of the journeys (often non-linear and complex) and of the arrival points in Europe. Both projects use in-depth qualitative interviews to unravel the impact of immigration and border policies on refugees' journeys. In my work, I engage with refugees' stories, but do so as an insider. I observe the refugees as an ethnographic participant myself, and my knowledge of the interviewees' refugee community, and my personal journey of uprootedness and loss, inform my research. My position as insider allowed me to explore refugees' detailed experiences, feelings, and transformations of positionality and identity while mapping their journeys towards their aimed destinations. Through this process, I position refugees as the *prime* source of knowledge and examine the painful, sometimes-tragic, yet near-heroic events refugees experience during their search for protection.

By using refugees' personal stories, I explore the daily realities and conditions of their journeys and reveal the diversity of their experiences, backgrounds, and aspirations, as well as

showing how messy and complex their journeys can become. My work engages with refugees'
stories to explore the personal impact of the global crisis of protection on their bodies and lives. I
examine the journey's transforming impact and draw on refugees' emotional and innermost
struggles en route, which change them dramatically. By doing so, I conceptualize refugee
journey as a friction between the global structures of governance and the intimate space of
refugees' bodies. I argue here that refugees' words uncover these connections and help us fathom
the global crisis of protection, which, as discussed in chapter one, results substantially from
containment and deterrence policies of parts of the global north – especially, in this study, the
EU -- against refugees from the global south. The suffering of refugees on their journeys brings
home the effects of these policies on the ground, as this chapter reveals. As I said in chapter
three, refugees rarely share these sentiments with foreign researchers, but I was able to learn
about these particular feelings due to my positionality as a Syrian researcher, who had
undertaken a journey, and had been through similar experiences. Most of my interviewees
treated me as an insider who could feel their pain and who, in addition, shared similar sentiments
of loss and helplessness, but also determination and hope.

The Egyptian Route

   On this route, refugees use the services of smuggling networks to depart from illegal points
on Egypt's Mediterranean coast near Alexandria and take fishing boats across the sea in towards
Italy – usually Sicily -- and then head north by land towards Milan. From there, they continue
north, either with smugglers in their cars or by train, to Sweden. Until July 2013, Syrians did not
need an Egyptian visa and could fly from Damascus to Cairo using passports, making it a
popular route. When Egypt's military overthrew President Morsi, they imposed visa rules on

Syrians (Fox News 2013; *The Guardian*; 2013).[15] Palestinian refugees from Syria had until then used travel documents issued by the Syrian authorities.

In Egypt, smuggling networks target refugees from Syria by using mediators (middlemen), often Syrian. Some 'mediators' are themselves refugees trying to collect money for their own journey or working in exchange for a trip with the smugglers' help. The mediator facilitates payment for the smugglers -- usually $3,000-$4,000 U.S. per person. The mediator holds onto the money and pays the smugglers only after refugees arrive in Italy. Refugees link "payment upon arrival" to their safe arrival in Italy, whereas many smugglers ask for it as soon as their vessel reaches Italian waters, assuming that the Italian coast guard will rescue the refugees. As refugees' stories reveal, rescue often takes a few days and can be dangerous and troubling. The Italian government's recent refusal to receive boats of migrants and refugees indicates that rescue is not always possible (MSF, 2018a).

I examine the Egyptian route here through the journeys of Wassim and his family. Wassim, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, ran a catering business in Damascus. He moved to Egypt in early 2013 with his wife Rajaa and their sons, Rami (early 20s) and Shadi (16). I introduced them at the start of chapter three. Rajaa did not want to leave Syria, but her family, concerned about her mental and emotional condition, forced her to depart with them to Egypt, where Wassim hoped to build a new life and set up a business. But political instability and growing hostility to Palestinians from Syria, particularly after July 2013, changed his plans. Compulsory military service ruled out Syria, so the family decided to try for Europe: "We were determined to try leaving Egypt … We had no other choice. We were left with only one option, which was to

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[15] Syrians in Egypt were considered supporters of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which was banned in Egypt after the summer of 2013.

depart for Europe" (Wassim, Stockholm, July 2016). But they could not obtain European visas due to restrictive European polices against Syrians and Palestinians from Syria, so Wassim decided to send the sons with relatives who were planning to travel from Egypt to Italy using the services of smugglers. Wassim and Rajaa, who did not want to travel illegally, were planning to join the young men in Sweden through family reunification. Shadi, as an unaccompanied minor, would be able to apply for his parents to join him in Sweden after his arrival there. Yet, like many other refugees, who were forced to make such journeys, Wassim and his family ended up making separate, unpredictable, and complex journeys to Sweden by different routes. The journeys cost them all their savings and lasted for several months.

After several failed attempts to depart Egypt for Italy with the help of smugglers, Rami finally left, with a number of relatives. Shadi decided to stay. On the Egyptian route, Rami, like other refugees, experienced vulnerability, violence, and yet high degrees of agency.

Rami departed on 2 December 2013 with two uncles. That night, they met the smugglers and were taken to a gathering point, where they met up with hundreds of other refugees, some of whom had been waiting for days, even weeks. For each would-be departure, the refugee pays the mediator; wraps passports, IDs, and phones in plastic bags; and prepares life-jackets, snacks, and water. Each person may take one backpack of clothes. Some sew special pockets inside their underwear for passports, money, and phone cards. A failed attempt means doing all this again.

Smugglers transport the refugees in small, covered, crowded vehicles, sometimes for hours, to departure points -- usually abandoned houses near the beach. Refugees must then walk through the sand for a few hours to reach the beach itself. In many cases, Egyptian police arrest the

refugees, with smugglers often 'escaping.' Rami described his fear and uncertainty the night of

his departure when people hid from the police:

> It was in the dark. People were terrified. They started feeling things moving around them like animals and insects. Many of them thought of going back. We encouraged them to stay and to continue after all of this, and also no one knew the way back or how to reach the main road, since we walked a lot to reach our location. We were worried about people's safety if they left the place. There might be gangs out there. Nobody was certain of anything. (Rami, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

Even after several attempts, and despite the fear and uncertainty, many refugees still want the

journey, such is their desperation to leave. Many refugees have put all their savings into the

endeavour so must continue. As Rami said. "We were convinced that this was our last chance --

we either use it or we will lose everything."

In such circumstances, departing from the beach can be chaotic, especially if armed smugglers

force refugees to board small rubber or wooden boats to go to the bigger fishing vessel in the sea.

Many families become separated at this early stage:

> There was a Syrian woman with a baby boy and three girls who were between two and twelve years old. Her husband did not manage to get on the boat. There was not a place for him. He was left behind and was then caught by the police who arrived later and stopped those who did not manage to get on the boat. So this woman continued her journey with her children and her brother in law. (Rami, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

The trip in these small boats takes usually less than 15 minutes, but many refugees reach the

fishing vessel wet and exhausted. The approach occurs usually in darkness and through high

waves. The refugees are then pushed or thrown up to the larger vessel by the smugglers, whose

colleagues grab them and drag them onto the deck of the fishing vessel -- any mistake can mean

drowning. This transfer was particularly terrifying for children and embarrassing for women,

totally wet, some of them separated from their husbands or children, and pushed and grabbed by strange men. Some journeys may include several such transfers. As they approach Italian waters, smugglers move their passengers from the fishing vessel, usually steel, to a smaller, perhaps dilapidated wooden boat and send the fishing vessel back to Egypt for other journeys.

After this trying launch in Egypt, most refugees reach the fishing vessel without their belongings and life-jackets. Rami's uncle lost his glasses while being pulled up onto the fishing vessel and was hardly able to see during the whole journey. A mother lost her baby's milk bottle and struggled to feed her infant for days. Once on the vessel, refugees often wait days as smugglers await more refugees – and more profit. Most refugees who waited describe becoming sick and dizzy during this hiatus, and newcomers often leave some earlier boarders unable to sit properly or move. Additionally, as Rami explained, most of the food the smugglers provided was rotten and the water tasted bad. In most of the journeys described to me, people ran out of food and water even before sailing towards Italy. In Rami's case, they did not have food or water for the last thirty hours before being rescued and received proper meals only when they reached the camp in Sicily.

Yet, according to the stories I heard from refugees who travelled this route, the scariest experiences are the storms. Most of them happen near Derna, in eastern Libya, known for bad weather even in summer. Rami's boat was sailing in December. He, and most of the other refugees, spent the whole journey on the deck, while young Egyptian men, who paid less, crowded in a room under the deck. At one point, Rami explained, "the waves were very high … We had to sail for about 12 hours through that area where the waves were horrible … The waves

were very high so the boat used to go deep and get full of water and then go up again and the water goes out from the sides. People were really terrified."

Another terrifying experience occurred when the vessel stopped in the middle of high waves. This happened during their fourth day of sailing, while they were already running out of food and water:

> Then we had the most dangerous night during the journey. The boat went up and down sharply and seemed totally out of control. It was horrible. People believed that the boat is sinking and that they were all dying. They started praying and reciting Quran loudly. They created a horrible atmosphere. It was as if we were surrounded by death. And the problem was that we could not stop them because for them this was praying and asking God for help. The boat driver could not do anything. He kept the engine running, but things were really out of control. He told us that we were going backward by the current and we were losing time. (Rami, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

The captain and other smugglers on board left the cabin and joined the refugees on deck. Rami and a group of Syrian and Palestinian refugees decided to take control and sought to send rescue calls. They discovered that there were no telecommunication kits in the captain's cabin, except for a simple old radio device – even though the smugglers had promised a number of satellite phones for such moments. The group managed to send an SOS and heard from an Italian fishing boat in Italian, which they could not understand. Hours later the Italian navy inquired about their location. None of them knew it, but the navy vessel spotted a flashing light on their boat's top. Rami said that everyone then rushed to the deck, looking desperately for the lights of the rescue ship.

The rescue vessel's arrival caused further chaos. When the rescue team started to throw life-jackets to the boat, refugees rushed towards them, and the boat threatened to capsize. Rami and his group took the lead again and tried to calm everyone. They had to hit those who would not

listen, as the Italian officer refused to provide more jackets due to the confusion. After a few hours, all the passengers were transported to the deck of a Red Cross boat, where they soon became soaked. Rami explained to the rescuers that they were shivering from cold and exhaustion and finally convinced the team to allow them inside for a few minutes.

After 12 hours of sailing in such conditions, they reached the port of Catania in Sicily. To their surprise, the port was full of police cars, media with their cameras, and medical teams as well. Doctors examined the refugees as soon as they departed the boat. The police then provided each of them with a sign that had a number written on it and took pictures of them holding the signs. I heard stories of refugees who were wiped down with sterilizers by medical teams before receiving bracelets with numbers on them. I heard stories where Italian police interrogated refugees before they were allowed to receive any food or water or change their wet clothes. Most of these refugees recalled deep humiliation and outrage about such shocking treatment, which seemed to alter them from refugees deserving protection to contaminated criminals who needed to be examined, sterilized, and then detained rather than being rescued and assisted.

The refugees were then transported to camps, where they received new clothes, proper meals, pillows, and blankets. Rami explained that the Italian police were not keen on keeping Syrians and Palestinians there and left the camp entrance open most of the time. He did, however, have to sign a number of documents in Italian, which he did not understand. In later years Italian security increased. and I heard stories of refugees forcibly fingerprinted on arrival, particularly during 2015, when Italy imposed the system of hotspots after thousands of refugees started arriving in Sicily and Lampedusa each day (Tazzioli and Garrelli, 2018). The same stories spoke of refugees

organizing protests and strikes against such treatment. They sought to avoid fingerprinting and to leave the camps for Milan to take trains or use smuggling services to reach northern Europe.

In Rami's case, after he spent two days in the camp, a family friend helped him to escape. The friend had driven there from Sweden and brought Swedish passports for Rami and his uncles to use in Italy. He helped them to cross police checkpoints at the port in Sicily and drove them to mainland Italy. He had to leave them afterwards to avoid being caught by the police for human trafficking. From there, the group took a train to Milan and then paid a smuggler $6,000 U.S. to drive them to Hamburg, Germany. There, they met Rami's other uncle, who drove them to Copenhagen, Denmark, whence they took a train to Malmö, Sweden. They made their way to Stockholm, where family members, who had arrived earlier, received them. After his two-week journey from Egypt, Rami applied for asylum in Sweden, but he had to wait for months for the rest of his family, who journeyed through different routes and had different experiences of illegality and precarity, as the next section reveals.

The Turkish Route

This route involves a journey across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to one of the Greek islands, from which refugees continue to Athens and then either fly from Greece or walk through the western Balkan corridor. Refugees who can afford to buy forged travel documents from smugglers in Athens, or receive genuine European travel documents from family members or friends in Europe, may fly to Sweden from one of the Greek airports. Others refugees, with fewer resources or who fail to pass through Greek airport security, travel from Greece through the western Balkans. The western Balkan route, or corridor, involves crossing from Greece to

Macedonia and through Serbia, Hungary, and Austria to Germany – and some then travel through Denmark to Sweden.

In 2015, more than 880,000 people used this route by crossing from Turkey to Greece. According to European Commission (EC) records, the majority took the western Balkan corridor (EC, 2016). However, on 8 March 2016, Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia closed their borders, stranding about 55,000 refugees and migrants in Greece (Danish Refugee Council, 2016)). Crossings from Turkey to Greece slumped from 885,386 in 2015 to 182,534 in 2016 (Squire et al., 2017), due mostly to the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016 (see chapter one). By that arrangement, Turkey prevents "irregular" crossings to Greece, which returns all new arrivals to Turkey (Crawley et al., 2018). Also in early 2016, NATO and Frontex increased their border-control operations in the Aegean to prevent "unauthorized" crossings from Turkey to Greece (Düvell, 2018). I examine both paths (air and land) of this route through the story of Shadi, Wassim's younger son, as he tried both after his failed departure from Egypt.

I explained in the previous section that Shadi, had joined his older brother, Rami, in many failed attempts to leave Egypt but was not with him when he finally succeeded, via sea. Shadi was terrified and discouraged from trying again until April 2014, when he decided to join some relatives who were departing also by sea, but with different smugglers. Egyptian police stopped him at the beach and detained him with a number of relatives, including his aunt and cousins. Shadi, who was now 17, was imprisoned with adult criminals. Wassim, his father, still in Egypt with his wife, Rajaa, was trying every day to get his son out of prison:

> The prison experience in Egypt was unbearable. You cannot imagine the real situation. I used to be at the police station from 9 a.m. till 7 p.m. every day. I used to hear horrible stories while I was there. We [Wassim and Rajaa] used

to spend our days between the police station, the court, the judge, and the offices of State Security. They used to take us around and around just to take our money … I used to cry while waiting for one of them to take my money, knowing that he was lying. I used to pay money for officers in order to take me to see a judge, and at the end there was no judge and no court. (Wassim, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

Being a Palestinian refugee in Egypt, Shadi was at risk of being deported to Syria for trying to leave Egypt illegally. This risk pushed his father to pay a huge bribe to secure Shadi's release. Many Palestinian refugees from Syria detained while trying to leave for Europe live in fear of deportation to Syria. When Shadi was released, his father arranged for him to obtain a Turkish visa through some business contacts in Turkey. The plan was that Shadi, together with some relatives, would cross illegally from Turkey to Greece and then fly from Athens to Sweden, assisted by a smuggler who would provide him with a fake travel document.

Flying from Greece

Compared with other stories of crossing from Turkey to Greece, Shadi had a relatively smooth trip. His father arranged for him to be smuggled on a luxurious yacht that cruised from Marmaris in Turkey to the Greek island of Symi. Yet the Greek coast guard intercepted the vessel while it was approaching the island. The guards detained the yacht's captain after beating him, seized the passports and phones of Shadi and his group, and took them to the police station on the island. The refugees had to stay in jail for a few days on Symi before obtaining the *kharti*, a Greek permit that allows six months' residence in Greece, crucial if Greek police stop the holder.

Shadi, who arrived in Athens with relatives, was planning to fly to Sweden with a forged travel document. All his relatives managed to depart from the airport, but security stopped him

every time he tried and was stranded alone in Greece for more than six months. Each new attempt to leave failed. Eventually his mother, Rajaa, travelled from Egypt to Turkey and then made a similar crossing to Greece. They tried to depart together from Santorini island after a smuggler provided them with fake travel documents. Rajaa was able to pass the security point at the small airport and board the plane, but Shadi failed again. The security team interrogated him but did not detain him. He returned to Athens to try again while his mother headed to Sweden. On one of the attempts, he was stopped at Athens airport while pretending to be the son of a Swedish smuggler and was detained at a juvenile detention center in Athens. He was supposed to stay until he turned 18 but was released a week later thanks to his uncle, who travelled from Germany to act as his guardian. Shadi continued to try to leave Greece and even departed from western Greece to Italy on a fishing boat, but the Greek coast guard stopped that vessel at sea because of its bad condition – it could easily have sunk.

Traveling the Balkan Corridor

In addition to Shadi's story, I look again at the journeys of Khaled and Ammar, who travelled from Turkey through the Balkan route in the summer of 2015 -- the most popular route for refugees that extraordinary summer.

Shadi

After his multiple failing attempts at Greek airports, Shadi decided to travel by land out of Greece, starting a new chapter of his precarious journey by joining the tens of thousands of refugees who trekked the Balkan corridor before it closed in March 2016. He was detained in horrible conditions in Macedonia for 40 days and was released only when the same uncle

travelled again from Germany to assist him. He then pushed on through Serbia and used smugglers to cross into Hungary and thence into Germany, where his uncle helped him to continue to Sweden. He arrived there on 26 February 2015, about nine months after he left Egypt and two years after departing Syria. His journey cost more than €40,000 and involved detention in Egypt, Greece, and Macedonia.

Wassim, his father, who tried initially to avoid such a journey and was looking forward to family reunification in Sweden, finally could not bear Egypt any longer. He applied for visas for himself to various EU countries but was rejected every time. He then travelled to Turkey, made the same crossing to Greece, and used a fake travel document to fly to Sweden, where he joined his wife and two sons.

The unpredictability and precariousness of this one family's journeys towards Sweden resemble those of thousands of other EU-bound refugees who became trapped in similar challenging circumstances. The stories about this route show most refugees passing through the same borders and with similar raw experiences because many EU governments have further restricted entry (see chapter one), leaving refugees to travel illegally through dangerous paths, using smugglers who often treat them badly.

As with Shadi, Khaled and Ammar's stories, which I introduced in in chapter three, reflect refugees' messy journeys and provide rich insights into their devastating yet courageous experiences on this route.

Khaled

In chapter three, I explained how Khaled, after two years in Jordan, decided to journey to Europe through Turkey. He did not have a detailed plan and simply worked it out en route. His goal was to enter Turkey via Syria, cross into Greece, and continue towards northern Europe. He planned to seek asylum there and then apply for family reunification. However, his journey became precarious inside Syria, as smugglers moved him from one war zone to another in disturbing conditions. On one occasion, a careless smuggler locked Khaled and 11 other passengers in a small truck:

> Suddenly the truck stopped in front of a Military Forces Club. We ran out of gas, so we had to wait for half an hour until the driver got some and then continued the journey. During this half-hour, I felt I was going to suffocate and die, the truck was boiling hot, and we were overcrowded like sheep inside. There was no oxygen inside, and suddenly I felt immense fear, I panicked, and started hysterically knocking on the walls of the truck. People were afraid of the noise I was making and tried to calm me down but I felt I was fighting for my last breath ... When we finally got out of the truck we were soaked wet. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

Khaled crossed the Syrian desert in a convoy with 80 other people, including women and children, and the trip took almost 3½ days because the drivers avoided the main roads. Khaled was on the back of a truck that usually transported sheep. The passengers were covered with dust and had no food or water and no idea about their destination. They were received by Islamic State forces (ISIS) in Al Maydeen, who moved them to their capital, Al Raqqa. After difficult negotiations, they were allowed to continue and headed to the countryside near Aleppo, whence they proceeded to Rehanieh, which was under the control of the Free Syrian Army and Al-Nusra Front militia. From there they were taken to Khirbet Al-Jouz, near the Turkish border, a major

hub for smuggling, with offices and agents operating openly. Thousands of people moved around in groups trying to negotiate deals to cross to Turkey. Khaled explained what happened next:

> We were a group of ten, including women and elderly people; our smuggler was a 16-year-old boy. We started walking around 1 a.m. after midnight, as we heard the Turkish police shouting through microphones and shooting in the air. That was our sign to stop and move forward again when the shouting and the shooting stopped. It took around six hours to cross a relatively short distance. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

While Khaled and his group were crossing the border fence, the smuggler shouted that the Turkish police were nearby. Scared, they ran in all directions, as the police shouted and shot bullets in the air. The smuggler ran away, and Khaled and his group hid for half an hour, until another smuggler appeared and gathered them into one group again. This time they took a different route and were ordered to run across a road that was usually used by the Turkish border police. Khaled's voice broke as he explained:

> While running, I saw a dead body, the body of a man with one leg, who looked exactly like someone from our group. I rushed to him and performed CPR, when, suddenly, I saw the man who looked like him standing over my shoulder, asking me about the dead person. Shocked, I left the dead man on the ground because the police were approaching. I think he had a heart attack ... We could not get back to bury him. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

Khaled continued to Izmir, on Turkey's Aegean coast, where he met up with his youngest sister, her husband, and their three young boys. They had left the United Arab Emirates after the authorities cancelled their work and residency permits and had decided to journey to Europe to avoid returning to Syria. In Izmir, Khaled and his brother-in-law looked for a smuggler to convey them to Greece in the city's Basmane district, which has a plethora of smugglers who operate openly.

Rather-precarious "deposit offices" accept refugees' payments for their crossing to Greece --
about €3,000-€5,000 per person. The offices keep these payments in trust and give refugees
secret codes to pass to the smugglers on arrival at the Greek island. Refugees know that
smugglers and deposit offices are part of the same network and that they offer no guarantees of a
safe or timely journey. In fact, after making their deposits, most refugees are subject to delays
and false promises, which may make them desperate to leave and willing to accept any
conditions when the actual journey starts. For example, Khaled reported that his smugglers
changed plans and routes many times without informing the group: "Why would they consult
with us? They treated us like sheep."

The trip across the Aegean often takes place in the dark. Smugglers usually load refugees into
closed trucks, where they might spend hours en route to their departure point. Most trucks are
overloaded: Khaled's had another 30 people, and they travelled for about five hours. At the
shore, they joined hundreds of other refugees who had been waiting for several days, under the
control of armed men, and with no idea of when and how they would leave. Some had to help
prepare the inflatable rubber dinghies, or balams. They would unload the balams and carry them
a few kilometers. Khaled and other interviewees assumed that Turkish police were aware of the
smuggling operations and intervened only selectively:

> We were about to board the balam when a helicopter appeared above our heads.
> We tried to escape and took the balam under the trees, but soon realized that
> we were surrounded by the police, and the smugglers just disappeared. The
> police took all of us in seven buses to a police station that overlooked the shore
> and all of the smuggling operation. It was clear that the Turkish police were
> aware of the whole process. They only intervene when they receive an alert
> about a particular smuggling activity. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

Khaled and his group were held for two days. A few days later they tried again. Under the supervision of armed men, they were transported again to the shore and departed in two balams. Khaled recalled:

> The water reached our necks ... We had 12 children and 20 women with us, and they were really scared. In fact, everyone was terrified. People prayed and recited the Quran loudly … At one point, the engine stopped because someone stepped on the cable. We silently sat holding our hearts in our hands, until my brother-in-law managed to fix the problem. Yet hostility started to increase between refugees as they shouted and fought with each other. This is when my brother-in-law purposely stopped the engine and refused to move ahead until everyone calms down and listen to him. He even threatened to kill anyone who does not listen and reminded everybody that he was in charge, and he would not accept any complaints or resistance. Everyone complied until we reached Samos island. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

At the Greek islands, conditions were very harsh, particularly during the summer of 2015, as refugees waited for the (six-month) *kharti* [introduced above]. Khaled and his group took a long and exhausting walk to the town of Samos. The island had no registration camps then, but hotels refused to receive them, so they slept without blankets on cardboard boxes in the streets, among thousands of refugees, with whom they shared three public washrooms. Three days later, the police issued them khartis, and they boarded a ferry for Athens.

When Khaled reached the Macedonian border, it was open, and refugees were crossing under the aegis of several NGOs and charities, which provided food and water generously. This "five-star treatment," as Khaled called it, was due to the presence of a Greek minister, who was supervising the situation after several days of border closure. Macedonian police then organized the refugees into groups and helped them book train tickets for Serbia, where they pushed on towards Hungary.

Serbia's border with Hungary proved precarious and violent. Refugees heading to northern Europe were keen to cross Hungary without applying for asylum or being fingerprinted, because that would keep them in that country, which, they knew, offered few rights and growing anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiment. The EU's Dublin Regulation – version I (1990), II (rev. 2003), and III (2013) -- determines which member state examines asylum claims – usually the one where a migrant first enters the EU (European Commission, 2017a). Those who apply in another member state face deportation to that initial country. Although most refugees were aware of this rule, the majority did not know about the changes taking place that summer, as thousands of refugees were arriving daily on Europe's shores. Germany suspended its regulation vis-à-vis refugees from Syria and instructed its immigration officers not to deport them to the initial EU country of arrival (*The Telegraph UK*, 2015), while Hungary closed its border with Serbia as part of its harsh policies against refugees (*The Guardian*, 2015b).

Even refugees with high-tech communication connections to family and friends in Europe could not keep track of the changes when the journey's harsh conditions interrupted such links, which added to their uncertainty. Such ruptures exposed them to further official harshness and violence at borders such as Hungary's.

Khaled aimed to reach the Netherlands after learning that it processed applications for family reunification faster than its neighbours -- a crucial matter for him. He and his group decided to cross from Serbia into Hungary under police supervision, unwilling to cross illegally and jeopardize the safety of Khaled's sister and her children. But, with Germany's policy changes and Hungary's tightening borders (except towards Germany), the group's decision made Germany, rather than the Netherlands, Khaled's ultimate destination. He could not afford to

continue by himself, so he followed his group towards Germany. Yet, despite crossing into

Hungary under police supervision, the group ended up in a detention center there:

> The borders were heavily militarized, with drones and helicopters. Those who tried to escape and cross the borders through the corn fields were captured and brutally treated ... We crossed the borders under heavy police supervision … After, we walked for about 500 meters and found thousands of people sitting on the floor. We sat there for about ten hours through the night. At 6 a.m. in the morning we boarded one of the buses, and it drove ten minutes and dropped us at a prison … Yes. It was a real prison. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

This facility denied the refugees basics, including food and water, and security forces treated

them viciously:

> A policeman placed colored bracelets around our arms and took us through another fence to an area that was full of military tents … Thousands of people were there; some have been waiting for days and others for weeks. We thought that we will have our fingerprints taken and we then continue our journey, but soon discovered that we were actually detained. We were in a prison with our children, with no food and no water for days. The police refused to give water even for children, and they treated us extremely bad. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

Such practices subjected Khaled and his group to violent border restrictions. Yet they

resisted:

> The situation in Hungary was the worst. We were hungry, humiliated, and imprisoned … We were getting very frustrated as they shouted and threatened with sticks at anyone who complains. My brother-in-law found a carton board and wrote in English that we needed to drink water. He went around tents trying to get as many people as possible to join in carrying the board in front of the media who were standing outside the fence. We immediately managed to attract the media's attention, and they started asking us questions about the situation inside. (Khaled, Berlin, Germany, April 2016)

159

As a result, the police took them water and sandwiches, but not enough, and many starving refugees, mostly devout Muslim,[16] refused to eat the ham sandwiches. These conditions continued for a few days, until Khaled and his group, like other refugees in the camp, were forced to provide fingerprints and sign Hungarian-language documents in exchange for food and water. Later, Khaled learnt that the papers stated that the authorities treated them in accordance with international human-rights agreements and provided them with both food and water. They were then handed official documents stating that they were asylum seekers in Hungary, which was not their intention.

Finally, they made their way to Budapest, where they joined thousands of people who had been trapped there for more than ten days. Smugglers were charging €700 per person to take refugees to Germany, which many refugees could not afford, including Khaled, who contacted a cousin in Germany. His cousin reached out to a group of activists, who were part of a large solidarity network that helped refugees stranded in Hungary to travel to Germany.

It was the end of August 2015 when Khaled finally reached Germany and was granted temporary protection, subject to annual renewal. This status did not allow him to apply for family reunification, his journey's ultimate goal. Thus, for him, the journey had not ended. He was desperate to reunite with his family after more than three years. He wanted to offer his children a new life and to save them from the horrors he had seen during the war in Syria and through his long journey of displacement and statelessness. In February 2018, Khaled finally received German permanent protection, and in April, he brought his family to Germany after six years of separation.

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[16] Devout Muslims do not eat pork.

I could not stop my tears when I watched the video of him meeting his children and wife at Berlin Airport. I recalled the details of his horrible journey, which he shared with me, while I was thinking about other refugees who are still waiting or who are unable to reunite with their families due to their temporary status in Europe.

Ammar

The third journey I examine here is Ammar's. His story reveals further realities of refugees' journeys through the Balkan route, where refugees experience extreme precarity and yet agency. Like Khaled, Ammar arrived in Turkey in the summer of 2015 heading to northern Europe. As explained in chapter three, he had a disturbing displacement experience in Lebanon and Thailand, where he did not find sufficient protection and could not obtain UNHCR resettlement. After his arrival in Istanbul, Ammar sought help from smugglers:

> Everyone knew what was going on in those gathering places. Refugees who were about to embark on their journey to Greece gathered in big numbers. There are shops filled with life-jackets … I mean it was so obvious. It was ironic that some Turkish locals started waving goodbye to us while policemen ignored us totally. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

In the absence of legal and safe routes, refugees take this illegal path to Greece. Public awareness and official indifference leave the refugees at smugglers' mercy and render the route even more precarious and chaotic. Refugees such as Ammar were unable to complain about any violations or poor treatment because they have little or no legal or social protection.

On the night of Ammar's departure, the Turkish coast guard appeared at the gathering point and started shooting in the air, but the armed smugglers shot back and forced the police to withdraw. Ammar spent the night in the woods near the shore among hundreds of refugees. It

was still dark when more refugees arrived and the smugglers gathered people in groups of 40-50

and ordered them to board the balams. Ammar recalled that the smugglers, who threatened them

with guns, did not allow people to carry any of their belongings on to the boat and forced them to

throw everything in the water. They attacked those who complained and even beat some of the

men. The Turkish coast guard intercepted the first balam. However, the smugglers continued to

send one balam after another. Ammar and other refugees experienced a waking nightmare:

> The situation was horrifying. The balam behind us capsized, and the fate of
> the people in it became unknown. As we reached international waters, another
> balam capsized too. It was terrifying in the true sense. The loud cries of the
> women and the children filled the air. We threw our life-jackets to the people
> who were struggling in the water. Happily they were then rescued by Greek
> coast guards … A group of six young men on our boat, including myself,
> decided to jump into the water and swim next to our boat in order to make it
> lighter and faster. We held the ropes on the sides of the boat and swam. The
> plan worked, and we made it to the shore in one hour. Unfortunately, only 13
> of the 18 balams that departed that night reached Mytilene island. (Ammar,
> Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

Like Khaled, Ammar experienced harsh conditions in a registration camp on the Greek island:

> Thousands of Syrians, Africans, and Afghans were waiting there. People
> waited in long queues to register their names. Then, they had to wait at the
> camp for their names to be called so they can obtain the passing papers. The
> camp was an olive-tree orchard outside the town, where people had to spend
> about a week to obtain their papers. There were no services, no NGOs, and
> no humanitarian agencies. Hostility between refugees started to increase as
> people were frustrated and tired. The Greek police intervened on many
> occasions and used violence against refugees. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany,
> April 2016).

During the summer of 2015, thousands of refugees boarded buses that headed from Athens

towards the Macedonian border. Ammar noted that the Greek police stopped their bus in order to

verify that each refugee held the *kharti* permission, but he felt they were not serious, because, in

the end they allowed everyone to depart, with or without the card.

The arbitrary treatment and unpredictability intensified at the Greek-Macedonian border. Compared with Khaled's smooth crossing, Ammar, who arrived at the same point of border a few days later, in August 2015, had a startling experience. He encountered an entirely different, more militarized border. Thousands of refugees had arrived at the fence that runs along the border. However, the Macedonian army blocked them from moving forward while Greek police prevented their return to Greece. Ammar explained the situation:

> The Macedonian army were heavily present at the borders, which was a razor-wired fence. The army used violence and tear gas to deter refugees from approaching the fence. Clashes between refugees and the Macedonia army increased in frequency and violence. The Red Cross teams, who were initially trying to assist pregnant women, the sick, and the elderly, started to focus on those who were injured by the army … Many families and groups were separated because of this situation, and I lost the group that I hanged out with. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

As Ammar's words illustrate, such violence rarely deters refugees, but only worsens their situation. He explained that masses of desperate refugees faced the Macedonian army and demanded the soldiers let them proceed. He and several other young men helped the Red Cross teams by translating for and moving injured people, and eventually the Macedonian army rewarded them: it let them cross into Macedonia. Ammar boarded a train from the border with Greece to the Macedonian border with Serbia, only to join thousands of refugees in a prison-like registration center there, in extremely hostile and miserable conditions that exacerbated hostilities between groups of refugees:

> In Serbia we were gathered by the security forces in an old, abandoned factory building surrounded by heavy security. We were left with no food or water. The movement was strictly restricted until authorities collected our personal information. This process took two days to complete, during which basic needs and services were non-existent. It was a miserable situation ... Add to that the frequent and harsh attacks by Serbian police. At one occasion, violence broke out between Syrian and Afghani refugees due

to accumulated sensitivities between the two groups. The Serbian army intervened and detained young men from both sides. I was detained with the Syrian group. We were released after two days and continued our journey towards Belgrade. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

The changes in European asylum policies and border control during the summer of 2015 added ambiguity and unpredictability to refugees' journeys as they made their way north. As Ammar recalled:

The border fence between Serbia and Hungary was three meters high, with police forces all over the place. It was impossible to get through without being caught. The police made accessible one exit through the fence for refugees to cross, in order to take them to gathering camps. Refugees were forced to provide fingerprints to the Hungarian police, which meant that they cannot seek asylum in Germany. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

Stranded refugees had to make crucial decisions. Ammar, unaware of Germany's new policy on refugees from Syria, was desperate to avoid Hungarian border control and attempted to cross illegally. Serbian armed gangs attacked him as he neared the border, and smugglers made false promises to help him. He tried to cross through the fence with a group of Afghani refugees but failed after a horrible experience at the border fence:

I decided to join a group of Afghani refugees whom I communicated with in Persian. Our plan was to cut through the fence and escape. At 5 a.m., we entered a swamp close to the borderline accompanied with women and children. The Afghani group had special scissors, which they used to cut the fence, but only a few seconds after crossing through the hole in the fence we were attacked by the Hungarian army forces with a helicopter above our heads. They captured the guy who made the hole, while we escaped through the swamp and hid in the waters for close to five hours. They released the guy who was captured, and he soon joined us. Signs of torture marked his body as he limped towards us. His money was stolen as well. While in the water I saw a snake passing by me and felt hopeless that we are not going to make it through. I convinced the group to return to the forest and decided to try again at night. We were certain that we will be caught, but we had to try. (Ammar, Hanover, Germany, April 2016)

Ammar's words convey both powerlessness and determination -- common, contrasting motivations for refugees and their movement. He and his group were desperate to avoid border controls, and, after many attempts, and with guidance from his smartphone's system navigator, Ammar reached a Hungarian gas station well-known to refugees for taxi drivers who can convey them to Budapest. Ammar found one who would take him there for €100.

In Budapest, however, Hungarian authorities had stopped all trains from running, trapping thousands of refugees in front of the central station for days. Even though there were no trains, smugglers refused to take refugees because of new restrictive measures. That was the week a truck full of refugees' bodies was discovered on an Austrian highway (*BBC*, 2015a). Due to this tragic incident, smuggling stopped briefly in Hungary, and Ammar was stranded at the central train station. With disbelief, he saw 20 buses arrive and start loading refugees to take them to Austria without asking for documents or fees. Thus he joined hundreds of refugees on a journey to Vienna and went on by train to Munich, where groups of Germans cheered their arrival at the station. Ammar moved on to Hanover, where he currently lives, after receiving renewable three years of protection in Germany.

The Libyan Route

The third route to Europe for refugees from Syria (and elsewhere) originates in Libya, where smugglers take them to Italy in fishing boats. They arrive in either Sicily or the island of Lampedusa and then continue their journey to Milan. From Italy they either take the train or hire smugglers for the trip to northern Europe. In December 2012, Libya attempted to restrict the number of refugees seeking to enter the country and imposed visa restrictions against Syrians and Palestinians (Lifos, 2016). After July 2013, when Egypt did the same, illegal crossings from

Egypt to Libya none the less escalated (ibid.). Yet insecurities continued in Libya as violence between militia groups intensified. Thus, after 2014, many refugees, particularly those with families, avoided the Libyan route. In January 2015, the Libyan government decided not to admit any Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria[17] (ibid.), which made it even more difficult for them to use this route.

Refugees' journeys through this route become particularly messy because of the shocking violence and brutality of Libya's smuggling networks, which render these refugees extremely vulnerable. The stories I heard show that such incidents traumatized refugees. I was able to trace their scars in their words and tears during our interviews. Perhaps even more poignant: the pauses between their words.

To examine refugees' journeys through Libya, I draw on the story of Fares, which provides profound revelations about the horrifying conditions they encounter on this route. Fares, whom I introduced in chapter three, departed Syria because he feared further detention. The details of his story illustrate clearly refugees' experiences through wartime, displacement, and the trip to Europe via the Libyan route.

In chapter three, I explained how Fares felt that his journey from Syria started emotionally on his wedding day, when his best friend was killed by the security forces in Hama. He himself was then detained near Hama by one of the country's most brutal security departments. Fares shared with me the details of the unspeakable torture he experienced there -- another turning point in his life and departure, when he began to feel that he could not protect himself from oppression and

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[17] Syrians and Palestinians were accused of being connected to radical Islamist groups such as Ansar Al Sharia (Lifos, 2016).

torture. His physical departure became imminent when, a few months after his release, he learned that he was still wanted by the security forces. He paid a huge bribe to a security officer in Hama to obtain passports for himself, his wife, and their two-year-old son. The same officer facilitated their safe departure from Damascus airport to Cairo.

The three arrived in Cairo in August 2012 without any plans or contacts. Fares had chosen Egypt because its government did not require Syrians to obtain visas. Yet within a week he realized that he would not be able to find a job and a decent income there. He shared the same concerns that I heard from other refugees: "There was nothing for me in Egypt. There were no jobs, no income, nothing at all … I stayed there for one week only. I could not stay longer" (Fares, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016). Additionally, during his brief stay in Egypt he could feel what many Syrian refugees feel there. He believed that "the humiliations of Syrians there, and particularly of Syrian women, were unbearable." He did not elaborate, but during my interviews I heard many stories about refugees from Syria having to beg in the streets. Accordingly, Fares decided to continue his journey towards Libya.

Fares grasped the reality of Libya's degrading conditions at the border, when an armed gang attacked his bus and forced each and every passenger to pay $3,000 U.S. in order to continue towards Benghazi. Benghazi was complete chaos. The terrible accommodations and extortionate rents appalled Fares. He spent all his savings within a few weeks. In the absence of any aid or social assistance, he had to find a way to support his family. Despite lack of experience, he rented a small shack and turned it into a falafel shop. He soon became popular in the neighbourhood and established good relations within the community, enjoying a level of social acceptance: "There was no state, no system, and no rules. But the Libyan people were

sympathetic with us, the Syrians. They considered us as brothers" (Fares, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016).

After the humiliation he experienced in Egypt, the supportive atmosphere he found in Benghazi enabled him to survive the difficult living conditions. He felt some protection, even though his area was a hub for drugs and weapons. Fares was able to create his own social space and to build a network of contacts that prevented the sort of discrimination and social marginalization other refugees suffered in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt. Because Benghazi, like most of Libya at the time, had no meaningful official institutions or structures of authority, Fares escaped the legal precarity that other refugees from Syria experienced in the region.

In early 2014, after about 18 months in Libya, Fares was finding life increasingly tough. The intensifying political unrest and extreme insecurity made him consider looking for protection elsewhere. Like thousands of refugees, he set his sights on Europe:

> We were surrounded by death. It was everywhere. We escaped death back home to find death in Libya. Death is around us. The way ahead might bring death or life. We did not know. We were not sure. We were not sure of anything, except of the death that was around us. (Fares, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

It was in such a precarious and violent context that many refugees decided to leave and began to make plans. Forced first to escape death in Syria, Fares was now planning another chapter of his journey to escape death in Libya, knowing that the trip too could bring death. His awareness of the danger prevented him from forcing his decision on his wife, who opposed the idea, which terrified her. However, when Fares was beaten by a group of armed men, who stole his money and his car, his wife changed her mind.

168

Fares did not have enough savings so labored in the building sector to collect money for the journey. During this period of immobility, he continued to learn about the journey to Europe. He discussed the available options with his Syrian friends, who were also desperate to leave. They navigated the internet, looking for stories of refugees who made the journey from Libya. They investigated particularly any social media sites where refugees shared the details of their journeys and provided tips for those who were thinking of doing the same. They examined the conditions of the journey, the smuggling networks, rescue stories, and all the other related details.

A few months later, Fares and his Syrian friends moved to Tripoli with their families and began to organize their journey for 25 people to Italy. They met 14 smugglers during their first visit to the coast at Tripoli, where such services were openly peddled. They were asked to pay in full in advance and were given no definite departure times. They insisted on two conditions: they would buy their own life-jackets, and they would leave Tripoli only on the day the boat was to depart from Zuwara, about 118 km west of Tripoli – they refused to stay at gathering points, where refugees were treated badly. The group of 25 was promised a two-storey boat, with a capacity of 60 passengers and with washrooms and storage facilities. They agreed to pay $1,400 U.S. per person -- $35,000 for the group. The price included food, water, and necessary medication.

On the day of departure, Fares and his group (including his own family) received 15 minutes' notice. They had to leave without their life-jackets and headed towards a gathering point in Zuwara, where they were to be "stored" (Fares's word) with other refugees in a gathering house. They were shocked by the conditions and decided to return home, as they had not yet paid the

smuggler, but he arrived with four armed men and forced them to continue. They were locked in that house, forbidden to move or make any noise The armed men brought them boxes of bread and canned tuna.

Most refugees who travelled the Libyan route experienced similar conditions. Smugglers kept them in such houses for weeks or even months, unable to predict what would come next or to decide or act. Fares and his group spent three days locked up, until the smugglers told them they would depart by midnight and in 24 hours reach the gas pipeline in the Mediterranean near Italy, where the Italian coast guard would rescue them. The smugglers collected the money and took Fares and his party to another house, where they joined some 400 people. Next, the smugglers forced them onto a meat truck and drove them for half an hour, to the beach, where armed men forced them onto small rubber boats, which would transport them to the fishing vessel, and many families became separated. One of Fares's friends had a panic attack, which almost paralysed him.

Each rubber boat carried about 70 people, and Fares gathered his and his disabled friend's families in his arms to protect them as they sailed at gun point, in complete darkness. Like the refugees in Egypt, they were transferred to the fishing vessel in harrowing circumstances. Some 470 people filled the old, 13-m-long vessel, with no room to move or sit. They were soaking and lacked life-jackets, food, and water. People soon started feeling sick, children were crying, and more men had panic attacks.

After six hours, they discovered that there were another 200 people under the deck -- Africans crowded inside one room and trying to climb up to breathe. Fares and a group of other Syrians worried about the boat's balance and negotiated with the Africans to coordinate their movements

so it wouldn't capsize. Suddenly, the boat came to a complete stop and water began to seep in. Fares believed that someone had stopped the engine in order to force the driver to let the Africans onto the deck. The captain could not restart the engine. Someone contacted the Libyan smuggler, who promised to send support, while they waited in high waves, close to Tunisia. The Tunisian captain wanted to ask his national coast guard for help – as a citizen, he would spend perhaps a year in prison there, while Italy imposed harsher penalties. Yet, for the refugees from Syria, Tunisian assistance might lead to their being detained and deported to Syria, so they prevented the captain's call.

Instead, they used satellite phones to contact activists in Italy, who were assisting refugees in the Mediterranean.[18] After providing the boat's location, they learned that they were too far from Italy and still in Libyan waters. Five hours later, a rubber boat appeared in the distance. The excited refugees started moving towards the approaching craft. As happened on Rami's journey from Egypt, Fares and a group of Syrians and Palestinians took control to prevent a disaster. They urged calm, but ended up beating those who did not listen or refused to cooperate, including members of Fares's own group. It quickly became apparent that the approaching boat was the Libyan smuggler, who gave them new batteries for the engine but was afraid to board. They fixed the engine and were able to sail again.

It was at this moment that Fares wept for the first time on the boat. He paused before telling me: "When I looked at my wife, I could sense the blame in her eyes. She was silent, but I could

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[18] Many groups of activists have been assisting people crossing the Mediterranean and Aegean to Europe. WatchTheMed Alarm Phone is a prime example. Established in October 2014, it runs a '24/7' hotline to assist people at sea. It thereby provides European coast guards with GPS positions of boats in distress, monitors rescue missions, supports and calms people waiting for rescue, and provides credit so people at sea can keep using their satellite phones during the journey. The project also documents deaths at sea and advocates for solidarity with migrants at sea (www.watchthemed.net).

hear her shouting that she would never forgive me for this experience." Fares could not stop his tears when he recalled the moment on the boat when his son asked him for food. They had none, but Fares could not bear to see his son hungry. He attacked the captain and forced him to open the locked fridge in his cabin, where he found some chocolate bars, which he quickly distributed among the starving children, including his son.

They sailed for almost two more days, without food or water, until they reached Italian waters and spotted flames on the horizon from the notorious pipeline. They contacted Italian authorities and gave them their location. Soon a helicopter flew above them, took pictures, and disappeared. Four hours later, a rubber boat approached them, and the occupants informed them of the rescue plan but departed without offering food or water. The driver stopped the boat and started to mingle with the people to avoid arrest. Everyone was wet, cold, and exhausted and had no idea when rescue would come. The rubber boat returned after more than an hour and dragged the fishing boat to an oil tanker, which they boarded. They were told to sleep on the deck. After some negotiations, the tanker team agreed to let the children and women stay inside, while the men remained on deck without food or covers. They formed groups of four or five to hug each other and warm their wet and shivering bodies. In the morning, the tanker crew gave them boiled potatoes. The male refugees spent two days on the deck, until the vessel reached Sicily.

The port of Catania was full of Italian police, the Red Cross, and media teams. Fares and other refugees refused to disembark with the police to avoid fingerprinting. Instead, following advice from the activists in Italy, they asked for Red Cross members. Fares was shocked to see the Red Cross team documenting the rescue operation before assisting the distressed refugees. This action upset and humiliated the refugees. They learned that Syrians and Palestinians would

not be fingerprinted in the port, while other arrivals would remain under police supervision as detainees. They were all taken to a reception center, where they spent two days. Fares explained that the Italian police did not force them to stay at the camp and did not ask for their fingerprints at all. He and other members of his group were told that they were free to leave, and the police helped them find the train station, where they boarded a train for Milan.

In Milan, Fares and members of his group stayed at the Islamic Society while they looked for a smuggler to take them to Sweden. They were afraid of taking the train by themselves. Refugees' fear of being stopped by police, their lack of trust after such perilous journeys, and misleading information from other refugees pushed thousands of them, including Fares, to pay smugglers sizable sums to reach northern Europe.

The Islamic Society in Milan offered Fares and his family beds in a basketball stadium that held over 200 men, with no privacy dividers or walls. After ten days there, Fares found a Syrian smuggler who agreed to take them to Copenhagen for €3,500. They drove for 36 hours through Italy, France, Austria, and Germany. When they reached Copenhagen, Fares, who could not figure out how to buy tickets to Malmö (only €12 each), hired another smuggler to take them there. They arrived at the immigration reception center in Malmö in May 2014 -- not yet journey's end for Fares. A new chapter began in his search for protection, with new forms of vulnerability and precarity vis-à-vis privately managed reception centers and government 'migration' offices.

Reflections on Refugee Routes

The stories discussed in this chapter inform us that many journeys lack a definite point of departure or arrival but rather involve unanticipated loops of movements and periods of stillness.

Journeys turn out to be a set of complex and chaotic actions unreeling in precarious and violent conditions, with refugees becoming victims in disastrous circumstances. Nevertheless, they can also bring moments of individual and collective agency, where refugees challenge inhumane conditions and restrictive border controls and create their own spaces and trajectories (Johnson, 2014; Squire, 2017).

The stories detail conditions on the three routes – Egyptian, Turkish, and Libyan. Yet, as I noted earlier, I sought to answer particularly the following questions about refugees from Syria and the three routes. How did they:

- decide who should go and who should stay?
- choose certain routes and pathways over others?
- travel -- with what types of transportation? What about negotiating border crossings with smugglers, coast guards, and others?

These are important elements of the journey and can help in revealing the realities and conditions through the three routes. Based on the details of the stories described in the above sections, the following information about the journeys can be summarized as follows:

Deciding Who Should Travel

In some stories, families chose to send their children, particularly boys, with relatives or friends so they could apply for family reunification and bring their parents to Sweden. The child had to be under 18 and hence an unaccompanied minor, with the right to be reunified with his parents in Sweden. Some families chose this method because they could not afford the journey for the whole family: for example, at least $12,000 U.S. for a family of four via the Egyptian

route. Other parents, such as Wassim and Rajaa, sent their sons with other relatives so as to avoid travelling illegally themselves.

Deciding on the Route

Circumstances compelled members of some families to travel through different routes. The trip from Egypt or Libya to Italy is cheaper ($3,000-$5,000 U.S. per person) than that from Turkey (sometimes more than $10,000 per person). Yet leaving from Egypt or Libya is more dangerous and risky. Crossing the Mediterranean -- for many refugees the journey's hardest and scariest part -- can take a few days, with the constant threat of storms and high waves, and the trip across the Aegean, only a few hours. Additionally, and as the stories highlight, smuggling networks in Egypt and Libya (especially the latter) are more violent, and refugees cannot resist or complain.

Methods of payment may add additional insecurity. In Turkey, refugees place money in deposit offices, and pay the full amount (usually $2,500-$5,000 U.S. per person) to the smugglers only on reaching the Greek island. Similarly, in Egypt, smugglers' mediators deposit payments (usually about $3,000 per person) and pay the smugglers when the refugees reach Italian waters or ports. In Libya, in contrast, refugees pay the full amount ($1,400-$2,500) to the smugglers on the night they depart.

In addition, the choice of route is always subject to political unrest, security conditions, border controls, and mobility restrictions. When refugees from Syria were required to obtain visas to Egypt beginning in July 2013, more chose Turkey instead of the Egyptian and Libyan

routes. Yet the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016, controlled the Aegean crossing tightly and slashed the number of arrivals in Greece.

Methods of Travel and Encounters with Various Actors

The stories also show how many refugees failed several attempts at departure, despite extensive preparation. In Egypt, police may interrupt departures: Palestinian refugees risk deportation to Syria, while most Syrian refugees obtain relatively quick release. In Turkey, the police detain refugees for one or two days and then release them; anyone with a valid passport or travel document is able to continue their journey.

Refugees may hear smugglers' false promises of luxurious journeys on lavishly equipped boats. In reality, particularly in Egypt and Libya, refugees crowd on the deck of dilapidated fishing boats that lack basic facilities, even water and food. Chaotic departures and the tense transfer to fishing vessels cause many refugees to lose their belongings. I heard stories about people with conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure losing their medication. In the end, refugees often find themselves sailing on treacherous journeys without life-jackets or even the basic elements of care.

On the Egyptian and Libyan routes, the arrival of rescue teams does not always end refugees' hardship. Chaos and tension with the captain may result from conflicting interests, as we saw in Fares's story. Most captains try to avoid arrest for human trafficking and pretend to be refugees. Tension also occurs between refugees themselves on the journey, particularly when rescue vessels pull up and refugees are desperate and excited after their difficult journey. As well, the rescue process takes time, with unpredictable outcomes for refugees. At Italian ports, many

refugees receive humiliating treatment. The stories show that refugees arriving from both Egypt and Libya experience similar conditions at the receiving camps in Italy and take the same route to Milan en route to northern Europe.

Through the Turkish route, refugees have fewer encounters with smugglers, but must go by truck to gathering points and along the coast and may encounter Turkish police and coast guard along the coast. Their short Aegean crossing is dangerous because of its precarious conditions. Many balams sink, as Ammar described, and most survivors face dire conditions in the Greek islands before they depart to Athens to continue their journey. In Athens, refugees who can afford airfare and forged travel documents can try to fly, hoping airport security does not intervene. Many refugees end up stranded in Greece for months before they succeed in boarding a plane out. Alternatively, they might walk the western Balkan corridor, like thousands of other refugees who could not afford to fly. Along this path, refugees encounter multiple forms of border control, and many are detained in terrible conditions, as happened to Shadi and Khaled.

Conclusion

The stories I described in this chapter reveal how each journey consists of complex and chaotic actions that occur under precarious, even violent conditions, which make refugees victims and often end up in disaster. Nevertheless, the journeys may bring moments of individual and collective agency, where refugees challenge inhumane conditions and restrictive border controls in order to create their own spaces (Johnson, 2014; Squire, 2017). By following the storylines of these particular journeys, I have sought to highlight messiness, violence, and agency as three key aspects of refugee journey.

Messiness

The messiness and complexity of refugee journey are revealed through the refugees' multiple loops of non-linear movements, often under stressful conditions, which are chaotic and unexpected. We see these features also in multiple moments of departure, including emotional experiences in advance of physical leaving, where one disconnects from one's own community. Home is no longer a secure place for such people, especially when violence and precarity touch them in their own communities. Hence many refugees mark multiple moments of departure. Fares, for example, had two: the murder of his best friend and his experience in detention, both months before he left Syria. As well, many refugees do not describe their arrival at their intended destinations as their journey's end, especially -- as we see in chapter five -- those who have had to wait months or years to reunite with their family.

Messy and complex journeys may crisscross borders and continue after physical completion -- examples (see chapter three) of the refugee journey as "a trajectory of wandering" (Khosravi, 2011: 51). Ammar's loops of movements included Lebanon and Thailand before he journeyed from Turkey through the Balkan corridor to Germany. Wassim's family had their own circular movement when they left Syria for Egypt and made complex and separate journeys to Sweden that spread out over more than a year and involved teenaged Shadi's detention in Egypt, Greece, and Macedonia.

Additionally, as the stories here detail, refugees' journeys can be extremely unpredictable and ambiguous, combining mobility and immobility (Brigden and Mainwaring, 2016; Innes, 2016; Kaytaz, 2016). Even during periods of stillness, refugees were navigating the next chapter of their journeys. Fares was learning about the conditions of the journey while waiting for his wife

to make a decision to leave. Similarly, Shadi, who was stranded in Greece for months, made many attempts to leave for Sweden before departing via the Balkan corridor. Refugees' abilities to navigate different options and paths along their journeys depend substantially on their economic and social resources. For example, Wassim could pay for his family's journeys, which cost about half a million U.S. dollars. His social networks in Europe, which included friends and relatives, helped his sons when they were stranded in Italy, Greece, and Macedonia. Other, less affluent refugees may experience much more challenging conditions and long periods of immobility.

Violence

Refugees' actual movement often proved messy and unpredictable: illegal crossings of multiple borders and encounters with structures of control, all while using smugglers, some of them rough, even violent. The stories showed extreme violence, sometimes encounters with death, as with Khaled, who recalled with distress the dead man at the Turkish border. Ammar spoke about crossing the Aegean when three boats capsized, leaving dozens of people to drown in the dark water. In fact, refugees' encounters with smugglers were usually nasty, as most of the stories indicated graphically -- especially on the Egyptian and, above all, the Libyan routes. The stories implicitly referenced the racial hierarchy of refugees' vulnerability and their treatment by smugglers and coast guard – most pointedly in Fares's story about the treatment of African people, locked below deck on the fishing vessel.

As well, the stories show how through the journey, refugees can be criminalized and penalized, changing them from people deserving protection to illegal migrants, simply for challenging sovereign borders (Schuster, 2011). I analyse this transformation in chapter five, but

I did touch on the impact of such unpredictable treatment and the feelings of humiliation that Rami described upon his group's arrival in Sicily and which was common to many of my interviewees. The criminalization of refugees at the Serbian border and Khaled's experience in detention are further examples of transformation. Through these stories we can see that refugees often find themselves in real prisons, together with their children, facing "biopolitical amendment" (Vaughan-Williams, 2015), which deprives them of their basic needs and rights.

Agency

Through the storylines I have also addressed refugees' notable agency and resilience despite the precarious conditions of such journeys. In fact, their agency is clear in their very decisions to leave in the first place. Many decided to make the journey despite genuinely not wishing to leave, as Khaled, Fares, and Rajaa indicated. At many points of the interviews, refugees reiterated their reluctance to leave their homes and explained that lack of safety and protection forced their hand. For example, Wassim and Fares, like many other refugees, wanted to establish new lives in their new localities within the region, but political unrest and increasing insecurity changed their plans. The journey is indeed complex, right from the early moments of departure. The stories showed how refugees felt they were left with no other choice but to leave for Europe, often against their wishes.

The notion of complexity also involves individual and collective expressions of agency. As Ammar, Rami, Khaled, and Fares told us, their moments of agency were usually acts for survival. Many refugees clearly had no intention of acting politically but ended up taking control and creating unexpected scenarios in order to survive. Some moments of agency were controversial and painful, as when Rami and Fares attacked other refugees on board in order to

maintain order and to avoid capsizing. This relates to my caveat in chapter two about romanticizing refugees' agency or making it appear deliberate.

The stories also revealed constraints on refugees' agency and ability. At the gathering points or when boarding the boats in Turkey, Egypt, or Libya, refugees were clearly at the mercy of armed smugglers and could not resist or even change their minds, as was explained by Fares, Khaled, and Ammar. Refugees travelling the Balkan corridor confronted heavy security and militarized borders. The stories of Ammar, Khaled, and Shadi share multiple elements of helplessness and surrender at the securitized borders of Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary. Yet, in moments of agency, refugees engaged, navigated, and maneuvered through such border controls and were able to continue their journeys. Protests at gathering camps, multiple attempts to cross through border fences, and even refusals to leave rescue boats were all cases of agency and resistance where refugees challenged the structures of control and tried to create their own spaces and assert their rights as refugees and as human beings. Through such practices, the stories revealed illegality and increasing human cost at the borders and showed how refugees transform borders into sites of resistance and places to exert agency (Johnson, 2014; Squire, 2011).

At the end, the intense messiness and precarity of these journeys, demonstrated by the stories detailed in this chapter, reveal the human cost of the global crisis of protection. It is the price that refugees from the global south must pay for challenging the structures of governance that aim to contain and deter them from the global north, regardless of the inhumane circumstances of war or of displacement, when sufficient protection and access to rights are limited, if not absent. In the next chapter, I examine the emotional impact of their experiences en route as part

of the human cost of the protection crisis, which transform refugees after their frequently

traumatic journeys.

Chapter Five: The Emotional Toll of the Refugee Journey

Introduction

In chapter two, I proposed a three-part approach to the refugee journey. Chapter three dealt with survival and resistance through its "stories of escape and displacement." Chapter four explored the "non-linear, messy, and complex" nature of the trip to Europe. The third dimension, which I discuss in this chapter, is about the journey as an emotional process that transforms refugees' identities, positionalities, and perspectives towards self, family, and life. The journey is a life-changing experience that is highly intense, emotional, and transformative (Benezer, 2002). As I noted above, this emotionally transformative element of the journey occurs substantially because of the global crisis of protection and is part of its human cost. For this reason, this chapter aims to expose and explore the journey's emotional toll on refugees who have escape the horrors of war and the challenges of displacement only to come up against closed borders.

As in chapters three and four, the stories of the refugees themselves, as they shared their experiences and feelings with me during my field research, inform my analysis. By relying on their stories, I hope to draw attention to the emotional element of refugees' journeys and reveal the fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion that were common to most of the stories I heard. I focus on stories of mothers who journeyed with their children and, some of them, without their spouses. These cases were intense experiences for both mothers and children. They also highlight the mothers' substantial agency as they created ways to survive the fraught journey. The remainder of the chapter also shows refugees encountering intense physical and psychological challenges that may undermine, even shatter their positionality (second part of the chapter) and their identity (third part) as a result. I aim to examine these transformations, which in turn affect refugees' integration within their new communities. I look, especially at the

experience of Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk in Damascus, who, as I showed in chapters three and four, are reliving the trauma of their people's statelessness through their new displacement from Syria. Their journeys in search of protection result in unique identity transformation.

The Journey's Physical and Emotional Toll

In chapter four especially, I proposed that the refugee journey is not only about the physical movement from one land point to another but also involves moments of emotional departure. When people can no longer cope with precarity and violence, they may leave their home communities emotionally, even before their body moves elsewhere. This shift may rupture their deep psychic ties to home, leaving some of them feeling powerless, alienated within their own communities. Such emotional departures reflect extreme social vulnerability, where "hopelessness" and "purposelessness" may prevail (Khosravi, 2017). This was probably the case after spring 2011 for millions of refugees from Syria, who lost emotional connections with their home communities, because of wartime insecurity and violence, and later, during displacement elsewhere in the region.

The stories in chapter four showed how this form of emotional departure often precedes the physical action of leaving departure, which may take time and require resources and planning. As well, refugees often feel torn between the need to leave and their desire to stay either at home or nearby. The examples of Rajaa and Khaled showed that refugees may resist leaving but eventually have to because of the extreme conditions. The cases of Wassim and Fares revealed how refugees may try to establish new lives within their region, but have to leave again and journey even farther. For Wassim, hostilities in Egypt against refugees from Syria became

unbearable. Similarly, insecure conditions in Libya intensified, forcing Fares to flee. Yet, as chapter four pointed out, the precarious and messy journeys make refugees more vulnerable emotionally and socially. They leave many refugees with traumatic stories and transform their lives.

In the remainder of this section, I discuss four powerful sets of feelings -- fear and exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion -- which refugees may experience during their journeys. These feelings have emerged in most of the stories I heard about the journey and reflect the impact of the precarious conditions on refugees' perceptions of self and others. The second and third sections examine the transformation –of refugees' 'positionality' and, of their identity -- while highlighting the emotional elements of uprootedness in refugees' journey and experience of exile, which is undertheorized in the literature of refugee journey. Through this approach, I aim to present refugees as real individuals who suffer from normal fears and anxieties when facing extreme precarity and humiliation while they search for acceptance and safety. My approach here speaks to the argument of Anderson and Smith (2011) for examining emotional relations and challenging the absence and marginalization of emotions and feelings in social research. In their work on emotional geographies, Anderson and Smith call for "a fuller program of work, recognizing the emotions as ways of knowing, being and doing in the broadest sense, and using this to take geographical knowledges – and the relevance that goes with them – beyond their more usual visual, textual and linguistic domains" (2011: 8). I build on this discussion and suggest that exploring the journey's emotional and transformative elements can both help us grasp refugees' predicament during their search for protection and also challenge the dominant perception of them as faceless and voiceless people who must prove legally their need for protection to obtain recognition and protection as refugees. As I explained above, these feelings

and transformations epitomize the human cost refugees pay for challenging control structures and border practices. These feelings demonstrate at the human level the emotional toll of the global crisis of protection and how it invades the intimate space of refugees' bodies and minds.

Fear and Exhaustion

As I discussed in chapters two and three, refugees experience greater precarity and fear during their journeys. Their unfamiliar situations start with their first encounters with smugglers and extend to include natural hazards, dealing with border control, and even coping with other refugees. In the absence of legal and safe routes to intended destinations, refugees remain invisible while encountering border controls or police forces. They may have to travel in the dark, avoid main roads, and cross through wilderness, often guided by smugglers who rarely show compassion. In addition, they often face natural dangers and police rides by themselves, as their smugglers often disappear at critical points. On the Egyptian route, as Rami explained, refugees had to hide every time the Egyptian police showed up, just as the refugees were departing by sea, while the smugglers always managed to disappear:

> It was in the dark. People were terrified. They started feeling things moving around them like animals and insects. Many of them thought of going back. We encouraged them to stay and to continue after all of this, and also no one knew the way back or how to reach the main road, since we walked a lot to reach our location. We were worried about people's safety if they left the place. There might be gangs out there. Nobody was certain of anything. (Rami, Stockholm, Sweden, July 2016)

Thus anxiety and stress may start early in the journey. Rana's story of crossing from northern Iraq to Turkey also revealed how stressful the moments of departure were. In chapter three I talked about her initial journey, with her husband and two sons, from Yarmouk to elsewhere in Damascus and then to Irbil. In Irbil, they decided that she would go to Sweden with her mother,

who was in her late sixties, and her younger son. Rana and her group crossed from Zakho in northern Iraq to Silopi, in eastern Turkey. Travelling in the dark, they passed through a swamp and became covered with mud up to their necks. They had to climb a rocky mountain and up a steep cliff, walk through a forest, and then move through cornfields. They were not allowed at any point to light a fire, use their phones, or make noise. Despite these hardships, her mother was concerned and ashamed more about their illegality:

> She was not literally afraid. She was emotionally exhausted more than being physically tired. She was stressed about the idea of being smuggled illegally in the middle of the night where it was totally dark and we could not see anything while we were crossing through a forest, cornfields, muddy water, and mountains. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

After a long bus journey from Silopi to Izmir, on Turkey's Aegean coast, Rana was joined by her two elderly aunts, from Damascus, who hoped to cross to Greece with her. The family spent almost a month in Izmir, with smugglers promising to leave every night. Rana explained the stress:

> We were emotionally exhausted because of the false promises … It was very stressful to get everyone ready for departing, including the old ladies and my son. We went through this stress every night. We used to call the smuggler every day to inquire about the trip. In fact this was the first thing we used to do every morning. He never called. He used to tell us to prepare ourselves for departing by midnight and keeps delaying until there is no chance for departing that night. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

Smugglers' promises proved false, and Rana and her group ended up exhausted and frustrated. Sometimes the smugglers would walk them to the shore, only to discover that either the time was not right to leave or conditions were not convenient for travel. Rana noted:

So every time we failed to travel, we had to walk back the long distance carrying our life-jackets and our bags to return to the hotel, by ourselves most of the time. At one attempt, the old aunts were carried by the men in the group because both of them were too exhausted and were not able to walk. One of them started crying. She felt humiliated. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

The intensity was so great that one of her aunts decided to return to Damascus; as Rana explained, "She was not emotionally able to continue and was too stressed and scared. She could not handle the stress of the journey" (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016).

As I noted in chapter four, the exhausting waits, combined with smugglers' false promises, pushed many refugees to accept horrible circumstances for their departure -- they become so desperate to leave that they will agree to any price and any condition. Those who manage to depart, however, still have hurdles to surmount. For example, Safieh, in her mid-sixties, whom I introduced in chapter three, shared with me her fear during her journey from Turkey. She and her husband were forced to leave their home in Yarmouk in December 2012 and moved to Tartous on the Syrian coast. They then decided to join their son and his family in Norway. They travelled via the Turkish route and experienced the sorts of conditions we saw in chapter four. They finally reached the uninhabited part of Rhodes island in Greece with no assistance or guidance from the smugglers: "It was totally desolate. There was nothing around us. I was so afraid and so tired. I could not catch my breath. I felt the blood freezing in my veins" (Safieh, Stockholm, July 2016).

Yet natural hazards of the Egyptian and Libyan routes (chapter four) created the most terrifying experiences for many refugees. Like Rami and his group, with the terrible storm in Libyan waters, Qamar and Issam, Palestinian refugees from Syria travelling the Egyptian route with their five children, faced a similar scare:

Issam: During the storm, the front point of the boat was broken. It was a horrifying hurricane. We felt as if we were on the top of a mountain and then down in a deep valley. The boat was carried high by the waves and then used to go down in the water. We were all wet. Everything was totally wet. The boat was surrounded by high waves from all sides. People were not able to talk. They were all pale.
Qamar: When the captain had his life-jacket on, I was really scared. I felt that we were done.
My question: Did you have life-jackets with you?
Qamar: No. We paid for them, but smugglers did not get us any.
Issam: The storm lasted for 28 hours.
Qamar: We were dying.
Issam: The storm stopped after midnight, and the sea became flat.
Qamar: Those hours were from hell. It was really scary.
(Qamar and Issam, Stockholm, July 2016)

Qamar summed up her feelings: "I have forgotten my pain in Syria, but I will never forget those moments on the boat. It was horrifying." She also spoke of her physical pain during and after the journey. En route from Egypt to Italy, the boat was overcrowded, and she had to hold her five children close to her chest for most of the eight days: "There was not enough space to sit … My five children had their heads on my chest for the whole journey. I still have pain because of their pressure on my chest. It has been two years and I am still in pain" (Qamar, Stockholm, July 2016).

Those who survived the sea journeys still felt fear and anxiety due to their illegal crossings. Khosravi's work explains:

Border crossing can be experienced in terms of honor and shame. A legal journey is regarded as an honorable act in the spirit of globalism and cosmopolitanism. The legal traveler cross[es] the border gloriously and, in so doing, enhances his or her social status, whereas the border transgressor is antithetical, being seen as shamed and anti-ethical. (2011: 66)

Khosravi illustrates how refugees may perceive illegal crossings as morally wrong and therefore shameful, adding to their vulnerability. Their illegality and the need to remain invisible

may generate fear and anxiety at any encounter with security officers and border control. For example, those on the Turkish route who attempted to fly from Athens experienced stress in every direct contact with airport security, which made them visible. Their experiences speak to Khosravi's argument about "a kind of gambling. Information, payment and networks are crucial and necessary components of an 'illegal' border crossing, but it is, after all, always a matter of chance" (2011: 62). The story of Rana at Athens airport provides a compelling example. Rana spoke of the first of her many failed attempts:

> I did not have any idea about how to behave and what to do. So, when I reached that point, I was looking directly at the security, and that was my biggest mistake. One of them noticed my looks and recognized that I was nervous. He was so smart, as it took him one second to discover me. So, he called me out of the line and asked me for the passports. I am not sure about the reactions on my face because it was my first time and I was really nervous ... I believe that being confident and calm is very important. You should not have any eye contact with the officers. You should behave as a normal passenger. I am talking from an experience because I tried four times and only managed to fly in the fifth attempt. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

Rana confirms Khosravi's argument about border crossing being "a matter of performance" (2011: 62). Refugees need to look and behave in certain ways in order to be trusted as genuine and legal travellers. Otherwise, they will end up as illegal figures, who may be criminalized. Salam, from chapter three, who crossed from Turkey to Greece before his attempt to fly from Athens airport, shared similar anxiety. However, Salam prepared himself by going to the airport the night before and observing the procedures at the gates for a few hours. He described his departure the next day:

> At the time, I had no idea where they check the boarding and where they check the IDs. So, I approached the gate and passed. I learnt that I should not look straight to the security guards. I should avoid any eye contact. I was left with one security check to pass, which was the gate of the plane. So, I stood

in the line and passed my ID and my boarding pass to the officer, who checked everything and said OK. Those moments were too long.

I could not feel relieved yet, because I heard about people who were stopped inside the plane. We took the shuttle from the terminal and went inside the plane. By the way, that flight was the only flight available for that week, and I had to book business class to avoid waiting for another week in Athens. It cost me around €300. I sat in the business seat and was keen to see the door of the plane closed. I only felt relieved when the plane took off. (Salam, Stockholm, July 2016)

Salam flew to Warsaw and then to Stockholm. His words summarize most refugees' anxiety and fear at airports. He was able to behave as a legal traveller and passed the security check. Illegal travellers experience airport procedures differently from other passengers. The routine waiting periods at the gate, the shuttle trip to the plane, and the preparations for takeoff change into anxious waits for refugees, who feel relief only when the plane takes off.

And refugees often suffer from other forms of anxiety, and the pain of separation, at the airport. The story of Rajaa, introduced in chapter three, who travelled from Egypt to Turkey and then to Greece to meet her son, Shadi, so she could accompany him to Sweden, provides another typical example. In chapter four, Rajaa passed airport security in Santorini island while Shadi was not allowed to board the plane:

Rajaa (weeping frequently): I did not know what to do. I called my family and asked them what to do. I came all the way to Greece for him. How can I leave him now? They all encouraged me to continue my way to the plane … Even Shadi himself encouraged me to continue by ignoring me. I was crying while I am watching him caught by the police.

Shadi: … I left the room and found my Mom outside. She was so close. There was only one door between me and her. If she turned her face towards me, they would discover that she was the one in the pictures in my phone. So, I looked down and left the airport. I did not want to have any eye contact with her, because she just managed to go through, and I did not want her to come back for me. I did not look at her at all. It was impossible for me to do anything

different. I would never tell them that this was my mother. (Rajaa and Shadi, Stockholm, July 2016)

Mother and son provide a poignant picture of refugees' stress and anxiety at border control. Her words and tears expressed the predicament of a desperate mother who has to act as a stranger, while watching her younger son, whom she journeyed long and hard to be with, is prevented from departing. Shadi acted as an adult who protected his mother by totally ignoring her. His performance reflected a maturity and masculinity unexpected from a 17-year-old stranded by himself in a foreign country for months.

Anxieties about Family Members

Rajaa and Shadi's distressing experience are shared by many refugees with children. The majority of parents whom I interviewed told me that they had few expectations in Sweden for themselves but undertook such terrifying journeys for their children's sake. Indeed, their hope of better lives for their children led sometimes to difficult choices that actually made their journey messier and more precarious. Some families were so desperate that they sent just one child to Sweden with relatives or friends, as Wassim and Rajaa did. They assumed quicker processing for an unaccompanied minor requesting family reunification. In 2015, more than 96,500 such children arrived in Europe, with 35,000 of them going to Sweden; in 2016, 63,300 reached Europe, including only 2,200 for Sweden -- a 94-per-cent drop (Eurostat, 2017). In Sweden, unaccompanied minors enjoy access to rights including education, health care, and legal facilities. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Sweden adheres to, they are entitled also to be reunited with their parents. The Swedish Migration Agency searches for relatives while examining a child's asylum application so as to reunite the young person with his/her family in the country of origin or other safe country outside Sweden. If reunion elsewhere

proves impossible and the minor receives refugee status in Sweden, the authorities may grant residence permits to the family (Swedish Migration Agency, 2018). Yet the high number of arrivals in 2015 resulted in a backlog of cases and delays in processing applications, and hence long separations for many families (Human Rights Watch, 2016g).

Similarly, many refugees who journeyed solo, hoping to reunite with their families in Sweden have had long separations, some still continuing to this day. Mahmoud, for example, whom I introduced in chapter three, decided to leave Syria to avoid his oldest son, Mazen's, being conscripted. He could not pay for the whole family's travel, so made the agonizing decision to leave his wife and children in Syria while he took Mazen, 18, and Samer, the youngest, who was 8, (he had heard from other refugees that having his youngest child with him would expedite family reunification).

Mahmoud and his two sons experienced a horrific sea journey from Egypt to Italy and were travelling by train from Milan towards Sweden when French police stopped them and arrested Mazen, detaining him for a few nights. After Mazen's release, the three continued towards Sweden until German police stopped them. Mahmoud managed to avoid fingerprinting, but when the police found out about Mazen's detention in France, they said that he had either to seek asylum in Germany or be returned to France. Mahmoud, who had begun this journey to save Mazen from the war in Syria, was forced to leave him, alone, in Germany and to push on with Samer, because family reunification in Germany is long and difficult. The two reached Sweden in August 2013 and reunited with other family members 13 months later. However, Mazen was forced to stay in Germany, separated from his family, with no hope of reunification.

Refugees with older children feel increased pressure to reach Sweden before their offspring turn 18[19] and may pay excessive amounts to get there in time. Some could not cover travel for the whole family and left partners and younger children behind. Others, worrying about their children's safety en route, particularly for the girls, decided to leave them at home and later seek family reunification in Sweden. Youssef, who I introduced in chapter three and who chose the Libyan route, serves as a poignant example. Youssef chose to leave his wife and children in Damascus with the hope of reaching Sweden and reunifying them all before their daughter turned 18 as she will not be treated as a minor and will be excluded from the family reunification application. Youssef's boat from Libya broke into pieces, and 49 people died before Italian rescue teams arrived. Once in Sweden, Youssef became concerned about the long processes for residency and family reunification. He told me that he contacted his lawyer and case manager at the Swedish Migration Agency every day to expedite his applications. Reunification took more than three years. The new Swedish rules on asylum and protection, mentioned in the Introduction, came into effect in the summer of 2016. Family reunification for refugees from Syria who arrived after November 2015 became very complicated and almost impossible.

Humiliation

The stories show that throughout the journey, refugees are subject to various forms of humiliation. As I mentioned above, refugees shared with me their feelings of humiliation, which began as early as their first illegal crossing of a border. I heard similar expressions of humiliation from Arad's wife, introduced in chapter three, who crossed into Turkey with her husband and

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[19] According to the Swedish Migration Agency, "The following are counted as family members: husband, wife, registered partner or cohabiting partner, and your children under the age of 18 years. Other relatives and children that are 18 years or older cannot join you in Sweden if you have been given a temporary residence permit. If you are under 18 years, your parents are counted as your closest family." (Swedish Migration Agency, 2018).

their two sons. She could not stop her tears when she recalled their reaching Turkey totally

exhausted and covered with mud. These harsh conditions, paired with the shame of being illegal,

overwhelmed some refugees. For example, Safieh shared with me her intense feelings while en

route from Turkey to Greece with her husband. Told by the smugglers to speed up, they had to

walk through the shallow water and board a yacht after spending three nights in the forest hiding

from the Turkish police. She was soaked and her leg was almost broken when a smuggler pushed

her up to the yacht:

> Then I started crying because I was too frustrated. I was weeping loudly and
> asking how we ended up like this. Why God is doing this to us. I almost lost
> it. (Safieh, Stockholm, July 2016).

To her surprise, their arrival in Oslo, Norway, involved new forms of humiliation. At the

police station:

> One police officer grabbed my handbag in a nasty way. They sterilized
> everything. I felt so bad. I cried because it was humiliating. We had never
> dealt with the police before, and have never been at a police station. Why did
> we end up like this? We did not do anything wrong to be treated like this. I
> could not control myself. (Safieh, Stockholm, July 2016)

Other refugees had similar experiences in Italian ports. In chapter four, I discussed Rami and

Fares's outrage and humiliation after their boats were rescued and the Italian police received

them at Catania. Qamar and her husband also felt great shame at the Italian port:

> When they received us, they covered their faces with masks and wore gloves
> as if we were infected. We were very humiliated and annoyed by this
> treatment … When we arrived to Sicily, they took our pictures and gave us
> numbers as if we were criminals. I was so mad and humiliated again. I felt
> ashamed. They gave us covers and blankets but left us to sleep outside in the
> cold weather and in our wet clothes. (Qamar, Stockholm, July 2016)

The same sorts of feelings affected Rasha, the Syrian widow from chapter three who journeyed to Sweden through Turkey and the Balkan route with her three children: a girl, 15, and boys 13 and 9. She shared with me her frustration over their treatment by the Greek army at a military base on one of the Greek islands: "They treated us badly as if we were criminals or dangerous people. There were guns pointed at us all the time. We did not escape the war in our country to end up like this" (Rasha, Laxå, Sweden, July 2016).

Confusion

The precarious nature of the journey stresses refugees emotionally, which can generate deep guilt and regret. As a result, many have conflicting emotions about their decisions and their journeys. Most refugees I interviewed feel such confusion, particularly those who travelled with their families and who felt guilt about imposing the harrowing journey on them. For example, in chapter three, we learned that Fares did not plan his journey and was still confused about its development, "My journey has been a complete shock for me. After all this time, I am still confused about its events. I have not yet understood how did it happen, how it developed and how I managed through it all" (Fares, Stockholm, July 2016).

This confusion problematizes the notion of agency and reflects the messy and precarious refugee journey/survival act. The confusion also may signal refugees' profound guilt and shame for imposing these conditions on their families. Yamen, for example, left Syria for Libya and travelled thence to Italy with his four-year-old daughter. His wife and other children made their way to Sweden through Turkey. Yamen's words reveal his confusion and guilt vis-à-vis his daughter:

> Maybe it was right and maybe it was wrong. I do not know. I am not sure. I am not sure what was right and what was wrong. I am confused about the whole experience and about the decisions I made during the journey. I could not evaluate my decisions at the time. For example, the smugglers I chose were too bad, but I did not know that at the beginning. No one can judge me since I was too desperate. I was totally trapped. (Yamen, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016)

This complex mixture of confusion, guilt, and shame about the journey's decisions and conditions illustrates its transformative effect, which targets mainly a refugee's positionality and identity.

I propose that these feelings en route reflect in refugees' bodies and psyches the terrible human price they pay for the crisis of protection and the resulting exclusionary policies. Focusing on the emotional dimension of the refugee journey may help us to reform government policies and international structures on migration. This method re-humanizes and re-individualizes refugees by presenting them as individuals with diverse experiences and aspirations. It challenges the "universalization" and "standardization" that dominate representation of refugees in official narratives as a faceless, homogeneous group of powerless people, but it may also pose a threat to the political, economic, and social identity of the global north (Johnson, 2011). Such "re-individualization" necessitates further examination of the transformative elements of the journey as explained by refugees. Refugees experience these elements during various stages of their journey, and they last after arrival at the new destinations, which rarely marks the end of their journeys.

Transforming Refugees' Positionality

In addition to refugees' fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion during the journey, the stories in this research show dramatic changes in their positionalities and roles within their families and communities, which reshape their perceptions of selves and others. Refugee studies say little about these transformations, as the literature about the refugee journey in general is minimal, as we saw in chapter two. Through my work, I aim to narrow this gap and contribute to the literature by focusing on refugees' stories and their intimate perceptions about the journey and its transformative impact, which will help us grasp the emotional toll and human cost of the global crisis of protection. For this work I focus on the loss of roles refugees experience en route, especially those of protector and provider.

Loss of Protector's Role

To understand the loss of role as protector, which affects mostly male refugees, we need to explore how violence and precarity during wartime, displacement, and journey often shake refugees' self-image and perception of life, upsetting their familial and social roles. Yet women too experience similar changes in their positions as mothers, wives, daughters, and members of the community. I discuss those shifts in the coming sections with a particular experiences of refugee mothers. As with other transformative elements of the journey, this topic is undertheorized in the literature. Nombasa Williams (2011), for example, refers to the absence of masculinities conceptualization in migration studies and proposes that the challenges facing refugee males during displacement can illuminate gender dynamics in refugee communities and men's profound role in sustaining their families' well-being:

An understanding of masculine identities must be included if gender analysis is to be used as a tool for understanding the dynamics of refugee parenting, refugees' representations of gender relations -- particularly the ways in which youth and men are challenged by new identity creation and reconstruction of their understandings of their gender roles as fathers, husbands, protectors, and providers. (2011: 107)

To further understand refugee men as protectors, I draw on the logic of masculinist protection, as it explains the journey's transformative influence on individuals and families as well. In her work on the logic of masculinist protection in feminist theory, Iris Marion Young (2003: 4) links being male head of family to the role of protector:

The gallantly masculine man is loving and self-sacrificing, especially in relation to women. He faces the world's difficulties and dangers in order to shield women from harm and allow them to pursue elevating and decorative arts. The role of this courageous, responsible, and virtuous man is that of a protector.

Connecting masculinity with protection also speaks to Jullie Peteet's (1994: 34) definition of Arab masculinity as she explains:

Arab masculinity (*rujulah*) is acquired, verified, and played out in the brave deed, in risk-taking, and in expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness. It is attained by constant vigilance and willingness to defend honor (*sharaf*), face (*wajh*), kin, and community from external aggression and to uphold and protect cultural definitions of gender-specific propriety.

These accounts of manhood, rooted mainly in lack of fear and ability to protect self and community, hint at how refugee males may perceive and internalize powerlessness, victimhood, and vulnerability during the journey partly as assaults on their masculinity and manhood. The stories in this dissertation indicate that experiences of violence early in wartime may feel like an assault on their masculinity. Violent and precarious conditions humiliate and devalue men (and women), diminishing their ability to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. This shift became particularly intense in cases of detention and torture, as with Fares, who shared

his feelings with me about the hesitation he felt during his first intimate meeting with his wife after his release. His words reflected his concerns about his positionality as a husband and a man. I revisit Fares's words here, as they reflect the humiliation he felt for being subject to torture and unable to protect himself. But, most important, he doubted his ability to regain his wife's respect:

> What should I show her? The blisters of my skin, the cigarette burns on my legs, on my back, and on other parts of my body? She is too young to understand this … How could I describe the humiliation I experienced in prison? Would she still see me as the man who could protect her from the whole world? Would she still be able to respect me? (Fares, Stockholm, July 2016)

The sometimes-extreme violence and precarity during their journey may further shake refugees' perceptions about their fearlessness. The stories in chapter four show refugees, at certain points, unable to defend their families from "external aggressions" by smugglers, police, and border security. Wassim and his family's story -- travel together to Egypt and then separate and perilous journeys to Europe -- provides a profound case of such conditions. Wassim experienced various forms of humiliation at the Egyptian police station while seeking his son Shadi's release. Wassim felt powerless as he was forced to silently watch police officers harass his wife: "My wife was sexual harassed in front of me while I kept silent. I used to cry every day. I could not control my tears while I was standing there" (Wassim, Stockholm, July 2016). Wassim's broken voice here reminds us how the trauma shattered his perception of himself as a husband and as a man.

The stories also demonstrate how encounters with smugglers restricted refugees' ability to protect selves and families. Refugees using the Libyan route received the worst treatment. Fares recalled the gathering house in Zuwara:

The smugglers treated us like dogs. We were all stressed, and we started fighting with each other. The wives were mad and started fighting with their husbands, blaming them for the conditions we ended up at. They questioned our decisions and called us criminals. Except for my wife. She was silent all the time. She did not express her emotions, but I could feel that she was dead inside. She was dead … (Fares, Stockholm, July 2016)

Fares's words show how smugglers' brutality could cause family and group conflicts and further undermine refugees' roles and positionality. As happened to other refugees, this brutality and uncertainty continued throughout the journey. Refugees faced countless moments of constrained agency, unable to act or to respond to threats. Men who value brave deeds and risk-taking lost their roles as protectors when they could not look after their families while at the mercy of armed smugglers or during nightmarish experiences at sea. Upon arrival at EU ports, refugees also could not prevent their families from being treated as carriers of disease and filth. The stories show how such instances of powerlessness scarred refugees and undermined their positionalities as they failed to protect selves and families.

Yet these stories also reveal moments of accomplishment and self-assertion. In fact, refugees' journeys may involve multiple moments of agency where they act fearlessly and create their own spaces and trajectories (Squire, 2017). I discussed the notion of agency in previous chapters and pointed it out in refugees' decisions to leave despite their desire to stay or, at the very least, remain close to home. By leaving, they challenge their own feelings and risk their own and their families' lives by setting out on journeys towards foreign destinations in an atmosphere of violence and precarity. Yet, and as I explained in the previous chapters, many of these moments of agency are, in fact, acts of survival. Ammar, Rami, Khaled, and Fares's words in chapter four reveal that they had no intention of acting politically but rather sought desperately to continue their journeys towards their intended destinations. To accomplish their goals, they had to create

their own trajectories through the disastrous conditions of the journey. Accordingly, and as I argued above, these performances of agency are acts of self-assertiveness that need examination apart from the notions of intentionality and free choice.

Loss of Provider's Role

The examples above indicate the extent to which many refugees experience social transformations during the journey that affect their self-awareness, roles, and positionalities within their families. But at their destinations, refugees experience another transformation, in losing their roles as providers. Refugees who arrive in EU states as asylum seekers take on a long, frustrating asylum process that lasts months, even years. During this period, refugees may not work and have to depend on the welfare system in their new communities, leaving them poor and dependent. They stop being breadwinners and providers (Heelsum, 2017; Moztic, 2018).

The impact of this loss is particularly intense for middle-class refugees with high academic credentials. Not only are they illegal, but their new country may not recognize their professional credentials. After surviving the journey, and despite feeling safe in Europe, many professional refugees cannot acquire the social acceptance they aimed for when they decided to leave their home regions. In her work on forced migration and uprootedness, Elizabeth Colson (2003: 8) observes:

> Since people define themselves in terms of the roles they play and it is thus that they are evaluated and valued, the loss of role structures means that they cannot know who they are or who anyone else is until new roles are constructed and people assigned to them. It takes time to assess the loss of old roles or their transformation.

The shift in positionality due to loss of role still attracts little interest in the refugee literature, despite some recent studies about highly skilled refugees in Europe (Heelsum 2017; Mozetic 2018; Pietka-Nykaza 2015; Smyth and Kum 2010; Valenta and Thorshaug 2012). Anja van Heelsum (2017), for example, investigates the aspirations and frustrations of refugees who arrived in the Netherlands during 2015-16: *"Refugees very much aspire to work and become a full member of the local community but are not allowed to work and live isolated in refugee shelters. Even though the Syrians are often better educated and seem better prepared for life in the Netherlands, they experience many obstructions"* (2017: 2148).

In the UK, Emilia Pietka-Nykaza explores refugee doctors and teachers' perspectives on re-entering their professions (2015) and notes generally: "Studies into refugee experiences in the labor market show that refugees are one of the most disadvantaged groups when compared to other ethnic minority groups or to the indigenous local population" (2015: 525). Her findings confirm what I heard from professional refugees I interviewed in Sweden about institutional barriers that exclude professional refugees from resuming their professions, thus changing their positionality and role within their families and their new communities. These barriers include their need to master professional language and their wait for verification of their qualifications. Pietka-Nykaza explains, "Assessment and accreditation of refugee doctors' and teachers' overseas qualifications represent an example of institutional barriers, as refugees' professional qualifications and work experience are not recognized as equivalent to the UK standards" (2015: 525). Pierka-Nykaza summarizes the major impediments for refugee professionals: "Experiences of forced exile, restrictions attached to the legal status of asylum seeker, labels attached to refugee status and lack of accreditations of pre-migration qualifications and work experience

have an impact on resources and choices available to refugees to re-enter their professions" (2015: 526).

In her work on highly skilled refugees in Sweden, Katarina Mozetic (2018) focuses on refugee doctors' self-perceptions and identity formation. Mozetic differentiates between self-identification and others' categorization of this group and notes that "refugee" is a form of institutional categorization imposed on them that does not reflect their identities as professional doctors:

> Their profession is positively connoted and seen as a source of strength. It means providing for oneself while at the same time actively contributing to society. Being a refugee is, on the other hand, burdened with negativity. It is therefore a term that they reluctantly use in relation to themselves. Instead, "refugee" is a label that is appointed to them. (Mozetic, 2018: 249)

This argument speaks to Colson's observation: "Self-definitions derived from work are at risk when professional skills are ignored in a resettlement area or camp or they [refugees] are denied the right to practice or work in old occupations as immigrants" (2003: 10).

The experience of many refugees I interviewed in Sweden confirms these analyses of professionals in a new land. During my field research, I met with many of them, including doctors and engineers, who were shocked by the requirements of the Swedish job market, especially as it did not recognize their academic and professional credentials and years of experience. Most of them were deeply depressed and frustrated by their marginalized social positions, as they lost their former roles of providers and sense of accomplishment. Most felt unable to maintain their roles within their families and in their new localities. For many, this frustration meant their journey had not ended, since they did not receive the acceptance for which they had aimed when they left Syria. This condition was particularly painful for refugees

in their fifties or older, who were already struggling to master basic Swedish -- the first step in the long and complicated process of seeking academic recognition. Such depressing circumstances pushed a doctor from the Yarmouk area, who owned and managed a well-known medical center there, to describe his journey and his more than five years in Sweden as "a total disaster."

Through such social marginalization and loss of role, refugees become a "disposable commodity," or, as Khosravi (2011: 3) puts it, "Sent back and forth between sovereign states, humiliated, and represented as polluted and polluting bodies, stateless asylum seekers and irregular migrants are excluded and become the detritus of humanity, leading wasted lives." While these refugees' inability to integrate into their new localities relates to the discussion of positionality transformation in Europe and elsewhere, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Positionality of Refugee Women

During their journeys, refugee women have their own moments of transformation and agency. Like male refugees, they are subject to various forms of violence and precarity, and as I explained above, they experience transformation through their multiple positionalities as mothers, wives, or sisters. The stories of Jenna, Qamar, Rajaa, Rana, Rasha, and Safieh, discussed above, show how the violence and insecurities during wartime and throughout the journey transformed the lives of these refugee women. They left their homes out of fear and desperation for their own and their families' lives. They undertook precarious journeys with their families, where many of them experienced intense vulnerability and victimhood. The transformations are particularly intense when women journey with their children but not their

spouses. Their positionality as mothers, focusing around their role as caregivers, expands to include main decision makers and only protectors of their children during the difficult journey.

The story of Rasha, the young widow who journeyed to Sweden with her three children, presents a superb example. During their perilous 23-day journey, she was the only guardian for her youngsters: "It is not their fault that I am suffering. I brought them to this world, and I should be responsible for them" (Rasha, Lax*å*, Sweden, July 2016). Rasha made her journey in October 2015, the month of one of Europe's highest rates of refugee arrivals (Reuters, 2015). She and her children trekked the Balkan route together with a massive group of about 4,000 refugees. In addition to the humiliating treatment at borders and camps, Rasha worried about her children's safety, and particularly her own and her daughter's. Rasha was not able to sleep for much of the journey:

> I do not know how I managed and from where I got my strength. But I recall that the tears in my youngsters' eyes pushed me to stay strong and to continue … I was supposed to be strong for them … They saw life through me, and I had to be strong for them … I used to talk to them about tomorrow and about the things that we will do together when we arrive … I used to tell them that they will sleep peacefully and will not be scared any more. I used to promise them with a new, good life. That was their hope, and therefore I had to be strong. I had no other choice. (Rasha, Lax*å*, Sweden, July 2016)

As with Safieh, reaching Sweden did not end Rasha's anxiety. After their fraught journey, the four of them reached Malmö in November 2015:

> When I arrived there, I collapsed … I could not believe that we have made it to safety. I kept wondering, so that was it. Can we now relax after all these years of war and after such a journey where we experienced cold, hunger, and humiliation? (Rasha, Laxå, Sweden, July 2016)

Rasha and her children were sent to a reception center in Hasselfors, six hours' drive north of Malmö. They found themselves in a basketball stadium, full of mattresses, with no dividing

walls or even curtains, so no privacy.[20] They stayed there for more than five weeks, surrounded by hundreds of men of different nationalities:

> During that period, I used to sit at a corner and cry … I could not do anything. That was the moment when I had a deep regret for making the journey. I felt that I did not deserve all this humiliation … I kept asking myself, why should I be treated like this? Was it because I am Syrian? Was that a crime? I did not choose my nationality. I did not choose my fate. It was not my fault that my country went through a war … It was not my fault. (Rasha, Laxå, Sweden, July 2016)

Despite her deep frustration and regret, Rasha was able to summarize what other refugees have shared with me about why they made such a journey. She ended her interview by stating:

> I do not want anything for me … I do not want a citizenship. I do not want a luxurious life … I do not want any of this. All I want is to give my children a chance to live and achieve their dreams … I am here only for them and because of them … I am here so their dream can come true. (Rasha, Laxå, Sweden, July 2016)

Hania, a Palestinian mother from Syria who journeyed to Sweden with her six children, shared a similar sense of responsibility. Her husband had already landed in Sweden, but she could not wait for family reunification, so she decided to travel with her children through Turkey and the Balkan route in 2015. Because of her limited finances and large family, her journey was more difficult and precarious than other interviewees'. Many smugglers refused to assist her, and the ones who did were manipulative and deceptive. At the Hungarian border, the seven were detained, like thousands of other refugees. Hania was determined to reach Sweden but, to avoid ending up in Germany, had to evade fingerprinting by Hungarian police. She could not afford being smuggled through the country's border, so paid €60 for someone in the camp at the

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[20] Although any woman would find such treatment humiliating [as would men], refugees in general are often criticized for raising such "unnecessary" complaints. This complaint is rooted in the dominant representation of refugees as "others" who should be grateful for whatever they have been offered (Nayeri, 2017).

Hungarian-German border to scrape her bodily fingerprints with a sharp rasp and then burn

them repeatedly with a heated iron rod and obliterate them. When I asked her about the process

and how painful it was, she explained that she would do anything to get her children safely to

Sweden. As we finished her interview, Hania expressed great satisfaction and pride: "At the end,

I did everything by myself. My husband did not face any of the difficulties I had during my

journey. He travelled by himself where he crossed to Greece and flew from Athens with no

children" (Hania, Laxå, July 2016). This sense of accomplishment and assertiveness, however,

clearly came at a very high price.

During my interviews, I met with a number of mothers who, at some point on their journey,

had to send children ahead to Sweden with smugglers. Most became stranded at certain points.

For example, Rana, who crossed from Turkey to Greece with her mother and her ten-year-old

son, was separated from her mother during the journey and was stranded for months in Athens.

All the smugglers she dealt with told her she could not continue the journey with her son. Thus

she chose to send him with a smuggling network to family friends in Copenhagen. The friends

then sent him to another family in Sweden, where he waited for her. Rana explained her

decision:

> I was so scared and nervous about the whole thing. I had a fight with my
> husband, who was against the idea of sending our son with these people ...
> He was far away from the stress that I was going through. He looked at things
> differently. Whereas I was very hesitant but also very desperate. I was so
> afraid but, at the same time, I was desperate to get out of Greece. I was
> trapped. My husband asked me for guarantees. He told me that he needed to
> know the lady who is taking our son, but I did not have any guarantees. How
> could I provide him with guarantees? Should I go to the police and tell them
> about the lady who is taking my son with her? ... See what I have done? I left
> a son in Erbil and I sent the other with a smuggler to Copenhagen. (Rana,
> Stockholm, July 2016)

Rana's tears at this point of the interview reflected the regret, pain, and shame she internalized as a mother for leaving one son at home and sending the other with smugglers to Copenhagen. Through her tears, Rana explained how smugglers instructed her son how to lie about his identity and how to behave:

> They taught him about his [new] Greek name and his new family during the journey to Copenhagen. They told him that the lady was his mom and the other girl was his sister. They also told him about how to behave at the airport in case he was asked anything by the security officers. They told him to smile and to act as if he was shy. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

To add to her distress, Rana was stranded in Greece for six weeks after he left. This period was hard on her son:

> First, he was happy in Copenhagen, but he started to get emotionally stressed. He used to ask me [on phone] to come to him every day. He did not expect that I will be away from him for that long period. Our friend did not tell me about his emotional problems at the time. She told about everything later when I arrived in Sweden. She did not tell me that she used to find him in the living room at the middle of the night crying. (Rana, Stockholm, July 2016)

As I explained in chapter three, Sweden did not end her journey, as she still awaited her husband and their other son.

I heard similar stories from other mothers who were stranded in Greece who did the same as Rana. Jenna and her husband, Karam, are Palestinian refugees from Syria who travelled to Turkey with their three children and crossed into Greece in October 2013. Their plan was to fly from Athens to Sweden, but they ended up stranded. After several failed attempts at the airport, they decided to hire smugglers to take their oldest son, who was 8, to Sweden. Jenna told me about her concerns and fears:

He departed Athens on December 27, and it took him one day to reach Sweden, but we felt it was like hundreds of years. It has been a long time since that date, but we are still confused and unable to understand how we dared to take that decision and to send him by himself. But life is cruel, and we often have to take decisions that are as hard as death. Sending our son to Sweden was better than keeping him in Greece, where we were suffering from hunger and desperation. He used to cry every time we called him. He missed us a lot, and we missed him too … We felt like dying. (Jenna, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016)

Later, the couple sent their daughter, who was 9, to Italy and then to Sweden through Denmark with the help of another smuggling group. Jenna recalled that their daughter's trip was long and hard, as she was travelling with a Romanian family who did not speak Arabic, so communication was impossible. Jenna and her youngest child were able to cross as tourists from Greece into Italy. On 2 January 2014, they arrived in Sweden, where she was reunited with her other two children. Six weeks later, Karam left Greece on a truck, hiding between large slabs of marble, crossed to Italy, and proceeded to Sweden. He rejoined his family after a journey of about six months.

As their words make clear, the shift in mothers' positionality in these stories intertwined with their deep guilt and shame over their children's risky journey. These sentiments reflected changes in their role as mothers, protecting their children and teaching them about values. Their handing their offspring to smugglers undermined these roles.

Encounters with smugglers clearly render refugees' situations more precarious, but refugee women feel particularly vulnerable. For example, the transfers from the small dinghies to the larger fishing vessels in Egypt and Libya were difficult for all refugees, but especially for women, being pushed and grabbed by strange men in the dark sea. These often-traumatic events harmed many of them emotionally and physically and could end tragically, as the following story

indicates. My prime source for it is a family friend whom I trust and who personally journeyed to Sweden through Egypt. I was not, however, able to verify it from other sources because of its sensitivity and lack of documentation.

In the summer of 2013, Egyptian smugglers took 250 Syrian and Palestinian refugees, including 40 women, to a gathering point on the coast near Alexandria. They separated the men and women and took the men and the older children to a fishing vessel in the sea. The women and the remaining children, 5 and younger, were taken in small boats to a tiny, uninhabited island, 35 miles (22 km) from the shore. There, the smugglers took the money and the gold from the women, raped most of them, abandoned them on the island, and informed the coast guard of their presence. The coast guard arrested the women and children and detained them for more than 40 days in a police station in Alexandria. The women were released but not deported back to Syria, because the ministry of interior was keen to avoid possible public outrage. As the events unfolded, the men of the group were on their way to Italy and remained unaware of the tragedy.

These disturbing details remind us of the shocking violence and brutality some refugees experience en route, shattering their perceptions of selves and lives. Such journeys may result in deaths, which shake up survivors' lives. The story of Rahma, a young Palestinian mother from Syria, is telling. Rahma was pregnant when she made her journey from Syria to Turkey, hoping to reach Sweden with her three-year-old son. She and the boy were boarding a rubber boat (balam) and crossing to Greece when a ship hit them. The balam broke into two pieces, and a number of refugees went missing, including Rahma's son.

I met Rahma in Hässleholm, Sweden, three years later, and she was still looking for her son.

She described that horrible night:

> After one hour of our departure towards the Greek island, our rubber boat was hit by a big ship, and it went into two pieces. I became unconscious, but I remember having my son in my lap at that moment. When they rescued us, I was cold and blue, so they thought that I was dead. They put me with the dead bodies until someone discovered that I was still alive. When I woke up, I could not remember anything. I forgot my name, I forgot that I was pregnant, and I forgot that my son was with me. I was not able to talk. I was extremely dehydrated … Later on, I discovered that my son was not rescued and his body was not found at the shore. They took us to a prison while I was screaming and crying that my son is lost … No one paid attention to me. (Rahma, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016)

Rahma told me that she is convinced that one of the families on the boat rescued her son. But she wept as she explained: "It was too dark at the gathering point. I was not able to see a thing. I was not able to see the face of my son … It was too dark … too dark" (Rahma, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016). Rahma's words and tears capture the trauma affecting many refugees, their lives unraveled by the loss of loved ones en route and by their inability to find their bodies or trace their fates. When Rahma showed me her son's photograph, I could comprehend her despair. The look in his eyes was calling for a rescue. The picture brought to mind Jenny Edkins's work on missing persons:

> The line between presence and absence cannot be drawn clearly, certainly not for some time for those whose relatives or friends cannot be found after a disaster, and maybe not at all for any of us. Photographs are interesting in this context. A photograph appears to record a moment that has inevitably passed, but in itself, as a photograph, it is equally clearly present. The eyes in the photograph still gaze determinedly directly at us, undaunted by the impossibility of the look. The photograph "is" the person. (Edkins 2011: 16)

Similar horrors have been occurring on the shores of Europe and other global frontiers. We can trace them through the thousands of bodies of those who did not survive the perilous journey

in the seas and are found washed up along the shores or left inside the sunken boats. The world-famous picture of Alan Kurdi, the three-year old Syrian boy whose body was found washed up along the shore of Turkey in September 2015, captured one of the thousands of tragic events that reflect the high human cost of refugees' journeys. These harrowing events are also relived in the stories of the survivors, who relive their painful memories through their transformed lives. After this nightmarish incident, Rahma crossed to Greece after many failed attempts and continued her journey to Sweden, where she delivered a baby girl. Her resilience and determination as a young mother were remarkable, especially given her haunting uncertainty about her son's fate.

Transforming of Refugee Identity

The transformed positionalities of refugees, as we saw in the previous section, intertwine closely with changes to their identity. Malkki (1992: 37) observes: "Identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera." Malkki captures the fluidity of refugees' identity as their shifting internal identification of self combines with outsiders' (re)categorization of them. The stories in this dissertation speak to this understanding and show how refugees' notion of what it means to be a refugee – or refugeeness – keeps altering during their journeys. In times of war, refugees go from being citizens or residents of their home countries into displaced individuals who strive for protection elsewhere. The absence of this protection in their home communities and neighboring countries pushes refugees to undertake journeys to destinations beyond their regions. Their journeys are often difficult, as this dissertation details, and render them illegal subjects, whom authorities punish and criminalize for challenging the structures of control represented by the sovereign regime of borders (Schuster, 2011; Vaughan-Williams, 2015)). Along with this process, refugees' decisions and actions

transform them from powerless victims to political actors who may display substantial agency and perhaps create their own paths to safety and protection (Scheel and Squire, 2014). On reaching their destinations, refugees become asylum seekers who claim the right of protection through temporary or permanent residency. Many become citizens of their new countries.

Through their words, I have shown how refugees negotiate, even shape, their complex new identity, starting with their initial act of leaving and then in their choices of routes and destinations. Yet the decision to leave often produces emotional scars that last through their exile and in turn influence their perceptions of self, home, and belonging -- intimate parts of their identity. Colson (2003: 15) argues that the scars of displacement disrupt refugees' memory and stay with them even after the war in their countries ends. She notes, "Whatever the outcome, people resent uprooting, find it traumatic, and in the long run look back in grief and with an anger that lasts longer than the war or the dam that forced them out." For refugees who feel compelled to undertake journeys towards foreign destinations in search of protection, their precarious journeys heighten their sense of grievance. When they add the journey's fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion to their sense of uprootedness, all that pressure may shatter and perhaps reconfigure their identity.

Qamar journeyed to Sweden with her husband and five children, and she summed it up, "We were kings in our country. Here we are just beggars" (Qamar, Stockholm, July 2016). Karam, who went to Sweden with his wife and three children, expressed similar sentiments:

It breaks my heart that back home we had everything and now we became refugees who have nothing and who are starting from scratch. (Karam, Hässleholm, Sweden, June 2016)

The words of Qamar and Karam reflect refugeeness as degradation, poverty, and dependence, disconnected from the past. In his reflection on exile, Edward Said (2000: 173) portrays such a state:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted … The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.

Said, however, differentiates between exile as an emotional state of loneliness and isolation, and the narrow political definition of "refugee," a legal term in international conventions on refugees and protection, which we met in chapter one. Khosravi points to the same limitations of the political definition:

To have a chance of getting refugee status, one must have the ability to translate one's life story into Eurocentric juridical language and to perform the role expected of a refugee … Only those few who could 'translate' their local stories into Eurocentric judicial language had a chance. (Khosravi 2011: 33-4)

So, in order to gain legal and political recognition as "protected refugees," uprooted individuals, who have escaped war and survived displacement, have to undertake precarious journeys in search of acceptance and protection. They then must, in Khosravi's view, translate their traumatic experiences into "Eurocentric" legal frameworks. Alexandria Innes frames this process in the "subjectivity of fear":

Yet, the refugee definition establishes fear as part of the refugee identity – a subjective feeling. To assess whether someone feels the right kind of fear to be genuinely a refugee means subjecting that person's narrative account to a positivist knowledge framework. The person's own knowledge and experience fearing persecution is [*sic*] only recognized if it meets the established framework. (Innes 2016: 270)

Peter Nyers (2006: 12) also addresses the shortcomings of such legal frameworks: "The juridical definition of the refugee is less important than the pervasively shared cultural conception of what the experience of displacement – or "refugeeness" – involves." The definition and the legal frameworks do not acknowledge the fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion that refugees experience during their search for protection, as I discussed above in this chapter. They fall short in front of refugees' traumatic journeys and do not recognize the human cost refugees pay to reach destinations that accept them as "protected refugees" only after they meet certain legal and political criteria.

The transformative notion of refugee identity involves other forms of complexity presented by the re-formation of memory. Colson notes the tension between identity and memories in exile: "Resettlement does not wipe out memory, but rather provides a medium through which it is reworked, and the memory of shared experience of uprooting helps to create new forms of identity" (Colson 2003: 9). The relationship between identity re-formation and memory is profound in Palestinian refugees from Syria. Their new displacement during the Syrian war has reconceptualized their collective sense of identity, belonging, and loss (see chapter two), but the words of Issam, the Palestinian refugee from Syria, who travelled with his wife, Qamar, and their five children to Sweden through Egypt, reveal the personal significance of identity and memory: "The Swedish citizenship will not change us from Palestinians to Swedes. We will remain Palestinians, and we will always belong to our native roots" (Issam, Stockholm, June 2016).

I explained above that Syrian refugees do not appear to share the same sentiments as Palestinians, since they have not yet re-mastered this collective sense of identity and belonging after their displacement. This is a result particularly of how the current conflict, often perceived as a civil war,[21] has sharply divided their own communities. The hostility has destroyed Syrians' common sense of identity and thus made them less able to share feelings of grievance and loss. I explained in chapter two that these divisions have increased the pain and vulnerability of the Syrian experience in exile.

In addition to memory formation, the change in refugee identity also influences refugees' perceptions of place and home. Khosravi addresses the "multi-place" identity of people in exile:

> Exile is when you live in one place and dream in another … A life in exile is like being condemned to purgatory, a state between life and death, a limbo between here and there … In exile, the past exists side by side with the present … Exile is only parenthetic of life, though it lasts and lasts, though I know return is only a myth, a never-to-be-realized dream, though I know there is no home to go back to. Even though the house is there, the home is gone. I am not the same person … However, the dream keeps me hoping. It liberates me from the unbearable burden of alienhood. (2011: 74)

Khosravi understands the illusion of return as a survival tool in the midst of uprootedness. Yet, for most of the refugees I interviewed, the house is no longer there. By losing their houses, these refugees have also lost the dream of return. The illusion of return cannot help them through the alienation of their exile. In her work on the meaning of home for Palestinian families, Bree

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[21] Many commentators see the Syrian war as a regional sectarian conflict pitting Sunni Muslims, supported by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, against Alawites and other minorities, supported by Iran. Others perceive it as a proxy war between the United States and Russia. Yet another group considers it a civil war between the Syrian governments, with its supporters, against its opponents. Regardless of the adopted narrative, I believe that the ultimate result of the war is the destruction of the country and the sharp divisions between its own people.

Akesson (2014) explores the impact of losing home on families and children in the occupied Palestinian territories. She frames this loss as a loss of right and explains that, for Palestinians, "when a home is destroyed, the physical structure is lost in addition to the entire emotional essence of home, including aspects of centeredness and self-identity" (Akesson, 2014: 17). Yet, she notices that such loss contributes to the formation of Palestinians' collective identity, particularly for residents of Palestinian refugee camps, who "identify with their villages and towns of origin even if they have lived in exile for two or three generations" (ibid.).

This connection between forming identity and losing one's home is experienced by Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk. In chapter two I explained that most of Yarmouk's inhabitants had to leave their homes in December 2012 and have been prevented from returning. A military operation in April 2018 destroyed much of the district and reduced most of its buildings to rubble. The loss of Yarmouk has felt tragic to all of its people, both those who remained in Syria and those who left. For those who made the journey to Europe, the loss has complicated their perceptions of identity and place (Colson, 2003). They have lost their second home, Yarmouk, after their people lost their first diasporic home, Palestine. They also lost the illusion of return that could have helped them in their exile. In this sense, "refugeeness" represents a state of being, because going home has become literally and physical impossible (Khosravi, 2011; Said, 2000). A friend of mine, who had a house there, mourned the loss of Yarmouk on his facebook page:

> Wind is what we are left with now … We stood in silence, watching in denial our massive loss. Our dreams are now lost … Our hearts are broken … Our childhood memories are scattered. Even in our worst nightmares, we could not imagine to see Yarmouk in rubbles [*sic*]. How lonely it was without its people. (facebook, 26 May 2018)

These words capture the pain of loss, the sense of uprootedness, and the deep grievance I personally felt when I watched my own house in Yarmouk destroyed and looted. As the wife of a Palestinian refugee and a mother of two Palestinian children, and despite our Canadian citizenships, I now feel that we have been uprooted yet again. Our "multi-place" identity and our sense of belonging are more fragmented than at any time before, as we are Canadians with homes that have been lost in both Syria and Palestine. We are now the "Adam of two Edens," as portrayed by Mahmoud Darwish, the popular Palestinian poet:

> I'm the Adam of two Edens lost to me twice.
> Expel me slowly. Kill me slowly. (Mahmoud Darwish, 2000)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the emotional impact of the refugee journey on refugees' own perceptions of themselves and others, and of life in general. I have explored some of the feelings that refugees often experience during their journeys in search of protection, including fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion. As in previous chapters, my work has drawn on the intimate expressions of individuals who have shared their stories with me. They have chosen to do so because they consider me a member of their own community who has also experienced a journey. In the second section of the chapter, I discussed the transformative impact of the journey on the positionality of refugees and examined the ambivalence of refugees' roles within their families and communities. I examined these powerful elements at work in various phases of the journey and focused on refugees' loss of role as protectors and providers. The experiences of professional and female refugees reflected vividly this emotional and life-altering impact of refugees' journeys. Finally, I examined the reshaping of refugee identity and its impact on refugees' re-formation of memory, perception of home, and sense of belonging. I focused on

Palestinian refugees from Yarmouk, who are reliving their statelessness during the current Syrian conflict.

The stories indicate that refugees' decision to leave their home region for other places flows from their aim to move from invisibility, as victims of war and as marginalized, displaced persons, to social and political visibility, with protection, social acceptance, and better access to human rights. Many of the people with whom I spoke initially perceived the journey as such a passage, from rightlessness to a state of rights and protection. Yet, in the absence of legal and safe routes, and with restrictive border practices that deter refugees, their crossing may expose them to severe violence and precarity. They actually disappear again as illegal subjects who must avoid control, while experiencing intense fear, exhaustion, anxiety, confusion, and humiliation. The refugee journey thus becomes emotional, even shattering, and often traumatic. We see refugees arrive at their destinations with a heavy burden -- agonizing memories of loss and grievance as a result of the war they have fled. They also carry other forms of trauma from the journey itself. For this reason, and despite their moments of political agency en route, the often-disastrous circumstances of their journeys radically unsettle their perceptions of role, identity, self, and life in general. These scars affect refugees' ability to integrate within their new localities and mean that, for many, arrival there does not end their journey. Mountz (2017: 78) explains this long-lasting influence: "The trauma of displacement, migration, and detention travels well beyond the material infrastructure of detention, traversing space and time transcarcerally and transnationally in myriad ways." Refugees' journeys develop as intense emotional experiences that engender confusing alterations in positionality and identity, reflecting the appalling global crisis of protection and its high human cost. By examining the emotional toll and transformative impact of the refugee journey, I complete my analysis of this journey

according to the conceptual framework I proposed in chapter two. Informed by refugees' stories

and their real experiences during their search for protection, I showed how the refugee journey

evolves as an act of survival and resistance that is messy and complex and has an intense

emotional, even transformative impact on refugees' lives and decisions.

Conclusion
Research Overview

   I began this dissertation by challenging the dominant official narrative in the global north about the events of 2015 in Europe. I proposed that the arrival of more than one million refugees on the shores of Europe reflected *not* a "refugee crisis" or "migration crisis," as some media outlets and governments called it, but a global crisis of protection. This *crisis of protection* had been developing in the global south for years because the international refugee regime have failed dramatically to protect refugees and because many governments in the global north have wilfully neglected, even renounced their international commitments towards refugees. I argued strongly that this regime failure and countries' reluctance to resettle refugees have forced many refugees, who are escaping war but not finding sufficient protection in their home regions, to think of journeying elsewhere to secure their safety and rights. Such decisions and actions, however, often take place under precarious conditions, because many governments in the global north have sought to contain refugees in their home regions and deter their entry to the global north. Such practices exponentially increase the human cost of border crossing, where many refugees' journeys end sadly, even tragically.

   Many survivors of the often-harrowing journey reach their intended destinations bearing a weighty burden of painful, sometimes-traumatic memories and grievances that shatter their identities and deeply affect their lives in their new localities. To examine this crisis of protection further, I explored in this dissertation these three core questions:

   - Why is this a crisis of protection, not of migration?

   - How and why did this crisis develop in the shadow of the international refugee regime?

   - How does the refugee journey actually reflect and pay the human cost of this crisis?

To answer these crucial and intertwined questions, I examined in chapter one the nature of the crisis and outlined many states' perspectives on governing refugees. I showed how the limitations of the international refugee regime have allowed this crisis of protection to occur at such an intense scale. I illustrated the links between this crisis and the reluctance of many governments in the global north to honour their international commitments to refugees and hence to protecting refugees. I then examined how these states seek to contain and deter refugees from the global south. I showed how such practices have actually altered the norms and practices of protection, as outlined in the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees.

In chapters two to five, I shifted my approach and added further complexities to this study by showing how the regime of protection looks from the ground up -- from the perspectives of the people most affected: refugees, specifically those from Syria. To do so, in chapters two to five, I positioned refugees as my prime source of knowledge, which flows from their decisions to leave their war-tron homeland and then their region, to journey to Europe in search of protection. My aim in so doing was to let refugees reveal, through their actual stories, how the failing protection regime and governments' efforts to contain and deter refugees scar them en route to Europe where they hope, a better, safer life there. I hoped thereby to shift the focus from policy to real people, who are often invisible in international policy making. I did so through the lens of the Syrian refugee crisis, especially through the refugees' journeys to Sweden. I added the discussion of Palestinian refugees, whose families have lived in displacement in Syria since 1948. Because they are stateless, these refugees experienced severe discrimination and vulnerability during their new displacement in neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt and during their later journeys towards Europe.

This dissertation has explored the predicament of refugees from Syria and illustrated the impact of regional and international responses to the Syrian crisis on their legal status and living conditions outside Syria. I situated their individual travails within the context of the global crisis of protection, as I showed how containment and deterrence by the global north dominated international responses to the crisis, rendering people in the global south more precarious as they travelled illegally in search of safety. Such policies included chronic shortfalls in international humanitarian aid and in official resettlement, which led to inadequate protection, dramatically worsening conditions of displacement within the region and forcing refugees to look for destinations elsewhere.

I examined these conditions through refugees' stories of their escape from the war in Syria and their displacement in neighbouring countries (both stages in chapter three) and through their journeys beyond in search of protection (chapter four). By following the storylines of refugees, I examined their journeys on three main routes to Europe: by sea from Egypt to Italy; by sea from Turkey to Greece, and on to Sweden by air or via the western Balkan corridor; and by sea from Libya to Italy.

Through their stories, I showed how refugees' journeys developed in response to this global crisis of protection, which none the less reveal their often-striking abilities to navigate and survive this crisis. Their decision to head out like this reveals their political agency as they push back against the harrowing conditions first of war and then of displacement. Their stories reveal the strong agency often required in such journeys, especially under such precarious conditions. The stories I have narrated make visible refugees' agency as they create unexpected scripts and trajectories, often despite their wishes or intentions. Many refugees tried to avoid leaving their

homes in Syria: Khaled, for instance, feared displacement like that of his parents, who lost their home in Palestine in 1948 and became stateless refugees in Syria. Khaled finally left his home in Daraa as security conditions in his area deteriorated, and particularly after security forces attacked him.

The stories also showed that many refugees attempted to establish new lives in their new localities in the region. They had no intention to travel to Europe, and only the tough conditions of displacement changed their minds. Wassim, for example, who escaped to Egypt with his wife, Rajaa, and their sons, established a new business there, but hostility against Palestinian refugees after 2013 led them to leave. Fares too did not want to leave Syria but finally did so, with his wife and son, to avoid another detention that might have resulted in his death. Fares tried to start a new life in Libya, but the intensified fighting and extreme insecurity there finally forced his hand, and they made a dangerous journey towards Europe and ended up in Sweden.

Stories such as these show how refugees exert agency despite the violence and constraints that shape their decisions and actions throughout the journey. The stories reflect the unpredictability and messiness of many journeys, with their multiple moments of departure, stillness, and immobility (see chapter four). Many journeys unfolded as a set of chaotic loops and non-linear movements, but sometimes with tragic ends. Their stories showed how such intense experiences might lead to fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and/or confusion, which dramatically transform their notions of identity, self, and positionality, and hence their perceptions of home, belonging, and life in general.

Informed by these stories and by my personal experience of exile and uprootedness, I developed a conceptual framework for the refugee journey (chapter two). My aim was to

contribute to scholarly debates about the crisis of protection and refugees' predicament during their search for protection. My approach engaged meaningfully with refugees' actual experiences, as I had proposed, and showed the journey itself to consist of three under-researched elements. It proved to be

- an act of resistance and survival that demonstrates refugees' vulnerability, and agency, in escape and displacement (chapter three)
- a non-linear messy, complex, and precarious passage towards protection (chapter four)
- an emotional and transformative process that reshapes positionality and identity (chapter five)

This framework articulates the journey through reconceptualised notions of the crisis, borders, protection, and refuge. It engages significantly with refugees' stories and examines their decisions and actions, which reflect high degrees of agency intertwined with extreme precarity. It thereby challenges dominant narratives about refugees as powerless victims or as potential threats when they approach the global north. Instead, it represents refugees as real individuals who resist the inhumane conditions of war and displacement by undertaking complex and messy journeys towards foreign destinations. The framework examines particularly the emotional toll of such journeys and illustrates its shattering effects on refugees, many of whom reach their destinations bearing a heavy burden of fear, exhaustion, anxiety, humiliation, and confusion, which influences their sense of belonging and their integration into their new localities.

Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

This understanding of refugees' journeys is fundamental and crucial as the world's attention shifts from refugees' crises, including that of refugees from Syria, while the crisis of protection

still rages and haunts the lives of those who strive for safety and a better life. During 2017,

arrivals in Europe via the eastern Mediterranean decreased by 92 per cent vis-à-vis 2016

(UNHCR, 2018). This sharp drop took place while numbers of refugees from Syria increased by

14 per cent during 2017, reaching a total of 6.3 million (ibid.), as the war continued. Moreover,

Syrian refugees' conditions remain highly vulnerable and precarious in neighbouring lands.

Those who wish to travel to Europe face harsher deterrence and containment. According to the

EU-Turkey deal of 2016, refugees who reach Greece from Turkey are now contained -- gathered

in overcrowded reception centers on the Greek islands (UNHCR, 2018). Médecins sans

frontières (MSF) reported multiple cases of self-harm and attempts at suicide among child

refugees at Moria camp on Lesvos, where more than 9,000 people were trapped for months

(and some even for years), living in terrible conditions, without any idea about their destiny

(MSF, 2018b). The crisis continues on the central Mediterranean route as well. European Union

(EU) governments such as Italy and Malta's blocked humanitarian organizations at sea and

accused rescue teams of trafficking in humans. In June 2018, the far-right Italian government

withdrew from search-and-rescue operations and started refusing disembarkation to commercial

and NGO vessels carrying rescued refugees (Amnesty International, 2018). According to MSF

(2018a), such practices result in more drownings, as people are left stranded in unseaworthy

boats in the international waters between Italy, Malta, and Libya. Karline Kleijer, the MSF head

of emergencies, described these decisions as "outrageous and unacceptable" and noted: "The

European political decisions that have been taken during the past weeks have had deadly

consequences. There has been a cold-blooded decision to leave men, women and children to

drown in the Mediterranean Sea" (MSF, 2018a). UNHCR goodwill ambassador and prominent

writer Khaled Hosseini (2018: 3) pleads, "Where is the outrage, one wonders? Are we growing

numb to the loss of human life? Or, maybe, numbers are to blame. Perhaps we are inspired to act by a single tragedy, while, paradoxically, larger-scale human suffering registers as abstraction." Refugees' stories, he insists, can challenge such indifference and numbness: "Stories are the best antidote to the dehumanisation caused by numbers. They restore our empathy. Each story I hear from a refugee helps me feel, bone-deep, my immutable connection to its teller as a fellow human. I see myself, the people I would give my life for, in every tale I am told" (ibid.).

Hosseini's call speaks to my argument about how refugees' stories can generate useful insights and connect us with refugees as real people, who experience fear, pain, and loss. Just as Hosseini seeks to rehumanize refugees, my work encourages us to move beyond empathy to action. I hope that it may inspire us as scholars and policy-makers to re-animate refugees as real people rather than simply objects of policy and research analysis.

As I prepared this dissertation, the chronic absence of refugees as real individuals in scholarly literature and policy discourses haunted me. Academic research tends to treat refugees as objects or data that explain how such groups interact, engage, and respond to governing structures in their regions or in receiving states. Refugees' human experiences during the journeys, the details of their daily struggles, and the emotional toll of such experiences are still largely missing and undertheorized in migration and refugee studies. This yawning void limits our ability as scholars and policy-makers to grasp refugees' real predicaments and aspirations. They are missing too from policy discourse, where they surface as abstract numbers. They appear usually as faceless and nameless, with "ungrievable" sufferings, or as illegals when they challenge states' borders in an "unauthorized" manner. Refugees are "others," whose pre-war lives and deeds are ignored, and whose hopes and dreams are questionable. Such an absence

reflects policy-makers' reluctance to treat refugees as equal individuals worthy of protection that offers the "independence and dignity which enable refugees themselves to decide how they wish to cope with their predicaments" (Hathaway, 2007: 364).

It is because of the absence of refugees that I have chosen not to conclude this dissertation with policy recommendations for refugee protection. I do not want to override their voices by focusing on policy frameworks again. I feel no need to reproduce what other research projects have already accomplished. As I noted above, since Europe's summer of 2015, several research projects have documented and examined migrants and refugees' journeys, especially via the Mediterranean (Amnesty International, 2018; Crawley et al., 2018; Squire et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2018). Their final reports propose sweeping policy recommendations to facilitate safe and legal pathways for those in need of protection, rights-oriented border practices, and protecting human rights en route. For example, Amnesty International (2018) challenges practices that violate human rights at sea, with often-harrowing results. It urges EU states to deploy enough rescue vessels, create regional disembarking arrangements, allow NGOs to continue rescues at sea, de-criminalize irregular entry, and stop outsourcing border control. It insists on reform of the Dublin Regulation system to reduce pressure on front-line EU members and ensure that all signatories protect asylum seekers. The UNHCR report *Desperate Journeys* (2018) recommends similar changes, especially re safe and legal pathways to international protection through resettlement for unaccompanied children. Squire et al. (2017) conclude *Crossing the Mediterranean by Boat* with calls for safe and legal pathways and improved reception centers. It urges states to replace deterrence with interventions that address why people undertake these journeys.

I agree with most of these recommendations and hope that such interventions may challenge state efforts in the global north to decontextualize refugee crises in the global south by blaming refugees for their own hardships. A proxy war involving many local, regional, and international players has caused the Syrian refugee crisis, for example. Most of those players ignore their responsibilities towards the people of Syria, who are trapped between a brutal war and structures of protection and border controls that lock them in unbearable circumstances. Those who want better lives must consider "unauthorized" journeys as "illegal" figures who travel through precarious conditions and are portrayed as a threat to deter and securitize. Nevertheless, many of these recommendations seem to me unlikely to end the crisis. They fail to see refugees as real individuals who deserve to be treated as equal as other people in the global north. Only, I believe, by humanizing policies and research can we make a real difference. A radical shift of the analysis would circumvent refugees' "otherness" and the binary of victims/criminals. This would require serious and meaningful engagement with refugees' stories and narratives about their actual experiences during war, displacement, and search for protection. This gestalt shift would allow 'us,' as academics and policy-makers, to see and treat refugees as people who have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and hopes and dreams, as we do, and who deserve to live *like us*. I explore this form of engagement below.

Future Research

Building on my findings in this dissertation and my argument for more humanized policies and academic research that disrupt the "otherness" of refugees and rather engage with them as equal humans, I propose three other areas of inquiry for future research informed more by refugees' narratives and actual experiences:

- refugees' integration in countries of resettlement

- the impact of refugees' differential experience of their journeys and its effect on their integration

- the ethics of writing about refugees

Integration of refugees: My research opens up future inquiry into how the journey continues after arrival. As I noted above, my research has focused on refugees' experiences before and during their actual journeys towards Europe, but I have not here been able to examine their experiences in their new localities – a notable, follow-through element of the journey. For many of the refugees I interviewed, arrival in Sweden started a new stage of their journey, with different kinds of challenges and changes. Many of them talked to me about missing their home, community, and life back in Syria. They spoke of the challenges of learning a new language, finding a job, or simply coping with new spaces and new norms of life. Hearing about this tells me that it is vital to examine refugees' individual experiences in their new localities to understand the barriers and challenges they face as uprooted individuals with a heavy burden of emotional scars who are none the less willing to adapt. This inquiry will illuminate the journey of refugees as a whole and how it shapes their lives and trajectories. It would explore integration in terms of refugees' individual and communal accomplishments and the barriers they often face.

To further humanize policies and research, this inquiry should look first at whether and how refugees reconstruct and reaffirm notions of identity, home, and belonging and at these notions' influence on their relationship with their new localities and on their ability to integrate. In fact, refugees' experiences of integration constitute a pressing topic for refugees and policy-makers as well. This is crucial, as European liberal values of acceptance and integration have been under

siege since the unprecedented events of 2015. The integration of refugees presents a major

challenge for receiving governments, host communities, and above all for refugees themselves. I

suggest, however, that a useful inquiry about integration starts not with institutional policies and

systematic procedures of integration and social cohesion, but with refugees' experiences and

intimate notions of identity, home, and belonging. Future research could explore refugees'

relationship with their new localities and their integration from their own perspective. This

presumes serious engagement with refugees' stories as a prime source of knowledge. Examining

their encounters with unfamiliar social, economic, and cultural structures may inspire new

debates and scholarly work in anthropology, sociology, and political science that focus on

insights from refugees' actual experiences. This in turn may suggest new ways to think about

protecting and accepting refugees that flow directly from and address the realities of their

experiences, and may help humanize policies of protection and integration.

   The impact of different journeys on refugees' integration: Another area of inquiry that my

research findings suggest concerns how the journey may affect refugees' integration

differentially. Comparing the experiences of asylum seekers from Syria with those of refugees

from Syria being resettled by the UNHCR might be very revealing. Sweden has received more

than 50,000 Syrians and Palestinian refugees from Syria. As I showed above, the majority of

these refugees arrived in Sweden "illegally" as asylum seekers during 2015. In response, the

Aliens Act of July 2016 offered temporary residency to asylum seekers, reducing chances for

them to reunite their families and creating barriers for refugees and asylum seekers to integrate in

Sweden (Folkkampnj for Asyllratt, 2016). As a response to the same crisis, Canada received and

officially resettled more than 40,000 refugees from Syria (Government of Canada, 2017). They

received permanent residency on arrival, which gave them access to social services. As a

member of the Syrian community in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, helping to sponsoring

refugees and as a board member at Reception House of Waterloo Region, which assists

government-sponsored refugees with resettlement in Waterloo region, I am keenly aware that

resettled refugees face daunting challenges of integration and self-accomplishment.

Studying the transformative impact of the refugee journey (see chapter five) may offer a

starting point for this proposed inquiry. The journey affects various individuals' positionalities

and roles as protectors and providers in different ways. Such an inquiry might compare the

experiences of refugees who resettle in Europe as asylum seekers after precarious journeys with

those who have been resettled in Canada. Why are some – in both destinations -- still facing

challenges of integration, such as learning the language, finding jobs, and coping with their new

lives? Refugees' stories should offer prime knowledge for this sort of inquiry. Their own words

may tell us about the journey's impact on their ability to integrate, their sense of belonging, and

their notion of locality while they perhaps try to reconstruct their identities in exile. This may

lead to new frameworks for protecting refugees that may help them fulfil their needs and

aspirations.

The ethics of writing about refugees: The absence of refugees as real individuals in

academia and the latter's tendency to treat them as objects raise questions about the ethics of

working and writing about refugees and the need for new scholarly approaches that engage

meaningfully with refugees' stories and narratives. Scholars such as Clark-Kazak (2017),

Johnson (2016), and Squire (2018) have entered this vital debate about the ethics of bringing the

narratives of migrants and refugees into qualitative research. Yet we need more academic

initiatives in migration and refugee studies to challenge the absence of refugees as real people

and to communicate with refugees' communities, which may generate new ways of thinking about protecting and accepting refugees.

During my journey as a researcher, I had to explore and write about refugees' actual experiences while having myself been uprooted and while also acquiring knowledge through my communication with family, friends, and community members, who shared their journey stories with me and trusted me to treat their intimate moments with respect and dignity. I came to this project from a policy background with a master's degree in international public policy and long professional experience in diplomacy and international business. Thus I started this dissertation research by analyzing the policy discourse of refugee protection and border practices. I struggled, however, with this approach, as it failed to capture the real scale and scope of the Syrian refugee crisis that I witnessed through my life in Syria and through the stories I heard. The policy discourse did not help me to – crucially -- delineate the devastating impact the crisis had on people's lives. I found little space in this discourse for people's voices and words.

This is why, during my research and as I was writing this dissertation, I found myself shifting towards other methods that allowed me to treat the stories I heard from refugees in an ethical and meaningful way. I ended up situating refugees at the center of my work and treating their stories as my prime source of knowledge about their journeys and aspirations and the crisis of protection in general. In the light of my experience as a researcher, I argue that research about refugees should be informed by their lived experiences and should aim to articulate, perhaps even help create new global frameworks of protection that hear, understand, and involve refugees as equal human beings.
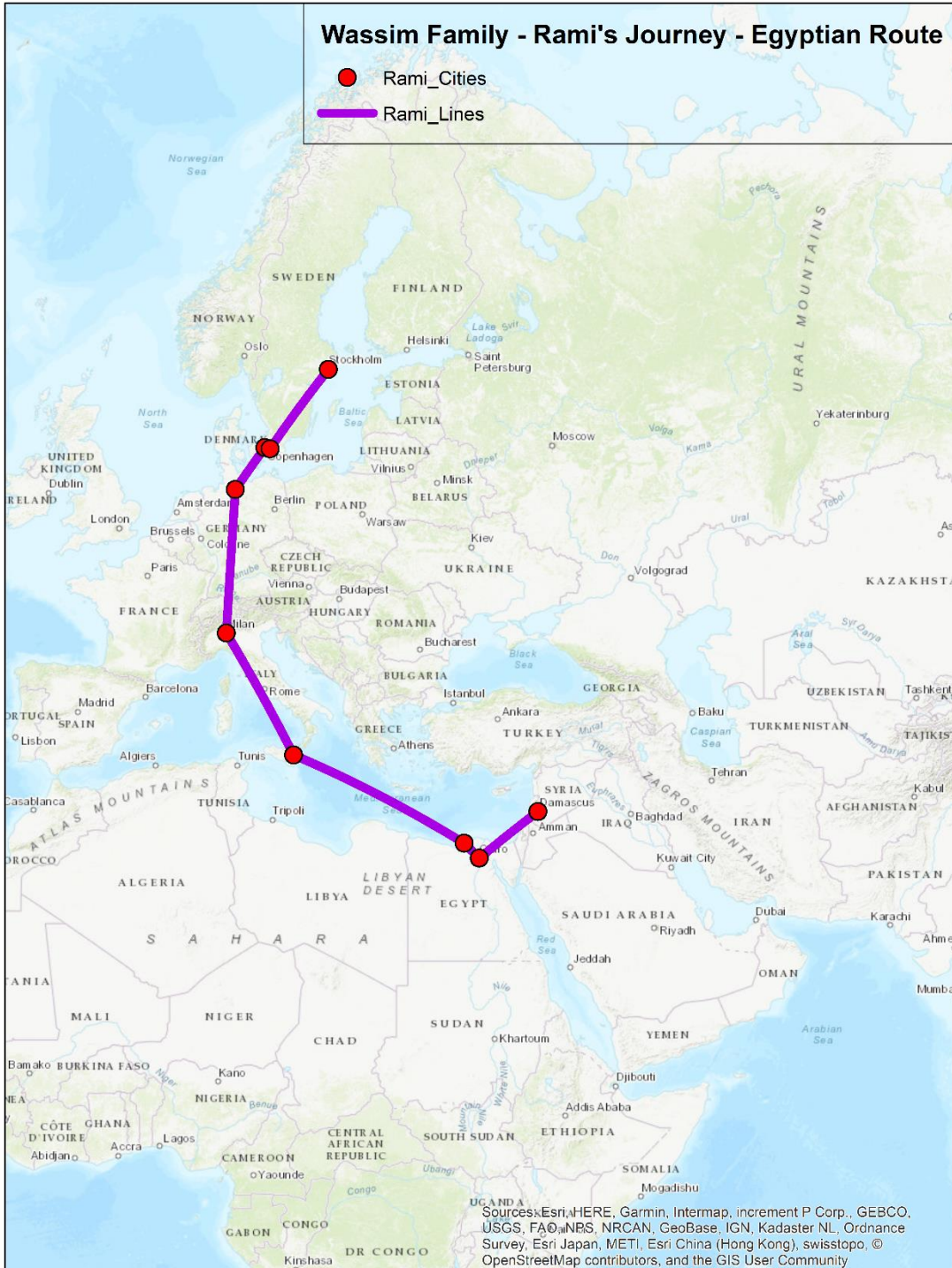
As I noted above in this Conclusion, research on refugees now tends more than before to adopt an ethical approach towards refugees' experiences. I argue, however, that a breakthrough requires going beyond the ethics of research and entails avoiding the "otherness" of refugees. It starts by hearing, understanding, and treating refugees as real individuals. Their stories should serve not as abstract data that further the agenda and goals of academic researchers, but rather as an alternative and priceless source of knowledge about lived experiences and worthy aspirations. Genuine human research starts when we imagine ourselves in the position of refugees through their stories and words. It succeeds when we feel their tears, loss, fear, and their hopes and dreams. This becomes possible only when we perceive refugees as equal human beings, whose lives are worth living and whose sufferings and deaths deserve dignified acknowledgment and grief.
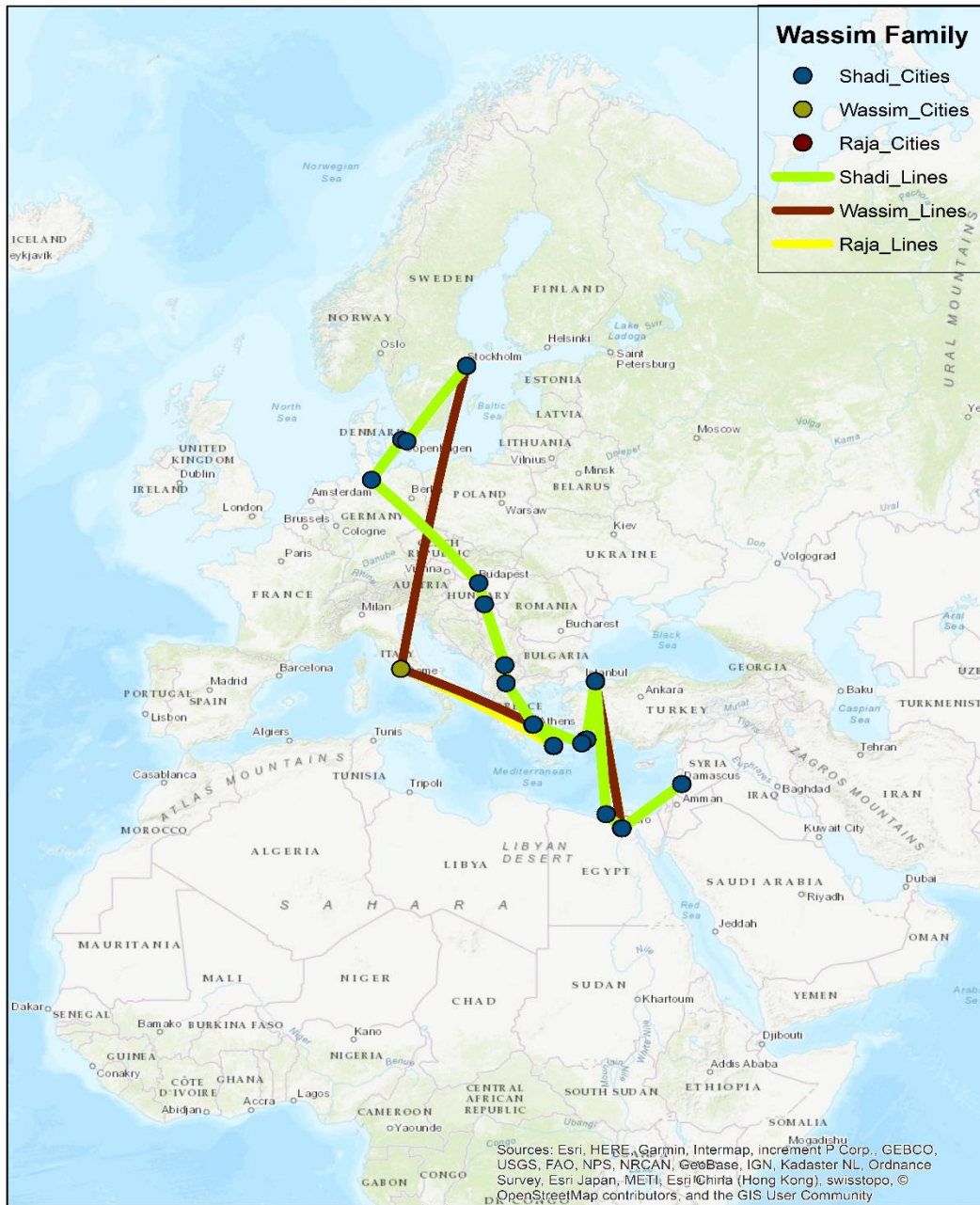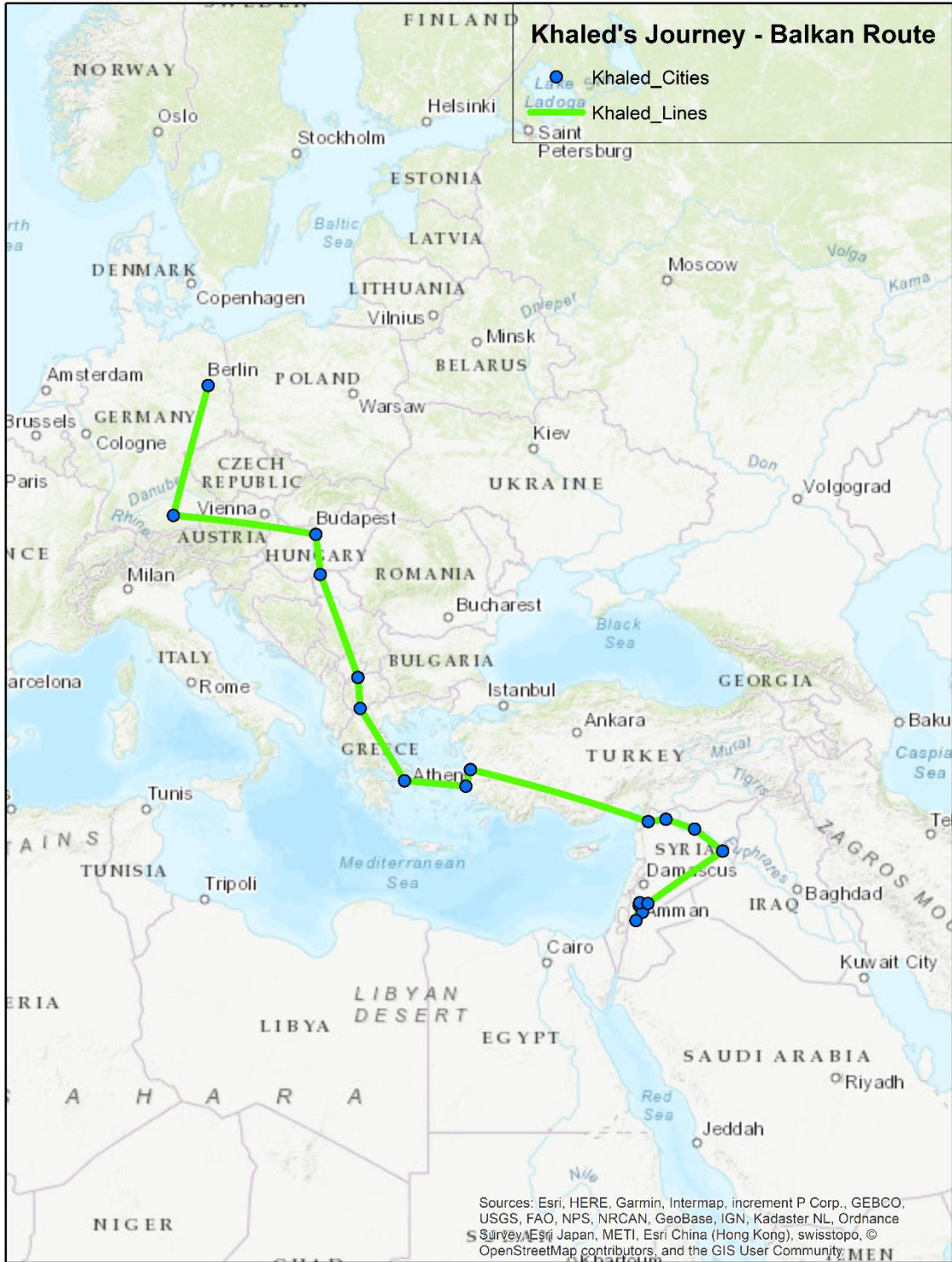
Interview Appendix

Name	Route	Date of Journey	Family	Destination
Ammar	Lebanon – Thailand – Turkey – Balkan route - Germany	2013 -2015	-	Hanover - Germany
Arrad	Turkey - Canada	2012 - 2014	Wife and 2 Children	Kitchener - Canada
Fares	Egypt – Libya – Italy - Sweden	2012- 2014	Wife and 1 Child	Stockholm - Sweden
Hania	Turkey – Greece – Balkan route - Sweden	2015	6 children	Laxå - Sweden
Issam and Qamar	Egypt – Italy - Sweden	2013	5 Children	Stockholm - Sweden
Karam and Jenna	Turkey – Greece – Italy - Sweden	2014	3 Children	Hässleholm – Sweden
Khaled	Jordan – Syria – Turkey – Balkan route - Sweden	2012- 2015	Sister and her family	Berlin - Germany
Mahmoud	Egypt – Italy – Sweden	2013	Two sons (one stayed in Germany)	Hässleholm - Sweden
Rahma	Turkey – Greece- Sweden	2015	Son	Hässleholm - Sweden
Rana	Irbil – Turkey – Greece - Sweden	2014	Mother and one son	Stockholm - Sweden
Rasha	Turkey – Greece – Balkan route - Sweden	2015	3 children	Laxå - Sweden
Rawan	Turkey – Malaysia – Germany - Sweden	2014	-	Uppsala - Sweden
Safieh	Turkey – Greece – Norway	2014	Husband	Norway
Salam	Turkey – Greece - Sweden	2013	-	Stockholm - Sweden
Wassim	Egypt – Turkey – Greece – Sweden	2013 - 2014	Wife and 2 children (separate journeys)	Stockholm – Sweden
Rajaa	Egypt – Turkey – Greece - Sweden	2014	Wife of Wassim	Stockholm - Sweden
Rami	Egypt – Italy - Sweden	2013	Son of Wassim	Stockholm - Sweden

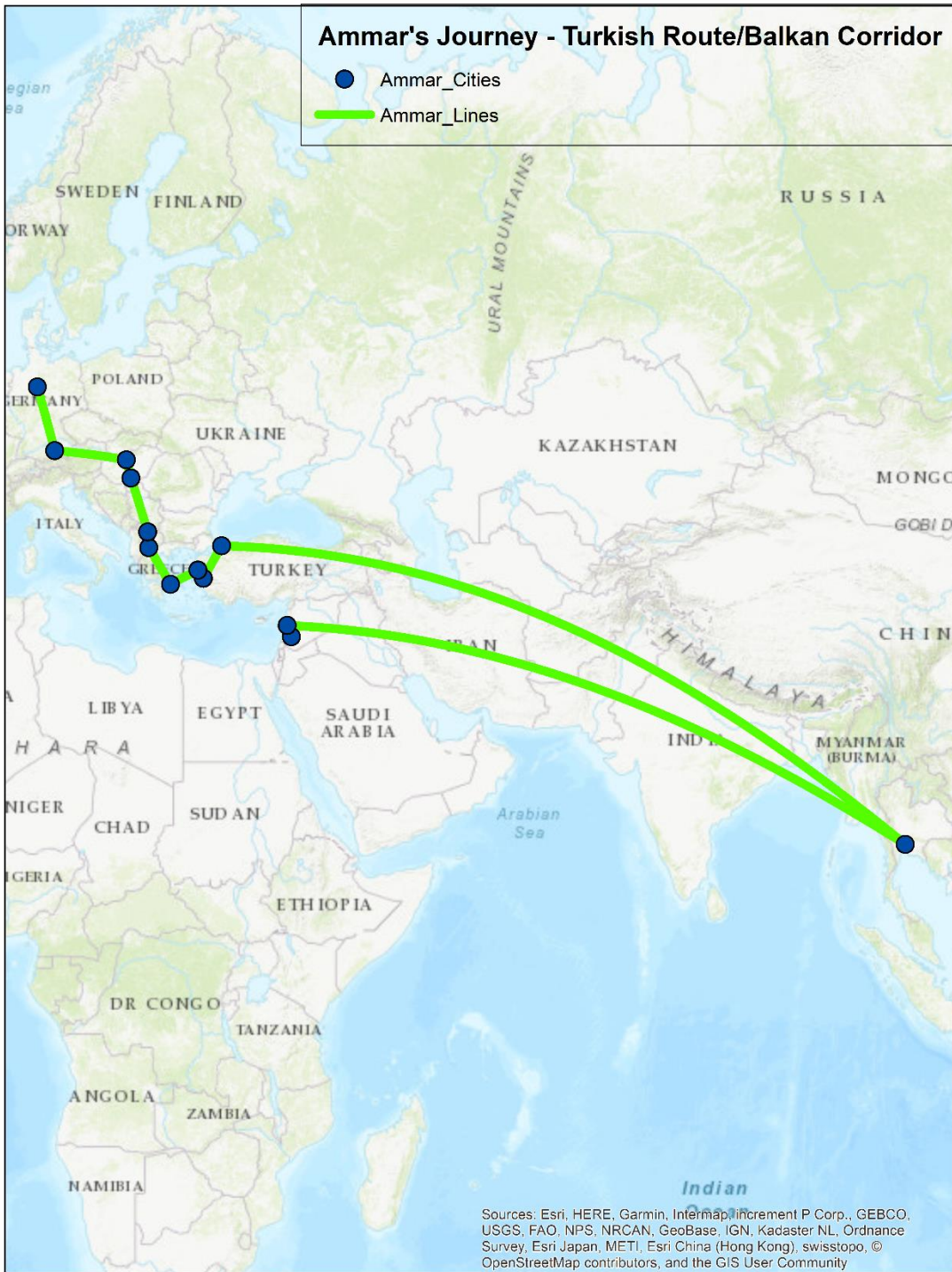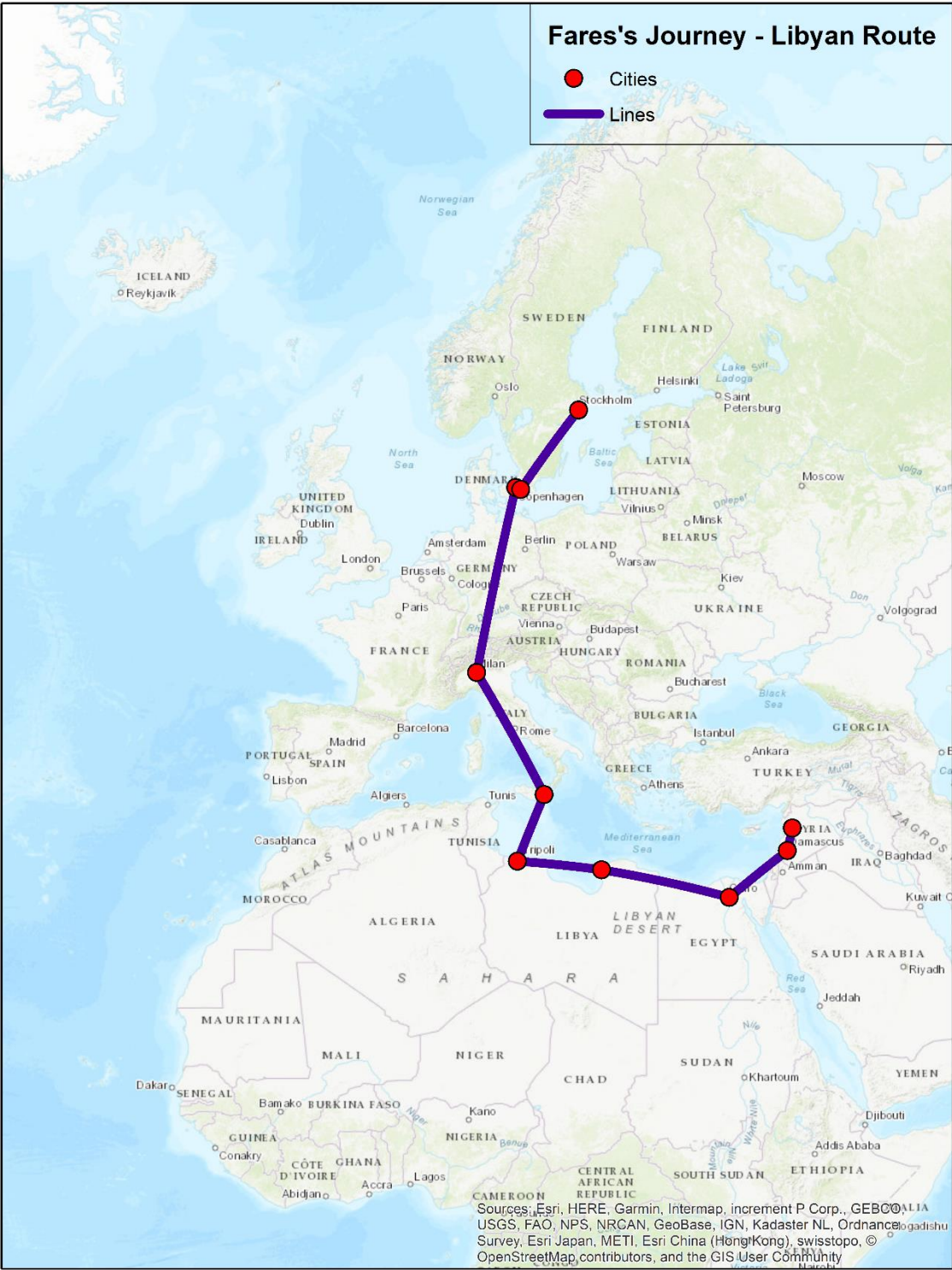|				
Shadi	Egypt – Turkey – Greece – Balkan route - Sweden	2014	Son of Wassim	Stockholm - Sweden
Yamen	Libya – Italy - Sweden	2014	Daughter	Hässleholm – Sweden
Youssef	Egypt – Libya – Italy – Sweden	2012	-	Hässleholm – Sweden

Maps of Routs and Journeys

Wassim Family - Rami's Journey - Egyptian Route

Khaled's Journey - Balkan Route

Khaled_Cities

Khaled_Lines

240

Ammar's Journey - Turkish Route/Balkan Corridor

Fares's Journey - Libyan Route

- Cities
- Lines

Rana's Journey - Turkish Route

Rana_Cities
Rana_Lines

Mahmoud's Journey - Egyptian Route

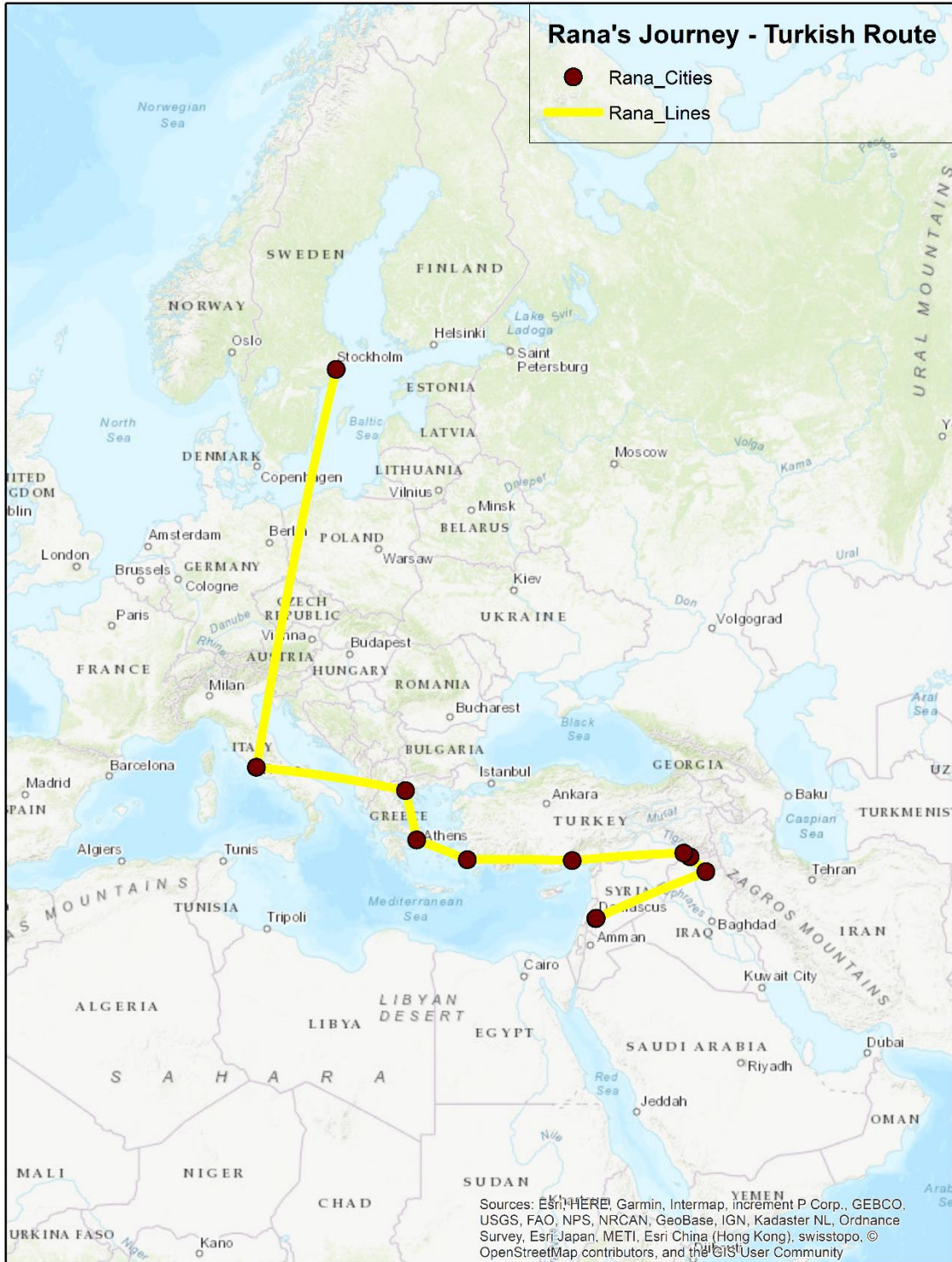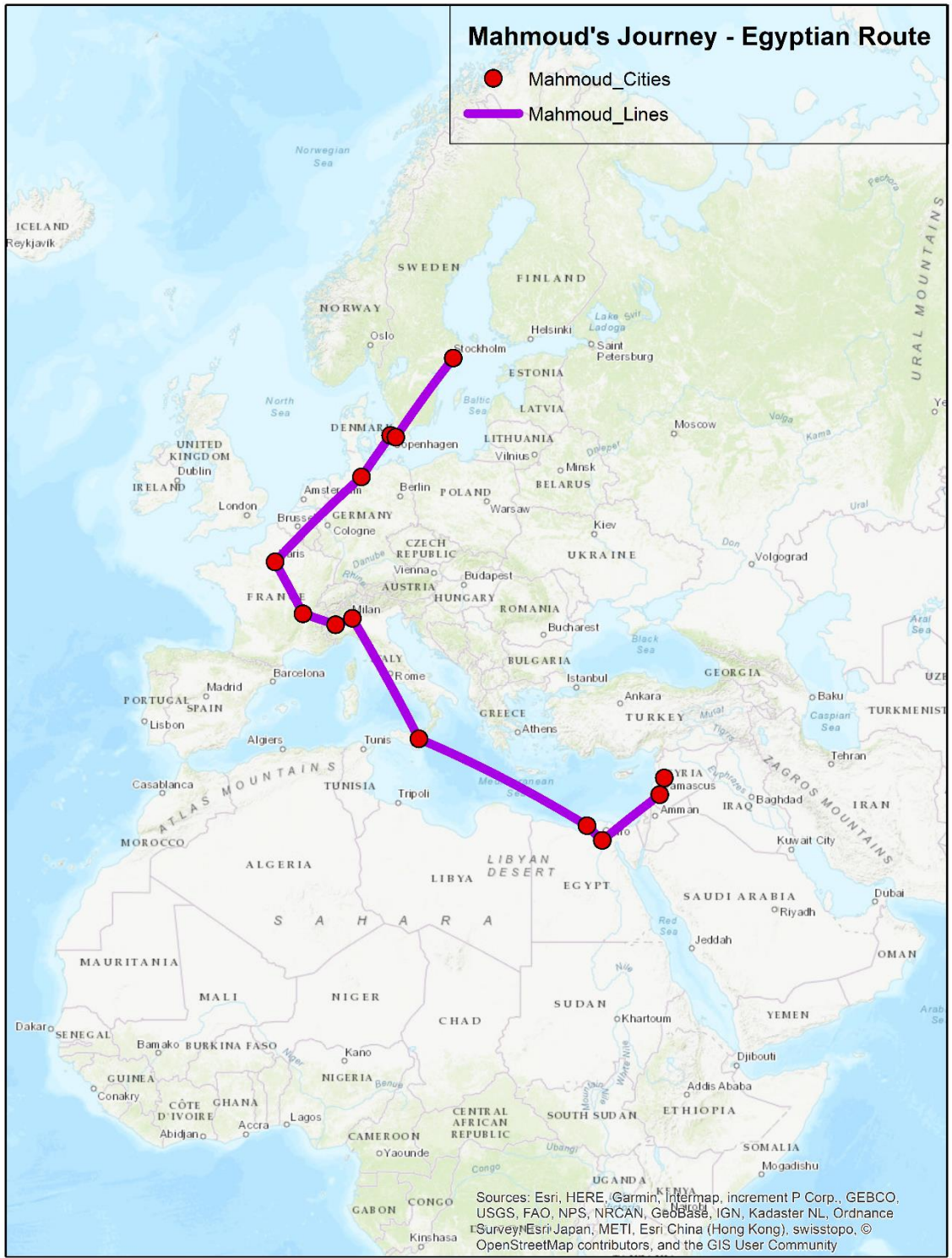- Mahmoud_Cities
- Mahmoud_Lines

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