Gendered Mobilities and Vulnerabilities: refugee journeys to and in Europe

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Abstract

The current refugees flows across the Mediterranean are heterogeneous, yet relatively little socially disaggregated data for adults and children, which would enable us to better understand the nature of the gendered mobilities and other social determinants of asylum seekers and refugees. The gendered modalities of mobility are also affected by the conceptualisation of specified categories as being vulnerable and in need of protection. This conceptualisation tends to favour categories that are most visibly dependent, such as single parents, pregnant women, the elderly and unaccompanied minors, and marginalising the less visible forms of vulnerability arising from the physical and emotional traumas experienced in the course of the journey, especially by young men . The application of vulnerability to the reception of asylum seekers and the privileging of certain nationalities have created a series of hierarchies and stratifications. What is needed is a more rounded appreciation of the complex situation and the experiences of vulnerability of individuals applying for asylum.

Empirical evidence is drawn from data (UNHCR and national source in Greece and Italy) as well as original data generated by the EVI-MED (Constructing an evidence base of contemporary Mediterranean migration) project.

Keywords: gender; mobilities; vulnerability; asylum seekers; Mediterranean

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In 2015, 856,000 migrants and refugees arrived by sea in Greece and 153,842 in Italy. The number of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean peaked in the autumn of 2015 and at the same time the composition of the flows changed. By the end of 2015, gender disaggregated statistics from UNHCR indicated a shift from what had hitherto been portrayed by the media as predominantly young males, and as potentially threatening and dangerous to European societies, to flows which included women, children and entire families. The supposed absence or small number of women travelling to Europe has been used by anti-immigrant social media sites to argue that men fleeing conflict zones are cowards, and unwilling to safeguard vulnerable women and children (Walker Rettberg and Gajjala 2016). Initially, the relative lack of gendered disaggregated data and the tendency to average data over the whole year (2015) and across locations in the Mediterranean meant that the view that the refugee flows consisted primarily of (young) men, who would eventually bring over their families, prevailed until the beginning of 2016 (Bonewit and Shreeves 2016, the Economist 2016a). The reasons for why the timing of the shift towards more women and children occurred when it did are not entirely clear (Squire and Perkowski 2016). However following the EU-Turkey statement concluded on 18 March 2016, the percentage of women dropped, regaining its more adult male profile, possibly as the sea crossing became more dangerous.

Having accurate data on who is on the move to and through Europe are indispensable to any reasoned, evidence-led policy or debate on refugee protection (ECRE 2015, Honeyball 2016). It shapes our representation of the refugee crisis and the ways it has and may unfold in the future. A male-dominated refugee population raises fears of security and is assumed to want to bring in other family members in future through a right to family reunification by those granted refugee status, thus leading to an increase in the refugee population. Currently, nearly all Syrians and almost three-quarters of Iraqis are granted refugee or subsidiary status (Eurostat 2016) and hence potentially generate a large demand for family reunification. The composition of the population on the move will also have a bearing on their needs and the nature of protection and services provided. International organisations have highlighted the specific facilities women should have available in transit camps and reception centres and the protection they should be given from the risks that they face, for example, of sexual violence. As we shall see, women tend to form a greater proportion of adults classified as vulnerable in European regulations and directives concerning the reception, relocation and return of asylum seekers and refugees, with likely implications for gendered mobilities and trajectories. Despite these gendered differences in mobility, there appears to be little socially disaggregated data and analysis of the gendered experiences of adults, and even less of children, in displacement, reception, relocation, and integration (Belloni and Pastore 2016, Fry 2016, Shreeves 2016).

The aim of this article is to highlight the need for socially disaggregated data (gender, age, marital status, nationality) that help us to better understand the changing flows and trajectories and the implications for policies concerning transit, reception and relocation. The production of such data also contributes to knowledge about the politics of differentiated mobility (Cresswell 2010), where the ability to be mobile is unequally distributed (Faist 2013) and with gender as a key determinant (Uteng and Cresswell 2008). In Europe studies have focused on differences in the how and why of everyday mobility in relation to different categories of women, for example mothers (Murray 2008) and carers as well as on racialized and gendered mobilities (Subramanian 2008). With the development of large scale refugee movements, growing attention has been paid to the routes and trajectories pursued by individuals and families, especially across the Mediterranean (Crawley et al. 2016, Squire et al. 2016). Although women have been surveyed and interviewed in the research projects concerning these flows, there has been little sustained analysis of their gendered mobility as they seek to cross multiple European borders. Most of our knowledge has come from NGOs concerned about the welfare of women as they have transited countries and their conditions in reception centres (UNHCR 2016a,b, Women's Refugee Commission 2016a).

Of course gendered mobilities in terms of the modalities of movement (why, how, with whom one travels) do not apply to women and men as homogeneous categories. Apart from the main social divisions of age, martial status, class and nationality, gendered mobilities are also inflected by the concept of vulnerability, increasingly adopted in EU law (Peroni and Timmer 2013, Timami 2015) and directives, and with an outcome which privileges selected categories of those in need of international protection (Pastore 2015). While asylum seekers in general are deemed to be vulnerable (Cabot 2014), within this heterogeneous category some are particularly vulnerable and considered to be in need of and to warrant special protection, priority consideration and entitlement to material resources (Timmer 2014) and spatial relocation.

The first section of the article synthesises the available data on the changing gender composition of flows across the Mediterranean. Through a detailed analysis of gender disaggregated data provided by regular UNHCR reports from the summer of 2015 to the summer of 2016 as well as the project *EVI-MED: Constructing an evidence base of contemporary Mediterranean migrations*[1], I show that the shift towards a profile comprising a majority of women, children and families in Greece had actually begun before late 2015/ beginning of 2016 and, that following the EU-Turkey Statement concluded on 18 March 2016, a more male adult profile re-emerged. We are in fact dealing with two very different sub systems such that the increasing feminisation of the refugee flow only occurred in the eastern Mediterranean, dominated by Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan populations (table 1), in contrast to the central Mediterranean where the major flows emanate from East and West Africa, and the female presence actually decreased as from the end of 2015 (table 2). Thus averaging out differences in location and data for the entire year effectively masks some of the key fluctuations that occurred from 2015 to 2016, including the very different gendered mobilities within and between the eastern and central Mediterranean.

The second section examines how the conceptualisation and operationalization of the notion of vulnerability applied to designated categories give them priority in asylum processing, access to material resources and services, and thus contributes to differentiated gendered experiences of mobility in Europe. As we shall see, it is not women and children as a whole who are classified as vulnerable, but sub-categories such as pregnant women, single parents or unaccompanied minors who are deemed to be the most dependent and in need of additional support and who should be given priority in terms of reception support and relocation. And for men, who are expected to be independent subjects, fitting into a vulnerable category is particularly difficult although gender neutral categories such as the disabled, the elderly and those with serious and incurable illnesses are populated by both women and men.

Socially Disaggregated Data of Refugees and Migrants

Over summer 2015, the media portrayal of those making the journey through the Western Balkans to Hungary, Austria and Germany was of young, single men. Indeed the Czech President (2016) predicted the flow of young male refugees would become a tsunami and questioned whether in fleeing generalised conflict they should be counted as refugees at all. Some commentators questioned whether it was wise to allow these males into European and North American societies[2]

> Because many are beginning to wonder if this is really a refugee problem, or if it's an orchestrated invasion of Europe by young males of fighting age. They don't even pretend to deny that the reason they're trying to get to Europe is for the welfare and benefits the socialist countries will bestow on them (Soopermexican 2015).

The dangerous consequences of taking in a high percentage of young males for European societies with their traditions of gender equality, or the creation of Europe's man problem, were raised (Hudson 2016, Symons-Brown 2016). Hudson draws particular attention to the very high percentage (90%) of unaccompanied minors and the problems this group is likely to pose for the gender balance of a population in future. In response, The Economist (2016) pointed out that it was a problem specific to Sweden, which had taken in a very high number of unaccompanied minors, rather than a European-wide issue

At this time, the statement that Syrian refugees were primarily male was often repeated on #refugeesNOTwelcome through images of men with texts highlighting the absence of women and children. An analysis of random samples of tweets and images revealed a widespread use of gendered rhetoric. 79% of the images and 55% of the tweets invoked gendered arguments or imagery against immigration or refugee resettlement (Ingulfsen 2016). Furthermore, a majority of tweets explicitly linked the arrival of refugees to gender-based violence or subjugation of women. Security too was a preoccupation as has become even more evident since then[3]. As Helms (2015) asks, why is it that men travelling on their own can't be legitimate refugees and that empathy and victimhood can only be extended to women and children?

However by November 2015, at a time when numbers in Greece were reaching their peak, a shift away from men to an increased number of women and children as well as vulnerable groups (UN Women 2016), began to be reported. Various studies highlighted how women were moving in kin groups of varying sizes (REACH 2016; UN Women 2016). An increase in families with young children, single women and pregnant women, was noted amongst those transiting Greece (UNHCR et al. 2016). By this time, women and children comprised up to 42% of the affected population -18% and 24% - and on average represented a 10% increase compared to May 2015 (UNHCR et al. 2016).

Among the 1,015,078 refugees who crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 were 58% men, 17% women and 25% children[4], but with quite divergent patterns between Greece and Italy. In Greece the main nationalities were Syrian, Iraqi, Pakistani, Afghan and Iranian, and in Sicily, Nigerians, Eritreans, Gambians, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. In Greece, the number of women, and especially accompanied children, revealed a marked increase as from mid- summer 2015, continuing to rise in the autumn and into the winter of 2015-2016; in Italy, the percentage of women actually declined in the late autumn and winter.

INSERT Tables 1 and 2

Overall, for the first half of 2016 (January to June), UNHCR (2016) figures indicate there were 40% men, 21% women and 38% children in Greece[5]. For the pre-registration exercise implemented from 9 June to 30 July 2016, the composition of the 27,592 individuals registered was 32% men, 22% women and 46% children, based largely on Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi nationalities (94% of total). 17% of them were single, 36% were in families of 4-5 people and 14% in families of 7 or more (Hellenic Republic Asylum Service and UNHCR pre-registration analysis 9 June-30 July 2016).

In terms of more detailed information about women and their mobilities, UNHCR (2016a,b) conducted interviews at the beginning of 2016 with Syrians and Afghans on the islands (Lesvos, Chios, Samos and Leros). Of the 524 Syrians interviewed, 23% were women of whom 2% were pregnant and 2% lactating. 80% had travelled with close family, 10% with extended family, 7% with friends and colleagues and only 11% were alone. 18% of respondents were part of a single male-headed household and 19% a female-headed household. 7% had left behind a spouse, 40% a parent and 13% children. For those exiting Greece through Idomeni to FYR Macedonia during the week 7-13 January 2016, 43% were adult men, 22% women and 34% accompanied children (IOM Compilation of available data and information 14 January 2016). Yet once the EU-Turkey deal rendered the crossing more difficult and dangerous, the flows to Greece reverted progressively to a more male adult composition – from 38% in February and March 2016, 47% in April 2016 to a high of 63% in June 2016 (UNHCR Monthly Data Update August 2016).

The first wave of the survey conducted for the EVI-MED project from March to July 2016 in mainland Greece added to our knowledge of gendered mobilities and socio-economic characteristics. 54 of the 152 individuals surveyed were women with the largest nationality being Syrians (22) followed by Afghan (7) and Iranians (6). Women were far more likely than men to be divorced or widowed (9 women compared to 2 men) while 9 were single. A third were therefore without a husband. The majority had children with them in Greece, few (2) had left children behind in the country of origin with 9 of them having children elsewhere. Proportionately more gave their security or that of their family (35), rather than war or persecution more generally, as a reason for leaving; a greater number (8 women compared to 2 men) gave family reunification as a reason for leaving their country. Few women (5) had travelled alone compared to men (26)[6]. The interviews with three Afghan women highlighted the fact that these women had been either physically attacked by the Taliban for working as professionals or had refused to marry them and had therefore initiated the flight together with other families. Thus the picture that emerges is of women travelling together with others and with their children.

In relation to the large number of children, we have little disaggregated data by gender in the UNHCR regular reports which tend to treat minors as gender neutral (Belloni and Pastore 2016). It is only through data collected during the pre-registration exercise that the gendered composition of this flow becomes apparent. Until the age of 14 years, the gender balance is fairly even; it is only among those 15-17 years that boys clearly outnumber girls. Such an imbalance becomes even more pronounced among unaccompanied minors with 6% girls as opposed to 29% boys out of 1225 unaccompanied minors (Hellenic Republic and UNHCR 2016). As children become older so does the gender imbalance become more marked. Up to 9 years, there are equal numbers of girls and boys, from 10-14 years, 4% of the total number of unaccompanied children are girls compared to 13% boys and among those aged 15-17 years, 10% of the total number are girls and 66% boys.

In Italy, there is much less detailed gender disaggregated data compared to Greece. What we do know is that most women come from African countries, with 25% of Nigerians, 22% of Eritreans and 21% of Somalis being women (Belloni and Pastore 2016). The EVI-MED survey (March-June 2016) of 202 individuals generated gender disaggregated data concerning the demographic, marital, educational, economic and legal status of women, how they travelled to Sicily and plans for the future. Of the 23 women surveyed, who entered Sicily, 14 were single and three widowed. 12 did not have any children and, of the 11 who did, only 3 were living with them in Sicily. Their educational levels were lower than that of men – almost two-thirds had no or only primary level education compared to just over 40% of men. Although fewer women had travelled alone (60%) compared to men (76%), this is considerably higher than for women in Greece. Indeed, concerns have been voiced about the extent of trafficking for prostitution among Nigerians (Kelly and Tondo 2016) asylum seekers with stories of women being taken directly out of reception centres by gangs.

What gender differences do we see in whether the individual sought to stay in the country, either in Greece or Italy, and to what extent did they want to move elsewhere and join existing family members. Surveys in 2015 on the Greek islands had indicated that refugees intended to apply for family reunification once they gained protection in the country of destination. According to the EVI-MED Greek survey, the majority of women with children were travelling with them but almost half of the men had no children and a fifth had left them in the country of origin. It would suggest that many women, whom we have seen are married, divorced and single, are seeking to rejoin family members (spouses, parents, siblings, other relatives) who had previously left and probably explains the higher percentage of women in the EVI-Med survey who intended to apply for asylum elsewhere than in Greece[7]. Some have been separated en route and the closure of the border with FYR Macedonia in March 2016 has left them stranded, as some of our interviews indicated. For women, the availability of family reunification is particularly important in reducing the precariousness of their existence (Barfuss 2016). However with the very large number still to be registered in Germany and those stranded in Greece (about 62,000 at the end of 2016), it may take a long time for family reunification to be completed, especially as northern states such as Germany and Sweden have either restricted or halted family reunification in order to reduce continuing flows for the increasing numbers now granted subsidiary protection rather than full refugee status (Brenner 2016). In fact some have not have been willing to wait for lengthy periods in the countries of origin for appointments at embassies, so they took matters into their own hands and began the journey, only to find themselves stranded in Greece (Karas 2016). As one woman said:

> “We have husbands and sons in Germany. We feel so hopeless about the possibility of going there now. In Syria, we were so far away. Now we are so close but we cannot reach them.” Asha, from Syria, living in the Eloneas refugee site since February 2016 with her cousin (Women’s Refugee Commission 2016c: 7).

For those in Greece the only location for the requisite appointments for family reunification is Athens. Among those who were pre-registered in June and July 2016, the vulnerable have been identified and may be given preference in rejoining their family members[8] who have gone ahead. On the other hand, the other means of moving out of Greece, that of relocation to other European countries, has been extremely slow though gathering pace towards the end of 2016[9].

More detailed data about the flows, including the identification of the vulnerable, remained quite rudimentary (Mouzourakis and Papadouli 2016) in the context of large-scale and rapid transit movements which only came to an end in early March 2016[10]. During the period of mass transit along the Western Balkans route, interviewing women, often in groups headed by men, and eager not to be separated from their kin group, proved difficult (UNHRC et al. 2016). However the investigation undertaken by international NGOs at the end of 2015 found that women and girls faced specific risks during transit, such as family separation, health complications, especially for pregnant women, physical harm and injury and gender-based violence from smugglers and from others along the route. The report argued that women were often taking care of children and the elderly and therefore required additional protection and support. An analysis of reception systems revealed the uneven and inadequate provision in many reception camps of women-only spaces, such as wash rooms, and targeted services (UNHCR review of reception sites)[11]. So too have women required reproductive health services. Furthermore, there was a need for more systematic attention to be given to gender-based violence and strengthening of protection for vulnerable groups. Although the Accommodation for Relocation Scheme under the auspices of the UNHCR (2016c) has housed vulnerable asylum seekers not eligible for relocation outside of camps in hotels, apartments, host families and a special site, the slow relocation process has meant the system cannot release as many new places as are required. The next section explores the concept of vulnerability and the ways in which it has been applied legally and in practice to asylum seekers in transit and on their journey through Europe and, as we shall see, prioritises women with implications for differential gendered mobilities.

Gendered Vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability has emerged in the past two decades in political, social and legal theory (Fineman 2008, Neal 2012, Turner 2006). Martha Albertson Fineman starts from a critique of the liberal notion of the autonomous individual which should be replaced by the vulnerable subject “describing a universal, inevitable and enduring aspect of the human condition that must be at the heart of our concept of social and state responsibility’ (2008: 8). She argues that the condition of vulnerability should be understood as stemming from our embodiment which carries the possibility of harm, injury and misfortune in the past, present and future, and which may render us more dependent over the life course. Thus vulnerability applies to everyone, and not simply to designated groups, as applied through the notion of vulnerability in European Human Court of Human Rights case law (Al Tamimi 2015, Peroni and Timmer 2013), which for Fineman represents a paternalistic approach.

While groups experience vulnerability differently, the Court has tended to focus on the historical and institutional circumstances creating vulnerability and the harm, prejudice and stigmatization affecting specific groups. The case of M.S.S. v Belgium and Greece (ECtHR [GC] 21 January 2011, no. 30696/09 (*M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*)[12] broadened the concept of group vulnerability to asylum seekers, considered to be a particularly underprivileged and vulnerable population group in need of special protection. The Afghan asylum seeker in question was deemed particularly vulnerable due to his total dependence on State support and thus being unable to cater for his most basic needs; the systematic deficiencies of the Greek asylum system, such as a lack of reception centres, inability to access the labour market and lengthy procedures in having asylum requests examined; and the trauma they had been through during the process of migration. All these elements could be said to contribute to 'the institutional production of vulnerability of asylum seekers in Greece' (Peroni and Timmer 2013: 1069).

Effectively, it has not been asylum seekers and refugees in general who are treated as vulnerable persons; only certain sub-categories are singled out for eligiblility for special protection. In the *Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection,* and regulating access to housing, food, health, medical and psychological care and employment while claims are examined, vulnerable persons are listed as minors, unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, single parents of minors, and victims of torture, rape or other forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence. Subsequently vulnerable status was extended to victims of human trafficking and FGM. Member states are required to identify those who fall into a vulnerable category so as to respond to their needs (Shreeves 2016). Vulnerable groups are similarly defined in the Greek legal framework, but which has also specified persons suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as shipwreck survivors or relatives of victims, and victims of trafficking. Yet despite the designation of vulnerable persons, numerous reports have highlighted the failure to identify vulnerable groups and enable them to register, ensure safety for them en route and provide appropriate facilities (Mouzourakis and Papadouli 2016, UNHCR et al. 2015, Women's Refugee Commission 2016a). This failure may of course occur due to lack of resources and trained personnel.

The pre-registration exercise in Greece[13] provided a picture of the composition of the vulnerable population (see table 3). The majority of adults were women due to the large numbers of those who were pregnant, had recently given birth or were single parents with children.

INSERT Table 3

Among the vulnerable categories listed, there seems to be a tendency to privilege protection based on past harm, such as disability, torture, exploitation, or those who are more dependent on others (see the previous discussion of the meaning of vulnerability), such as single parents with young children, or those who require additional support, for example, pregnant women, the elderly or the disabled. These categories are the most visible and easily identifiable. Because of the failure to identify those designated as vulnerable early on, it is likely that individuals with less visible markers such as victims of torture or with mental health problems do not receive priority processing or access to services that they require. On the other hand, single women travelling alone[14], identified in a number of reports as encountering dangerous and threatening situations and gender-based violence (Women's Refugee Commission 2016a), are not included under a listing approach enumerating those who are vulnerable and/or display characteristics, such as age and mental abilities, which render them vulnerable (Timmer 2014). Indeed the Protection Working Group (26 July 2016) noted that in the preliminary results of the Participatory Assessment, women had raised issues of sexual harassment, especially verbal and psychological, and recommended that the authorities work with boys and men in order to prevent this. So while women's organisations highlight the vulnerability of single women travelling on their own, in EU directives and national laws they are not treated as vulnerable subjects though they often find themselves in vulnerable circumstances, which calls for treating vulnerability as a 'layered concept' (Luna 2009). Single women thus do not correspond to the notion of dependency or in need of additional support applied to the other sub-categories of asylum seekers defined as vulnerable. Their vulnerability would appear to stem from their situation in a society in which they are likely to be subjected to sexual and gender based violence as women who are outside the norm of familial protection.

The vulnerabilities of boys, except for unaccompanied minors under 18 years, and men are also not taken into account. The UNHCR et al. (2015:5) report comments that although their remit was to assess protection risks faced by women and girls, they had also noted risks for boys and men arising from the fear of forced conscription into armies and armed groups which is particularly common for young men from Iraq, Syria and some African countries. Young men may have also experienced quite traumatic journeys (physical violence, detention, imprisonment, kidnapping, forced labour) which are not elicited through more probing interviews. Furthermore, Mouzourakis and Papadouli (2016:52) point out that vulnerability criteria do not cover the group of young men 18-24 years who are specifically protected under the UN definition of 'youth'.

So what difference do criteria of vulnerability make to the support given to designated vulnerable groups in Greece and to their attempts to move to less insecure places, either in Greece or through relocation or reunification to another European country. In terms of services it may involve greater protection through secure spaces and better accommodation, and access to reproductive health services, child friendly spaces, psychological counselling and legal advice. Although many single parents have been taken out of camps and placed in decent accommodation, for other categories still in camps, the quality of services varies hugely between camps (Action Aid et al. 2016). In relation to spatial relocation it may involve priority being given to moving designated vulnerable persons away from very poor and insecure places, such as transferring them from the overcrowded islands to the Greek mainland or facilitating their relocation to be with their families in other EU countries. However the restriction of the relocation scheme largely to Syrians and Eritreans (the latter insignificant in Greece) takes precedence over vulnerability, creating inequalities of treatment resulting from the application of EU procedures to different nationalities[15]. In addition Syrians are now fast tracked in the asylum system unlike others whose applications may take up to 6 months. Being classified as vulnerable is therefore particularly significant for those nationalities, such as Afghans and Iraqis, who are not eligible for relocation, but among whom some of the vulnerable have also been included in the Accommodation for Relocation project in Greece.

In terms of relocation itself, classification as a vulnerable person in the *Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection* states (Articles 21, 22) should also give priority. In relation to the specific country, considerations of family, cultural and social ties as well as language skills should be taken into account as well as the ability of the state to provide adequate support to the particularly vulnerable.

Conclusion

As the article has argued, we need to produce more socially disaggregated data by age, gender, nationality and marital status of adults and children as the basis of a better understanding of the dynamic and experiences of journeys to Europe as well as the development of very different sub-systems. The often negative image of young male refugees on the move along the Balkan corridor in the summer of 2015 slowly gave way to a more familial profile as women and children became the majority in Greece by December 2016. And although the flows reverted to a more masculine balance as a result of the EU-Turkey deal at the end of March 2016, the stock of refugees remained dominated by women and children, especially of those eligible for relocation or intending to apply for asylum in Greece.

In Greece in particular, female mobility has been more closely associated with the family, often travelling with them and taking care of family members, especially children. As the number of women has increased, so has the number of accompanied children. A significant number have become pregnant and given birth en route. Both these categories have required additional services for themselves and their children We know little about the relationship of single, divorced and widowed women and their families in the process of mobility. The Italian context, as we have shown, is quite different in its gender composition and the lesser role played by family reunification. The smaller proportion of women are largely single or travelling without their children.

And as we have noted, vulnerability constitutes a significant criteria in prioritising individuals and families among those who qualify for accommodation outside of camps and other services as well as relocation elsewhere in Europe. Yet the reliance on a listing approach in order to facilitate the operation of the asylum system neglects those whose vulnerability derive primarily from their placement in insecure situations, such as single women, who are often targets of sexual violence and trafficking, but who are not classified as deserving of prioritisation. There is also a tendency to treat women as victims and inevitably in need of special assistance. A more rounded approach towards vulnerability, which considers the overall characteristics of both women and men and the context of their mobility, is however needed. Furthermore, the arbitrary categorisation of nationalities for purposes of relocation, especially in Greece, undermines the role that vulnerability is intended to serve in EU reception directives. This is reinforced by the fast tracking procedure for asylum processing of nationalities selected for relocation. Hence gendered mobility is increasingly played out through categorisations of vulnerability in conjunction with nationality with the effect of dividing populations and creating hierarchies between them.

Though defined as being particularly vulnerable, the relatively large numbers of unaccompanied minors in Italy have not been relocated to other European states, possibly because of their status as young males soon to transition to adulthood. They unlike women and their accompanying children do not exude a feeling of reassuring and unthreatening vulnerability. In addition, children are treated as sexually neutral for purposes of data collection but we have to explore more fully how their mobilities too are shaped by gendered norms and representations and age. This might help to explain the slowness of the relocation of the large numbers of teenage boys on the cusp of adulthood who are depicted more as potential threats rather than vulnerable children.

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[1] The data is largely based on the first wave of the survey of 153 respondents in Greece and 202 in Italy conducted from March to July 2016. In Greece the survey took place in sites in and around Athens and Thessaloniki after the EU-Turkey statement came into effect on 20 March 2016. In Italy the survey took place in various sites across Sicily which received the largest number of those crossing the Mediterranean to Italy. We sought to create a survey sample that reflected the gender balance of the flows to the particular country. The questions covered socio-demographic and economic characteristics, whom they were travelling with and whom they had left behind, whether they had applied for asylum, been granted refugee status and whether they planned to do so in country (Greece or Italy) or elsewhere in the EU; their choice of destination and where they hoped to be in one year's time; the cost of their journey and experiences on it; and reception facilities. The survey was complemented by interviews conducted towards the end of 2016 in mainland Greece and Sicily which explored in greater detail the reasons for their departure, and their experiences of the asylum system, reception and, for a few Syrians in Greece, relocation.

[2] Following the Paris attacks in November 2015 and the suggestion that some of the men (Belgian and French nationals) had returned to Europe in refugee flows as well as security fears, the Canadian government decided to exclude single men, except gay men, from its Syrian resettlement programme from neighbouring countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey) and limit it to women, children and families (Kingsley 2015).

[3] The incident on the Thalys train from Amsterdam to Paris in August 2015, the Paris events in November and Brussels in March 2016 all involved men who had used refugee routes to cross borders which they had not been able to do by flying directly

[4] Children include both accompanied and unaccompanied, the latter being defined as those who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

[5] The proportion of women varied by nationality with Syrians, Iraqi and Afghan populations registering a substantial minority of women compared to Bangladeshi and Pakistani populations.

[6] Based on a sample of 108 persons derived from a larger IOM Needs, Population and Migration Mobility Dynamic Monitoring survey of those who left Syria between 2012 and 2015, 97% of whom were men, about half left alone and the other half either with family members or with friends.

[7] Among the interviews conducted for the EVI-MED project in Greece from October to December 2016, several couples had decided in Turkey that the man would go ahead, but the closure of borders as from March 2016 meant they were applying for family reunification to Germany and Sweden.

[8] The definition of the family for purposes of family reunification is restricted to existing spouses, dependent elderly parents and children under 18 years.

[9] The figure set for relocation from Greece and Italy has varied. It is currently set at 66,000 from Greece and 39,600 from Italy. The relocation scheme is applicable to persons entering Greece from 16 September 2015 to 19 March 2016, as the entry into force of commitments agreed in the EU-Turkey statement is *de facto* considered as a cut-off date for relocation. However after the end of the pre-registration period only 12,940 places have been promised

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and only 3226 individuals from Greece and 961 from Italy relocated by 24 August 2016 (IOM Compilation of available data and information reporting period 11 August -24 August). The pace of relocation has now accelerated with 8162 (6212 Greece and 1950 Italy) having been relocated by 6 December 2016.

[10] Only 1.5% of those moving through in 2015 applied for asylum in Greece (Mouzourakis and Papadouli 2016).

[11] Early in the year (2016) only a minority of sites on mainland Greece had a separate shower, toilet and breastfeeding facilities for women. By the end of 2016, despite the large sums of money made available, the proliferation of institutional actors and lack of clear control of funding and management of each camp has meant that about half of camps (about 50) do not have facilities for child protection or female friendly spaces (Kinglsey 2016).

[12] A minority view was expressed by Judge Sajó who argued against asylum seekers being treated as a homogeneous group who have historically been subject to prejudice, resulting in their social exclusion.

[13] Pre-registration gave asylum seekers cards valid for one year legal residence in Greece, access to services to be followed by an appointment to apply officially for either asylum or relocation.

[14] Indeed single women, subject in their country in their country of origin to substantial legal gender discrimination, were included in the initial version of the Directive (2003) under article 23 but it is thought this was too broad a category or very difficult to verify (correspondence with David Moya, Professor of Constitutional and Migration Law, Barcelona University).

[15] The stratification and division caused by the application of this rigid formula have been heavily criticised by NGOs (Action Aid et 2016; Oxfam 2016).

Tables **Table 1 Gender Breakdown by Month in Greece June 2015-February 2016**

	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Men	73	66	63	59	52	54	45	43	38
Women	11	13	14	16	18	17	20	21	22
Children	15	21	23	25	30	29	35	36	40

Source: Gender breakdown of arrivals to Greece and Italy, UNHCR

Table 2 Gender Breakdown by Month in Italy June 2015-February 2016

	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Men	76	75	72	68	71	76	74	73	73
Women	15	14	17	18	17	11	12	9	9
Child	9	11	11	14	12	13	14	12	18

Source: UNHCR Gender breakdown of arrivals to Greece and Italy,

Table 3 Vulnerabilities by type and gender in Greece

Vulnerability	Male	% of total	Female	% of total	Total no.
Unaccompanied minors	1009	29	209	6	1218
Single parents with minor children	104	3	627	18	731
Pregnant women/recently given birth	0	-	522	15	522
Incurable or serious diseases	174	5	174	5	348
Disability	209		104	3	213
Elderly	104	3	139	4	243
Post traumatic disorder	39	1	39	1	78
Torture	39	1	10	0.3	49
Rape or serious exploitation	10	0.3	17	0.5	27
Total	1688		1841		3481

Source: Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Interior and UNHCR pre-registration data analysis 9 June -30 July 2016