

**Gender,
Identity
and Belonging:**

How Syrian refugee women negotiate
their everyday life in the city of Milan

By

Sara ElTokhy

Supervisor

Massimo Bricocoli

Tutor

Martina Bovo

StudentID

865579

AcademicYear

2018-2019



Contents

Abstract	4
Chapter 1. Introduction	7
1.1 <i>Research objectives and questions</i>	8
1.2 <i>Overview of thesis structure</i>	9
Chapter 2. Research methodology	11
2.1 <i>Qualitative research method</i>	11
2.2 <i>Data collection methods</i>	11
2.2.1 <i>Literature review</i>	11
2.2.2 <i>In-depth interviews</i>	12
2.2.3 <i>Cognitive maps</i>	12
2.3 <i>Participant recruitment and profiling</i>	13
The participants	14
2.4 <i>Data organization and analysis</i>	15
2.5 <i>Ethical challenges, positionality, and limitations</i>	15
Chapter 3. Theoretical framework	18
3.1 <i>Formations of belonging</i>	19
3.1.1 <i>Place-belongingness: Belonging as a personal feeling</i>	20
3.1.2 <i>Politics of belonging: Belonging as a collective practice</i>	23
3.2 <i>Identity and belonging: ‘Who am I’ versus ‘Where do I belong’</i>	25
Intersectionality and the study of belonging	27
3.3 <i>Everyday practices of belonging</i>	28
3.3.1 <i>The right to the city</i>	29
3.4 <i>The right to belong</i>	31
Chapter 4. Contextualizing Syrian refugees in Italy	33
4.1 <i>The Syrian refugee “crisis”</i>	33
4.2 <i>Syrians in Italy: From a transit to a host country</i>	34
4.2.1 <i>Transiting in Italy</i>	36
4.2.2 <i>Refugee resettlement schemes: Different pathways</i>	39
Chapter 5. Rethinking belonging through everyday practices	43
5.1 <i>Stability: Planning the future in a safe manner</i>	43
<i>Changed gender roles: Blessing or burden?</i>	44
5.2 <i>Stories of (non)belonging</i>	48
<i>City center as a mixed space</i>	54

5.3 Relationships at the microlevel of the neighborhood	55
5.3.1 To each their own	56
5.3.2 Motherhood social networks	57
5.3.3 Weak ties and access to language capital	58
Chapter 6. Cognitive maps.....	62
6.1 Salwa: Belonging to childhood.....	63
6.2 Kinda: Longing for home.....	65
6.3 Amal & Eman: Isolated at home	68
6.4 Mona: Life on the road.....	72
6.5 Lamia: Living in social vacuum.....	72
Chapter 7. Conclusion.....	78
List of interviews.....	81
Bibliography.....	82
Appendix I Personal account	94
Appendix II Cognitive maps with English translation.....	100

List of Figures

Figure 1 Thesis structure-----	9
Figure 2 Participant characteristics-----	14
Figure 3 Sense of belonging framework for analysis -----	18
Figure 4 Syrian population displacement -----	33
Figure 5 Distribution of Syrian refugees in Europe and MENA region-----	35
Figure 6 Syrian asylum seekers and refugee distribution in Italy-----	37
Figure 7 Salwa's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria -----	64
Figure 8 Salwa's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan -----	64
Figure 9 Kinda's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria -----	66
Figure 10 Kinda's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan -----	66
Figure 11 Amal's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria -----	69
Figure 12 Amal's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan-----	69
Figure 13 Eman's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria-----	71
Figure 14 Eman's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan-----	71
Figure 15 Mona's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria -----	73
Figure 16 Mona's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan-----	73
Figure 17 Lamia's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria -----	75
Figure 18 Lamia's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan-----	75

Abstract

For more than eight years, the ongoing armed conflict in Syria has led to the displacement of more than half of the Syrian population. Although most Syrians have fled to neighboring countries, many are seeking asylum in Europe as well. The gendered experiences of women, who comprise the majority of Syrian refugees, makes their needs qualitatively different from those of men.

Within this picture, the research takes on a qualitative, exploratory approach relying on in-depth interviews and cognitive mapping to investigate the settlement experience of eight Syrian refugee women who have been living in Milan for the past two to five years. The concept of belonging is used as an analytical tool to explore ways in which feelings of being 'at home' can be facilitated or limited through daily practices of everyday life in their new environment.

Throughout the analysis process, the multidimensional character of belonging was demonstrated in the way it intersects and overlaps with different aspects of the participants' lives. The research concludes that the participants face significant challenges in adaptation and developing their sense of belonging to new and unfamiliar environments. The research also suggests that the spatial practices of the participants and their ways of using the city are directly influenced by their gender identity. However, it also demonstrates the presence of clear potential pathways that may form a foundation onto which this sense of belonging could be developed such as the increased interaction with the host community, having secured sources of income and housing and learning the host country's language.

Finally, it is argued that for the refugees to fulfill their right to belong in their new environments, they need to be capable of expressing their own identity and at the same time, feel accepted by the host community. Without this acceptance, refugees will continue to feel as outsiders in their city of residence.

Keywords

Belonging – Politics of belonging – Forced migration – Syrian refugees – Refugee women – Gender – Identity – Everyday practices – Exclusion – Milan – Cognitive mapping

Abstract *(in Italian)*

Da più di otto anni, l'attuale conflitto armato in Siria ha costretto più della metà della popolazione siriana a migrare. Anche se gran parte dei Siriani si è stabilita nei Paesi limitrofi, molti stanno cercando asilo in Europa. Le donne, che rappresentano la maggioranza dei rifugiati siriani, hanno un'esperienza diversa da quella degli uomini e per questo esprimono bisogni qualitativamente differenti.

In questo contesto, la tesi assume un approccio qualitativo ed esplorativo fondato su interviste in profondità e l'uso di mappe cognitive per indagare l'esperienza di insediamento di otto rifugiate siriane che vivono a Milano da due o cinque anni. Il concetto di appartenenza è stato adoperato come strumento analitico per esplorare il modo in cui il sentimento di "sentirsi a casa" possa essere stimolato o limitato attraverso pratiche di vita quotidiana nella nuova città.

Durante il processo di analisi, il carattere multidimensionale di appartenenza è stato dimostrato nel modo in cui questo incontra e si sovrappone con diversi aspetti delle vite degli intervistati. La ricerca conclude che le donne siriane intervistate affrontano sfide significative nell'adattarsi e sviluppare un senso di appartenenza a un nuovo e non familiare ambiente. La ricerca mostra anche come le pratiche spaziali e il modo di fruire la città siano influenzati direttamente dalla loro identità di genere. Tuttavia, viene evidenziata la presenza di potenziali percorsi che possono costituire una base su cui sviluppare un senso di appartenenza. Tali percorsi richiedono frequenti interazioni con la comunità ospitante, una fonte sicura di reddito, un alloggio e l'apprendimento della lingua del Paese ospitante.

Infine, si sostiene come per soddisfare il loro diritto di appartenenza, i rifugiati abbiano bisogno di esprimere la propria identità e, allo stesso tempo, sentirsi accettati dalla comunità ospitante. Senza quest'ultimo elemento, i rifugiati continueranno a sentirsi emarginati nella città in cui risiedono.

Parole chiavi

Appartenenza – Politica di appartenenza – Migrazione forzata – Rifugiati siriani – Donne rifugiate – Genere – Identità – Pratiche quotidiane – Esclusione – Milano – Mappatura cognitiva

Chapter 1 | Introduction

Chapter 1. Introduction

Throughout human history, people migration from one place to another has been commonplace. However, in recent years, the world has witnessed several changes in these movements: there is an increase in the international migration numbers, and it is expected to continue rising in the next years. Another change that characterizes the current migration phenomena is that not all of these movements occur under positive or voluntary circumstances. While many migrate voluntarily for reasons like work, study and family reason, another relatively small percentage of all migrants are forced to migrate either internally or internationally for other compelling reasons putting them directly in vulnerable situations.

The level of forcibly displaced population has shown a significant increase in recent years. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2018, 70.8 million persons were forcibly displaced due to reasons such as persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations (UNHCR, 2019a). These massive displacements pose enormous challenges for the host countries both economically and socially, in addition to preserving human rights and security for those displaced persons.

One of the main drivers of this substantial increase in recent years, particularly marked between 2012 and 2015, is the Syrian refugee conflict (IOM, 2018). As of 2011, the Syrian conflict alone has forced 13 million people to leave their homes (UNHCR, 2019a).

Italy, on the other hand, has been a remarkable destination to those displaced and seeking asylum from different countries of origin because of its location as a frontline. According to UNHCR, an estimated 648,117 have reached the Italian coast between 2014 and July 2019 (UNHCR, 2019). Around 460,000 of these have applied for international protection and found their refuge in many Italian regions and cities.

This phenomenon is also marked by a change in the demographic composition of asylum seekers; the number of women and children among the overall population has been increasing. In 2016, 32 percent of the asylum seekers in the European Union were female—up from 27.7 percent the previous year. Meanwhile in Italy, the percentage has gone up from 11.5 to 15 percent within that same time frame; amounting to nearly a 30% increase in one year (Eurostat, 2019).

Amongst the many challenges faced as a result of hyper-inflated refugee-ism are those that concern the urban environment, and the difficulty of adjustment faced by displaced persons between their home and host environments. As many studies contend, the difficulty faced by refugees in adjusting to their unfamiliar surroundings in receiving countries may be emblematic of a larger socio-political context in which displacement might be associated with feelings of uncertainty, disconnection, alienation and invisibility (Kristjánisdóttir & Skaptadóttir, 2018). “[The refugees’] lack of knowledge of the environment, cultural practices, and language can easily lead to difficulties in integration, to misunderstandings and isolation, and often entails a vulnerable position” (ibid., p. 389).

In a context of increasing numbers of refugees and migrants in Italy, it is necessary to underline the significance of examining the different dimensions of refugees’ settlement in the country amid profound change and complete disarray. At the same time, although all refugees have significant needs in resettlement, several studies have also shown that women experience migration differently from men; in

other words, the gendered experience of women makes their needs qualitatively different from those of men and must therefore be addressed distinctly from them (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009; Nasser-Eddin, 2017).

Against this reality of increasingly diverse forced migration, the concept of belonging becomes of particular importance in current debates about refugee settlement in the host countries. Belonging is considered as a central concept in people's lives; it is associated with being able to 'feel at home' in a specific place and is considered as a precondition to quality of life (Anthias, 2006). Naturally, the notion of belonging becomes particularly complex for refugees, as displacement results not only in the loss of a sense of home, but also produces a transformation in the sense of belonging and identity. The reality of refugees has put their belonging into question both in their home and host countries (Mehta & Napier-Moore, 2010). As pointed out by many scholars, the absence of these feelings of belonging and attachment tend to adversely increase the refugees' feelings of being displaced and 'out of place' (Anthias, 2006; Antonsich, 2010).

While cities offer refugee women better chances of resettlement, access to the labor market and services and on top of that sometimes a newfound sense of autonomy and normalcy, they can still encounter problems and barriers to adaptation. Refugee women's "needs are multiple, complex, and intertwined with their sociodemographic characteristics" (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009). To explore these needs and challenges, this research adopts a 'bottom-up' perspective by putting the refugees' stories and narratives of urban experiences at its center.

Ultimately, discussing refugees' rights in the national framework is a key step to examining their situation in a given country. However, the main focus of the research is not to conduct an institutional analysis nor to attempt to draw out to the shortcomings of the reception system in Italy. Instead, it aims to deal with these shortcomings as a given and try to investigate how the refugee women manage to gain their independence around this reality.

1.1 Research objectives and questions

This research is particularly focused on studying the case of Syrian female refugees who have been living in the city of Milan for a period, ranging between two and five years.

Adopting a qualitative approach, the research explores the settlement experiences of eight Syrian refugee women through the lens of everyday practices, to identify whether they could develop a sense of belonging to their new environment, while investigating the opportunities and challenges in realizing this feeling of attachment towards new and unfamiliar settings.

In essence, the research aims to tackle the following research question:

How do Syrian refugee women negotiate their sense of belonging in the city of Milan?

In order to fully expand on the research objectives, the following secondary questions were also composed:

- How do the daily practices of Syrian refugee women change in the city of refuge? And how such practices influence their sense of belonging?
- What role(s) does gender play in their experience as refugees?

- How do Syrian refugee women engage in different kinds of social networks?

Throughout the following research, these themes will act as a guide to the primary research task and will aid in developing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic in a wider context.

1.2 Overview of thesis structure

The research is articulated in four main sections, as shown in the following diagram (Figure 1).

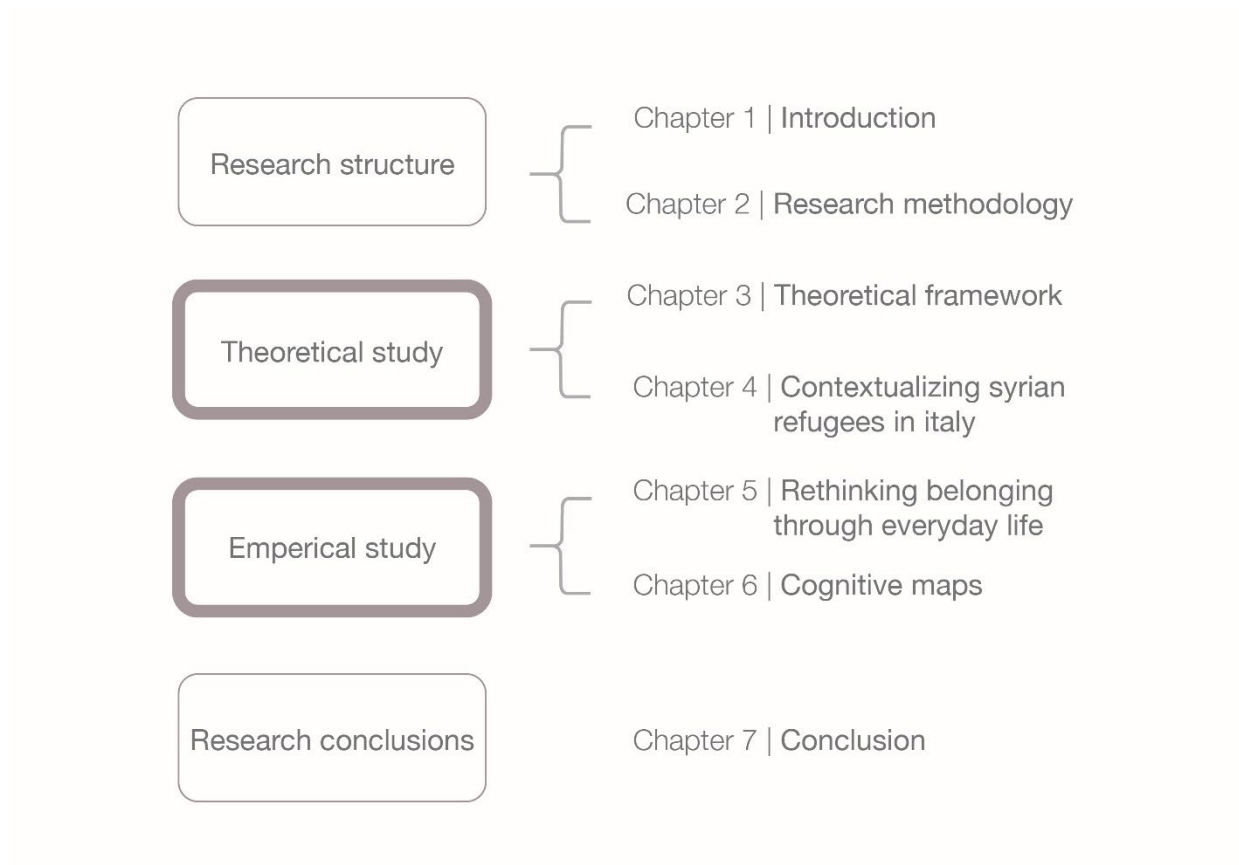


Figure 1 Thesis structure

Chapter 2 | **Research methodology**

Chapter 2. Research methodology

This chapter attempts to outline the research methods used in this research to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee women in their new daily environment. It starts in Section 4.1 with highlighting the significance of using qualitative research methods in migration research. Section 4.2 rationalizes the method used for collecting data throughout the research process. This is followed by an explanation of the participant recruitment and profiling methods. Section 4.4 considers the method of data analysis; and finally, Section 4.5 reflects on the ethical challenges that are faced while researching private lives and elaborates on the social position of the researcher and the research limitations.

2.1 Qualitative research method

The research is primarily based on a qualitative, exploratory approach. The choice of this research method was determined by the research aim to extract the rich subjective experiences and perspectives of the participants about their daily practices as new arrivals in the city of Milan. It also recognizes the context in which these experiences are created. Subjective experience of migrants and how these experiences are shaped by gender, race, class and ethnicity became of particular interest in migration research in recent years (Gilmartin, 2008). A qualitative research approach allows us to explore people's experiences from inside through their local practices in order to understand relations of meaning, rather than from the outside through objectifying methods (Brinkmann, 2012).

Moreover, feminist theories propose that qualitative, more detailed and small-scale research methods utilized in the social sciences are the most fitting for women studying women as they develop higher intersubjectivity with the participants than is possible in other methodological frameworks, which characterizes the ideal relationship between a feminist researcher and the research participant (McDowell, 1992).

2.2 Data collection methods

The research involved different methods of collecting data. The use of different methods, as will be explained following, provides a broader variety of evidence and perspectives, which serve to enhance the credibility of the analysis.

2.2.1 Literature review

The secondary data were principally generated through reviewing academic literature on refugees and theories of belonging. As Flick (2009) notes, using the existing literature in qualitative research is intended for gaining insights and information as contextual knowledge, rather than to derive hypotheses as in quantitative research. This knowledge is used "to see statements and observations in your research in their context" (ibid. p. 49).

The literature review on belonging in Chapter Three outlines the framework for analyzing the data obtained from empirical research, primarily based on academic journals and books. On the other hand, to understand the context of Syrian refugees in Italy, the data in Chapter Four was collected from

governmental and non-governmental organization reports and articles. This theoretical research was conducted prior to and during the empirical research process.

2.2.2 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted between December 2018 and April 2019. Most of the interviews took place in public spaces chosen by the participant, mostly in cafés, and twice, I was invited to the participant's home to conduct the interview. This allowed the interview to be conducted in an informal setting that makes the participant feel more comfortable.

Each interview lasted around two or two and a half hours. I have met with each participant mainly once but in some cases, the interview was divided into two sessions to accommodate the participants' schedules. All participants were interviewed separately except for two participants—a mother and a daughter—who were interviewed together as it was more suitable for them.

The initial intention for the method of the interviews was to be based on a semi-structured, in-depth method of interviewing where a framework of themes is defined in advance by the researcher to direct the interviews while at the same time, allowing the participants to give a detailed description of their experiences, behaviors, and feelings. The selection of this method was effective in gaining a deeper understanding of the process through which the participant developed a sense of belonging as well as the challenges and opportunities they had faced.

However, sometimes during the interviews, especially in the beginning of an interview, a life-narrative method proved more fitting in order to leave it open for the participants to tell the story in their own way and from their own perspective. Furthermore, using this method at the start of the interview put the participants at ease, thus making the rest of the interview flow more smoothly.

The language used during the interview was Arabic, the mother tongue of both me and the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent at the beginning of each record and the recordings were later transcribed for analysis.

2.2.3 Cognitive maps

Following the interviews, each participant was asked to draw two cognitive maps of their daily environments, one in their city of origin in Syria and the other of their current life in Milan. This was followed by a discussion between me and the participant about the meanings attached to the drawings for each map. In using cognitive mapping we pass from the implicit mental representation to the explicit graphic formation through which the form and meaning of the city are communicated to others (Pezzoni, 2013).

Cognitive mapping helps to reflect people's environmental perception, social life, feelings, needs, and place attachment in ways that go beyond the effectiveness of interviews, surveys, in-field observations and other planning methods (Fenster, 2009). This method also gives a deeper understanding of the subjective perspective of each participant and the way they map the environment in relation to many factors as the gender, ethnicity, age, economic and social status, length of staying in the area and travel mode (Madanipour, 1996).

Comparing the two maps of the past and the present environments helps retrace the differences in the participants' spatial practices and activities post-displacement, as well as the spaces of belonging/non-belonging in which they perform their everyday life practices as will be explained in detail in Chapter Six.

It must be noted that not all participants agreed to draw the cognitive maps; only six of the participants drew both cognitive maps while two participants did not participate.

2.3 Participant recruitment and profiling¹

Since the aim of the research is to conduct a thorough analysis of the complexity of the individual experience rather than generating representative results, a statistical representative sample was not required. Alternatively, the small number of participants enabled a more in-depth exploration of the issues (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010).

The choice was made to make Syrian women who had arrived in Milan after the Syrian conflict had started the focus of this study, which also marks the beginning of the arrival of Syrians to Europe. Initially the idea was to select Syrian women who had already left the reception system of refugees in Italy. However, in time, and due to difficulties of access, this scope was broadened. This was due to several factors. First there is no Syrian community in Milan through which access to other members can be facilitated using the snowball sampling method. Secondly Syrian refugees are scattered across the city, and as it will be clarified in Chapter Four, the number of Syrian women in Milan and in Italy in general is limited. For these reasons, the research had to be refocused on the refugee women who have been living in Milan regardless of their status with respect to the reception system. This expansion also meant that the sample did not have to be restricted to specific characteristics such as a specific age group, marital status, religion, etc.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling combined with the snowballing technique, when possible. The process began by approaching informal networks that can provide contact to Syrian refugees, such as mosques and Syrian cafés. I was able to reach the first two participants through staff at two different cafés. The snowballing technique was used to reach the third participant who herself, introduced me to her Italian language teacher.

It is the meeting with the teacher, who volunteers to teach Italian in a language school, that was the most helpful; she was the main gatekeeper. Through her, I was introduced to the rest of the Syrian group that was attending her class at the time of research or had attended before. They later became participants in the research. Another important gatekeeper was the Syrian Imam² of one of the mosques in Milan. Although he did not directly connect me to a participant, he put me in touch with a Syrian interpreter in the community who did.

¹ More detail on how participants were selected, and the general process of the fieldwork process is clarified in Appendix I.

² The Imam is the person who leads prayers in a mosque and in some cases may act as a community leader.

The participants

Eight Syrian women, aged between twenty-two and forty-seven, were interviewed. The majority of them falling into ‘middle-class’ category back in Syria.

All but one had obtained the refugee status, which means they had a residence permit that allowed them to stay in Italy for five years. The remaining participant had come to Italy after her husband was granted political asylum and applied for family reunification.

All of the participants had been living in Milan for a period, ranging between two years and five years.

The table below gives an overview of the key characteristics of the participants in this research.

	Name	Age range	Occupation (Syria/Italy)	Date of arrival	Marital status	Family composition in Italy
1	Farah	30	employed/ unemployed	mid-2015	single	none
2	Rawan	22	student/ student	mid-2016	married	a husband
3	Salwa	39	employed/ Housewife	mid-2017	married	a husband and a child
4	Kinda	31	housewife/ housewife	end of 2016	married	a husband and two children
5	Mona	29	student/ unemployed	end of 2016	single	her mother and two brothers
6	Amal	47	housewife/ housewife	end of 2016	married	three children
7	Eman	29	employed/ employed	mid-2017	married	a husband
8	Lamia	30	housewife/ unemployed	end of 2014	married	a husband and two children

Figure 2 Participant characteristics

2.4 Data organization and analysis

The analysis presented in this research is based on transcriptions from the interviews. All the interviews, including the discussion over the cognitive maps, were transcribed following each interview. Although this process was time-consuming especially factoring in the translation effort of all the interviews from Arabic to English, this long process formed the initial stage of the data analysis as it enabled a first-level overview and acquaintance with the data and the themes presented in the transcripts.

After the initial stage of familiarization, three main steps were followed during the analysis. The first step involved a close reading of narratives by looking at the text of each participant and engaging with its content holistically following the holistic-content mode of reading in order to gain a complete understanding of the experience of each separate individual in full (Fenster, 2004).

Following, a categorical-content approach was used to “identify important themes or categories within a body of content, and to provide a rich description of the social reality created by those themes/categories as they are lived out in a particular setting” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 11). Therefore, the second step involved defining the different themes expressed by the participants in each transcribed interview. After that, the thematic similarities between the interviews were defined, looking into how these multiple themes interconnect.

At last, using the broad factors that influence the process of developing a sense of belonging already defined in the theoretical framework, the categories with highest significant were defined as tools to understand the overall research topic and explore more deeply than others.

2.5 Ethical challenges, positionality, and limitations

In qualitative research, ethical problems arise particularly because of the complexity of “researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena” (Miller, Birch, Mauthner, & Jessop, 2002, p. 1).

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were informed about the background, aims and scope of the research. Additional consent was requested to carry out audio recordings, which some of the participants were wary of for several reasons. Some pointed out they did not want this to cause problems with the resettlement organization responsible for them, while others were afraid of the inappropriate use of the records. All these concerns were mitigated by assuring the concerned participants full confidentiality and that their records will be used for academic purposes only.

It was also made clear to the participants that they are not obliged to talk about any topic if they do not want to. Although we were discussing difficult personal experiences and sensitive issues, I did not encounter any situation during all the interviews where a participant was uncomfortable talking about a specific point. On the contrary, they were all eager to tell their stories. To guarantee confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all the participants in this research.

To that effect, I declare that as a researcher, I am myself an Arab, Muslim, veiled woman who has been residing in a European country for a couple of years. These facts are stated as a way to recognize my own position in relation to the participants'; a position that could block or facilitate certain research insights during the fieldwork (England, 1994).

The social position of the researcher affects the results of the fieldwork in several ways. First, the characteristics of the interviewer, such as gender, age, background, and so on influence how the participant responds and by extension the shared data (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). Here, I argue that an atmosphere of trust was established based on the commonalities between me and the participants, and therefore positively affect their degree of openness. During the interviews, the participants repeatedly referred to these commonalities while trying to explain specific situations. This was especially true for issues related to cultural specificity or religion, where they did not feel the necessity to justify their point of view, as they took it for granted that it was understood.

Secondly, as I am fully aware that my interest in this topic was stimulated by my own daily experience and struggles, Kim England argues that we do not conduct the fieldwork on just the research participants but rather on the “betweenness” ground of both the research participants and the researcher. This ground is shaped by the researcher’s biography that works as a filter of the data, the perceptions and the interpretation of the fieldwork (England, 1994).

This conscious reflexive awareness allowed me to try to minimize the potential influence of my standing on the research process, from the way in which the questions were asked to how the research was written. Caroline Ramazanoglu suggests that “it is more logical to accept our subjectivity, our emotions and our socially grounded positions than to assume some of us can rise above them” (Ramazanoglu, 1992, p. 211).

Due to the cultural similarities, I had a basic knowledge of the Syrian traditions, customs and dialect before conducting the interviews. However, I discovered that although Syrian is a small country, there are striking differences between the customs and local dialects of its cities. At the same time, a special attention was paid to the sociopolitical situation from which they come as it was important not to generalize based on the assumption that they are a homogeneous group who came from the same country (Vargas, 1998). As it was revealed, the participants had different allegiances that causes tension among them.

A particular linguistic limitation of the interview process also needs to be acknowledged. Although conducting the interviews in Arabic allowed the participants to well articulate their experiences and to give rich details, during transcription, I was faced with the complexity of translating meaning between different contexts—to find the right word in English that gives the full meaning of words spoken by the participant in the native language. The translation was carefully carried out to preserve the original significance in Arabic but the possibility that some meanings were lost in translation evidently remains.

Chapter 3 | Theoretical framework

Chapter 3. Theoretical framework

This chapter attempts to build the contextual ground on which this research is positioned. In line with the aim of this research, the concept of belonging is used as an analytical tool to investigate the settlement experience of Syrian refugee women. Section 3.1 and 3.2 primarily focus on the context of migration. It starts with defining the concept of belonging as both an individual and collective issue, and it comprises different thoughts and understanding of the concept across multiple disciplines. This is followed by the analytical framework to outline the different dimensions that facilitate or limit the feeling of belonging while further elaborating on relevant theories and concepts such as identity and intersectionality. Section 3.3 explains the everyday dimension of belonging that people develop in their daily practices of using the city and looks at the notion of space as a contested site for practices of belonging where rights to the city could emerge or be challenged.

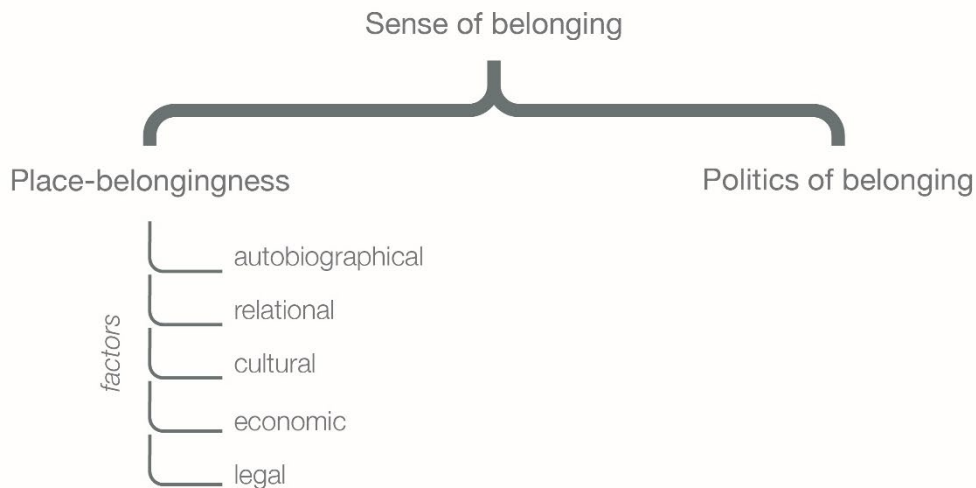


chart based on the work of Marco Antonsich (Antonsich, 2010).

Figure 3 Sense of belonging framework for analysis

3.1 Formations of belonging

The term 'belonging' has been defined, described, and interpreted in different ways by authors from multiple disciplines. It has become a dominant discourse in the policy debates around identity, citizenship, multiculturalism, migration, integration and social cohesion. These current debates have underlined the importance of scrutinize the notion of belonging as it is central in people's lives and both social and political practices (Hamaz & Vasta, 2009; Yuval-Davis, Anthias, & Kofman, 2005).

Migrants are a central reference in studies of belonging, as belonging tends to become an issue when it is undermined or missing in some way (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The reality of migrants produces a shifting in the landscape of belonging and identity due to their multiplex relationships to different locales; the retained ties to their homeland and the new ones that they form in the destination countries (Anthias, 2006).

In migration literature, the term belonging has been used to highlight the complexity of migration phenomena and migrant experiences, it is explored either as political struggles between minority and majority groups over issues related to identity, citizenship, multicultural education and political representation or in relation to the construction of borders and boundaries of the nation-state (Hamaz & Vasta, 2009). Recent research also considers situating belonging within power structures of society as it will be discussed in the following section on politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006).

So, what does it mean to belong? Although belonging is a widely used term in social and political literature, in most cases, it is treated as self-explanatory or left undefined. In a broad sense, belonging translates into a feeling as well as a set of practices, it can be linked to many different social and spatial terms (Gilmartin, 2017; Wright, 2015). The Oxford Dictionary defines belonging as a combination of three interconnected meanings: first, to be a member of (club, household, grade, society, etc.); second, to be resident in or connected with; and third, to be rightly placed or classified (in, under, etc.); to fit a specified environment. These definitions emphasize both the social and spatial dimensions of belonging: firstly, the social dimension related to the membership and attachment component to a particular social group that can vary in size and scale from family or local community to the nation. Secondly, they highlight the spatial dimension of belonging as attachment to a particular place and how this sense form towards different geographical scales vary from the home to the state. (Yuval-Davis, 2003; Gilmartin, 2017).

Belonging is a contested and multidimensional concept that is influenced by multiple factors; thus, it must be located on different analytical levels (Christensen, 2009; Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). People can feel a sense of belonging as individuals and as a shared collective feeling between a specific community. They can have a feeling of belonging to a community or a nation, and at the same time they can have a transnational sense of belonging (Vasta, 2013).

Using belonging as a theoretical and analytical tool is important to grasp the complexity of social affiliation and interaction, subjective experience as well as the meaning of place. This is especially important in the context of increased migration, multiculturalism and globalization where new inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity, and race emerge (Christensen, 2009; Lähdesmäki, et al., 2016). Moreover, it is very relevant to give special attention to the particular case of refugees and to the absence of a homeland to return to.

In doing so, this research draws on scholarly discussions on the concept of belonging, specifically on Antonsich's (2010) work. He offers a comprehensive cross-discipline review of literature on belonging, suggesting an analytical framework to the concept of belonging organized around two major analytical dimensions; first belonging as a 'personal, intimate, private sentiment of place attachment' (place-belongingness), and secondly as a 'discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion' (politics of belonging). His framework built on past contributions of literature to offer a more structured and detailed discussion of the concept. Following Yuval-Davis' (2006) differentiation between belonging which is about emotional attachment and feeling 'at home' from politics of belonging connected with the construction of belonging within power structures in the society. Antonsich (2010) argues that it is necessary to avoid the recurrent mistake in discussions of belonging by focusing on either one dimension since they mutually influence each other and contribute to the embodiment of belonging. Therefore, the analysis will encompass both the emotional and political facets of belonging.

3.1.1 Place-belongingness: Belonging as a personal feeling

Yuval Davis drawing from Elspeth Probyn's (1996) discussion on belonging, she highlighted "the affective dimension of belonging – not just that of be-ing but of longing, or yearning" (Yuval-Davis, 2003). This personal emotion of an individual towards a particular place generates what Antonsich terms place-belongingness. In other words, it is about feeling at home and safe in a place (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Home represents a symbolic place that offers security, familiarity and comfort beside being a place of lived experiences.

As a spatial concept, belonging is frequently linked to the notion of place as practices of belonging can exist in a variety of geographical settings. The idea of home may be localized to particular place(s) including house, neighborhood, urban spaces, city and country (Lähdesmäki, et al., 2016). This coincides with Mee and Wright's (2009) argument that belonging is an 'inherently geographical concept' that connects people to places through discourses of boundary making and inhabitation. While Stratford suggests that "notions of belonging are intimately interwoven with symbolic and material particularities and spatialities" (2009, p. 807). Place, therefore, is implicated in the formation of belonging in both its affective and political dimensions.

Within the place-belongingness theory, Antonsich identified five dimensions that are relevant in shaping such a personal sense of belonging: auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal.

Auto-biographical factors

Relate to the subjective experiences of an individual such as past experiences, relations and memories, they all contribute to person's attachment to a particular place. Fenster (2004) emphasizes the key role of memory as an expression of belonging and identity, she distinguishes between the short and the long-term memory; the former is based on the knowledge developed by the everyday use of the built environment. She argues that memory is both physical and identity-related as it engages bodily activities such as walking, driving, cycling and at the same time it is affected by personal identity. On the other hand, long-term memory is based on the past events from childhood experiences of spaces.

For refugees who come to live in a completely unknown area to which they do not have prior associated memory, the accumulation of lived experiences and activities over time and space is crucial to communicate their sense of belonging.

Relational factors

Refer to the social relations that give experiential content to people's lives in their environment, they involve both emotionally dense relationships such as family ties and network of friends, and weak ties with those whom Stanley Milgram called Familiar Stranger; individuals that are repeatedly observed in public urban spaces without direct interaction (Milgram, 1977).

Antonsich (2010) explains that although inter-personal relations are an existential need for people and they constitute the self, not all these relationships have the same value. According to the "belongingness hypothesis" presented by Baumeister and Leary, for the social relations to construct a sense of belonging they have to be conditioned by their stability and positive and significant effect, otherwise they would not be sufficient (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; as cited in Antonsich, 2010).

Regarding interpersonal relations, Fenster (2004) noticed in her research that in the case of presence of family and friends, belonging to people at home is more evident than belonging to the physical home. In the case of migration and the absence of family ties in the same place, friends become 'families of choice' and may replace the traditional family network in providing intimacy, sociality, and care (Bowlby, 2011).

While these relationships are a valuable resource in the everyday lives of individuals within receiving societies, they do not necessarily reinforce a local sense of belonging. In fact, it depends mostly on the persons with whom they establish these social ties. Studies distinguish between bonding social capital³, which is based on the social networks which is formed with the co-ethnic individual, and bridging social capital, which based on social networks that outside ethnic community (Putnam, 2000)

Michael Eve states, that "migration can be seen as a special case of the development of social networks" (2010, p. 1236). Many other scholars argue that it is important to examine the ways in which migrants engage in the discourse of establishing networks in the host society with diverse people, to understand how these interpersonal social networks provide access to different kinds of resources (Ryan, 2011).

Co-ethnic social networks have a significant role for refugees and other migrants' settlement and integration experience within the host country ranging from emotional support by providing a sense of community and security, to practical help by facilitating access to networks and opportunities such as job opportunities (Cederberg, 2012). At the same time, the homogenizing effect of these networks can be problematic socially (Anthias, 2007). As Pohjola (1991) noted, that they can lead to segregation of migrants from the host society, making it nearly impossible for them to feel part of the whole society (see also Walsh, 2014; Toruńczyk-Ruiz, 2008; Anthias, 2007). Conversely, the interaction with a diverse range of backgrounds and identities within one's network, especially natives, positively correlated with the possibility for a sense of belonging to the host country (Vroome, Coenders, Tubergen, & Verkuyten, 2011).

³ Social capital for Bourdieu refers to resources that become available for individuals through durable social networks (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Cultural factors

Cultural factors involve forms of cultural expressions such as language, traditions and habits that can evoke a feeling of familiarity and belonging to a society. While cultural connections can facilitate a sense of belonging among individuals with shared national identity and culture, it can perform as an obstacle towards belonging to a new societal context (Antonsich, 2010; Buonfino & Thomson, 2007).

For refugees who have their own cultural traditions which may be extremely different from the new society's own culture, adapting to the new culture is a challenge. Cederberg (2015) also noted that it takes time for migrants to get familiar with the cultural nuances and social customs of the receiving community.

Among cultural factors, Antonsich (2010) considered language as the most important one as it constitute the medium of everyday communication, or as Valentine, Sporton and Nielsen put it "you are what you speak, and what you speak is where you are" (2008, p. 385) it can also encourage a sense of community and intimacy with people who share the same language. Language at the same time can demarcate 'we' from 'them'.

Being able to speak the host country's language is a prerequisite for the refugee to engage in any kind of activity such as employment, education and social interaction in the host society. Lack of language skills can be a barrier that prevents refugees from engaging in bridging networks. As was mentioned before, it is essential to provide access to different resources and share knowledge about the new country's culture and rules and fully experience life in the new environment (Buonfino & Thomson, 2007; Ryan, 2016).

Refugees are involved in a process of constant negotiation between here and there, context and culture, their past and present (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). Becoming part of the host society is conditioned by a successful management of these different realities without having to forego their own cultural identity. Lichtenberg stressed on the refugees need to maintain their own culture, "our native culture provides us with a sense of being at home in the world ... we can recognize the superior virtues of other cultures, but still feel the attachment bred of familiarity our own culture affords" (Lichtenberg, 1999; as cited in Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002).

Economic factors

Antonsich (2010) highlights the importance of economic factors in establishing and maintaining a sense of belonging within a place, not only by creating safe and stable material conditions in their places of residence but also through their economic place in society, people feel they have a say in the future of the place.

Moreover, through active economic participation in the society, people can feel recognized and start to form a sense of achievement, self-esteem and belonging, which can lead ultimately to a positive feeling towards the host country (Hagendoorn, Veenman, & Vollebergh, 2003).

In a study which examined how economic participation in the Netherlands can stimulate identification with the host country among refugees and therefore contribute to their feelings of belonging, commitment and attachment, it was evident that employed refugees had higher odds of identifying themselves as Dutch. Furthermore, the increase in occupational level among refugees is positively and significantly associated with their self-identification as Dutch (Vroome et al., 2011).

Pre-immigration economic factors, such as education in the country of origin, can also dominate migrants' self-identification to their country of origin and the host country (Zimmermann, Gataullina, Constant, & Zimmermann, 2008). Another point is also that the skills and resources acquired in the countries of origin prior to migration such as education and labor market experience may not be transferred across countries, especially for refugees leading to an economically disadvantaged position of this group (Friedberg, 2000; Vroome & Tubergen, 2010).

Legal factors

To be entitled to legal rights such as to enter the state, remain there and to work or study there, to be basically able to plan a future in a safe manner, is what Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) calls "security spatial rights". These among other legal rights are essential to produce security which is significant for the feeling of belonging to be enacted, according to many scholars. Security in this sense is not limited to inter-ethnic violence, it is additionally about having access to the resources that enable individuals to manage the instability of their existing situation (Antonsich, 2010).

This legal status can be in the form of citizenship or resident permits, providing differentiated categories that entail different rights, ranging from indigenous citizens, naturalized citizens, residents on a working permit or refugees to non-citizens such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. These different statuses make the distinction between the insider and the outsider blurred as it will be discussed later in the politics of belonging (Buonfino & Thomson, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

The legal status also grants the right to participate in shaping the individual's own environment which helps to develop the sense of belonging. Studies showed the negative effect of the insecure legal status on the extent to which the sense of place-belongingness is developed (Antonsich, 2010).

Finally, Antonsich adds the length of residence as another factor that may influence the sense of place-belongingness among newcomers. A number of studies have shown that the length of residency in a particular place, has a positive correlation to belonging (Puddifoot, 2003; Markova & Black, 2007; Kitchen, Williams, & Gallina, 2015). Markova and Black (2007) for example, argue that migrants' sense of belonging, whether to their neighborhood or to the host country, increases over time due to the increase in resources and improved quality of life over time. While Krichauff (2017) does not view length of residence as a precondition to belonging, in her opinion it may influence the extent to which people feel employed.

3.1.2 Politics of belonging: Belonging as a collective practice

As discussed above, whilst migrants' personal sense of belonging to a place in which they settle remains significant in how they negotiate belonging; it is not just an individual affair and should not be isolated from structural expressions of inclusion and exclusion that locate people belonging or non-belonging to a specific collectivity (Antonsich, 2010). As Visser states, "the personal feeling 'I belong here' is unavoidably influenced by a complex set of power relations" (2017, pp. 1-2), Yuval-Davis (2006) refers to these personal-public relations as 'the politics of belonging'. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate both facets of belonging to understand the interplay between them in order to avoid misrepresenting belonging either as "an individualist matter, independent from the social context within which it is immersed [...] or as the exclusive product of social(izing) discourses and practices" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 653)

Politics of belonging involve boundary-creating practices as Favell (1999) describes it, 'the dirty work of boundary maintenance', these boundaries delineate the political community of belonging, separate symbolically between 'us' and 'them'; the two sides involved in the process of constant negotiation, the 'us' is the side who has the power of granting belonging and 'them' are those on the other side that claims belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006; 2011). Antonsich argues that as a spatial notion these boundaries of belonging can also be connected to a specific territory and not limited to the symbolic boundaries of social collectivities. In line with this, Wessendorf (2019) in her comparative study of migrants' in East London and Birmingham found out that structures of inclusion and exclusion can be different from one area to another, she agrees with Valentine's claim that belonging to a place depends on how this place is produced by the dominant groups' hegemonic culture whereby some individuals are included while others are excluded (Valentine, 2007; as cited in Wessendorf, 2019).

This idea of symbolic boundaries of social collectivities is closely related to the notion of 'imagined communities'; according to Benedict Anderson, nations are imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6).

Belonging or not belonging to imagined communities is often associated with the interplay between the feeling of sameness and difference perceived by those who possess the symbolic power of granting belonging. This is often a privilege of dominant group or as Hage calls them, the 'masters of national space' (1999). Therefore, part of the reason for considering a person 'inside' the imaginary boundary line of the community of belonging is based on the idea that "s/he shares a certain criteria of 'sameness' with other members of the collectivity. Conversely, part of the reason a person may be excluded from belonging to a group results from in-group members categorizing her/him as 'different'" (Ralph, 2012, p. 448).

Thus, for refugees to be entitled to belong they need to shed their differences and follow the dominant language, culture, values and religion of their host society (Ralph, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Yet as Antonsich (2010) noted, even if they are willing to follow the prevalent culture of the host society, there are other factors that may prevent full sameness such as ethnic origins or skin color consequently leading to exclusion from the community.

On one hand, these imagined communities may foster a sense of belonging and solidity while on the other hand, the strong assertion of belonging to the community can simultaneously trigger exclusion of the others (Christensen, 2009; Skrbiš, Baldassar, & Poynting, 2007).

Citizenship and the politics of belonging

As discussed before, while the legal status matters in the individuals' feeling of place belongingness, citizenship is also a key factor in the politics of belonging, as Antonsich (2010) noted it is usually treated as a synonym of political belonging. Marshall's (1950) definition of citizenship is that it is a "full membership in the community with all its rights and responsibilities", through which civil, political, and social rights are granted, it defines the relationship of individuals and groups with public life (Christensen, 2009). Therefore, establishing a sense of belonging around national identity is often seen as a necessity to evoke migrants' attachment to the host country (Anderson, 1983).

Buonfino and Thomson (2007) view formal citizenship as the end point of belonging by representing the most formal recognizer of belonging, it determines who is inside the community and who is outside, who belongs and who does not. This however may be problematic, as Fenster (2004) noted that conventional definitions of citizenship contradict perspectives of difference and diversity in terms of cultural, ethnic and gender or racial as it is built around concepts such as equality and homogeneity. Nevertheless, citizenship is not just an individual relationship between the citizen and the state, it is also mediated by the political community, thus it might be insufficient to recognize and accept diversity if the rest of the society does not grant this recognition (Antonsich, 2010).

Therefore, scholars have tried to develop alternative theories of citizenship that encompass difference in a globalizing world featuring increasing migration flows. Yuval-Davis introduced the concept of 'multi-layered citizenship'. Citizenship is not limited to the state, it is seen as an informal multi-layered way of participating in different political communities; whether this difference is in the scale such as local, national, transnational or in terms of ethnicity or religion (Yuval-Davis, 2013; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006).

Migrant, refugees and ethnic minorities are mostly affected by these multiple citizenships more than the majority groups, speaking about refugees, they have a twofold lack with respect to citizenship, they are a citizens in their countries of origin which they fled its territory to the countries where they live, they acquire a 'citizen-like'⁴ status and their attachment to their country of origin does not disappear (Mehta & Napier-Moore, 2010). Therefore, a new transnational layer should be add to citizenship while addressing migration and globalization as it has been recently argued by many scholars (Christensen, 2009).

3.2 Identity and belonging: 'Who am I' versus 'Where do I belong'

Although belonging and identity are frequently used in the literature, especially in the context of migration, they are often not clearly defined and their meanings can be conflated (Anthias, 2006; Antonsich, 2010). However, identity issues cannot be separated from discussions of belonging as Loader suggests, the question of 'Who am I?' cannot be isolated from the question 'Where do I belong?' (Loader, 2006; as cited in Antonsich, 2010). Or as Zygmunt Bauman puts it "One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure where one belongs" (1996, p. 19). Similarly, Gilmartin (2008) noted that the articulation of belonging is interrelated with the relationship between migration and identity, a relationship that intersect with place and time.

The concept of belonging and identity are closely linked in many ways, especially in speaking of social and collective identities. Therefore, before exploring how this relationship is formed, what is meant by social/collective identity in this context must be made clear. As this part is mainly focused on this relationship, I have limited the scope to include only themes and perspectives that are particularly intertwining with the debates on belonging.

⁴ A 'citizen-like' status as defined by Goodman and Wright includes "speaking the host country language, having knowledge about the country's history, culture and rules, and understanding and following the liberal democratic values that underscore their new home" (Goodman & Wright, 2015, p. 1886)

Aida Hurtado distinguishes between personal identity and social identity. Personal identity is “composed of psychological traits and characteristics that give us personal uniqueness”, while social identity consists of “those aspects of the individual’s self-identity that derive from one’s knowledge of being part of categories and groups, together with the value and emotional significance attached to those memberships” (Hurtado, 1997, p. 309; drawing from Tajfel, 1981). Personal identity is more fixed than social identity and does not change from one context to another, whereas Social identity is socially constructed from interaction with others and in relation to an individual’s role in society or environment, thus it is variable and subjective to structural forces such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, as well as mobility and places where people are living (ibid.). Social identity should be understood as a process that involves the person’s identification with the group. Such process entails identifying of both similarities with and differences between oneself and the group or society (Jenkins, 2008)

Social identity can be individual or collective; it can be collective in the sense that “[it] is shared with a group of others who have (or are believed to have) some characteristics in common” (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004, p. 81). Collective identity is often considered as a resource for individual identity. By being part of the collective, the individual draws defining characteristics from them (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Anthias, 2002).

In some contexts, Fenster (2004) noted that social identity can play a stronger role, it can “shift and change, be contested and multiple” (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This can be the case for refugees where the notion of identity becomes more complex, their journey and life in a new society have a transformative effect on their identities; such experiences can cause a confusion or even loss of identity. In some cases, they can constitute the development of new identities while in other cases old ones get strengthened (Binder & Tošić, 2005). Studies showed emerging identities are also characterized by the living conditions in the host country such as the type of accommodation (ibid.).

The discussion on the politics of belonging is intertwined with questions of identity (Lähdesmäki, et al., 2016); Performing identity in a particular collective can determine whether the person is belonging or excluded. Generally, people construct their identities by engaging in politics of belonging claiming for recognition and acceptance of their identities by the community as a prerequisite for belonging (Valentine, Sporton, & Nielsen, 2009). As Weeks states, “Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others” (Weeks, 1990; as cited in May, 2011).

The ability to identify with a certain country and to belong to it are not the same process nor are they necessarily correlated processes as Anthias states that “you may identify but not feel that you ‘belong’ in the sense of being accepted or being a full member. Alternatively, you may feel that you are accepted and ‘belong’ but may not fully identify, or your allegiances may be split” (Anthias, 2006, p. 19).

However, belonging also entails a process of identification with one’s *surroundings*. It is not just about constructing individual and collective identity. According to Anthias, it may also reflect “the social places constructed by such identifications and memberships, and the ways in which social place has resonances with stability of the self, or with feelings of being part of a larger whole and with the emotional and social bonds that are related to such places” (ibid., p. 21).

Intersectionality and the study of belonging

Belonging to a particular social category such as gender, social class, race, sexuality, age, ability, religion, etc. refers to an individual's social location within power structures in the society. Social locations are defined by both the boundaries of such a social group and hierarchies of their positions on the social power axis. These positions are often fluid and contested and can differ according to the particularity of contexts (Anthias, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Yuval-Davis argues that the different categories of social locations are constructed and negotiated along multiple power axes of difference at the same time. Thus, an intersectional approach is required while looking at social location to think of them in relation to each other, considering their interconnections and interdependence (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Moreover, as Anthias notes, using the term location "recognizes the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales" (2006, p. 27).

Intersectionality as a concept was first developed by black feminists in the U.S. to theorize ways in which race and gender intersect with some attention to class. Others started to integrate other categories of interest such as class, age, nationality, religion, etc. (Phoenix, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Kimberlé Crenshaw describes intersectionality as "the multidimensionality of marginalized subjects' lived experiences" (Crenshaw, 1989; as cited in Yuval-Davis, 2011). Intersectional analysis recognizes that everyone is positioned within multiple social categories all at once which means that even if one category is prioritized, we cannot understand it in isolation or explain inequalities, for instance, through a single social category, therefore investigating the differences and commonalities within groups is necessary to develop a complete understanding of a particular social category (Phoenix, 2006; Valentine, 2007).

In recent years, the notion of intersectionality has gained significant attention across many disciplines and contexts; in feminist studies, Lesley McCall argues that intersectionality is "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). While in migration studies many scholars used it to highlight the inequalities and the inclusion/exclusion of migrants in the host countries especially for women who are experiencing multiple discrimination during their migration journey and resettlement (see for example Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001; Christensen, 2009; Ludvig, 2006; Bilge & PhD, 2010). At last, feminist scholars argue that belonging is constructed in the interrelationship between social categories such as those of gender, class, ethnicity, race, etc. (Christensen, 2009).

In this sense the analysis of belonging and politics of belonging from an intersectional approach bring attention to the intersecting patterns of power relations that are based on differential social locations. As Yuval-Davis points out, in reality, these intersecting powers mutually constitute each other, even though each has a separate ontological basis such as race, gender, class, etc. To be a woman is different if it goes with being young or old, middle class or working class, part of the majority group of a racialized minority, living in the city or the in the country and so on. As discussed before, in people lives, those power relations such as racism, sexism or classism can result in exclusion and economic, social and political inequality for particular social groups.

In this case, given the complexity of the participants' multiple social locations, this becomes a particularly crucial aspect to consider while acknowledging that we cannot understand their experience without looking at all the different layers together.

3.3 Everyday practices of belonging

"[people's] lives and subjectivities are about where they go and why, how they go, and who they encounter on the way. We live as we go and make up life as we go along" (Knowles, 2010, p. 376).

Here, Caroline Knowles highlights the importance of journeys in making up people's lives; she identified different kinds of journeys ranging from local journeys around the neighborhood to run daily life errands to daily trips to work and journeys for leisure activities. She argues that these different kinds of daily routine practices constitute places across neighborhoods and connect between city spaces based on people's subjectivities. It is through these daily practices that people develop images of the city (Fenster & Yacobi, 2005).

People inhabit spaces in the course of their daily life, they use spaces for their diverse inhabiting practices, that can vary between economic, political, social and cultural activities. These practices take place in different kinds of spaces, ranging from personal private spaces to public collective spaces (Sadri & Sadri, 2012). Although architects and planners often focus on the space as a physical object, as they tend to deal with the built environment that makes up the city, such as buildings, streets and parks, these spaces have powerful mental and social impacts (Lefebvre, 1991b) as a result of social and political practices that take place within them (Lefebvre, 1991b; Sadri & Sadri, 2012). It is within these spaces that the meanings and practices of belonging, citizenship and exclusion are being contested on a daily basis.

There is a large body of literature that examined the role of everyday practices in creating a sense of belonging to new places, especially for migrants (May, 2011; Nardi, 2017; Fenster, 2005; Christensen & Jensen, 2011; Leach, 2002). Vikki Bell, following Butler, used the term performativity in her discussion about belonging. She argues that belonging is not a static statue that people can achieve conclusively rather, it has a performative dimension through practices and repeated actions, people keep reaching it (Bell, 1999). In his book 'The Practice of Everyday Life' (1984), de Certeau conceptualizes belonging as a sentiment which is rooted in the everyday life as it grows with time by daily practices. He developed a theory of territorialisation, which states that we territorialise a space by habitual interaction and bodily engagement with it. In doing so, people become familiar with the urban setting and develop a connection that gives a meaning to the place based on their subjective experience (May, 2011).

A sense of belonging is created based on this process of owning the space by moving through and engaging with it (Fenster, 2004; May, 2011). "Belonging and attachment are built here on the base of accumulated knowledge, memory and intimate bodily experiences of everyday walking" (Fenster, 2004, p. 148). Through the use of public spaces such as parks, streets, and plazas these experiences build up and their effect accumulates by time causing the sense of belonging to develop.

De Certeau draws the distinction between 'place' (lieu) and 'space' (espace). According to his conception, unlike the prevailing idea, spaces are defined by places, spaces are products of practices within the place (Leach, 2002) or as de Certeau put it, "space is a practical place. Thus, the street geometrically defined by

urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” (Certeau, 1984, p. 117). For de Certeau, the embodied everyday practices such as walking are central to the process of territorialisation, the ordinary repeated practices and engaging with the urban settings, “by covering and recovering the same paths and routes” (Leach 2005, 299, drawing from de Certeau 1984), people get the opportunity to make sense of places as a way to overcome alienation (Leach, 2002).

Everyday and ‘taken-for-granted’ practices are substantial in conferring belonging for migrants and refugees, to be able to identify with the spaces they need to acquire what Sadri and Sadri (2012) name ‘spatial rights’, they define the rights to use and be involved in the production of space as the spatial dimensions of human rights.

3.3.1 The right to the city

Lefebvre lay the groundwork for these rights to be fulfilled by “an urban spatial approach to political struggles with the participation of all those who inhabit the city without discrimination” (Dikec, 2001, p. 1790). By introducing the notion of “the right to the city” in his book which was published in 1968, Lefebvre suggested that recognizing a right to the city:

...would make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (citadin) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of the center, a privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos (for workers, immigrants, the “marginal” and even for the “privileged”. (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 34)

The notion of the right to the city implies a specific form of citizenship between inhabitants and the city, its main idea is based on placing belonging to political community based on inhabitation rather than formal citizenship; people who live in the city have a right to it, they acquired this right merely by inhabiting the city; the right to the city is a fundamental right guaranteed to both the citizen and the urban dweller (Purcell, 2003). By claiming their rights, inhabitants appropriate urban places making them their own which is the way to *de-alienate* urban space that is central to Lefebvre’s idea (Purcell, 2014).

The right to the city essentially involves two main interdependent rights for the inhabitants: the first is the right to appropriate urban space and the second is the right to participation. The right to appropriate is the right for the inhabitants to fully and completely use urban spaces in the everyday life in the city.; it is their right to live in, play in, work in, represent, characterize and occupy urban space in a city. For Lefebvre, the city and urban space are the context for people’s daily life and should be considered as an artifact (oeuvre) and a product that is created and recreated every day by the collective routine daily practices of its inhabitants. It is the collective right of inhabitants to use and change the urban spaces as it best suits their needs (ibid.).

Don Mitchell’s view of the right to the city denotes a right to inhabit the city. He argues that the right to the city is conditioned by a right to housing, and although it is alone not sufficient to fulfill the right to the city, it is an essential and necessary step to fully obtain this right. On this basis, Mitchell considers the right to housing as a way of appropriating the city (Mitchell, 2003)

The second right is the right to participate, it is about inhabitants being able to participate centrally in decisions concerning the production of urban space. They can participate at any institutional scale that would make decisions for an urban space that they have a right to, ranging from national to local (ibid.).

This form of urban citizenship or as Purcell (2003) terms it “citadenship” does not refer to legal status rather it is to be considered a form of identification with the city (Dikec, 2001). It entails both obligations and rights; inhabitants have an obligation to design the city as *oeuvre* by practicing their everyday life in urban spaces and this grant them to the right of appropriation and participation (Purcell, 2003). In this case, everyday life can perform as the mediator of the rights of using the urban space.

Following Lefebvre, Purcell introduced the concept of “the right to the global city” as an elaboration on Lefebvre’s original concepts, the rights will be to the inhabitants of the global city as a way of overcoming the limitations of what he calls liberal-democratic/Westphalian citizenship⁵. He dedicates a central role to the inhabitants in the decision-making of producing space in the city beyond LDW (ibid.). Another important aspect of his idea is that by grounding citizenship on inhabitation rather than nationality, the rights of the non-citizen inhabitants of the city are considered, which allows them to express their needs and have a say in how the space where they live should be organized. This is essential nowadays as international migrants are increasing in cities around the world while they do not necessarily have the privilege of being formal citizens (ibid.).

These spatial rights for migrants and refugees could be fulfilled on the basis of the right to appropriate. However, the question of whether the idea of the right to the city considers the difference among individual, as well as, the collective difference was discussed in Fenster’s qualitative research of the residents in London and Jerusalem (2005). She noted that Lefebvre included the right to difference in his vision of the right to the city as “the right not to be classified forcibly into categories which have been determined by the necessarily homogenizing powers” (Lefebvre, 1976; as cited in Dikec, 2001). Later in her book, basing on Dikec’s ideas, Fenster adds that “Lefebvre’s emphasis was on the ‘be’ of the right to be different rather than the ‘different’” (Fenster, 2005, p. 219). Thus, the concept as envisioned by Lefebvre does not relate to any kind of power relations inherent in the realities of many marginalized groups in the city such as refugees and women. Identity issues like gender, ethnicity, nationality and culture that might affect both the right to the use and participate, are not considered in his discussion, and so, it does not provide a practical stance (ibid.).

Gender and the right to the city

Looking at the role of gender relations in the everyday life of the city, Bondi argues that “gender is an integral, ubiquitous and taken-for-granted aspect of urban life. It is an influential dimension of urban identities, an axis of urban inequalities, and it animates the everyday practices that characterize and constitute cities and city life” (Bondi, 2005). It is evident that women’s right to the city can be restricted. According to feminist critiques, public spaces are perceived as a place for the middle and upper class, white and heterosexual men, therefore women use of the city such as streets and parks is limited compared to

⁵ “liberal-democratic/Westphalian (LDW) imagines that individual political actors agree to a 'social contract with the state in which they consent to be ruled in exchange for certain privileges and protections” (Purcell, 2003, p. 565).

men in both western and non-western cultures especially if they are on their own. In some cases, they cannot go around alone at all (Fenster, 2005). Moreover, as Fenster argues, in order to have a better understanding of these restrictions on the right to use for women, we should investigate the limitations on right to use not only in public spaces but also in private ones (i.e., the home), as the right to use and participate can also be denied on the home scale.

In her qualitative research project of the residents in London and Jerusalem, Fenster discusses women's daily practices, focusing on how their feeling of belonging to the city in which they live is enacted. She described how the patriarchal power relations that dominate private and public spaces work to deprive women from their right to use and participate in London and Jerusalem. According to the findings of the study, women's fear of using public spaces such as streets and public transportation was consistently present in their narratives, consequently undermining their rights of using the city. She also noted that in some cases, these gendered relations intersect with other power relations of nationality and ethnicity (Fenster, 2005).

Escalante and Sweet noted that in the case of migrant women, their rights to the city can be denied based on the multiplicity of their situation; the intersecting power relations of gender, race, ethnicity in addition to their migration status (Escalante & Sweet, 2013).

3.4 The right to belong

It is important to differentiate between the right to use the city and the right to belong, as we discussed, a sense of belonging is created and nurtured by repeatedly fulfilling the right to use the city. Fenster defines the right to belong as "the right of people of different identities to be recognized and the right to take part in civil society in spite of one's own identity differences" (Fenster, 2004, p. 174). Ultimately, people should be able to express their own identity and maintain right to be different without jeopardizing the equal access to resource and services. In that sense, the right to belong can be perceived as more inclusive than 'citizenship in the global city'. This notion becomes especially significant in contested claims for the rights of marginalized groups (ibid.).

Chapter 4 | Contextualizing Syrian refugees in Italy

Chapter 4. Contextualizing Syrian refugees in Italy

This chapter attempts to give an overview of the Syrian forced migrants' journey and settlement in Italy. It starts with a background information about the so-called Syrian refugee "crisis"⁶ and the hosting countries. Following, the changed role of Italy from a transit to a host country for the Syrian migration over the past years will be briefly and critically discussed as well as touch upon some of its governance aspects.

4.1 The Syrian refugee "crisis"

Inspired by the 'Arab spring' in the neighboring counties, in March 2011, what had started as pro-democracy demonstrations against the regime of Bashar al-Assad turned into a multi-sided and long-lasting civil war that has since damaged and completely destroyed entire neighborhoods, claimed more than half a million lives and forced millions of Syrian to leave their homes. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) considered the Syrian War as the cause of 'the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time' (United Nations, 2016). For more than eight years, the ongoing armed conflict in Syria has led to the displacement of more than half of the Syrian population. According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2018, Syrians are the largest forcibly displaced national population including 6,654,000 refugees, 6,184,000 internally displaced people and 140,000 asylum seekers, as demonstrated in Figure 4 below (2019a).

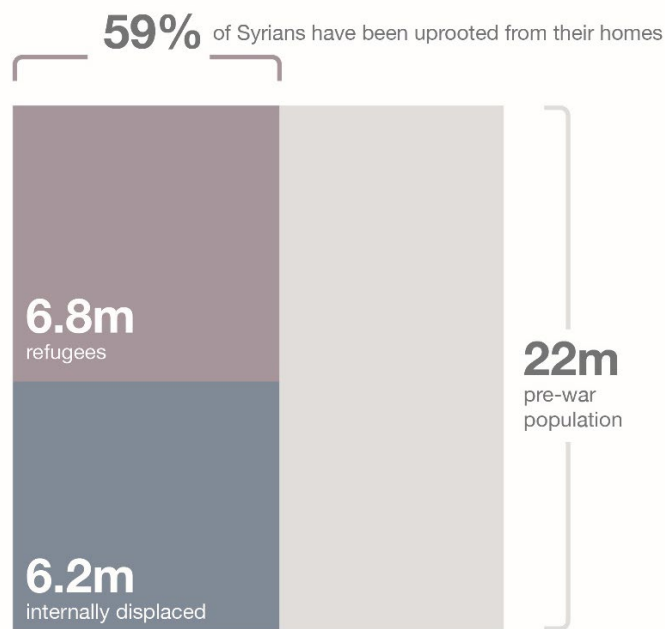


chart adapted from BBC; based on 2018 data from UNHCR

Figure 4 Syrian population displacement

⁶ Using the term crisis as argued by Freedman, Kivilcim and Baklacioğlu "has served the interests of political leaders in EU member states and EU institutions by diverting attention away from their failures to find any real political solutions to this problem and focusing attention on the humanitarian emergency of migration" (2017).

Among those 13 million Syrian refugees living in displacement, the majority are women, although the exact numbers are unknown especially for those internally displaced (Freedman, Kivilcim, & Baklacioğlu, 2017). According to The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), nearly 78 percent of displaced Syrians are women and children (UNFPA, 2014; as cited in Freedman et al., 2017), yet as Freedman et al. argue, these numbers are problematic as they denote both women and children in one category which is criticized by feminist scholars. The lack of accurate sex- disaggregated data as Freedman et al. state “hampers efforts to put in place programs that respond to the needs of male and female refugees” (ibid., p. 2).

The majority of Syrian refugees have fled to neighboring countries placing a massive impact on their economies and infrastructure. As of the first half of 2019, Turkey is considered to be hosting the largest Syrian displaced population with 3,614,108 registered refugees (UNHCR, 2019c). Lebanon, a country of approximately 4.5 million people in 2011, is hosting the second largest population with 929,624 registered Syrian refugees, which means that nearly one in every five people now living in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee (ibid.). Jordan is hosting 662,010 registered Syrian refugees, while other countries in the region including Egypt and Iraq are hosting nearly half a million (ibid.).

Although most Syrian refugees are located in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), Syrians are seeking asylum in states outside the region as well. The Syrian migration to Europe began in the first years of the conflict but it became more noticeable since 2013, reaching its highest records in 2015 and 2016 (Eurostat, 2019). By the end of 2018, an estimated one million Syrian citizens seeking protection managed to reach the EU countries since the start of the war (ibid.). The main countries that have been receiving and accommodating them include Germany, which is hosting almost half of the Syrian refugees in EU countries, followed by Sweden with 120,875 Syrian refugees. Other countries including Hungary, Greece, Austria and the Netherlands are together hosting a total of 235,220 Syrians. The rest of the Syrian refugees are dispersed in other countries with relatively small numbers (ibid.). The map presented following shows the distribution of Syrian refugees in the most receiving European countries and in the MENA region (Figure 5).

4.2 Syrians in Italy: From a transit to a host country

The year of 2013 witnessed a substantial increase in the Syrians arriving to Europe by sea or overland. As reported by European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Syrian asylum seekers used the Central Mediterranean route that connected Northern African countries (mainly Libya and Egypt) with Italy and Malta, in their sea journeys to reach Italy and enter EU (Frontex, 2014). In the following year, the number of Syrian making this journey through the same route multiplied from 11,307 in 2013 to 42,323 in 2014, only to decrease again in 2015 (Frontex, 2015). The reason for this decrease, as reported by Frontex is that Syrian migration has shifted to the Eastern Mediterranean route (Frontex, 2016).

They mostly come from Egypt in families and depart from the Libyan coast (ibid.) Denaro argues that the Syrian family-based migration and the presence of women and children changed the socio-demographic composition of the migration flow to Italy which had previously been dominated mainly by young males (Denaro, 2016).

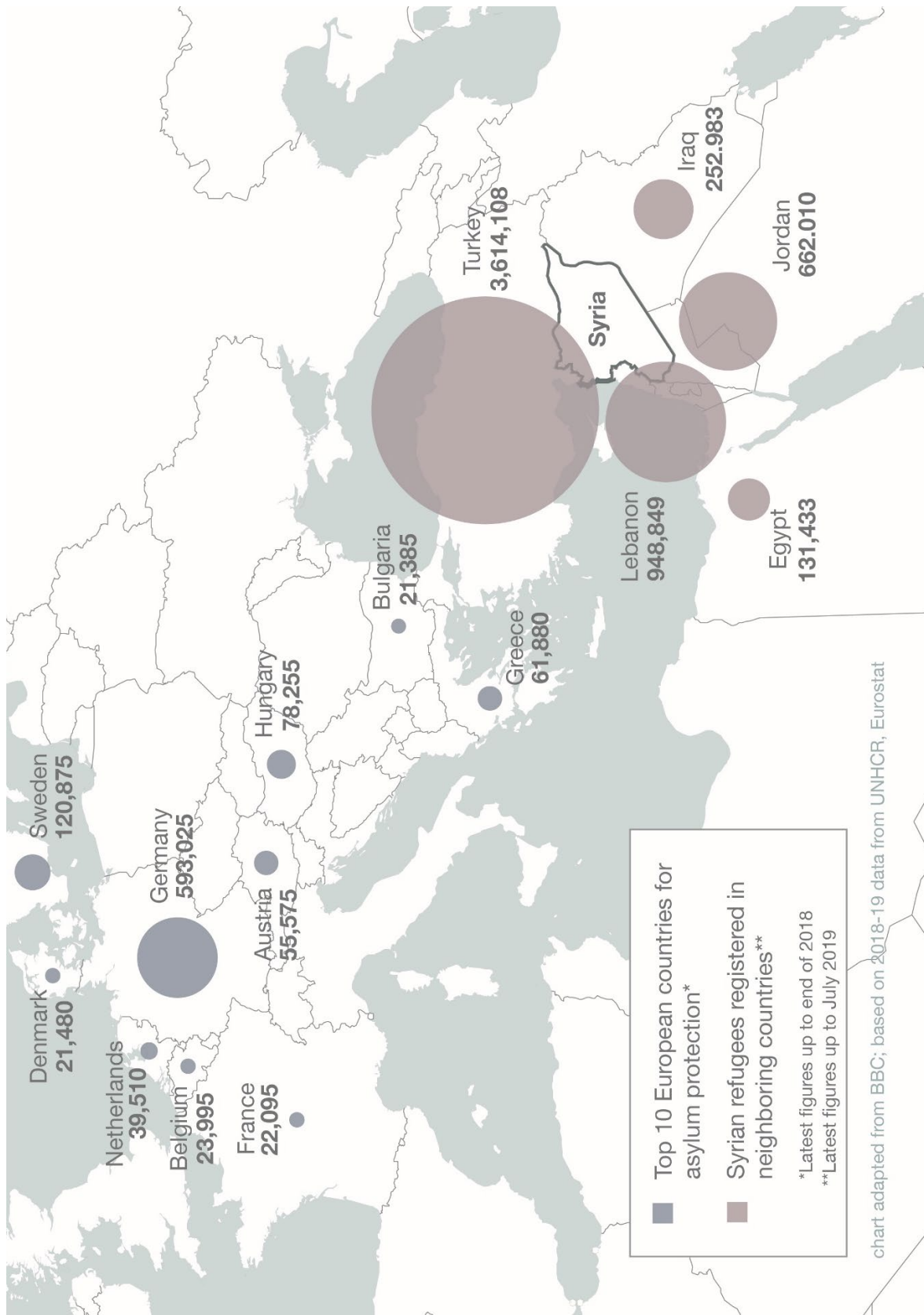


Figure 5 Distribution of Syrian refugees in Europe and MENA region

4.2.1 Transiting in Italy

In their annual reports of recent years (2013-2015), Frontex documented these border-crossings of Syrians, reflecting that the majority of them did not apply for asylum in the countries of entry (namely Italy and Greece) but rather in other member countries of the EU in which more welfare benefits are expected, or for family-related reasons (Frontex, 2014; 2015; CIR, 2013).

In the years of 2013, 2014 and 2015, an estimated 61,078 Syrians reached the Italian coasts. Looking to the number of asylum applications by Syrians in the same years, it becomes clear that the vast majority of Syrian did not apply for asylum in Italy. Only 2.7 percent filled their application in Italy while the rest made secondary movements within the EU to their final destinations (Ministero dell'Interno, 2015; Eurostat, 2019; SPRAR et al., 2017). The charts on the following page illustrate the overall situation in recent years (Figure 6).

By refusing to be fingerprinted upon arrival to Italy, Syrian were challenging the Dublin Regulation (CIR, 2013; Frontex, 2014). Adopted in 2003⁷ by some EU Member States, the main purpose of the regulation was to determine which EU country is responsible for examining an asylum application, which is normally the State where the asylum seeker first entered the EU (UNHCR, 2017).

The EURODAC Regulation (European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database) establishes a fingerprinting database in which Member States register the fingerprints of people making un-authorized crossings of the EU borders in order to make it easier for EU States to determine responsibility for examining an asylum application. This is done by comparing fingerprint datasets and identifying the point of entry (European Commission, 2016). The Dublin Regulation together with the EURODAC Regulation form the Dublin system (ibid.).

The Dublin system is criticized by many NGOs for “perpetuating inefficient and unworkable mechanisms for allocation of responsibility” (ECRE, 2018, p. 1). Viewing it as unfair to both asylum seekers and certain EU Member States. Critics contend that for asylum seekers, the Dublin regulation affects their access to legal rights since asylum policies and practices still vary across European countries (Brussels & Kok, 2006; ECRE, 2018). At the same time, the uneven distribution of asylum claims among Member States impose pressure on the external southern border countries (e.g., Italy and Greece) that receive the majority of the migrants (ibid.).

In their study about secondary migration of Eritrean asylum seekers to Norway who arrived through Italy, Brekke and Brochmann argue that asylum seekers’ secondary movements are motivated by factors beyond the migration regulations and access to protection including labor-market conditions and the provision of welfare benefits as well as the difference in national reception conditions and integration policies that vary across the EU (Brekke & Brochmann, 2015).

⁷ A revised version, Dublin III, came into force on January 2014 replacing the Dublin II Regulation (UNHCR, 2017).

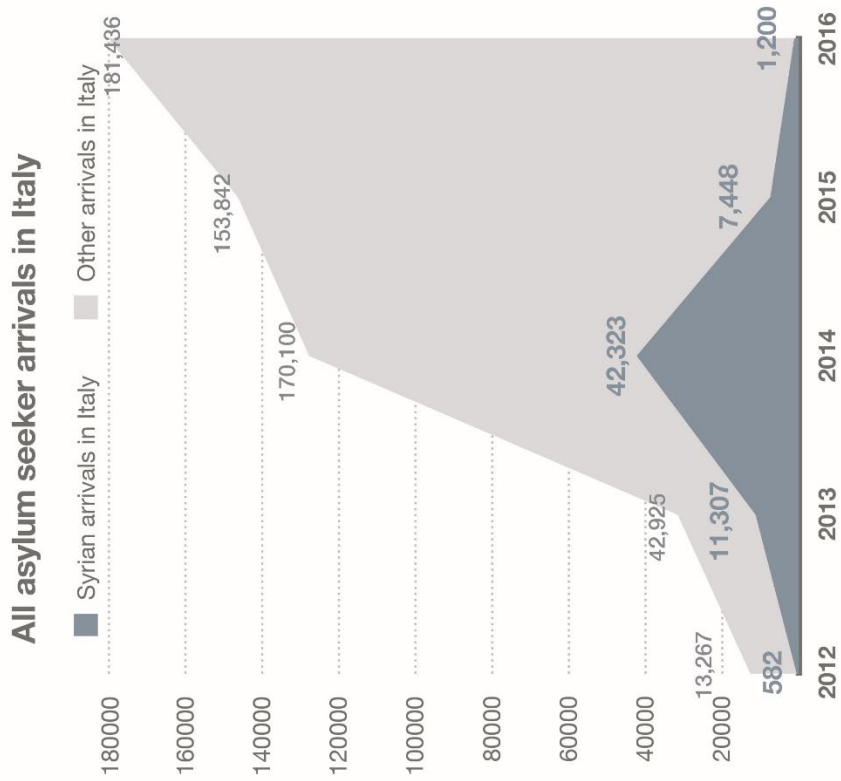
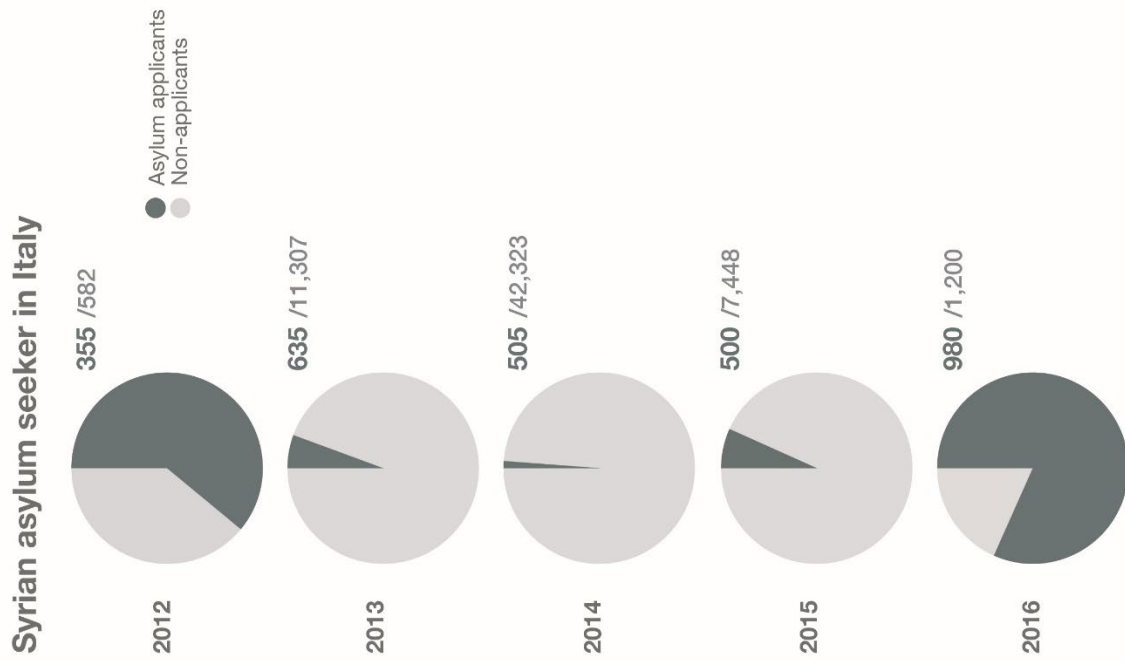


chart based on data from Eurostat, Italian Ministry of Interior report, UNHCR

Figure 6 Syrian asylum seekers and refugee distribution in Italy

Chiara Denaro in her research on the Syrian asylum seekers between the two cities of Catania and Milan in the years of 2013 and 2014, concluded similar results; she highlighted that the participants' main reasons for considering Italy as a transit country and their motivation to continue their journey northwards were due to "the presence of relatives and friends in those countries or [due to] the awareness of the Italian asylum system's structural weakness" (Denaro, 2016, p. 91).

On their report on the reception system in the city of Milan, Naga Onlus explained how, in these years, the reception structures in the city of Milan were dedicated to Syrian migrants 'in transit'. In that way, Milan was considered just as a temporary transit in their northwards journey from southern Italy, often to Germany, Sweden and France (Naga, 2016). The data provided by the Municipality of Milan in August 2015 stated that since 18 October 2013, 48,276 Syrians passed through the city on their way to the northern border (ibid.). In November 2015, this situation started to change as the number of Syrians arriving was decreasing considerably (ibid.).

In response to these arrivals, the Municipality of Milan, in collaboration with local associations and a large network of volunteers, initially made available ten reception centers to host the Syrians asylum seekers who were staying for an average of five days before continuing their journey (Naga, 2016). In addition to this, an informal reception space was arranged in the entire mezzanine floor of the central station in Milan, managed by the Progetto Arca Foundation, which was later evacuated in June 2015 (Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus, 2014; 2015). The structures for the reception of asylum seekers were constantly changing and developing to accommodate the unprecedented numbers of asylum seeker arriving every day to the city within this period (Naga, 2016).

The Italian reception system in brief

In recent years, the Italian reception system for asylum seekers was subjected to several yet, not substantial modifications trying to deal with the massive numbers of migrants and asylum seekers who are constantly arriving to Italian shores.

In 2018, the design of the Italian reception system has undergone some radical changes. Previously, under the Reception Decree (LD 142/2015), the reception for asylum seekers operated through three phases: The first phase was that of the First Aid and Reception Centers (CPSA⁸), which is presented at the main places of disembarkation. After identification and the initial assessment of their status—asylum seeker or economic migrants move onto the second phase of the system in which they are assigned in different collective centers for first reception, including the existing governmental centers for accommodation of asylum seekers (CARA⁹) and short term accommodation centers (CDA¹⁰).

The third phase, (i.e., the second reception stage) is provided under the System of Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR¹¹), a publicly funded network of local authorities and NGOs. Due to the increased numbers of asylum seekers, first and second reception centers are supplemented by emergency

⁸ CPSA: Centri di primo Soccorso e Assistenza

⁹ CARA: Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo

¹⁰ CDA: Centri di Accoglienza

¹¹ SPRAR: Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati

reception centers (CAS¹²), which make up the greater part of the reception system (ASGI, 2019; 2014). Refugees in the second reception are offered, beside accommodation, support to facilitate their social and economic integration in the host society (e.g., language courses, vocational training, etc.) (Ministero dell'Interno, 2015).

However, according to an official report by SPRAR and Caritas Italiana, during 2017, out of the 12,171 people left the reception system, only 41.3 percent left due to a successful and completed integration process. Others had to leave either voluntarily or because their term of stay ended (SPRAR et al., 2017). This study shows that the integration process is not enough developed yet and only a minority of refugees reached a certain independency.

Other studies pointed out that the reception system is lacking coherence and sustainability in responding to the complexity of the situation back then. Among its shortcomings is the insufficient number and conditions of hosting facilities for all asylum seekers in need of adequate accommodation. On the other hand, the management of the reception system was emergency-based and highly fragmented (Bovo & Lippi, 2017; Denaro, 2016; Gois & Falchi, 2017; ASGI, 2014).

The Decree Law 113/2018 transformed the SPRAR system into the System of Protection for Beneficiaries of Protection and Unaccompanied Minors (SIPROIMI¹³). Now the Italian reception system is structured into two parallel systems based on the division between asylum seekers on one hand, and the beneficiaries of international protection and unaccompanied minors on the other. This prevents asylum seekers from accessing the second reception system and limits their accommodation to the first reception centers and CAS centers (ASGI, 2019).

This recent reformation of the reception system for asylum seekers is received negatively by many NGOs. A report by the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI) on the asylum process in Italy points out that hosting the asylum seekers in collective centers rather than the previous small scale, decentralized and integrated structures of the former SPRAR, “The reform is therefore premised on a logic of security and control, no longer a logic of protection” (ibid.). Another point that was highlighted by the report is that since the majority of places available for asylum seekers are in the emergency accommodations of CAS, thus, the asylum seekers would be spending the time of processing their request in this emergency accommodation, which will in turn negatively influence the process of gaining self-sufficiency (ibid.).

4.2.2 Refugee resettlement schemes: Different pathways

Resettlement is an international protection tool offering a durable solution mostly for cases of refugees with particular needs or vulnerabilities in the State in which they sought protection (Country of Asylum) and where voluntary repatriation is not possible. In such circumstances, refugees are transferred to a third country (Country of Resettlement) that has voluntarily agreed to the settlement program; ultimately granting them permanent settlement (UNHCR, 2002).

¹² CAS: Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria

¹³ Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e minori stranieri non accompagnati

In response to the Syrian refugee emergency, with no immediate resolution in sight, UNHCR, in coordination with the resettlement countries, had, by May 2019, managed the resettlement of 221,092 Syrian refugees in third countries (e.g., USA, Canada, Australia) since the start of the conflict (UNHCR, 2019b).

Resettlement in Europe

To provide displaced persons international protection without subjecting their lives to threats through dangerous journeys to reach the EU borders, in July 2015, a European settlement scheme was adopted by the European Council and supported by the EU budget. This two-year scheme aims to reduce irregular migration and provide legal and safe pathways to enter the EU, as well as provide resettlement in the participating EU countries to 22,504 people (European Commission, 2015; European Council, 2015). Another scheme was also activated in November 2015, according to the EU-Turkey Statement, to open up organized, safe and legal channels to the EU for vulnerable Syrian refugees from Turkey (European Council, 2016).

By November 2017, a total of 25,739 persons were resettled in EU countries, mainly from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, of which 11,354 are Syrians under the EU-Turkey Statement (European Commission, 2017).

This was followed by another two-year program launched in December 2017 aiming at 50,000 additional places by October 2019. By June 2019, the European Commission reported that the two settlement programs have helped almost 60,000 persons in clear need of international protection to resettle in EU countries (European Commission, 2019).

According to the European Commission, by November 2017, 1,521 persons had arrived in Italy under the July 20th scheme, while under the current scheme, Italy has pledged to take 1000 refugees by 2018 (European Commission, 2017).

Humanitarian corridors in Italy

In response to the refugee critical situation initiated by the civil society organization in Italy to create a new humanitarian entry scheme and take up the responsibility of the reception and assistance of the refugees, the Humanitarian Corridors program in Italy was established through the cooperation between the Federation of Evangelical Churches, Waldensian Churches and the Community of Sant'Egidio and based on an agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of the Interior (Mediterranean Hope, 2018).

In accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 15 December 2015, the pilot initiative's main goal according to Daniela Pompei, responsible of the services to migrants of the Community of Sant'Egidio, is "to avoid human trafficking, avoid deaths at sea, and show that it is possible to utilize other channels of entry other than the pontoons of death" (Pompei, 2015).

The project is structured into three steps to grant the selected people a safe journey to Italy and integration support following their arrival. The first step is the identification of the potential beneficiaries based on their vulnerabilities by conducting interviews carried out by the humanitarian corridors staff in the chosen countries of asylum in cooperation with UNHCR and other NGOs. Based on these, a list is made to be sent

to the Italian authorities for investigation and approval. Beneficiaries are then secured safe flights to Italy through the obtainment of humanitarian visas “with Limited Territorial Validity”, issued by the Italian Consulates in the countries concerned. This visa allows them to take a normal flight to the airport in Rome in which they are received by promoters of the project. At last, the final step is offering support during the procedure of applying for political asylum, the reception and socio-economic integration (Mallardo, 2017; Mediterranean Hope, 2018).

The last step is what partially distinguishes this initiative from the European settlement schemes mentioned above. Whereas in the European settlement schemes, refugees are welcomed in the Italian second reception system, this project can be considered as a stand-alone reception system. After their arrival, the organizations, in cooperation with other partners and associations, provide refugees with legal assistance in the application for international protection, accommodation in structures run by the Waldensian Diaconia, economic support, as well as guarantees for the subsequent pathways of socio-cultural integration, without any burden on the State as all the costs are covered by the promoter organizations. (Caritas Italiana, 2019).

Since its start, the first phase of the project in the two-year period between 2016-2017 witnessed the arrival of a total of 1,000 people, mainly of Syrian nationality, transferred to Italy from Lebanon. The phase ended with the arrival of the last group on October 2017. This was followed by a renewed plan in November 2017, for the resettlement of 1,000 people, to be transferred from Lebanon and Morocco to Italy in the two-year period of 2018-2019 (Caritas Italiana, 2019). Between 2016 and June 2019, more than 1,610 people have arrived from Lebanon to Italy. These refugees are mainly from the cities of Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, Damascus (FCEI, 2019).

Even though the number of the beneficiaries of the pilot project of humanitarian corridors is relatively small, the strength of the project lies in the way it made use of the already present legislative instruments to guarantee regular entries for refugees. As pointed out by Paolo Naso: “although the ‘HC’ project cannot represent the solution, it can be seen as an innovative ready-to-use tool included within the Schengen regulation framework” (Naso, 2015; as cited in Mallardo, 2017). Thus, while governments still play the main role in providing safe and legal access to Europe, the humanitarian corridor scheme introduced a bottom-up alternative way that can be replicated in other EU Member States through civil society organizations.

Chapter 5 | **Rethinking belonging through everyday practices**

Chapter 5. Rethinking belonging through everyday practices

This chapter attempts to investigate the participants' possibilities of negotiating a sense of belonging to new and unfamiliar settings. By looking at the personal everyday practices and experiences of places at the scale of the neighborhood and the city they live in, we can develop an understanding of what Tovi Fenster calls 'secular aspects of belonging' that are part of these ordinary activities.

The multidimensional character of belonging was demonstrated in the way it is intersecting and overlapping with different aspects of the participants lives. In telling their personal experiences of searching for home, the different dimensions that can facilitate or limit a personal sense of place-belongingness as stated by Antonsich were revealed in the interviews i.e., auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic and legal factors (Antonsich, 2010). The interviews also served to convey structural expressions of inclusion and exclusion in the city.

In analyzing the data, three main interrelated themes were identified. These themes highlight the challenges the participants are experiencing in their daily life which in turn influence the process of establishing a sense of belonging to the host country. Section 6.1 focus on the participants' prospects of stability and their plans for the future. It explores issues related to economic stability and housing, while further investigate the changed gender role of the participants in light of these challenges. Section 6.2 explains how the participants' sense of place belongingness is shaped by the politics of belonging that define the boundaries of the community of belonging. At last, section 6.3 looks at how the participants' engagement in different kind of relationships on the neighborhood scale may influence their sense of inclusion or exclusion to the community.

5.1 Stability: Planning the future in a safe manner

Developing a sense of belonging to the host country and to feel at home involve questions about stability and being able to plan a future. In discussing the prospects of settling down with the participants, two concerns of particular significance emerged; the first of which is related to work, while the second relates to housing.

The issue of economic stability was pronounced in all of the interviews conducted. Mona, for example, imagines that having a stable job is the only factor involved in securing her future: "I don't like thinking about the future. I'm so scared of the future that's why I don't think about it. But if there is work, the work contract will protect you and nothing else" (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019). Another participant, Salwa shares the same perspective: "whenever he [her husband] finds a job, the work will provide everything; the apartment and everything else" (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019). Similarly, Lamia says:

If you asked me what are the two things that you want the most, I'd say that I wish for my language to improve and for our project¹⁴ to flourish. This would relieve much pressure, almost all my problems would disappear. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

¹⁴ Lamia and her husband have started a home-based catering service a couple of years ago.

In her narrative, Mona addresses the consequences of the instability of her situation on her plans of having a child:

To have jobs and fixed place wherever I don't care but the important thing is to have a permanent job. To know that this job is yours ... If we don't settle down and have a place, we can't—for example, a child, we have been married for more than two years now and we don't think about having a child because we don't know anything about the future. (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

Changed gender roles: Blessing or burden?

Due to financial concerns, these women are now actively taking part in providing for the household while at the same time maintaining their gender roles as the main caregivers. Deacon and Sullivan argue that refugee women face challenges in negotiating their gender roles in the new society which might be different from their role in the country of origin (2009). In the Syrian context, having traditional¹⁵ gender roles in their country, displacement can disrupt traditional gender roles, forcing Syrian women to challenge their old roles and take on new responsibilities in the hosting communities (Nasser-Eddin, 2017; Harvey, Garwood, & El-Masri, 2013). This was clearly evident in the participants' narratives. These narratives illustrate how the majority of them are overwhelmed by the altered gender roles in the family unit while for others this meant gaining more freedom and sense of empowerment within the household unit than in the home country.

The participants indicate that in their home country, they had had access to resources and services that enabled them to realize their traditional roles. As capitals and assets are not easily transferable in the case of forced migration, refugees tend to experience an economically disadvantaged position in their host countries in terms of overall wealth. In her interview, Lamia was trying to explain why the financial situation had resurfaced many times during the interview as one of the main concerns for her in contrast with what she was used to in Syria and how this is affecting her daughter:

In Syria, we weren't troubled with financial matters. I have never known what my father owns or his income ... I don't know other than that he is financially stable, I didn't have any idea about financial concerns. Now, my daughter bears some kind of financial concern, maybe because she doesn't see her father in a fixed job or owning a place ... [back home] it had never crossed my mind to ask about my husband's income, he had a job and I never asked him how much his salary was. There was a kind of financial security, so I wasn't worried ... now, I became a participant in securing life expenses with him. Maybe that's why I'm repeating this topic because it became part of my day. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

¹⁵ 'Traditional' here is used to refer to women who were primarily responsible for caring for their husbands, children and the house while men tend to undertake the role of provider—breadwinner—for their households, and dominated almost all aspects of society (Lokot, 2018; Nasser-Eddin, 2017). It is worth mentioning that this role might be determined by social class or urban and rural living environment (Lokot, 2018; Charles & Denman, 2012).

In a similar manner, another participant, Kinda talks about the lack of resources and its effect on her own daughter's wellbeing:

She [her daughter] is sensitive and has big fear because we were displaced. She was living in a specific way and now she is living differently; my husband's status in Aleppo was good: we had a house, a car and a pastry kitchen. She was my only child and I used to buy her many clothes to wear and change. Now, here the situation has totally changed, leaving her low-spirited, but she is trying to adapt. (Kinda, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

As Lamia mentioned above, resource poverty has led participants to become economically active and break traditional gender roles and division of labor within the family unit. Lamia, who has a higher-degree education in Economics, had gotten engaged right after she graduated, she got engaged and eventually married. She had never thought about working as this was not common in her family:

In my family, women don't work. In my husband's family, there are women who work. But in my family, our opinion is that women don't work. It is not like it is prohibited but it is linked to need, and we are not in need. For example, none of my sisters works, nor my aunts or my mother. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

One of the main factors with a large impact on resource wealth, as conveyed in the interviews is concerned with the housing situation. As most of the participants interviewed had belonged to the category of the middle class in their home country, they had lived in their owned homes in Syria, therefore the financial burden of rent was not of a concern for them. Accordingly, they expressed how the issue of housing now causes them stress both mentally and financially. Salwa explains that renting an apartment is difficult as many Italian owner refuse to rent to Arabs: "it is difficult to rent an apartment from an Italian; they don't rent to Arabs. We have the problem of housing, if you have a place you would feel secure" (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019).

Lamia also is facing the same problem as she explained that they rented their current place with the help of an acquaintance when they first arrived, from an Egyptian owner. And although it is small for her family now, they do not think about moving out:

We rented it [the current home] when my children were young. It is just one bedroom and a living room; two rooms. It was fine with two babies but after this, now, we are disturbed because they are older. It is not a big place, but we can't even think –just think– of moving out because it is impossible to find an alternative. Also, a bigger place will be more expensive. So, we are staying for now. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Lamia further explains how the financial burden of rent is affecting their life:

For a person in their own country—maybe because of our class, we didn't suffer because of the issue of rent. Whether when I was in my family's home or after I got married, it was our place; we owned it. You don't think about the rent and how much it costs. This huge burden of rent doesn't exist; that's why your life is more luxurious. Here, life is harsh. You find yourself struggling; all day long you are suffering, suffering here. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

On the other hand, Kinda is expressing her critical need of stability as she worries about her children's and how this situation of insecurity might affect them. Kinda is a mother of two; a daughter who is 16 years old and her son is eight years old. Her son was diagnosed with autism almost three years ago when they were in Lebanon. After they came to Italy, the doctors confirmed this diagnosis:

We left Lebanon mainly for the children's mental condition. My husband left Aleppo; left his pastry kitchen, car and home, left them just for these two ... we started moving from one place to another and this was harsh on her [their daughter]. My problem is that instability causes my son's condition to deteriorate. So, I wanted to settle down in some place because whenever he moves, he has to start over and acquire new information and new friends and this makes him worse and prevents his improvement. This is my problem. I'm searching for stability and I can't find it. Even here, we moved three times up until now and the fourth is coming. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

I didn't move from this area. Although this apartment is old and small, and I pay rent that I can pay in a better apartment, I can't leave it. To the extent that when the owner told me that he needs the apartment I told him I would buy it. This is the result of moving a lot I feel that I want something to be mine and no one can force me to leave it, it gives me the feeling of safety that this is my place. (Farah, personal communication, December 12, 2018)

Farah's narrative addresses the issue of having control and being able to make choices over her life that can result in developing a sense of belonging. It is clear here that 'belonging by choice' depends on the financial ability of individuals (Fenster, 2004). This advantage that Farah has is not the case for the other participants who were forced to move several times during their first years of settlement.

In Syria it was different, a normal life; the man works and the woman can work or not, her life is in her hands, here my life isn't in my hands, I have to work to make a living for my son and my family because there is no place of residence and in Syria there was. The place of residence is the base, when you own a place it is different from renting ... you have to work just like the man, it is unreasonable that I would sit cross-legged while my husband works. Life is hard in Europe, here they both work: the men and the women. I'm not dependent, if I wanted to be dependent, I should have remained in my country. (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019)

In Salwa's narrative, she mentions the lack of choice in another aspect of life which is employment. Salwa used to work as a nurse in Syria. She mentioned many times during the interview that she prefers to work, but at the same time she feels now that she is *forced* to work (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019). Mona, who studied biology at University also worked in Syria as a teacher. Now she is working two jobs; she is training in a hospital lab and teaches Arabic language online. She explained that when her contract will end in the hospital, she will have to find any other job to help her husband, "If I stopped working, I have to search for something else ... it is impossible to depend just on his [her husband's] salary" (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019).

Eman, who came with her mother and two brothers, also had a training job in a children's kindergarten school to be a teacher in Syria, but as she states, "the work was to amuse oneself" (Amal & Eman, personal

communication, March 2, 2019). She is now trying to find a job to help her older brother in covering the family's life expenses:

We are hoping for my brother's work to get better and [for him] to get a higher salary but the salaries here are low, if the two didn't work, it won't be enough. It is impossible. One's salary covers the rent and the other covers living expenses. (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019)

As discussed previously in Chapter Three, the sense of achievement that can result from economic participation can ultimately increase refugees' sense of belonging to the host country. This was clearly illustrated in Kinda's narrative as she explained that even if she is now facing several challenges as a refugee in a new country, being in Italy opened up the opportunity for her to achieve her childhood dreams to work. Her husband would not allow her to work back in Syria for what might be cultural norms, coupled with financial capability. This all changed when they moved to Italy and that's why she like it here:

My dream has been to work since I was a child ... I was dreaming when I came to Italy that I will find a job because I like working, especially in kindergarten school as a teacher or with the children. I like this a lot. This is my dream but till now I can't find it. I loved Italy because I thought it might give me this opportunity. In Aleppo my husband would never allow me to work ... Maybe because the living expenses are high here and he can't afford the rent alone. Maybe because he was able to afford everything there alone. I didn't lack anything from clothes to jewelry or anything. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Kinda did not complete her education as she got married at an early age and dropped out of school. During the interview, she discussed her lack of qualification: "I don't know anything, I didn't study... I don't know even how to work in anything" (Kinda, personal communication, February 5, 2019). She further explained that her motivation to learn the language is to be able to work despite of these limitations: "I'm just learning the language to be able to work, I don't want to work for the money, but I want to work. Sometimes I cook for people, and I feel truly happy" (Kinda, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Kinda's situation also reflects Fenster's argument that for women who are oppressed, the opportunity to be free of restricted gender roles and norms (which in Kinda's case, were presented by being in Italy) can form their sense of belonging (Fenster, 2004).

The changes in gender roles and responsibilities that were illustrated in the participants' narratives also influence and alter their spatial behavior. New responsibilities push them outside of the home, whether for work or household errands. For these women, this push has meant the exposure to specific uses of the city that increase their interaction with it. These socio-spatial changes and impacts will be discussed in the next section and it will be the focus of Chapter Six, which discusses and analyzes the participants' inputs in the cognitive maps exercises. As will be shown following, these new interaction and movement within urban spaces adds to their familiarity with the city and can ultimately create a sense of belonging to it.

5.2 Stories of (non)belonging

Looking at the participants' newly formed relationships with the city and the more interaction they have with it, this part focuses on the factors that might prevent the participants from fully using the city and develop a sense of belonging to it. These factors such as their background experiences, being in an unfamiliar context and their social locations within power structures in the society overlap and result in instances of everyday life in which the participants' claims of belonging is denied.

The everyday mobility patterns of refugees in their new environment are significantly shaped by their migration experience (Hanson, 2010). A number of participants indicates that their mobility in Syria was different in terms of the used means of transport or that it was more restricted due to cultural norms. In their new settings they are experiencing a certain degree of freedom and independence. As an example, in Kinda's narrative, she explains the changes in the way she moves and her newly gained freedom:

I didn't even use the bus when I went out [back in Syria]. My husband would take me by car wherever I wanted to go. If I have an event to attend, my husband would give me a ride there and pick me up after I finish. Here I have more freedom, but it is not that I'm not adapted. No, actually it is the opposite, each person goes through situations and they just have to adapt. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

The change in the means of mobility has emerged in many of the participants' narratives. Salwa also relates to such changes concerning the use of public transportation and adaptation:

We had a car ... it is fine, I adapt. People have to climb the ladder from the bottom up, it is normal; but for my husband, it is difficult because he used to live in luxury. At the beginning he found it very hard but now he got used to it. (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019)

While Mona had been occasionally using public transportation back in Syria, she talked about how she is not used to life in a big city like Milan. Mona spends one hour and a half on her way to work every day. Although she got used to using the metro system now and has realized how fast it is, she thinks that it does not save much time for her as she lives far from work:

My father used to drive me to school, and I would go back walking or using public transportation. If I woke up late and it's raining, I would take a taxi. But generally, it was my father who took me to school on his motorcycle. It was much easier ... the first time for me to ever see a metro was here ... Moving with the metro is easy, maybe saves time, but for me it doesn't save any time, because I was used to a small city where it takes half an hour walking to reach the farther destination or an hour. while here, with the metro you travel long distances also in an hour. (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

On the other hand, two participants, Rawan and Farah emphasized the central role of the car in their lives in Syria, as they both started driving at a young age and experienced more freedom in their movement compared to other participants:

In Syria, it [travel] was all by car, all, all. If I want to go to my grandfather's house, I'd go with the car. Here it is all by metro and the bus. All by public transportation here. I wasn't used to public

transportation at all; there was public transportation in Syria, but we never used it because my father got us a car and I used to drive, as well as my brothers. Since I was fourteen, my father taught me how to drive—he taught all of us. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

I've been driving since I was sixteen years old. The first two years here, I used to take the metro but for me, this was upsetting. Although the metro is comfortable, I'm not used to taking the metro or the bus. Eventually I bought my car and I now drive to go everywhere. (Farah, personal communication, December 12, 2018)

In the light of Farah and Rawan's narratives, it is not surprising that Farah who had sufficient financial means bought a car two years after coming to Italy. In contrast, although Rawan was not able to do the same, she mentioned in another part of the interview that buying a car is a certain part of her future plan.

As previously noted, many of the participants are gained more mobility in Milan. However, in discussing the issue of safety with the participants it was noted that their movement continues to be limited in certain places and at certain times of the day. The participants' previous patterns of movement, in which they were reported to travel either accompanied by men or by means of a private car, gave them a sense of security. In the absence of this feeling, coupled with moving in new, unfamiliar environments they tend to restrict their mobility out of fear of harassment. This is in line with a large body of literature that argues that in some contexts, women can choose voluntarily to limit their movement in the city principally because of insecurity and fears of harassment or assault (Fenster, 2006).

In contrast, Farah explained that she feels safe moving in the city in general, even at nighttime:

Italy is good with regards to this point; I feel safe even when I walk after midnight. If I park my car far from my home, I don't feel there is any reason to be worried and in general the police is always around. (Farah, personal communication, December 12, 2018)

It is noteworthy that Farah has been living in the same area for four years. Her place of work is also in the same neighborhood as are the social spaces where she meets with her friends:

I didn't move from this area, I get attached to places ...When someone suggests that I move out, I say "no, no, here". I think this is also why I am working in [the same area], I'm afraid to go out. I feel as if I would be going to a whole new country, not just a new street and this frightens me. (ibid.)

Farah's feeling of security and safety is thus derived from comfort and familiarity with her environment as is clear from her description of how her movement is restricted to her neighborhood and her feelings about moving out of it. Another factor that distinguishes Farah from the other participants is that among all of them she is the only one who uses a private car in her daily travels, while the others rely on public transportation. This factor might be related to her feelings of safety as it coincides with studies about how women perceive private cars as a safer way of travelling (Schintler, Root, & Button, 2000; Ilahi, 2009).

Not all the participants shared Farah's feeling. Others expressed how they might feel unsafe and uncomfortable in a specific time of the day. Rawan and Lamia, for example explained that they choose not to go outside alone after it gets dark:

At night, I don't go outside because I see the people who drink, and smoke weed, so I never go out to public spaces like parks and narrow streets. I never go there at night because I know that I might get hurt. At night I don't go outside alone and when I finish school, I go home immediately—I never take a walk ... I don't have a pressing need to go out at night—I have all day. I don't have to go out at night. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

No, no. I don't like to go out at night alone, even in Syria, I wouldn't go out alone ... I don't have a problem to go out if it is me and the children with my husband ... maybe I get scared, I don't know, maybe it is cultural inheritance from mothers. Maybe that's it. I feel uncomfortable; not scared, but uncomfortable. That's why I don't like to go around alone after sunset and when it gets dark. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

While in some other cases, participants limit their use of specific parts of the city that they perceive as unsafe. In addition to parks and narrow streets that were mentioned in Rawan's narrative, others mentioned places like metro and train stations, public transportation or specific neighborhoods:

Sesto [San Giovanni], the area around the station is not so good. I don't know. I feel that people—it might be a wrong idea, but I feel that they sell drugs there. Sesto and Centrale, the central station. I don't know why but I don't like to go there especially alone. (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

... I don't like the train, if I have to take it to go outside Milan, I feel there is no one especially if it is empty, it is possible that someone can harm you especially if there is no control. I get really scared. I took it twice to go to Varese, I was really scared. I was alone in the early morning, I was praying and praying nothing would happen to me but at the same time, I don't think—what could happen? they won't slay you, I don't know. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

A: The places that we hear are not good, we don't even think about going there, and we don't try to know them.

E: They say for example, "in this street or this area, the rents are cheap, but it is not good for living; people smoke there", so we don't go. (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019)

This discussion of the restrictions on the participants' mobility does not imply that this issue is unique to the refugee women. As it was discussed and investigated in a large body of literature, local women experience the same fears in their daily use of the city. However, refugee women may experience a double jeopardy due to gender and racial discrimination. As Bhagat put it, "Women in the city suffer the consequences of being migrants and women, in addition to inherent sociocultural prejudices and economic deprivations. Migration adds to the existing baggage of inequality and discrimination" (Bhagat, 2017). This was illustrated in Salwa's narrative, when she was asked if she felt safe moving around and whether she goes out at night or not, saying "yes of course, sometimes I get scared but not too much ... [I'm scared] to meet someone racist and for them to harass me, that's it. This never happened to me till now" (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019).

Another participant, Rawan, who is wearing a hijab¹⁶, discusses her everyday practices that are associated with a feeling of discomfort and of being out of place. She talks about using the metro to go to school every day and how she is disturbed by the way people stare at her. Rawan is reminded that the way she dresses which is related to her own culture does not conform with the cultural boundaries of the community of belonging. Therefore, her right to belong is denied:

One time, on the bus, an old woman was staring and said to me, “why are you wearing this? what is its benefit? Take it off, maybe your head is dirty underneath, or you don’t have hair! Who dresses like this in summer? Are you killing yourselves in the summer for your religion? Take it off, it’s better than dying of the heat” ... Even in the metro, people stare a lot, a lot. They look at me from head to toe and at my hijab, but I don’t say anything I just got used to it ... I like to use the metro because it is a fast mode of transport, but I feel that everyone stares at me ... if I want to solve this problem so no one would stare at me, I wouldn’t go to school. I tell myself no, I will pretend I don’t see them and I will just go, I won’t let them stop my life, my life has to go on and I will ignore them. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

In this case, Rawan does not have an alternative mode of transport, so she has to endure these situations until she realizes her future plan of buying a private car. Contrarily, when she was faced with a similar experience in an Italian restaurant, a case in which there are alternative options for use, she decided to avoid such places altogether. As she mentioned later in another part of the interview, she usually goes out with friends for dinner in sushi places or a Syrian café:

The places where I don’t like to go to are Italian restaurants because all the customers there are Italians and they seem wealthy and arrogant. When I enter with my husband and my husband looks like Italians not Arabs, he is blond, they are narrow-minded. Even in Syria or Egypt, there are blonds, not all of us are dark-skinned, they think he is Italian and I’m an Arab ... They stare at the way I dress and how I talk. I try to pretend that I don’t care, I’m here to enjoy not to look at how people are staring at me. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

Rawan’s narrative reflects Alice Ludvig’s argument about the weaknesses of the intersectional approach while trying to use it in empirical analysis. She noted that in a particular situation it is difficult to recognize the significant differences that trigger acts of discrimination (Ludvig, 2006). In Rawan’s situation, as she is occupying different social locations and her difference is visible, it is not possible to know for a fact if she experienced discrimination just because of her race or for other reasons such as religion, class, gender or all of them together. In such cases, identity differences like gender, skin color and class do not add but multiply (ibid.)

For other participants such as, Salwa, speaking in the Arabic language in the metro was a trigger for an aggressive attack targeted at her and her husband by a fellow passenger. While they were in the metro, a man overheard them talking in Arabic and he angrily said, “enough, don’t speak Arabic ... speak in Italian”. According to Valentine et al., “speaking a given language in different spatial contexts can define individuals

¹⁶ The traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d.).

as ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’” (2008, p. 385). Salwa tried to calm the man down by speaking to him in Italian but her husband could not speak Italian:

I talked with the man and asked him why he is doing this ... he said because he doesn't want us to speak in Arabic. I told him ok we won't speak in Arabic. When the train stopped, he tried to force him [her husband] to get off but eventually, he got off while cursing us. (Salwa, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

The previous experiences were of the participants whose difference from the majority of the society is clearly visible. Identity markers such as race and language complicate these individuals' negotiations of belonging.

Alternatively, Mona believes that the way she looks, particularly having light-colored skin and hair and not wearing a hijab, makes her an invisible Arab and Muslim and might be the reason that she is treated differently. Up until the point of the interview, she said she had not experienced any discrimination:

I didn't face any [discriminatory] situations—direct ones—maybe because I don't wear a hijab, and my skin isn't dark to show that I'm an Arab. They always, always say this to me, “you don't seem as though you're an Arab”. Even the Arabs tell me this. (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

On the other hand, she believes that her invisible ethnicity increases the chances of being harassed by Arabs as they would not recognize her as ‘one of them’.

Honestly, I'd get scared when there are Arabs. Especially because I don't appear to be an Arab so anyone can verbally harass me. It happened to me a lot. I mean talteesh¹⁷ ... Yes [they speak in Arabic], and sometimes in Italian. I'd get scared of the Moroccans and Algerians, the Moroccans more. They are unsettling people, to be honest. (ibid.)

Farah had several negative experiences that made her feel unwelcome in Milan at the beginning. In her narrative she addresses the issue of who possesses the power to grant belonging; who really decides who is included and who is not:

People who enter the bar and say, “you are Syrian, why are you here? go back to your country”. In the beginning, I didn't reply but after some time I felt that I wasn't different from anyone here. They live here, and I live here, they pay taxes and so do I. I didn't take any money from the government; I came here with my own money. I have my own apartment and I pay the rent every month. I am following the law since the first day, so no one has the right to tell me to go back to my country. (Farah, personal communication, December 12, 2018)

This situation reflects Antonsich's argument, which was previously discussed in Chapter Three, that belonging cannot be considered as an individual matter (2010). Clearly, Farah considers herself a member of the Italian community even though she does not have the formal citizenship but based on the fact that she inhabits the city and fulfills her duties and responsibilities. Moreover, her legal status as a refugee

¹⁷ Talteesh means verbal harassment in Levantine Arabic dialect.

grants her the right to reside in Italy. However, this alone is insufficient to grant belonging if she is not accepted by the receiving community.

This argument was reflected once more in Kinda's experience, she explains that when she was in Lebanon and was preparing to come to Italy and start the process of claiming belonging in the host community, she had to adjust the way she dressed to be able to fit in:

In Lebanon, I was wearing a niqab¹⁸ but here, they are afraid of niqabis, so I had to take it off ... I came without it because in Lebanon they [the organization] explained the situation to us. They said, "that's the situation but it is up to you" ... I didn't take off the whole hijab I just took off the niqab. As the old saying goes, "necessity provides its own rules". (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

The above example shows that the boundaries of the community of belonging may be narrower than the geographical borders of the nation-state. And even if belonging is supported by political institutions, it is also contingent on recognizing and accepting diversity by the dominant group.

In her study about migrants' settlement in East London and Birmingham, Susanne Wessendorf noted that their sense of belonging to the new society is shaped by previous experiences of exclusion in their countries of origin and transit countries¹⁹. In Kinda's narrative, she expressed the impact of discrimination she had experienced in Lebanon on her life there:

Racism in Lebanon is indescribable. We stayed in Lebanon for around three years, racism made us wished we would have stayed in Syria instead. We wished we would have stayed in Syria and hadn't come to Lebanon because of racism. (Kinda, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

It [work in Lebanon] was exploitation; because you are Syrian you would work, work and work. For example, my husband used to leave at 6 o'clock in the morning and return at 6 o'clock in the evening for 700 dollars. These 700 dollars weren't enough for water; buying water or for electricity. You would pay money even for breathing. (ibid.)

Afterwards, when she was asked about her experience of discrimination in Milan, she compared her experience of discrimination in Lebanon with the situation in Milan:

Till now I didn't experience racism at all, against me or my children. My daughter wears hijab and didn't experience racism ... maybe you can face racist behaviors, I'm not saying there isn't any, but because I have lived in Lebanon and saw racism, I would say there is no racism here. [In Lebanon] I saw that if you take a taxi and he knows that you are Syrian he would make you get off. This is the least that could happen. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

¹⁸ A veil for covering the hair and face except for the eyes that is worn by some Muslim women (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d.).

¹⁹ "Transit countries are countries where refugees settle temporarily until they can be resettled in third countries ... In the case of Syrian refugees, they are settled temporarily in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt" (Nasser-Eddin, 2017).

It is notable that Kinda's experience of perceiving discrimination is influenced by her overall previous experience of exclusion in Lebanon. She experienced a high degree of discrimination that made her affirm that even if there is racism in Milan, it was not comparable to what she had faced in Lebanon.

In Lebanon, I was always scared [of harassment], but here I feel my right is preserved, if I complain there is justice. In Lebanon, as a Syrian, you have no rights. I feel that here if you work you would get a return, everyone gets their right, not like our countries even, Syria ... The strong intimidates the weak, but here I feel it is not like this. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Mona who also lived in Lebanon for a relatively short period of four months, also talked about the discrimination she and her husband had experienced in the labor market in Lebanon. She explained how she could not find a job for being Syrian, while her husband was able to find a job but was paid meagerly compared to Lebanese workers:

Our life in Lebanon was harsh, I was going to schools, I wanted to teach, when I was telling them I'm Syrian, they would say, "no, there aren't any jobs available". Why? "Because you are Syrian, you have your own schools in camps, if you want to work, go work with the Syrians". It was prohibited for me to work in Lebanon ... He [her husband] was [working], but if a Lebanese was doing the same work, they would earn 2000 dollars, while he was working for 700 dollars because he is Syrian. (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

City center as a mixed space

... there is the Duomo [places that she likes], when I go, for them, they think I'm from Dubai, they speak to me in English. They think I'm from Dubai and I'm rich. They welcome me and ask me to try perfumes when I'm shopping. It is funny ... I like to go there to walk around. I like Milan in general, all of it. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

I like the center very much it is the place where I go when I'm stressed and want to relax, I go to the Duomo ... going out and seeing people even if I won't buy anything, just to go around and see people having a nice time, in the holidays especially, makes me feel good. (Farah, personal communication, December 12, 2018)

I like to go to the duomo area, I don't know why I like it there. I don't go frequently of course; every couple of months. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

The city center was mentioned as one of the most favorite places by many of the participants in the city of Milan. It is a place of leisure activities and relaxing, a place in which they can easily fit in. In a study about migrants in Birmingham, Pemberton found that the city center attracts migrants because they perceive it as a "neutral diverse space, and generally absent of any politics of belonging" (Pemberton, 2017). In this diverse context, the presence of people from all over the world and of different races, religions and languages is the norm. Within these places difference become normal and overlooked. It gives the participants a certain degree of anonymity (Wessendorf, 2016). According to Tonkiss, this "ability to go unnoticed in the streets of the city has particular resonance for women and for others whose bodies are

marked in terms of difference” (Tonkiss, 2003, p. 301). As it was reflected in the narrative of the participants, this freedom might lead to developing a sense of belonging and the feeling of being accepted rather than alienated (Wessendorf, 2016).

I like it a lot and I have the memory of my marriage there. I like it and I feel comfortable there. There is a café there where I love to go to, it is on a high floor and you can see Milan from above. In fact, I like Milan. Many good events have happened here. (Salwa, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Salwa’s narrative illustrates how long-term memory is an essential factor in establishing a place-belongingness as previously discussed in Chapter Three. Her memory of her marriage ceremony is associated with the place where it took place. The accumulation of personal significant events such as the marriage, having her first child, etc. develop her sense of belonging to the places where these events happened.

To sum up, the narratives of the participants in this section illustrate the feelings of insecurity and exclusion that cuts across the daily practices of the participants, and consequently, interrupt the process of establishing a sense of belonging to the host country. On the other hand, the city center, the place that is characterized by the absence of politics of belonging offers the participants a safe refuge in which they can freely practice their right to belong despite their visible difference.

5.3 Relationships at the microlevel of the neighborhood

On the neighborhood local scale, developing weak ties with people who share the same geographical environment helps newcomers to feel ‘more secure and welcome in their neighborhood’, consequently increase the feeling of belonging and attachment to the host community (Buonfino & Thomson, 2007; Giuliani, 2003; Ryan, 2007). According to previous studies, the neighborhood scale is considered to be a key spatial level playing an important role in the settlement experience of the refugees, especially during the first years (Pratsinakis, Hatziprokopiou, Labrianidis, & Vogiatzis, 2017). In line with this, in her study of migrants’ sense of belonging, and the factors that can shape such a feeling, Susanne Wessendorf discussed the effect of the diversity as one of the main factors. According to the findings of the study, it is not necessarily that ethnic diversity of the city would affect the migrants’ sense of belonging, “but it is the neighborhood, the immediate locality in which migrants live, and the nature of social interactions with other residents in such areas, which crucially impacts on their sense of inclusion or exclusion” (Wessendorf, 2019).

Various kinds of social networks can provide support for refugee women to overcome the disadvantages of their situation. Louise Ryan, drawing from Schaefer et al., distinguishes between different support types; emotional, informational and instrumental support. While emotional support might be provided by family or friends who are not necessarily living in the same place, informational support may be available through acquaintances or work colleagues. Lastly she states that “instrumental support such as childcare is likely to be provided by someone who lives within one’s local neighborhood” (Ryan, 2007, p. 298). In fact, migrant women, especially mothers engage in localized networks through their childcare responsibilities, which

could be challenging due to the absence of kinship support, making neighborhood ties an important source for social capital (Ryan, 2007; 2011; Edwards, 2004).

5.3.1 To each their own

In general, the participants had similar experiences of social encounters with neighbors. While few of them maintain a contact with neighbors, the majority do not have a meaningful interaction with them. They also expressed how this is totally different from the situation back in Syria where they used to interact with neighbors on a daily basis and have a positive relationship with them. Some of them think that the reason behind this is mainly due to cultural differences and the fact that they are strangers to them, as shown in the following narratives:

There is no relationship at all because everyone is minding his own business ... All of them are Italians we have never had Arab neighbors ... Italians do not have family relations as we have, even in their family their relations are superficial. (Rawan, personal communication, December 15, 2018)

E: We just greet each other, because in Europe it is not like an Arab country, they don't have family relationships among themselves, so a stranger they don't know comes...

A: We are foreigners for them, strangers, they mind their own business, but they are polite. (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019)

We don't see them. We know just one. One time she gave my daughter a bike and sometimes she knocks the door if she wants something. It is very different [from Syria], especially in my parents' house ... my mother like people, I have five aunts who used to visit us, and we would go to them, also the neighbors. For me, before marriage, my time was full, either I go over to this neighbor or that neighbor. We were busy all the time. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Another participant, Mona believes that the lifestyle in Italy does not give opportunities for such relationships to develop:

There is no relationship, my former neighbor in Milan, I like her, and she is so nice and everything, but everyone is minding his own business. There is no relationship at all. My neighbors here, there is a woman next to me from Albania I think, it is also just greetings and that's it ... the reason behind this, in my opinion, is the long working time; I see my neighbor in the elevator, I don't see her during the day because I return and try to finish household work and she is the same. Maybe if she had had more time and me also there would have been more opportunities to see each other. But the shortage of time is the reason. (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019)

On the other hand, Farah thinks that the age difference could be the reason as she is in her thirties and all her neighbors are elderly Italian people:

Sometimes we greet each other in the elevator and that's it. I think this is because they are old. Maybe if there was someone young, like thirty or forty years old, she might say I want to try the Syrian food or drink coffee together, but the old people are different. The one on the floor under mine is sixty-seven and the rest are eighty or eighty-five. (Farah, personal communication, December 12, 2018)

5.3.2 Motherhood social networks

The everyday reality of migrant mothers provides opportunities to engage in different kinds of networks related to their responsibilities for their children (Ryan, 2011). In contrast to other participants, Salwa who is a new mother talks about the weak ties in the neighborhood scale with neighbors positively; both her former neighbors and the current ones. After moving from her old place, she maintained a good relationship with her Egyptian neighbor to the extent that she is willing to depend on her to take care of her baby in case she found a job (Salwa, personal communication, January 24, 2019). Their relationship has developed to a close friendship. Her friend became a 'family of choice' by practicing the role usually associated family members in providing support and care.

These relationships are considered as a source of social capital that provides "a counter-balance to the disadvantages that migrants may encounter in the destination society" (Ryan, 2011). One of these disadvantages for refugee women as expressed in one of the participant's words: "a woman's life is restricted in general especially as a refugee, the restrictions are much more because she doesn't have a support system that she can rely on; like a mother or close friend. That's why her options are fewer". Here Farah explain the difficulties that might face refugee women in the host countries. She was talking more specifically about difficulties related to work for mothers in the early years of motherhood. Similarly, Lamia also explains how her life here as a woman is difficult comparing to Syria due to the absence of social capital:

In Syria, there are people to help you in everything, if I wanted to buy some stuff, I would leave my children with my mother, just my daughter as my son wasn't born yet. But here, there is no one, you have to take your son and daughter with you. You feel that life is harder. Its every detail is harder. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Transnational relationships with families/friends back home continue to serve the emotional support factor even if they stopped to serve the instrumental support factor as indicated by many participants.

In contrast, Kinda came to Italy with her husband, two children and her mother-in-law. They are all living together in one apartment. She explains the positive side of what she considers an 'inconvenient arrangement':

The positive side is that she [the mother-in-law] stays with my children, I know if I leave the house there will be someone with them and they will be safe one million percent, as she worries about them more than me. (Kinda, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

On the other hand, Salwa talks about her good relationship with the current neighbors:

The important thing is that they are Italians, all of them ... They are all old, it is just me and my son, and they love him and love to play with him. (Salwa, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Salwa's weak ties with her Italian neighbors function as bridging social capital that gave her access to many resources. Firstly, they help her build language resources since she practices the Italian language with them. And secondly, she is introduced to the Italian culture by casual and frequent communication with the neighbors. As a result, she is acquiring knowledge that make her feel part of the Italian community and develop her sense of place-belongingness.

Two of the participants, Kinda and Lamia are both mothers of two, and are engaged in social networks through their children activities, mostly school-related. They both talked about their lack of knowledge about the school system when they first arrived which could have led to their children missing a year at school had it not been for the help they have received from other mothers they met from the school.

Lamia described the Syrian friend she got to know from her daughter's school. She explained the kind of help she offered in admitting her daughter to school and recommendations about school choice:

I remember when I first came, I went to the school for the registration, they told me to come next year. She saw me, and my daughter was with me. She asked me, "how old is your daughter?" I answered then she said, "did you register her in the school?", I told her that I don't know where and how. She said, "Ok, tomorrow we can meet, and I'll do the registration for you" ... She told me about a good school, which is the best school here. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Similarly, Kinda also explained how she met her Palestinian friend:

I have a Palestinian friend who helped me to register for his [her son] current school when the registration was opened ... I knew her through my son's school, she greeted me in the beginning and thought I'm Egyptian. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

However as discussed before while some of these networks provide a valuable social capital and access to information, some women may feel excluded. Lamia has a cordial relationship with one Italian mother from her daughter's school, she found the rest of the group of mothers quite unfriendly as they perceive her as an outsider:

Sometimes I go to pick her up from the school, many of the mothers try to avoid meeting my eyes so that they are not forced to greet me. If you greet them, they reply. I feel that maybe they are not bad people. Maybe they are hearing stories in the news, or they don't closely interact with us, or they experienced a bad incident and that's why they have the idea that these people are not good. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

5.3.3 Weak ties and access to language capital

The presence of weak ties in the neighborhood also offers opportunities to practice the language which was a main concern for most of the participants. They all consider the best way to learn the Italian language is by having a contact with local people. Some of them manage to have access to the Italian community as Salwa who went on to describe the way people were helping her to improve her language skills as she persisted to use the language. In general, these acts of kindness and goodwill influenced her decision to stay in Italy at the same time when other Syrian families who arrived with her were fleeing to Germany:

...as I did; when I was speaking, and I would pronounce a word in a wrong way, they were correcting it to me. This how I have improved. Here the Italian people are good, they would help you in the language, if you pronounce a word incorrectly, they would tell you the correct way, this is how good they are. In fact, that's why I have stayed here; they are very helpful in everything, they are very similar to the Arabs in this point. (Salwa, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Others expressed anxiety about their situation, Lamia who has been living in Italy for five years has reached the B2 level still considers the language as one of the main challenges that she is facing every day. She explains that in some situations not being able to fully express herself is a big issue:

Now I can manage with my life but with unease; for example, to understand or to not understand, repeat a word. You know they are not all so kind; some might talk to you slowly and make the words easy for you. And some others would turn their faces and speak fast then criticize you for not understanding. For example, I went yesterday to my daughter's doctor, he speaks in a difficult way even to my daughter, she is speaking fluently ... and she said, "I don't understand him". He speaks maybe with an accent, yet he looked at me as he was thinking that I'm stupid. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

In another part of the interview, she continues: "The issue of the language is causing me distress, it gives me a kind of paralysis ... You know when you feel that something is choking you all the time, every day. Everyday this issue is disturbing me (ibid.).

Others expressed distress about their language skills and how this may affect their chances of finding better jobs due to this lack of interaction with Italian people. Kinda believes that this is partially the resettlement organization's fault as they were responsible for their integration in the Italian society, and they should have provided these kinds of opportunities, while her fault was that she accepted this situation and did not try to change it:

I don't learn Italian in the language school. The language school doesn't teach the language, it teaches you just the grammar ... The language is very hard for me and you don't get to learn the language just from courses, you must speak with someone Italian. My Italian language is not good although I have been here for two years now ... It is both our fault and the organization's; they didn't provide interaction opportunities with Italians, there was no integration at all. Our fault is that we remained at home and their fault is that they didn't care. We didn't focus on learning the language, maybe we would be able to find better jobs. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

E: I also go to the course near the Duomo, I go there just to listen to Italian because there is no one to practice Italian with, no friends, you know. (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019)

The case of Amal is very different, she is 47 years old, her husband is missing back in Syria. She has been living in Milan for two years with her three children at the time of the interview. She has tried to learn the language but failed. She believes that this is not a big issue as she stays at home most of the time. At the same time, she understands the importance of learning the language for her children:

I keep forgetting it, I can't keep it in my brain at all ... it [taking an Italian language course] didn't work for me, my daughter can manage with the language. My son who is at school knows everything and my other son started learning since he began to work with Italians. But for me you can say, I'm staying at home so it is ok not to learn but they are young and can learn. To tell you the truth, my brain couldn't take it in, I forget it at once. (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019)

She further explains that she usually does not go out except to go to the supermarket and that she does not have any friends, neither Syrians nor Italians. She chooses to isolate herself due to a personality feature: “I don’t have any friends here, my family is a homebody²⁰, I don’t like to go outside, I don’t like to, except to go to the street market or Lidl and that’s it. We didn’t get to know anyone” (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019).

To conclude, this section illustrates the significant role of the neighborhood in establishing bridging relationships with the host community. It highlights how these relationships, whether with the neighbors or the school mothers’ group can provide the refugee women with access to different resources and support. Ultimately, help refugee women to overcome the disadvantages of their situation and increase their feeling of place belongingness.

²⁰ Homebody is a person who likes to stay at home, especially one who is perceived as unadventurous.

Chapter 6 | Cognitive maps

Chapter 6. Cognitive maps

This chapter discusses the cognitive/mental maps of the participants as a way to understand how the participants map their cities by points of references that are meaningful to them in their everyday routine practices. The importance of cognitive mapping is that it offers a subjective and qualitative understanding of the way people relate to the physical places of their everyday spatial practices. Cognitive maps comprise subjective knowledge of “the processes through which migrants’ organize their social and physical environment by selecting, emphasizing, and reorienting its various components” (Kochan, 2016).

The process of drawing the maps, followed by a collaborative interpretation of its meaning, has been an interesting exercise. Although some of the participants were reluctant to draw, they enjoyed describing what they drew afterwards. Sometimes they were surprised by what they drew as they expressed meanings unconsciously in the drawings and discovered them after they finished during the discussion.

One of the interesting examples of this was Salwa’s mapping experience. After she finished and while explaining her map of the past, she noticed to her own surprise that she drew natural features such as the sun, flowers, trees and the mountains in her map of the past while in the present she didn’t include any except for clouds:

My home, I drew the sun, but I didn’t draw it here ... I don’t feel it is bright here, these are clouds, just a practical life here ... Here is my childhood, family, our harah²¹, trees and flowers, children, bright sun. Although there are trees here, but I didn’t draw it, I don’t see them. (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019)

The participants’ drawings mostly represent their everyday life practices. The analysis of these maps builds upon the participants’ own analysis of their drawings and on themes identified in Fenster’s (2009) research, in which she draws from previous research on cognitive mapping. The choice was made to focus on the themes relevant to the aim of the study.

One critical point of focus is the geographical scale the participants choose to visually represent their environment. As will be discussed later, the choice of scale often indicates one’s habitual range. A second point of departure had to do with the location of the home in the participants’ maps and its size and relationship with other elements. This has revealed the centrality of the home in participants’ lives as well as the positive and negative feelings associated with it. At last, the influence of factors such as gender and socio-economic status on their spatial behaviors was also duly noted.

This chapter is structured according to the discussion of each participant’s two maps. Although eventually a number of themes appeared to be common between the participants, each map includes details that varied from one person to another as a result of their biases and personal experiences.

²¹ Harah: literally means an alleyway that is surrounded by a mass of buildings, it has an inherent meaning as a social and cultural unit.

6.1 Salwa: Belonging to childhood

In Salwa's map of the past environment (Figure 7), she drew a group of detached houses without mentioning which one her home was. Later on, when she was describing what she drew, she referred to the cluster of houses as 'our harah': "we were all together, I didn't draw my home because our harah was all my relatives' homes" (Salwa, personal communication, February 6, 2019). Meanwhile, in her map of the present (Figure 8) she drew a similar group of tall residential buildings without specifying which one was her own building exactly, but her explanation of the rationale behind it was different: "it [my building] is the same as any other building, there is no difference". This feeling of detachment is consistent with previous statements she had made in her interview:

No, of course [it is not my home] I'm a guest, I'm restricted with my guests, who I let in, I have to tell them [the resettlement organization]. It is their right though, because I'm their guest, I can't deny that I'm their guest. This is the reality, I don't pay the rent, I can't fool myself and say I'm not a guest, I'm a very realistic person.

Salwa's map of the present visually represents the scale of the neighborhood in which she lives and focuses on that. Inside it, she drew detailed elements in her neighborhood that are significant in her daily life such as the supermarket, a bus stop, a pharmacy, a tram, a bus and streets.

The appearance of these elements such as the bus and the tram in her map of the present reflects the previous discussion in Chapter Five on how Salwa's used means of transport changes from private cars to public transportation modes. Other elements such as the supermarket and the pharmacy also illustrate the transition into new acquired gender roles that had previously been absent from her life. As she mentioned, "everything here is new for me, like I'm a newborn. *Everything is new*".

Salwa connects between the feeling of belonging and the childhood environment. For her, to be able to belong is conditional on the ownership of a home and being surrounded by family. Factors that are absent from her current environment coupled with her fear of the future:

Wherever you go, you belong to your childhood environment, although I had my son here and I'm so happy—my son means a lot to me. But if it were up to me, I want him to live with me there [her village in Syria] ... Here [in Milan], I'm scared of the future, there is no future, it is unknown, you don't have a home or anything while in your country, you have a home, a life, and a family.

Salwa tried to illustrate the peacefulness of her childhood environment in contrast to the environment she is currently living in, which she describes as "a practical city". For example, she filled her map of the past with children playing or going to school, while people depicted in her map of the present are going to work as she indicates later while discussing the maps. The following narrative illustrates Salwa's nostalgic description of her childhood village and her longing for lost places:

[my village] is very beautiful, the sea was nearby but I didn't know how to draw it, it is behind the mountain, there are mountains and a valley. On the borders with Lebanon, a river separates between us and Lebanon, a small river crossing the street. In winter, it is full but in summer it is



Figure 7 Salwa's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria

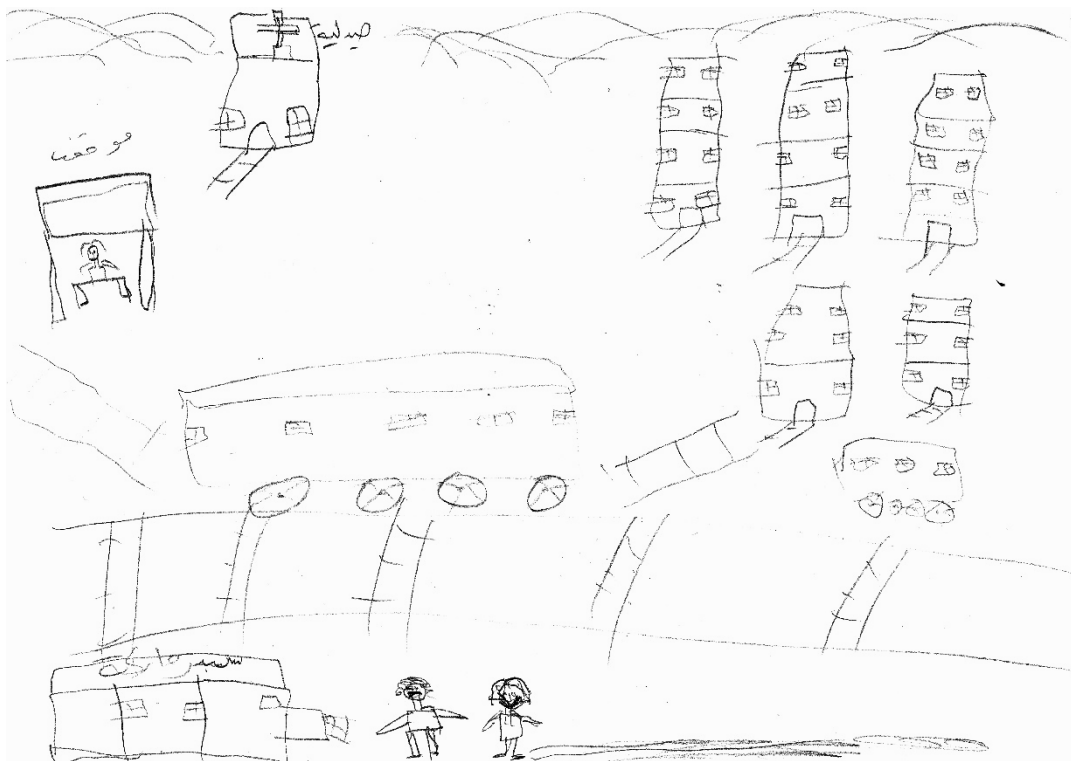


Figure 8 Salwa's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan

like a street, you can cross it and be on Lebanese lands. It is very beautiful, I don't want to remember it during the war, if I try to remember it during the war I can't understand, I don't want to remember the war.

6.2 Kinda: Longing for home

Kinda grew up in Homs until she was 16 years old and got married and moved to her husband's city where she lived for around eight years before leaving Syria. When Kinda was asked to draw her daily environment back in Syria, she chose to draw the daily environment of her childhood. She explained:

Aleppo is my own residence and my children's, but it has to be Homs, I feel the real happiness was in Homs ... This is Syria for me, Homs, I don't know why I didn't love Aleppo, I just didn't. (Kinda, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Kinda's map of the past environment (Figure 9) is rich with details that symbolize her nostalgic feelings for her childhood environment. She included in her drawings elements that represent both personal and collective memory, drawing the places of all her childhood activities and explaining them afterwards in detail. Her old school is a central figure in the map as she indicates that although it was her school for a short time, she spent the best time of her life there. She also drew a tree as a representation of the park, which she could not draw in full, where she used to go and play as a child. Kinda also wrote the name of one of the main streets in the city explaining its significance for her:

This street was like the Duomo [area] here, everyone goes there; there were clothes shop, shawarma²² restaurants, a small park and many shops. You could just walk around, there was life. The good thing about Syria is that we had a life, here it is stagnation.

She drew a mosque which she later revealed had both personal and collective memory as she gave more details about it:

This is a mosque, I will write its name down [because], it doesn't look like this. It was near my grandparents' home and there was a huge yard where my mother used to take us to play. It is a symbol in the heart of the city. Whenever you ask about Khaled Ibn Al-Walid Mosque, people would guide you to it, it is a big mosque and witnessed several massacres.

Another element that was associated with collective memory of the community is the clock tower, which she drew on the left side of the map, as it is connected for her with the revolution and the massacre that happened at this famous landmark:

Homs's clock tower is famous—a massacre took place there, the biggest one—Homs's clock tower witnessed the revolution and blood, the ground of Homs is scented with the blood of the martyrs, nobody knows where they are. They died or were imprisoned, because it is unfathomable that they all died. Nobody knows their fate for sure.

²² A type of traditional Middle Eastern food.

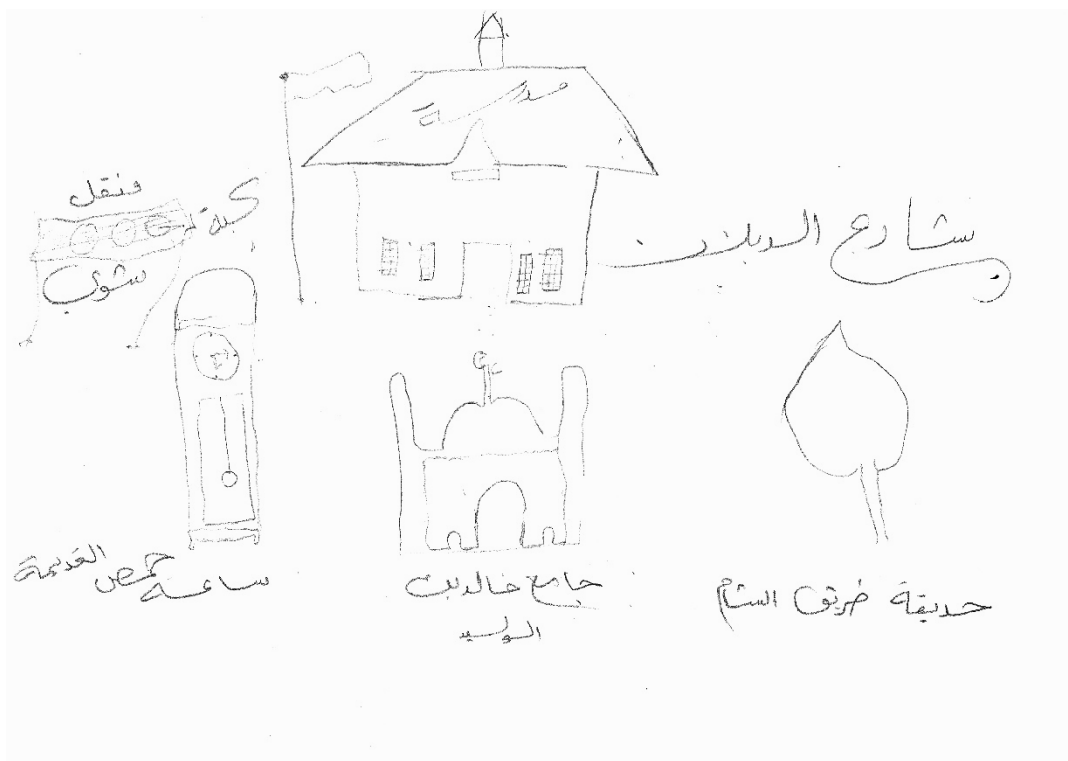


Figure 9 Kinda's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria

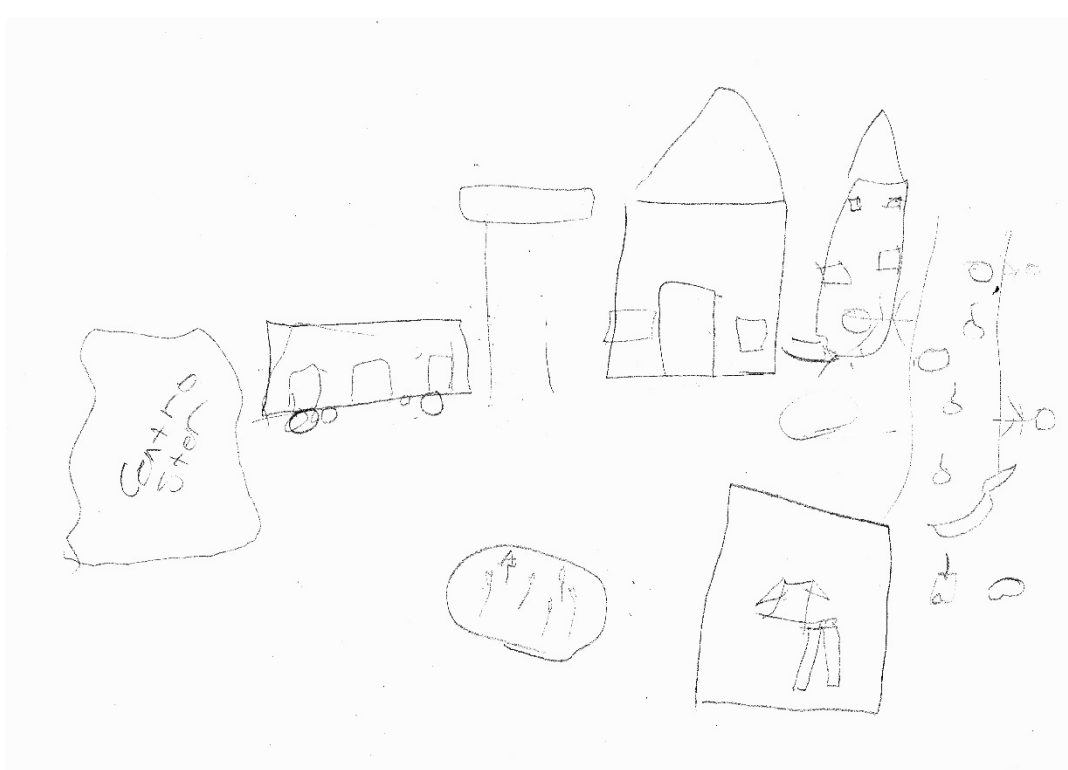


Figure 10 Kinda's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan

As previously discussed in Chapter Three, the key role of memory as an expression of belonging and identity is clearly evident in Kinda's map of the past. Kinda's narrative reflects her longing for people, places and memories. Tovi Fenster connected between nostalgia and belonging, "Nostalgia is associated with belonging, belonging to family, friends and the community" (Fenster, 2004, p. 250). This feeling of nostalgia for the past can prevent individuals from belonging to the present life (ibid.).

I left my family, my mother, my siblings, and my memories but when I see the situation there—no electricity, no water and, no gas—I don't wish to go back to this situation but I'm longing for Syria. I cry a lot when I see videos about Syria especially Homs and I think about what happened to us, what happened to me; where I was and where I am now and why.

It is interesting to note that the home as a physical place is absent from her map. She only mentioned the area where it was located later in the discussion. This is linked to the memory attached to this place as she explained:

I don't know, our home was old, I love it but—what can I say? It is not like it doesn't have memories, it has memory and I love it, but it witnessed many fights between my parents. My mother is very, very organized and likes cleanliness, our home was very old but you would find it very neat. But my father used to pick quarrels, so I feel my mother's suffering in it.

Despite the negative memories connected to her home, Kinda expressed her nostalgic feeling for the food rituals that were taking place in it:

What I remember from my home is that my father used to let me sit beside the grill and give me kibbeh²³, he would make some for me because he used to spoil me. This is the coal, and this is the metal grid on which to put the kibbeh—the smell was amazing. The day of making the grilled kibbeh was a festival for us, we used to eat in the big terrace, and we prepared the food next to the grill to eat immediately.

It seems that Kinda's home back in Syria was actually the city itself, where she felt comfortable and had a sense of belonging to particular places or, in her words, "There [in the city] I feel I exist". She goes on to explain that she was free in Homs to be herself, and nobody tried to restrain her, a situation that has changed after she got married and moved to another more conservative city: "I was free [in Homs] but when I got married—even girls there [in Aleppo] are restricted". Belonging to Kinda is conditional on freedom and the ability to express herself.

Similar to her map of the past, Kinda's map of Milan does not include her home (Figure 10), albeit for different reasons. She explained this by saying: "it [the home] is not mine. I feel threatened there, I don't feel stability in this house, I'm afraid [while being] in this place especially when they told us that we have to move out".

In her map of Milan, Kinda drew, as she explained also in the interview, the change in her daily routine practices and responsibilities:

²³ Kibbeh is a Levantine traditional dish.

[Back home] I wasn't responsible for anything. My husband was responsible for everything, he would bring anything, he even had a worker working for him to attend to our needs. I had never been to a grocery store. I just went out for shopping and visits. When I came here, I became responsible for almost everything because my husband's work situation doesn't allow him to help me. His work is complicated, and everything is so far.

Kinda drew her children's schools and the speech center which her autistic son visits, as she is the one who is responsible for their caring duties. She also drew places that are linked with household needs such as the street market and the mall. Similarly to other participants, she drew a bus that illustrates the change in the means of transport for her. As other studies have shown, for mothers, these daily gendered uses of spaces can increase their feelings of attachment to places (Fenster, 2005). This is especially relevant in Kinda's case, because these uses are associated with positive feelings towards their respective places. In the discussion afterwards, she referred to the speech center as her "most favorite place in Milan" as she connects it with her son's development and the improvement of his condition. At the same time, Kinda considers her situation in Milan as generally more liberating than the one she had back in Syria.

6.3 Amal & Eman: Isolated at home

Looking at Amal's maps of the past and the present environment, it is apparent that the home is the central space in her cognitive mapping (see Figure 11 and 12). She started with drawing where the home is located in both maps on the upper right corner, drawing it relatively bigger than the other elements. From the home, she drew lines to connect it to the outside environment. After drawing the other elements on her map, she asked her daughter to label each location with what it represents for her²⁴.

This is logical in this case, as Amal is a housewife and during the interview, she emphasized the significance of the home in her life. She also described herself as a homebody explaining that she does not like to go outside in general. Her mental maps reveal that this preference is limited to her present life in Milan. Her map of the past illustrates a wider spatial context in comparison to her map of the present. The map of the past shows physical elements associated with her close family relationships as they were labelled: "my daughter's home", "my other daughter's home" and "my parents' home". Her map is a representation of the importance of family ties in her previous life. She also drew places of leisure activity such as a park and restaurants representing chosen places of leisure for her and her family.

These relationships disappeared in her current map and are substituted with elements related to her changed gender role of carrying out household duties such as the supermarket and the street market. Amal's role has changed after she came to Italy, as she explains:

My husband was bringing us everything we need, we didn't buy anything, everything was brought to us at home. We didn't have to worry about anything. That's why I'm telling you that after we left Syria we are living in a whirlpool; I feel like I'm living in a whirlpool and can't get out of it. (Amal & Eman, personal communication, March 2, 2019)

²⁴ Amal is illiterate

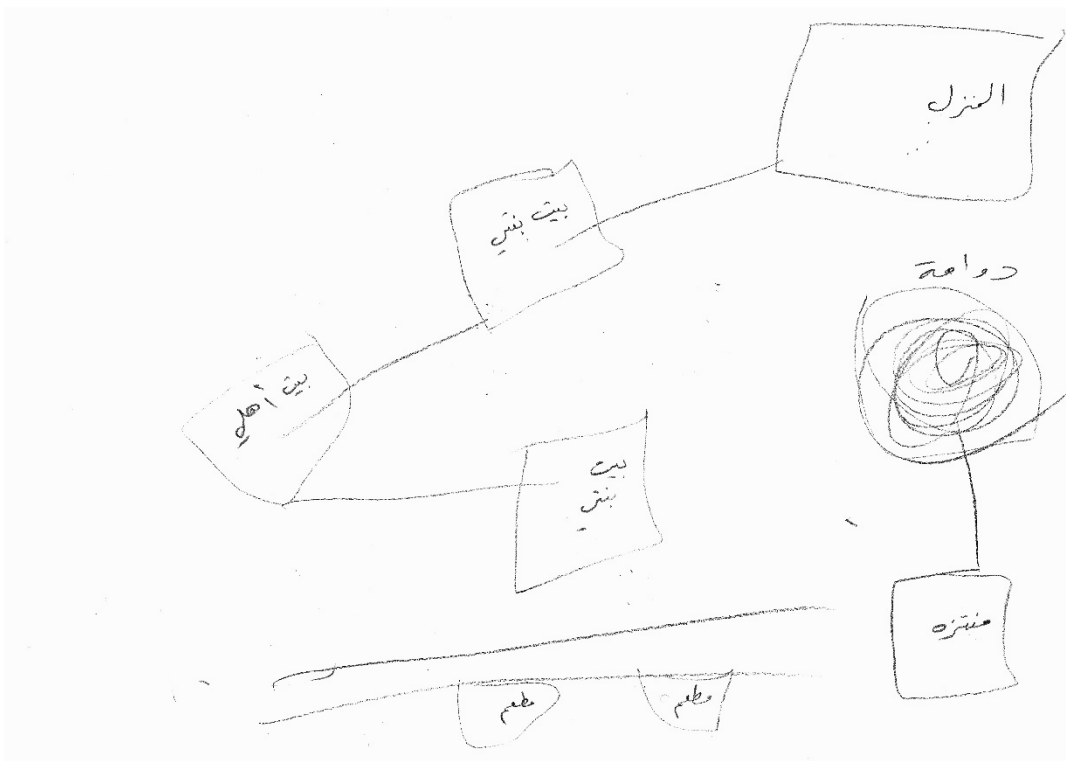


Figure 11 Amal's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria

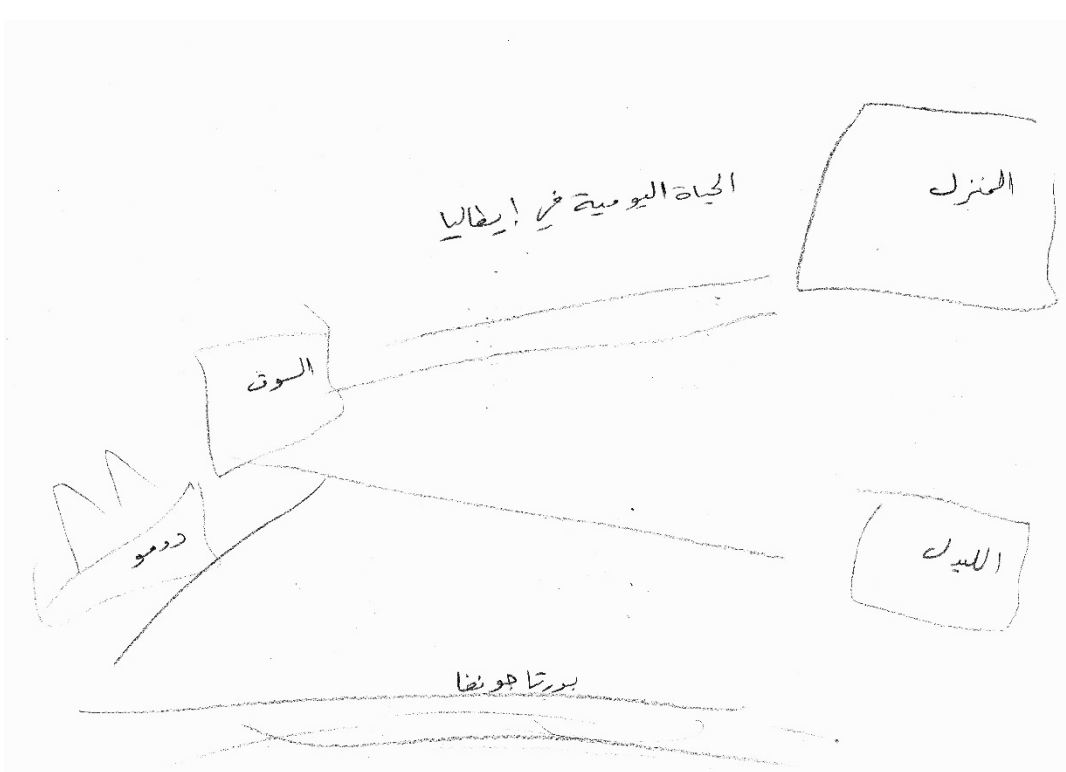


Figure 12 Amal's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan

Amal's map of the present symbolizes the hardship of her situation, as she expressed that her life after she left Syria is resembled by living in a whirlpool due to her disadvantaged economic situation and housing instability. Her new disadvantaged situation also changed her patterns for leisure activities. Since the option to dine out became inaccessible to her economically, the duomo and the canal in the Porta Genova area have come to represent accessible (and free) places for relaxation for her.

Amal's daughter, Eman, explained how their economic situation and the absence of extended family changed the nature of their activities:

Our relatives used to visit us, they would come to us one day, and we would go visit them another day. We used to go to the park, or restaurants especially on Fridays, many places, but here if you want to go outside it is impossible to go to a restaurant, it is expensive.

Similar to the way Amal draws her maps, the home in Eman's map of the present (Figure 14) appears as the anchor point from which she moves in her daily life in the city: "home is security for sure—at least you have a place to sleep; it is where I come back when I go out". Despite the centrality of the home, for her, it is associated with instability and sense of discomfort as she wrote in words in her drawing of home in Milan.

Eman tried to express her loss of family and stability. In her map of the present, inside the home she drew her mother and her two brothers. While in her map of the past (Figure 13), home contains her family members as she indicated: "the family; my mother, my father, my siblings, my nephews. There was safety, calmness, family and stability". In addition to that, she drew another building as a symbol of her relatives' different homes in different areas. She also drew other elements that are absent from her map of the present such as her school, a park and restaurants.

In her current life, Eman engages with the city more than her mother whose movement is restricted to the area around her home, where her daily needs, including grocery shopping are met at walking distance. On the other hand, for Eman who takes Italian language courses outside her neighborhood, the metro is an element that appears in her map of present.

Similar to the way Salwa draw her maps, Eman drew the sun and flowers only in the past environment, but not in the new. Natural features such as mountains, flowers and trees in visual materials tend to represent nostalgic feelings to the homeland (Jung, 2014).

To summarize, as discussed before in Chapter Three, Amal and Eman's repeated daily routine practices and interacting with the environment through everyday walking to the street market or the supermarket can develop their sense of attachment and belonging to the neighborhood. However, this seems to be hard to achieve as these practices are associated with a feeling of discomfort. As discussed by Tovi Fenster, a feeling of comfort is prerequisite to develop a sense of belonging to one's environment (Fenster, 2004).

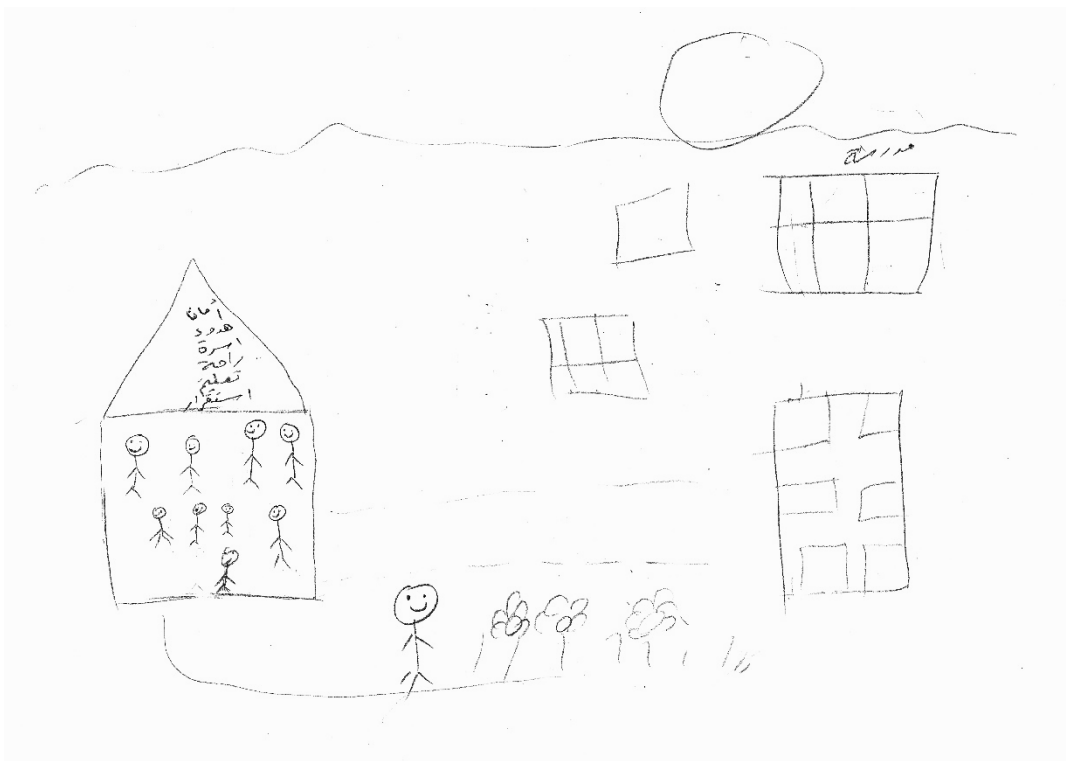


Figure 13 Eman's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria



Figure 14 Eman's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan

6.4 Mona: Life on the road

Mona's current environment map (Figure 10) is predominantly composed of a network of streets, as she explains: "our life is all on the road. That's why I drew it big. Traveling for three hours every day. This is the most disturbing thing for me here" (Mona, personal communication, March 9, 2019). On the upper right side²⁵, she drew her home. In terms of scale, it is interesting to see that the size of her home is similar to the size of other components of the map such as her laptop—which she explains represents her relationship with her family and her students—as well as the park where she usually goes with her husband in their free time.

Mona's map visually represents her sense of discomfort in her new environment with the centrality and the size of the street network compared to other elements which bring her comfort, such as her home.

While discussing the issue of comfort and attachment, she said that she feels comfortable in her home with her husband. She explained that in general she feels attached to Italy to some extent as she got to know people who supported her. Another reason is that she is now capable of financially supporting her family back in Syria. Ultimately, however, she concludes, "but belonging no, it is [towards] Syria".

By looking at her map of Syria (Figure 9) to understand how she expressed her sense of belonging, it is interesting to see the scale in which she chose to draw her past environment in comparison to how detailed she visualized her map of the present. She drew the entire map of Syria and in the middle of it she wrote the name of her city. Later, she indicated that her city located almost at the center of Syria. She then drew three hearts and filled each of them with a word; family, friends and school. Mona's reason for this way of representation is that this is the best way to illustrate that:

What actually matters for me [in her city] is the school where I was teaching as I was a teacher, the family, my family, and my friends ... whatever I try to draw, it is not enough. So, I wanted to express it with a heart. Because they are truly a piece of my heart, even when I was there, they are just that".

Mona's sense of belonging is linked to people more than to places as she herself mentioned later in the discussion after she drew the maps that the most important thing for her is the people not the places.

6.5 Lamia: Living in social vacuum

Similarly to Amal and Eman's maps, the home is a central space in Lamia's daily life; it is the starting point of her representative cycle of daily practices in both her maps of the past and the present (Figure 17 and 18).

In her map of the past, interestingly, although she drew her marital home, the central figure of the home was not hers but her parents'. In her own analysis of the maps she explained this choice:

²⁵ Arabic writing goes from right to left. Thus, many of the participants' choice to draw home on the upper right corner is logically congruent to the representation of a 'starting point'.

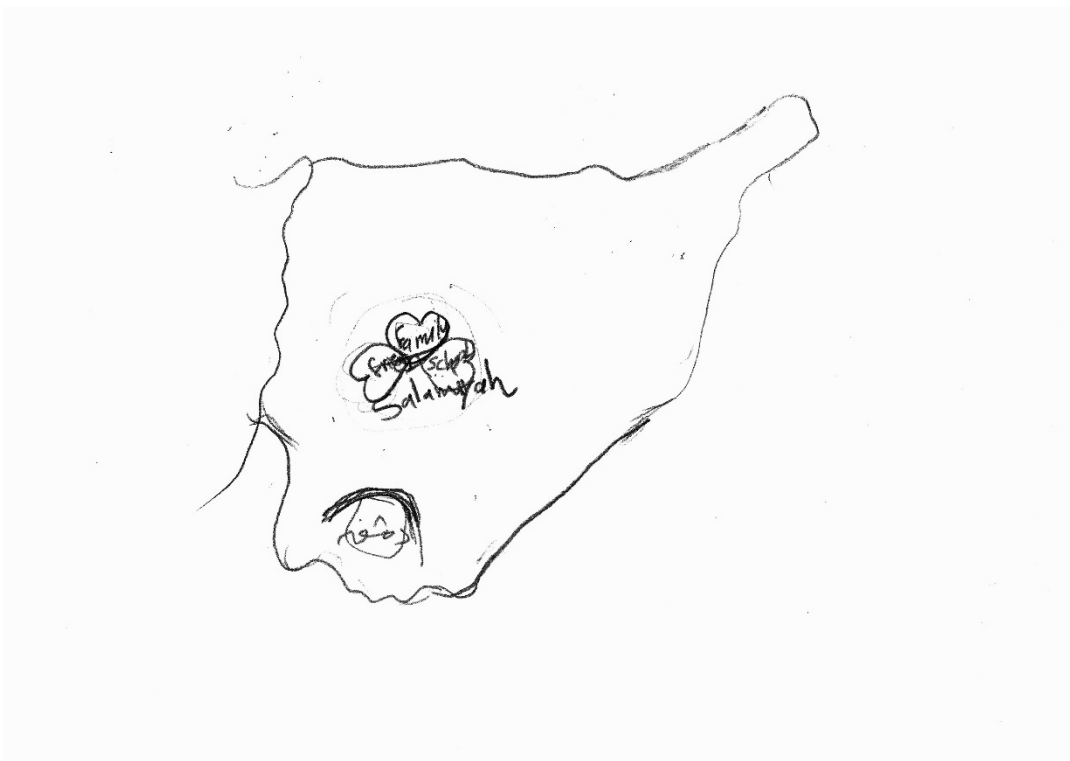


Figure 15 Mona's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria

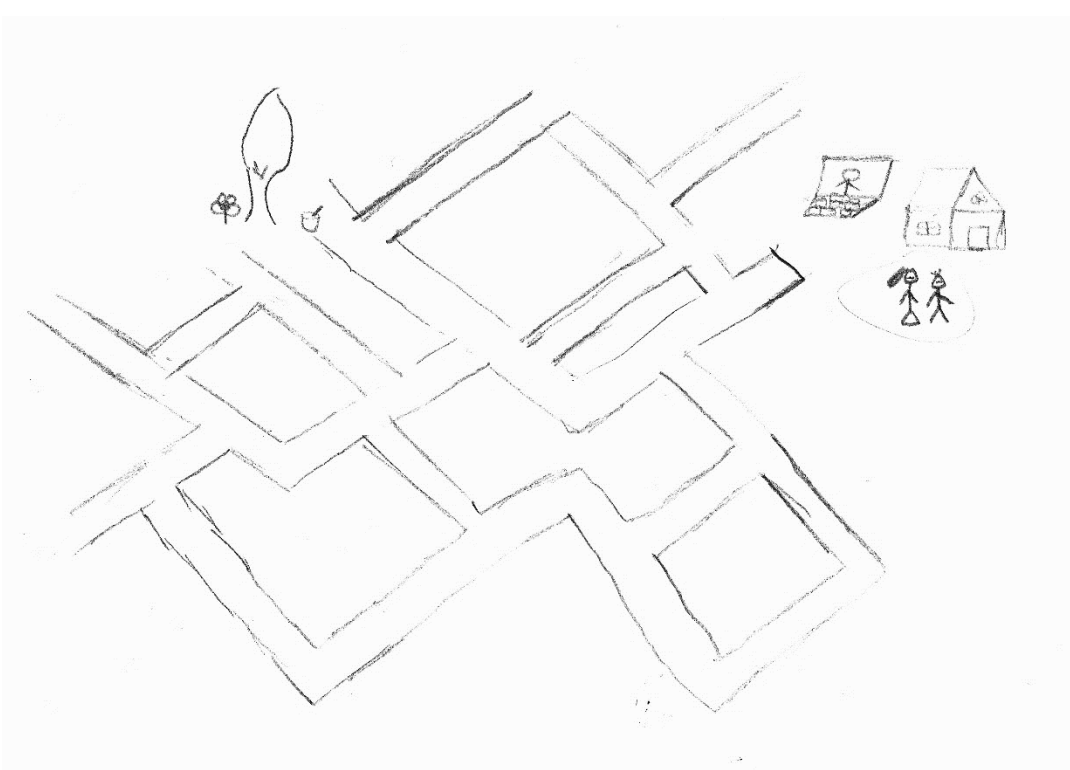


Figure 16 Mona's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan

I didn't like this home, as a place, I like the events that happened there; it is where I got married and had my daughter. I like the ties that formed there, but I didn't like it. If I had the means, I would have changed it and bought another place. This is because I did not choose it. When I got married, they [her husband's family] had already bought it and my mother-in-law furnished it. So, I didn't feel that it was mine ... I also didn't choose this one [her home in Milan] or furnished it, but it was closer to my taste, that it is why I feel attached to it. (Lamia, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

In Lamia's narrative, she addresses the issue of having control and being able to make choices, which was underlined in Chapter Five, in developing a sense of attachment and belonging to her home. The lack of choice back in Syria developed a sense of detachment while in Milan, although it was also missing, she developed her sense of attachment based on taste proximity.

Another significant factor in developing a sense of belonging, which Lamia referred to while comparing between her childhood home and her marriage home in Syria, is the spatial knowledge of the surroundings and the length of stay in the neighborhood:

Here [her marital home] I lived for four years while in my parent's home, I had lived for 20 years. For sure the attachment to your parents' home is stronger, it is your neighborhood and you know everything there. I have left this [marital] home without knowing the neighborhood at all, maybe just one or two streets. But there I had the knowledge, especially because my parents' home was in the center of the city and everything was at a walking distance.

Lamia's map of the past illustrates her dynamic social life and leisure activities. This is shown by the number of people in the map. The difference between the number of people in her maps was mentioned in the discussion after the drawing process, along with what they represent. She said:

Those are the friends, we used to go out regularly—there was a social life in general ... this was my other social life, it was more related to relatives ... this social life was in our country and we don't have it here. This is a summary. It [her life] was between leisure activities, family, etc. these are the places where I used to go and the ones that I loved to go to.

In her map of the present she drew symbols of people to represent just her nuclear family. Lamia works from home for her catering service project, which explains the dual centrality of the home (as home and office) and explains as well the detailed sketch of her kitchen next to the home. The importance of economic participation for refugees is illustrated in her statement: "here [in her home], you are learning, you feel that you are doing something to improve yourself and solve your problems. Therefore, there is a sense of comfort to some extent, but there isn't a place where I feel completely comfortable".

The reason behind the sense of discomfort in Lamia's case is the lack of financial security, while in Syria, she explained that, she was not troubled with these kinds of issues; she felt more comfortable. As with many other participants, Lamia's map of current environment reflects how the gendered dimension of everyday life affects her daily use of the city, having drawn her children's schools and the supermarket as part of her environment.

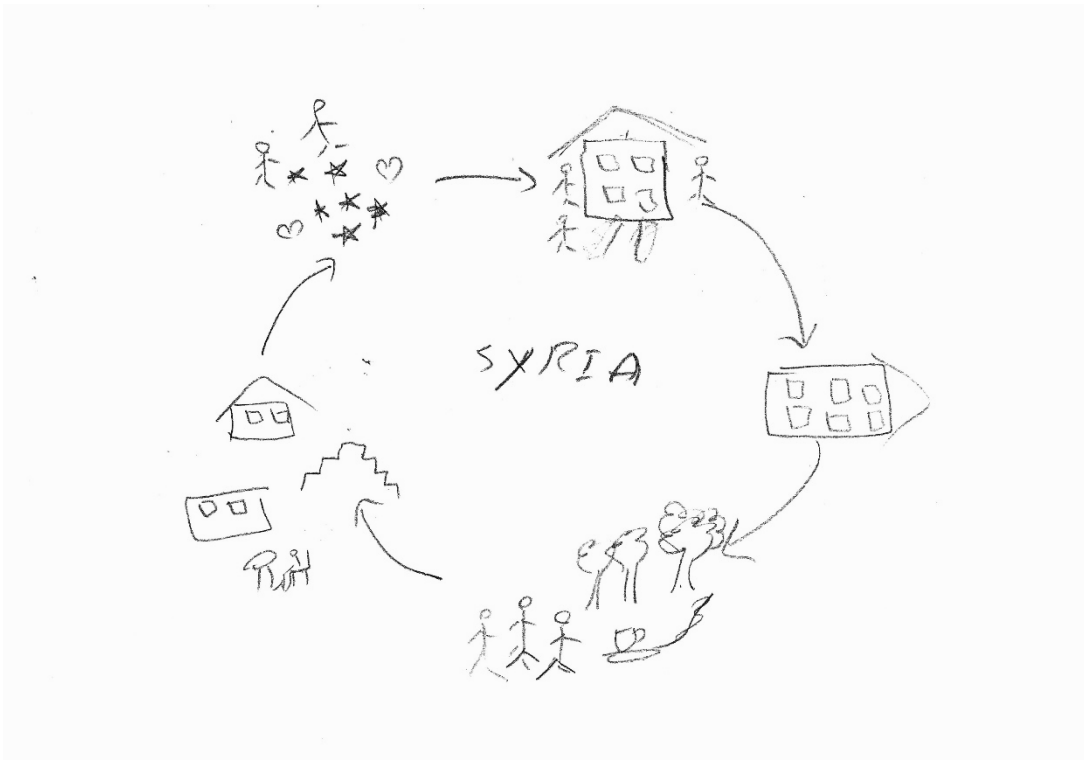


Figure 17 Lamia's cognitive map of her past environment in Syria

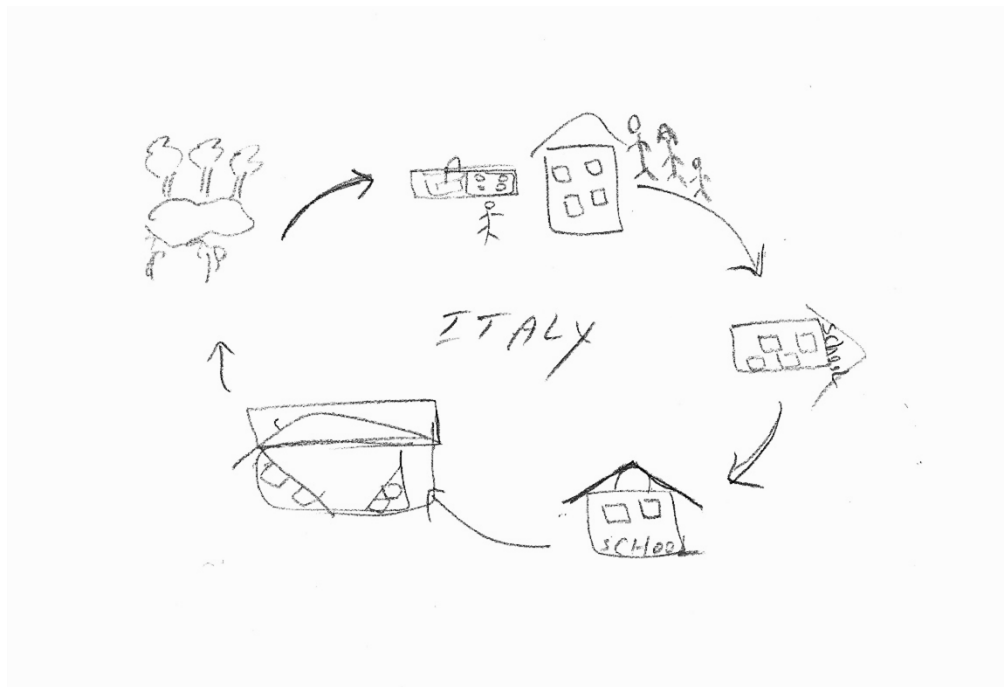


Figure 18 Lamia's cognitive map of her present environment in Milan

To conclude, in analyzing the different cognitive maps of the participants, significant changes can be noticed between their past and present daily environments. These major changes are centered most prominently around their changed gendered roles in their new environment which often entails specific uses of the city.

Most of the participants' choice of the scale at which they describe their own environment conveys a localized way of life in the current environment that is usually concentrated at the scale of the neighborhood. Hesitation to interact with the rest of the city has to do with a fear of use as well as a feeling of non-belonging as they explained in Chapter Five. Another significant factor which influences this limited interaction is related to their employment situation, as most of the participants, at the time of the interviews, were unemployed or working from their homes. Employment outside of the home unit would expose them to a wider scope of the city and familiarize them further with the wider environment.

The participants' feelings of belonging to specific places are strongly connected to places and memories in their past. Moreover, the presence of extended family and friends had enriched their social lives back in Syria and developed their sense of belonging to the community. In their current environment, although belonging is missing, some participants expressed their feelings of comfort in their homes, while home for others was a contested place due to the instability of their situation or their lack of sense of control over it.

Chapter 7 | Conclusion

Chapter 7. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to assess to what extent the sense of belonging of Syrian refugee women redevelops in their city of refuge; as a way to understand their overall settlement experience. Within this research, multiple debates have been introduced and explained; starting with the meaning of belonging and particularly in the context of migration and its different and interrelated dimensions that influence how this sense of belonging is experienced, performed and practiced.

The everyday dimension of belonging was investigated especial in relation to the notion of ‘the right to the city’, as a specific form of citizenship between inhabitants and the city, and how it lays the groundwork for the individual to fully engage the city spaces, through which they can communicate their sense of belonging.

In general, a sense of belonging can be defined as “a desire for attachment in order to negotiate one’s identity and to feel part of a larger group” (Huizingaa & Hovenb, 2018). According to Antonsich, the discussion around belonging is centered around two dimensions; the first is belonging as personal feeling of place attachment (place-belongingness) and the second is belonging as a collective practice influenced by a complex set of power relations defining who belongs and who does not (politics of belonging).

While investigating the daily life of the Syrian refugee women in the early stages of their settlement, it became evident that they are facing significant challenges in developing their sense of belonging to their new environment. These challenges are related to both their personal feeling of place-belongingness as well as the collective practice of belonging.

A principal argument presented in this research attests that the daily routine practices of the participants and their ways of using the city is influenced by their gender identity. Gender is considered as an integral aspect of the refugees’ experience, starting from their flight experience and extending throughout the asylum period.

Refugee women during settlement in the host countries face challenges in negotiating their gender roles that may be subjected to change from the situation before displacement. In this research, these altered gender roles were strongly present in the participants’ experiences. Due to their economically disadvantage position, the participants took up new economic responsibilities in addition to their role as the main caregiver in the household. For some, this meant a newfound freedom and sense of empowerment, while for others, there was a clear expression of feeling overwhelmed by these new responsibilities especially, in the absence of social networks of support to rely on.

These gender roles affect the spatial behaviors of the participants, as it was illustrated in their narratives and in the cognitive maps. Daily practices and engaging the cityscape constitute people’s image of the city and create a sense of belonging to visited places. As many studies show, sense of belonging can grow with time and through daily routine practices due to the accumulation of experiences. The everyday use of the city as experienced by the participants revealed a clear gendered dimension; places they go to being closely connected to their household caring duties, such as their children’s schools and supermarkets. This frequent interaction with city spaces provide a potential to increase their sense of place-belongingness.

Running daily life errands help them become familiar with the urban setting and give meaning to these places, ultimately developing a sense of place attachment.

However, these daily practices usually do not take place in neutral space. Within these daily spaces, the meanings and practices of belonging are being contested on a daily basis. The findings of this research suggest that although the participants experience a certain degree of mobility freedom in their new environment, there are obstacles that prevent them from realizing their right to fully use city spaces. These barriers are related to different yet overlapping factors. First, with the feeling of discomfort—and in some cases, insecurity associated with the change in the mobility patterns of the participants in their new settings, they tend to restrict their movement. As stated by the participants that while back in Syria they used to move using private cars and usually accompanied by men, in Milan they shifted to use public transportation and started moving alone more frequent. Secondly, their use of the city is also influenced by the politics of belonging occurring in public urban spaces. In some contexts, their visible difference marks them as ‘out of place’, which leads to feelings of discomfort or in other extreme cases, they might experience discriminatory behavior. In either case, they tend to avoid places in which they might face such situations.

The research underlines the importance of examining the situation of refugee women from an intersectional approach to understand how they experience simultaneous disadvantages based on the intersection of multiple power relations such gender, race, ethnicity, and finally the refugee status. During the interviews, the participants reported instances when their claims of belonging were denied leading them to feel excluded.

The significant role the spatial level of neighborhood plays in the settlement experience of the Syrian refugee women was emphasized in the research. The interaction with people who shares the same geographical environment can shape the refugees’ feelings of attachment to their community. These kinds of relationships that form on the neighborhood scale with direct neighbors or through schools networks for mothers acts as a source of social capital that can help the refugees overcome the disadvantages of their situation that may result from the absence of support provided by the social networks of extended family friends.

In this research, these kinds of weak ties proved an effective tool in providing access to resources and information. However, this was only in the cases where the participants managed to engage in such networks, which was not the case for the majority of the participants. Few participants engaged in bridging networks with natives, while for others, due to cultural differences and lack of language skills they could not manage to form such relationships. On the other hand, these participants engaged in co-ethnic relationships that, while they acted as a valuable resource, they could not reinforce a local sense of belonging as relationships with locals achieve. In essence, the lack of interaction with the host community may result in a feeling of isolation and exclusion.

Feelings of attachment and belonging are also about being safe and having a secure future. The participants did not express any feelings of insecurity regarding their legal situation; their main concerns were linked to the economic stability and security of labor and housing. The home particularly proved to be a central space in the women’s lives; for most of the participants, it represented a space of security and comfort. At the

same time, because the participants are forced to move repeatedly, their ability to form a sense of attachment is limited.

Memories also play an important role in constructing a sense of belonging. This was particularly clear in the analysis of the participants' cognitive maps of their past and the present living environments. The sense of belonging to particular places—whether past or present—is built upon significant personal events that happened to the individual participants in these places. Nostalgia towards certain places is also associated with feelings of belonging to family and the community. In the case of refugees, feelings of nostalgia for the past can often prevent them from belonging to the present life.

Based on the abovementioned interrelated factors that include economic instability, exclusion and discrimination. The research concludes that the participants' sense of belonging is strongly connected to people and places in their country of origin and that their sense of belonging, even two to five years into their asylum experience, have not adequately developed towards their host community. There are clear potential pathways that may form a foundation onto which this sense can be developed such as engaging in social networks with the host community or having a secured source of income and housing. In both cases, development of the host country's language is key to progress. Nevertheless, beyond linguistic communication, for this sense of belonging to be intact refugees need to feel that they can express their difference and feel accepted by the host community. Without this acceptance, refugees will continue to feel as outsiders in their city of residence.

The research aimed to provide an in-depth investigation of the early-stage settlement experience of Syrian refugee women in the city of Milan. By conducting a detailed qualitative analysis of these intimate experiences, it helps to articulate the needs of this group of refugee women in relation to their multiple particularities. In that sense, we can open up a discussion about the implications of these urban transitory movements in various contexts, and how to best address them amid the growing diversity needs that characterize our current urban era.

List of interviews

Amal & Eman. (2019, March 2). Personal interview.

Farah. (2018, December 12). Personal interview.

Kinda. (2019, February 5&27). Personal interview.

Lamia. (2019, March 11). Personal interview.

Mona. (2019, March 9). Personal interview.

Rawan. (2018, December 15). Personal interview.

Salwa. (2019, January 24 & February 6). Personal interview.

Bibliography

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso 1991.
- Anthias, F. (2002). Where do I belong?: Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality. *Ethnicities*, 2(4), 491-514.
- Anthias, F. (2006). Belonging in a Globalising and Unequal World: Rethinking Translocations. In N. Yuval-Davis, K. Kannabiran, & U. Vieten (Eds.), *The Situated Politics of Belonging*. London: Saga Publications Ltd.
- Anthias, F. (2007). Ethnic ties: social capital and the question of mobilisability. *The Sociological Review*, 55(4), 788-805.
- Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework. *Geography Compass*, 4(6), 644-659.
- ASGI. (2014). *National Country Report: Italy*. The Asylum Information Database (AIDA). Retrieved from <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy>
- ASGI. (2019). *Country Report: Italy*. The Asylum Information Database (AIDA). Retrieved from <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy>
- Ashmore, R. D., Deaux, K., & McLaughlin-Volpe, T. (2004). An Organizing Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130(1), 80-114.
- Bauman, Z. (1996). From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity. In S. Hall, & P. d. Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 18-36). London: Saga Publications.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529.
- Bell, V. (1999). Performativity and Belonging: An Introduction. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16(2), 1-10.
- Bhagat, R. (2017). Migration, gender and right to the city. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 52(32).
- Bhatia, S., & Ram, A. (2009). Theorizing identity in transnational and diaspora cultures: A critical approach to acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(2), 140-149.
- Bilge, S., & PhD, A. D. (2010). Introduction: Women, Intersectionality and Diasporas. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 31(1), 1-8.
- Binder, S., & Tošić, J. (2005). Refugees as a Particular Form of Transnational Migrations and Social Transformations: Socioanthropological and Gender Aspects. *Current Sociology*, 53(4).
- Bondi, L. (2005). Gender and the Reality of Cities: embodied identities, social relations and performativities. *Online papers archived by the Institute of Geography, University of Edinburgh*.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago press.

- Bovo, M., & Lippi, C. (2017). *The receptive city*. Politecnico di Milano.
- Bowlby, S. (2011). Friendship, co-presence and care: neglected spaces. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 12(6), 605-622.
- Brekke, J.-P., & Brochmann, G. (2015). Stuck in Transit: Secondary Migration of Asylum Seekers in Europe, National Differences, and the Dublin Regulation. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28(2), 145-162.
- Brinkmann, S. (2012). *Qualitative Inquiry in Everyday Life: Working with Everyday Life Materials*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Brussels, R., & Kok, L. (2006). *The Dublin II Regulation. A UNHCR Discussion Paper*. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4445fe344.html>
- Buchanan, D., Boddy, D., & McCalman, J. (1988). Getting in getting on getting out and getting back. In A. Bryman, & A. Bryman (Ed.), *Doing Research in Organisations* (pp. 53-67). London: Routledge.
- Buonfino, A., & Thomson, L. (2007). *Belonging in Contemporary Britain*. London: The Commission on Integration and Cohesion.
- Caritas Italiana. (2019). *Oltre il mare: Primo rapporto sui Corridoi Umanitari in Italia e altre vie legali e sicure d'ingresso*. Caritas Italiana. Retrieved from <http://inmigration.caritas.it/sites/default/files/2019-05/corridoi%20definitivo%2015052019.pdf>
- Cederberg, M. (2012). Migrant networks and beyond: Exploring the value of the notion of social capital for making sense of ethnic inequalities. *Acta Sociologica*, 55(1), 59-72.
- Cederberg, M. (2015). Embodied Cultural Capital and the Study of Ethnic Inequalities. In L. Ryan, U. Erel, & A. D'Angelo (Eds.), *Migrant Capital: Networks, Identities and Strategies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Certeau, M. d. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Charles, L., & Denman, K. (2012). Every Knot Has Someone to Undo It." Using the Capabilities Approach as a Lens to View the Status of Women Leading Up to the Arab Spring in Syria. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(5), 195-211.
- Christensen, A.-D. (2009). Belonging and Unbelonging from an Intersectional Perspective. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 13(1), 21-41.
- Christensen, A.-D., & Jensen, S. Q. (2011). ROOTS AND ROUTES: Migration, belonging and everyday life. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 1(3), 146-155.
- CIR. (2013). *Access to Protection: a human right*. CIR. Retrieved from <https://www.cir-onlus.org/en/2013/10/12/accesso-alla-protezione-un-diritto-umano/#>
- CIR. (2014). *ATTIVITA' DEL CIR - RAPPORTO 2013*. CIR. Retrieved from http://cir-onlus.org/old_site_2016/images/pdf/riv%20new%20TESTO%20RAPPORTO%202013.pdf

- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 138-167.
- Deacon, Z., & Sullivan, C. (2009). Responding to the Complex and Gendered Needs of Refugee Women. *Affilia*, 24(3), 272-284.
- Denaro, C. (2016). Agency, resistance and (forced) mobilities. The case of Syrian refugees in transit through Italy. *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, 24(47), 77-96.
- Department of Economic and Social Affairs, P. D. (2017). *Trends in International Migrant Stock*. United Nations.
- Dikec, M. (2001). Justice and the spatial imagination. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 33(10), 1785-1805.
- ECRE. (2018). *To Dublin or not to Dublin? ECRE's assessment of the policy choices undermining the functioning of the Dublin regulation, with recommendations for rights-based compliance*. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). Retrieved from <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Policy-Note-16.pdf>
- Edwards, R. (2004). Present and Absent in Troubling Ways: Families and Social Capital Debates. *The Sociological Review*, 52(1), 1-21.
- England, K. V. (1994). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research. *The Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 80-89.
- Erel, U. (2010). Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies. *Sociology*, 44(4), 642-660.
- Escalante, S. O., & Sweet, E. L. (2013). Migrant Women's Safety: Framing, Policies and Practices Interventions. In C. Whitzman, C. Legacy, C. Andrew, F. Klodawsky, M. Shaw, & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Building Inclusive Cities: Women's Safety and the Right to the City*. London: Routledge.
- European Commission. (2015, June 8). *Commission Recommendation on a European resettlement scheme*. Brussels: European commission. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/asylum/general/docs/recommendation_on_a_european_resettlement_scheme_en.pdf
- European Commission. (2016). *Identification of applicants (EURODAC)*. Retrieved from European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/identification-of-applicants_en
- European Commission. (2017). *ANNEX to the REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL Progress report on the European Agenda on Migration Resettlement*. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14473-2017-ADD-7/en/pdf>

- European Commission. (2019). *Delivering on Resettlement*. European Commission. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20190619_managing-migration-factsheet-delivering-resettlement_en.pdf
- European Council. (2015, July 20). *Justice and Home Affairs Council*. Retrieved from European Council: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/jha/2015/07/20/>
- European Council. (2016, March 18). *EU-Turkey statement*. Retrieved from European Council: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>
- Eurostat. (2019). *Asylum and first time asylum applicants [Datafile]*. Retrieved from Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>
- Eurostat. (2019). *Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex: Annual aggregated data [Datafile]*. Retrieved from Eurostat: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>
- Eve, M. (2010). Integrating via networks: foreigners and others. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(7), 1231-1248.
- Favell, A. (1999). To belong or not to belong: the postnational question. In A. Geddes, & A. Favell (Eds.), *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe* (pp. 209-227). Ashgate.
- FCEI. (2019). *Corridoi umanitari – modello per l'Europa*. The Federation of Evangelical Churches. Retrieved from <https://www.nev.it/nev/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Scheda-Corridoi-Umanitari-27giugno-2019.pdf>
- Fenster, T. (2004). *The Global City and the Holy City: Narratives on Knowledge, Planning and Diversity*. London: Pearson.
- Fenster, T. (2005). The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 14(3), 217-231.
- Fenster, T. (2006). Identity Issues and Local Governance: Women's Everyday Life in the City. *Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 11(1), 21-36.
- Fenster, T. (2009). Cognitive Temporal Mapping: The Three Steps Method in Urban. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 10(4), 479-498.
- Fenster, T., & Yacobi, H. (2005). Whose City is it? On Urban Planning and Local Knowledge in Globalizing Tel Aviv-Jaffa. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 6(2), 191-211.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus. (2014, June 19). *Emergenza Siria: in prima linea*. Retrieved from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKSIKI2DsNQ>
- Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus. (2015). *BILANCIO SOCIALE 2014: Il primo aiuto. Sempre*. Fondazione Progetto Arca onlus. Retrieved from https://www.progettoarca.org/images/pdf/bilanci/Arca_Bilancio_Singole.pdf

- Fox, J. E., & Jones, D. (2013). Migration, everyday life and the ethnicity bias. *Ethnicities*, 13(4), 385-400.
- Freedman, J., Kivilcim, Z., & Baklacioğlu, N. Ö. (2017). Introduction: Gender, Migration and Exile. In J. Freedman, Z. Kivilcim, & N. Ö. Baklacioğlu (Eds.), *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. London: Routledge.
- Friedberg, R. M. (2000). You Can't Take It with You? Immigrant Assimilation and the Portability of Human Capital. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 18(2), 221-251.
- Frontex. (2014). *Frontex Annual Risk Analysis 2014*. Warsaw: Frontex. Retrieved from https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2014.pdf
- Frontex. (2015). *Frontex Annual Risk Analysis 2015*. Warsaw: Frontex. Retrieved from https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2015.pdf
- Frontex. (2016). *Risk Analysis for 2016*. Warsaw: Frontex. Retrieved from https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf
- Gilmartin, M. (2008). Migration, Identity and Belonging. *Geography Compass*, 2(6), 1837-1852.
- Gilmartin, M. (2017, January). *Belonging*. (B. Warf, Editor) Retrieved from Oxford Bibliographies: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199874002/obo-9780199874002-0150.xml>
- Giuliani, M. V. (2003). Theory of attachment and place attachment. In M. Bonnes, T. Lee, & M. Bonaiuto (Eds.), *Psychological Theories for Environmental Issues*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Gois, P., & Falchi, G. (2017). The third way. Humanitarian corridors in peacetime as a (local) civil society response to a EU's common failure. *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, 25(51), 59-75.
- Goodman, S. W., & Wright, M. (2015). Does Mandatory Integration Matter? Effects of Civic Requirements on Immigrant Socio-economic and Political Outcomes. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(12), 1885-1908.
- Hage, G. (1999). *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
- Hagendoorn, L., Veenman, J., & Vollebergh, W. (Eds.). (2003). *Integrating Immigrants in the Netherlands: Cultural Versus Socio-Economic Integration*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Hamaz, S., & Vasta, E. (2009). *'To belong or not to belong': Is that the question?' Negotiating belonging in multi-ethnic London*. Oxford: University of Oxford - Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. Working Paper 09-73.
- Hanson, S. (2010). Gender and mobility: new approaches for informing sustainability. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 17(1), 5-23.
- Harvey, C., Garwood, R., & El-Masri, R. (2013). *Shifting Sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon*. Oxfam International.

- Hedetoft, U., & Hjort, M. (2002). *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity*. (U. Hedetoft, & M. Hjort, Eds.) U of Minnesota Press.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2010). *Qualitative Research Methods*. London: SAGA Publications Ltd.
- hijab. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster online dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hijab>
- Huizinga, R. P., & Hovenb, B. v. (2018). Everyday geographies of belonging: Syrian refugee experiences in the Northern Netherlands. *Geoforum*, 96, 309-317.
- Hurtado, A. (1997). Understanding Multiple Group Identities: Inserting Women into Cultural Transformations. *Journal of Social Issues*, 53(2), 299-328.
- il Giornale. (2014, March 25). *Fondazione Progetto Arca in campo per l'emergenza Siria*. Retrieved from il Giornale.it: <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/fondazione-progetto-arca-campo-lemergenza-siria-1004473.html>
- Ilahi, N. (2009). Gendered Contestations: An Analysis of Street Harassment in Cairo and its Implications For Women's Access to Public Spaces. *Surfacing: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Gender in the Global South*, 2, 56-69.
- IOM. (2018). *Global Migration Indicators 2018*. Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC). International Organization for Migration (IOM). Retrieved from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/global_migration_indicators_2018.pdf
- Jenkins, R. (2008). *Social Identity* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Jung, H. (2014). Let Their Voices Be Seen: Exploring Mental Mapping as a Feminist Visual Methodology for the Study of Migrant Women. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(3), 985-1002.
- Kitchen, P., Williams, A. M., & Gallina, M. (2015). Sense of belonging to local community in small-to-medium sized Canadian urban areas: a comparison of immigrant and Canadian-born residents. *BMC Psychology*, 3(1), 28.
- Knowles, C. (2010). Mobile sociology. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 61(s1), 373-379.
- Kochan, D. (2016). (Re)placing migrants' mobility: A multi-method approach to integrating space and mobility in the study of migration. *Migration Studies*, 4(2), 215-237.
- Krichauff, S. (2017). *Memory, Place and Aboriginal-Settler History: Understanding Australians' Consciousness of the Colonial Past*. London; New York, NY: Anthem Press.
- Kristjánsdóttir, E. S., & Skaptadóttir, U. D. (2018). "I'll Always Be a Refugee": The Lived Experience of Palestinian Refugee Women of Moving to a Small Society in Iceland. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 17(3), 389-404.
- Lähdesmäki, T., Saresma, T., Hiltunen, K., Jäntti, S., Säskilahti, N., Vallius, A., & Ahvenjärvi, K. (2016). Fluidity and flexibility of "belonging": Uses of the concept in contemporary research. *Acta Sociologica*, 59(3), 233-247.

- Leach, N. (2002). Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Space. In J. Hillier, & E. Rooksby (Eds.), *Habitus: A Sense of Place*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991a). *Critique of Everyday Life*. London: Verso.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991b). *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, H. (1996). *Writings on Cities*. (E. Kofman, & E. Lebas, Trans.) Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Lichtenberg, J. (1999). How Liberal Can Nationalism Be? In R. Beiner (Ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Loader, I. (2006). Policing, recognition, and belonging. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 605(1), 201-221.
- Lokot, M. (2018). Syrian refugees: thinking beyond gender stereotypes. *Forced Migration Review*, 57, 33-35.
- Ludvig, A. (2006). Differences Between Women? Intersecting Voices in a Female Narrative. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 245-258.
- Ludvig, A. (2006). Differences Between Women? Intersecting Voices in a Female Narrative. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 245-258.
- Madanipour, A. (1996). *Design of urban space: an inquiry into a socio-spatial process*. Wiley.
- Mallardo, A. (2017, May 3). *Humanitarian Corridors: A Tool to Respond to the Refugees' Crisis*. Retrieved from <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2017/05/humanitarian>
- Markova, E., & Black, R. (2007). *East European immigration and community cohesion*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Marshall, T. (1950). *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essay*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- May, V. (2011). Self, Belonging and Social Change. *Sociology*, 45(3), 363-378.
- McCall, L. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs*, 30(3).
- McDowell, L. (1992). Doing Gender: Feminism, Feminists and Research Methods in Human Geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 399-416.
- Measor, L., & Woods, P. (1991). Breakthroughs and blockages in ethnographic research: Contrasting experiences during the Changing Schools project. In G. Walford (Ed.), *Doing Educational Research* (pp. 59-81). London: Routledge.
- Mediterranean Hope. (2018). *How do humanitarian corridors work? An Italian ecumenical project signals hope for Europe*. Mediterranean Hope - Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy. Retrieved from <https://www.mediterraneanhope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Executive-Summary-Humanitarian-Corridors.pdf>

- Mee, K., & Wright, S. (2009). Geographies of Belonging. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 41(3), 772-779.
- Mehta, L., & Napier-Moore, R. (2010). *Citizenship and Displacement*. IDS Working Paper no. 354.
- Milgram, S. (1977). The Familiar Stranger: An Aspect of Urban Anonymity. In S. Milgram, & T. Blass (Eds.), *The Individual in a Social World: Essays and Experiments*. Pinter & Martin Ltd, 2010.
- Miller, L. (2009). Belonging to country — a philosophical anthropology. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 27(76), 215-223.
- Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M., & Jessop, J. (2002). *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Ministero dell'Interno. (2015). *Report on the reception of migrants and refugees in Italy. Aspects, procedures, problems*. Rome: Ministero dell'Interno.
- Mitchell, D. (2003). *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Naga. (2016). *(Ben)venuti! Indagine sul sistema di accoglienza dei richiedenti asilo a Milano e provincia*. Naga. Retrieved from <https://naga.it/2016/05/04/benvenuti/>
- Nardi, A. D. (2017). Landscape and sense of belonging to place: the relationship with everyday places in the experience of some migrants living in Montebelluna (Northeastern Italy). *Journal of Research and Didactics in Geography*, 1(6), 61-72.
- Nasser-Eddin, N. (2017). Gender Performativity in Diaspora: Syrian Refugee Women in the UK. In J. Freedman, Z. Kivilcim, & N. Ö. Baklacioğlu (Eds.), *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. London: Routledge.
- niqab. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster online dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/niqab>
- Open Migration. (2017). *The number of women seeking asylum in Italy and who they are*. Retrieved from Open Migration: <https://openmigration.org/en/analyses/the-number-of-women-seeking-asylum-in-italy-and-who-they-are/>
- Pemberton, S. (2017). *The importance of super-diverse places in shaping residential mobility patterns*. A Report to the Leverhulme Trust. Keele: Keele University.
- Pezzoni, N. (2013). *La città sradicata. Geografie dell'abitare contemporaneo. I migranti mappano Milano*. Milan: O barra O edizioni.
- Phoenix, A. (2006). Interrogating intersectionality: Productive ways of theorising multiple positioning. *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, (2-3).
- Pittaway, E., & Bartolomei, L. (2001). Refugees, Race, and Gender: The Multiple Discrimination against Refugee Women. *Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 19(6).

- POHJOLA, A. (1991). Social Networks - Help or Hindrance to the Migrant? *International Migration*, 29(3), 435-444.
- Pompei, D. (2015, December 15). *What are the humanitarian corridors? Interviewing Daniela Pompei*. Retrieved from Sant'Egidio: <http://archive.santegidio.org/pageID/3/langID/en/itemID/14724/What-are-the-humanitarian-corridors-Interviewing-Daniela-Pompei.html>
- Pratsinakis, M., Hatziprokopiou, P., Labrianidis, L., & Vogiatzis, N. (2017). Living together in multi-ethnic cities: People of migrant background, their interethnic friendships and the neighbourhood. *Urban Studies*, 54(1), 102-118.
- Probyn, E. (1996). *Outside belongings*. London: Routledge.
- Puddifoot, J. E. (2003). Exploring “personal” and “shared” sense of community identity in Durham City, England. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 31(1), 87-106.
- Purcell, M. (2003). Citizenship and the right to the global city: reimagining the capitalist world order. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(3), 564-590.
- Purcell, M. (2014). Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36(1), 141-154.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Quiroz Becerra, M. (2014). Performing Belonging in Public Space: Mexican Migrants in New York City. *Politics & Society*, 42(3), 331-357.
- Ralph, D. (2012). Managing sameness and difference: the politics of belonging among Irish-born return migrants from the United States. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 13(5), 445-460.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (1992). On Feminist Methodology: Male Reason Versus Female Empowerment. *Sociology*, 26(2), 207-212.
- Ryan, L. (2007). Migrant Women, Social Networks and Motherhood: The Experiences of Irish Nurses in Britain. *Sociology*, 41(2), 295-312.
- Ryan, L. (2011). Migrants' social networks and weak ties: accessing resources and constructing relationships post-migration. *The Sociological Review*, 59(4), 707-724.
- Ryan, L. (2016). Looking for weak ties: using a mixed methods approach to capture elusive connections. *The Sociological Review*, 64(4), 951-969.
- Sadri, H., & Sadri, S. Z. (2012). The Right to Appropriation: Spatial Rights and The Use of Space. *[Re] appropriation of the city: Architecture as a tool for the re-appropriation of the contemporary city*. Tirana, Albania: Botime Afrojdit.
- Savage, M., Bagnall, G., & Longhurst, B. (2005). *Globalization and Belonging*. London: Saga Publications Ltd.

- Schintler, L., Root, A., & Button, K. (2000). Women's Travel Patterns and the Environment: An Agenda for Research. *Transportation Research Record*, 1726(1), 33-40.
- Skrbiš, Z., Baldassar, L., & Poynting, S. (2007). Introduction – Negotiating Belonging: Migration. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 28(3), 261-269.
- SPRAR; Caritas Italiana; ANCI; Cittalia; Fondazione Migrantes. (2017). *Rapporto sulla protezione internazionale in Italia 2017*. SPRAR. Retrieved from https://www.sprar.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Rapporto_protezione_internazionale_2017_extralight.pdf
- Stratford, E. (2009). Belonging as a Resource: The Case of Ralphs Bay, Tasmania, and the Local Politics of Place. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 41(4), 796-810.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Monterey: Brooks/Cole.
- Tonkiss, F. (2003). The Ethics of Indifference: Community and Solitude in the City. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6(3), 297-311.
- Toruńczyk-Ruiz, S. (2008). *Being together or apart? Social networks and notions of belonging among recent Polish migrants in the Netherlands*. Warsaw: University of Warsaw, Centre of Migration Research (CMR). Working Paper, No. 40/98.
- UN. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
- UNFPA. (2014). *Women and Girls in the Syria Crisis*. Amman: UNFPA.
- UNHCR. (2002). *Refugee Resettlement. An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*. Department of International Protection (DIP). UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/405189284.html>
- UNHCR. (2017). *Left in Limbo: UNHCR Study on the Implementation of the Dublin III Regulation*. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/59d5dd1a4.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2019, July). *Mediterranean Situation: Italy*. Retrieved from Operational Data Portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>
- UNHCR. (2019a). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>
- UNHCR. (2019b, May 31). *Resettlement Data Finder*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#nhJ6>
- UNHCR. (2019c, June). *Syria Regional Refugee Response*. Retrieved from Operational Data Portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>

- United Nations. (2016, March 15). *Syria conflict at 5 years: the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time demands a huge surge in solidarity*. Retrieved from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2016/3/56e6e3249/syria-conflict-5-years-biggest-refugee-displacement-crisis-time-demands.html?query=the%20biggest%20refugee%20and%20displacement%20crisis%20of%20our%20time>
- Valentine, G. (2007). Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography. *The Professional Geographer*, 59(1), 10-21.
- Valentine, G., Sporton, D., & Nielsen, K. B. (2008). Language use on the move: sites of encounter, identities and belonging. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(3), 376-387.
- Valentine, G., Sporton, D., & Nielsen, K. B. (2009). Identities and belonging: a study of Somali refugee and asylum seekers living in the UK and Denmark. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27(2), 234-250.
- Valentine, G., Sporton, D., & Nielsen, K. B. (n.d.). Language Use on the Move: Sites of Encounter, Identities and Belonging. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(3), 376-387.
- Vargas, C. M. (1998). Ethical challenges in refugee research: Troublesome questions, difficult Answers. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 17, 35-48.
- Vasta, E. (2013). Do We Need Social Cohesion in the 21st Century? Multiple Languages of Belonging in the Metropolis. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 34(2), 196-213.
- Visser, K. (2017). "Because we're all different" – Everyday experiences of belonging among young people from immigrant backgrounds in Tottenham. *Geoforum*.
- Vroome, T. D., & Tubergen, F. V. (2010). The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands. *International Migration Review*, 44(2), 376-403.
- Vroome, T. d., Coenders, M., Tubergen, F. v., & Verkuyten, M. (2011). Economic Participation and National Self-Identification of Refugees in the Netherlands. *International Migration Review*, 45(3), 615-638.
- Walsh, K. (2014). Placing Transnational Migrants through Comparative Research: British Migrant Belonging in Five GCC Cities. *Population, Space and Place*, 20(1), 1-17.
- Weeks, J. (1990). *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*. London: Quartet Books.
- Wessendorf, S. (2016). Settling in a Super-Diverse Context: Recent Migrants' Experiences of Conviviality. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 37(5), 449-463.
- Wessendorf, S. (2019). Migrant belonging, social location and the neighbourhood: recent migrants in East London and Birmingham. *Urban Studies*, 56(1), 131-146.
- Wright, S. (2015). More-than-human, emergent belongings: A weak theory approach. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(4), 391-411.

- Yuval-Davis, N. (2003). Belongings: in between the Indigene and the Diasporic. In U. Özkirimli (Ed.), *Nationalism and its Futures* (pp. 127-144). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), 197-214.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The politics of belonging: intersectional contestations*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2013). Citizenship, Autochthony, and the Question of Forced Migration. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 32(2), 53-65.
- Yuval-Davis, N., Anthias, F., & Kofman, E. (2005). Secure borders and safe haven and the gendered politics of belonging: Beyond social cohesion. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(3), 513-535.
- Yuval-Davis, N., Kannabiran, K., & Vieten, U. (Eds.). (2006). *The Situated Politics of Belonging*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative Analysis of Content. In B. M. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Zimmermann, L. V., Gataullina, L., Constant, A. F., & Zimmermann, K. F. (2008). Human Capital and Ethnic Self-Identification of Migrants. *Economics Letters*, 98(3), 235-239.

Appendix I Personal account

“Research reports frequently give the appearance of confident, well organized progress through the lengthy period of research. This probably is rarely the case.” (Measor & Woods, 1991, p. 59)

This personal account traces my fieldwork journey that lasted for four months from December 2018 to March 2019. It provides backstage details of what happened during the research; starting from the initial choice of the focus sample of my study through the maze of negotiating access, unanticipated occurrences, and compromises.

It aims to explain developing the fieldwork strategy with an overview of the different approaches used in the various stages in gaining access to the participants. It also reflects on the significance of both the fruitful and unfruitful attempts of the process, the turning points and the implication of such moments on the final findings of the research.

Such an approach of presenting the personal reality of doing research allows us to be more honest about the research process and the limitations and partial nature of that research. As Measor and Woods suggest that instead of giving “antiseptic accounts” we have to provide this kind of information “in order for the reader to be able to scrutinize and judge research findings—and therefore assess its virtues, and its value” (Measor & Woods, 1991, p. 59)

Nationalities of interest

As the main goal was to reach refugee women from different countries for the purpose of interviewing them about their experiences in the city of Milan, the nationalities of interest that might be included in the research were defined by looking thoroughly at the number of asylum applications and first instance decisions that are published by the Ministry of Interior in Italy, disaggregated by countries of origin for the previous five years.

Based on this information, a broad distinction was made comparing the number of applications and rejection rates of different countries. Through this analysis, it was revealed first that there are some countries of origin from which huge numbers of asylum seekers come, but the rejection rate for that group is also very high. Such examples include Nigeria, Gambia and Senegal. Alternatively, there are countries of origin from which few numbers of applicants are recorded, yet the rejection rate within that group is very low, such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq. A third distinct group contains countries of origin of relatively average numbers from which the rejection rate is high: these include Bangladesh, Mali and Ivory coast. By classifying different nationalities into these categories, it became easier to distinguish specifically where the refugees in Italy come from and not the migrants in general.

In addition to this, a brief research has been done about these countries to get background information in terms of language, religion and the current situation there, in part to understand when an interpreter will be needed.

Methods of gaining access

In trying to gain access to different communities that might lead to participants recruiting, several techniques were used to facilitate entry into such communities both formal and informal. In all attempts, the research project aims, and scope were explained, and the anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of requested information assured.

Places of Worship: As many refugees come from Muslim countries, the first step was to go to Muslims gathering places which were mostly Mosques²⁶. My initial thought also was that being a Muslim would favor me in gaining access. The Imam is mostly the most appropriate person that would be able to give contacts due to his leading role in the mosque community, thus I talked mostly with the Imam. The majority of the mosques were managed by Egyptians which made the communication much easier in terms of language and dialect. Contact information with female members of the congregation was facilitated through them.

Food and beverage establishments: Another method was used by approaching international food and beverage establishments directly. Two of the research participants were approached through these establishments.

The first time was when I got to know through a friend of mine that there is a Syrian restaurant in Via Padova so I went there and while I was talking with the Palestinian woman who was working there, she pointed to one of the customers and said that he might be able to help me better. He was a Syrian man who is living in Syria but was in Milan for a short visit. He told me about a café which is owned by a Syrian woman. In this café, the Moroccan barista referred to another place where I can find the Syrian owner. I headed there and I got to meet the Syrian manager, who became my first participant.

On the second time, I went to a hookah bar which is run by Syrians and there I was told that a Syrian girl might be interested but they must ask for her permission first. Days later one of them called me and put me on phone with the girl who became my second participant.

The same visit was made to different establishments, including Gambian, Eritrean, Senegalese and Iranian. Unfortunately, though, no positive outcomes came out of these visits.

Non-governmental organizations: Six Italian NGOs that offer different services for migrants were approached through emails which explained the research background and the kind of access they might be able to provide, but no responses were received.

Social media: I started my search on social media platforms (particularly Facebook), using keywords both in Italian, English, and Arabic as refugees, Milan, the names of different countries, etc. Following this method, contact was established with various community groups for Iraqis, Syrians, Eritreans, Nigerians and other African communities. Most of them did not lead to a productive result; either no one answered as in the Nigerian and African groups while the Eritrean answered at first then stopped answering to follow up messages. In the Iraqi groups, most of the comments concluded that the number of Iraqi families in Italy

²⁶ Islamic cultural institutes used informally for the purpose of prayer.

were very few. In the Syrian group, they gave me the contact of a woman suggesting that she would be of help.

I wrote on the Facebook group of “Nigerians in Europe”, the only answer I got was, “they are NOT gonna volunteer if there’s nothing in it for them”. I tried to reach out for the women members of this group who are living in Milan; I have sent a private messages for more than 20 women but no one answered except one woman and she said she has moved back to Nigeria, and when I asked if she can put me in touch with her friends who are still in Milan, she did not answer.

In addition to that the admin of a grope called “ITALY - REFUGEE CRISIS DATABASE” referred to a document that has a list of community organizations that help Migrants. This opened the way for me to take the following step in the physical world.

Community organizations: In this list, the organizations were listed by the country of origin and the province in which they are located in Italy. It was used to obtain their addresses and contact information like email and phone number. A new list was made based on the organizations that are concerned with the predetermined countries of interest and are in the city of Milan.

I started to approach these organizations directly by visiting their offices. Telephone calls were made in case of difficulties reaching a specific organization. Some of them did not exist but in the end, I was able to reach different offices that offer help and services to people originate from Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan, Mali, and Somalia. Although they all agreed to support the project, it was the same as previous Facebook attempts; some gave me contacts for other people who might help (Eritrea, Somalia) while others said they will assist with recruitment then stopped returning any of my calls or emails (Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan). Finally, all these attempts did not lead to positive results.

Pivotal moments

By the end of January, after two months and a half of intensive informal and formal communications, an evaluation of the progress had to be considered. At that time, on one hand, a total of 3 interviews with three Syrian women were conducted and there was also a possibility of reaching more Syrian participants. On the other hand, there were many other possibilities of reaching women from Somalia and Eritrea.

It was evident at this stage of the fieldwork that much more time is needed to try again through different channels to gain access to different nationalities as Nigeria. I was more inclined to continue searching among all the nationalities but due to the timeframe of the study, I had to consider redirecting my focus towards just the Syrian community. I decided to also pursue whatever possibilities I would encounter.

By time all of the open leads to different nationalities were closing up, throwing into doubt the whole fieldwork stage of the research due to my inability to negotiating access.

I was able to get in touch with one of the main gatekeepers to the Syrian community. Thus, the decision was to refocus my research on Syrians.

Desperate attempts

After encountering many people who showed initial enthusiasm to help and then lose contact with them. At some point, I was questioning my ability to differentiate between people who are really willing and those who are not interested.

During the interview with the first participant, I asked her if she could recommend any of her friends to be interviewed, she said she will ask around and tell me. After trying to reach her several times with no answer, I had to consider this a closed road. But in a desperate moment, I called her again after one month and a half and she answered. She said that her mobile was stolen and that's why she could not reply, apart from this being the truth or not, she managed to arrange the meeting with my third participant on the exact same day.

At the very beginning of my fieldwork, I went to a mosque which is managed by Syrians, I was able to reach the Imam on his mobile but not personally as he was not there at this day. After explaining what I needed, he asked me to call back in a couple of days, giving him time to ask around.

After trying to reach him for several times without an answer, I was pretty sure that this is also a closed end. At this time as I was able to reach other Syrians women through other ways and this was more than enough because at this time, the Syrian women were part of the targeted participant and not the focus as it turned out to be later.

When I have reached this turning point in my research, I thought I might give it another try and try to contact him. It was three months since our first call and surprisingly he was able to recall my previous request. This time he tried to help, he said that he can put me in touch with one family which I had already interviewed. Also, he put me in touch with two Syrian women that might be of help. Although as it turned out I was not able to reach any additional participants as the potential participants recommended by them, were already included in my research, I am thankful for the change in the attitude.

Deadlocks

It was apparent that underlying issues existed between some of the Syrian participants which obstructed the flow of the recruitment process; when I was trying to approach one participant through a previous one.

For instance, one of the participants told me during the interview about her troubled relationship with another Syrian woman, after finishing the interview I asked her as usual if she can connect me with other Syrian women. She said that she cannot give me this woman's number as they are not in touch anymore and she will not be interested to meet me anyway. This later appeared to be untrue as I was able to reach this woman through a different route and was completed my interview with her – reflecting how personal tensions could block accessibility to potential participants through direct connections.

That same participant also gave me a Facebook account of another Syrian woman that might agree to be interviewed. But at the same time asked me not to mention her as the source of contact, going as far as suggesting an alternative story that I can tell that does not include her name. I was uncomfortable by the suggestion, but I decided to try and contact her anyway, and fortunately, she did not ask for details on how I got to know about her.

In another encounter with one of my participants at the Italian language school for foreigners, the first time accompanied by one of my participants, I met a Syrian woman who appeared to be her friend. but I did not have the chance to ask for her mobile number. When I asked my participant for her mobile number she started stalling without apparent reasons. This happened again with another participant and however she gave me the number, she asked not to mention that I took the number from her. In this case, the mobile number was useless as I could not use it without being able to mention my source. Finally, I had to call the Italian teacher who gave me the number again with a permission to tell that it was her who gave it to me.

The role of gatekeepers

Gatekeepers are those who can arbitrate access for the researcher. When gatekeepers served as communication channels, as Buchanan et al. (1988) state, the researcher is forced to rely on the goodwill of gatekeepers, which “creates risks that are beyond the control of the researcher and which are difficult to predict or avoid” (Buchanan, Boddy, & McCalman, 1988, p. 56).

During the fieldwork, I had to deal with gatekeepers who on the one hand, had a local influence to grant participation for the research endeavor and on the other hand, were able to withhold access and consequently undermine the research process.

When I started searching on social media for local community groups of different countries in Milan (before limiting my target group to the Syrian community), I found a Facebook page for a Nigerian community organization in which I was able to retrieve contact information and call to ask about the opening hours to visit. It was easy to reach their office as it was located close to the Porta Garibaldi station. There, I was welcomed by who appeared to be the head of the office to whom I explained the purpose of my visit. He told me to give him a few days to ask if any women will accept to be interviewed and asked me to call him back on a specific date. Later, however, whenever I would call him, he would put off my request and always ask me to call him later.

It took me some time to understand that he was dodging my request because simply I did not expect it. Every time I contacted him, he was giving a reason why he did not find someone and tell that he will try and that I just give him more time. There are a number of possible explanations to this kind of behavior and it could be understood from the gatekeeper’s perspective. Denying access had resulted in a set-back of the research process, especially given that this particular organization was the only one I could trace among the Nigerian community. This situation happened once again with a Somali woman who runs a tailor shop leading to the same outcomes.

The Italian language teacher in one school acted as a gatekeeper, she contributed to the research in many ways: firstly, she offered to take the responsibility for the coordination between me and the organization and secondly, she asked for their permission to do the interview with participants who came through this organization. The process of obtaining this permission helped me in gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the potential participants. In addition to this, the teacher directly introduced me to a former Syrian student of hers who later became one of the participants in my research.

Finally, the teacher put me in contact with another Italian language teacher in a different school in Milan, who had managed to arrange for me one interview with three women from Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Eritrea.

In the end, however, I had to omit this interview from my sample after the target group became limited to Syrian participants.

Although, the gatekeeper, in the last case, was eager to support the research, by acting as a communication link between me and the potential participants, I was not able to fully communicate with them in order to build trust and develop relationships.

This lack of trust was evident when the teacher informed me that the women expressed their preference to be interviewed all together, which put me in a difficult situation on how to conduct the interviews in terms of language. The mutual language between the three participants was Italian as they all attend the same course, but they had not reached an adequate level in the Italian language to express themselves clearly.

Otherwise, added trust might have gotten them to agree to be interviewed each one alone and increase the quality of the collected data by being able to speak in their mother tongue language.

Also, by performing the role of interpreter, as he carried out the translation from Italian to English, he exercised control over the discussed topic as he was deciding whether a specific topic is appropriate to be discussed or not, judging from the perspective of his original role as their teacher who was trying somehow to protect their privacy. With regards to one of my questions about the participants' backgrounds and journey to Italy, the teacher commented, "we don't ask them about these kinds of details here". This confusion of roles obviously undermined the quality of the data.

Closing Thoughts

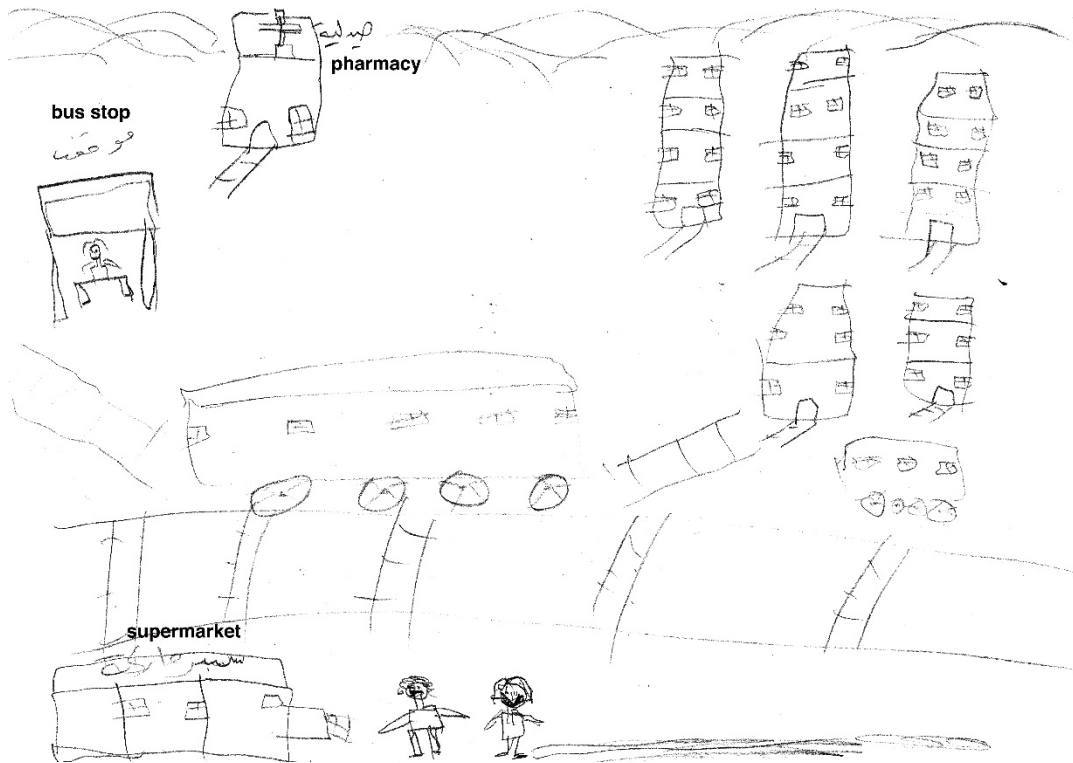
Although the fieldwork was an eye-opening experience, it was not an easy task, neither at the beginning when trying to find the appropriate way to approach communities, nor in the later stages when the whole research focus had to be redirected several times to accommodate conditions due to obstructions in access.

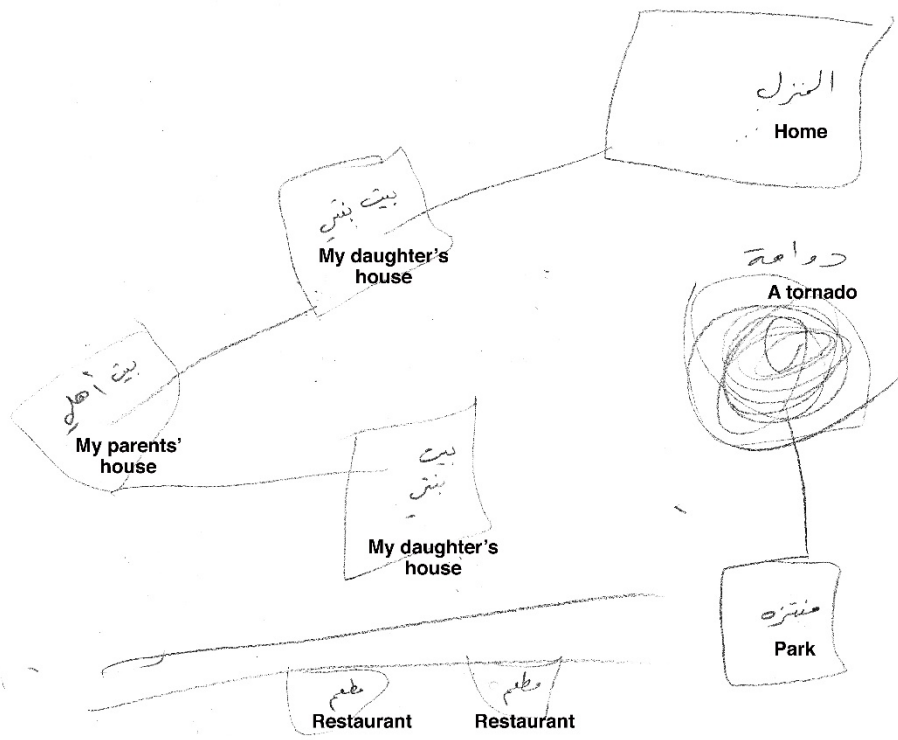
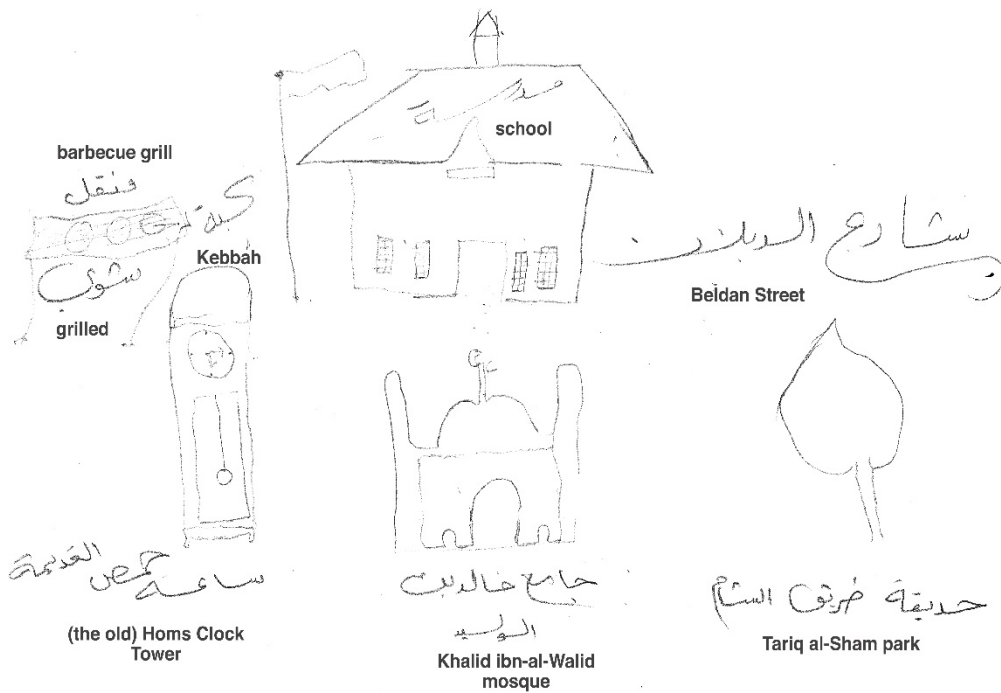
Communities of minorities are dynamic and complex. They are usually skeptical about outsiders; especially in the context of academic research whereby sensitive personal questions may be posed without the affordability of adequate time to build relationships of trust, making the process of gaining access very challenging. In addition, finding participants to interview can also be difficult if they are not connected to an organization.

Throughout this research process, a number of insights have been gained, which include the importance of adequate preparation before conducting the fieldwork. Moreover, the fieldwork research is a process that requires flexibility and openness to deal with changes that might arise and also to be prepared to work with a significant margin of uncertainty.

I hope this account could give an understanding of the kinds of issues and tensions that arose during the fieldwork process and accordingly, offer the reader more material through which to interpret and evaluate the research.

Appendix II Cognitive maps with English translation





الحياة اليومية في إيطاليا
Everyday life in Italy

المنزل
Home

السوق
Market

دومو
Duomo

الليدي
Lidl supermarket

بورتا جنوفا
Porta Genova



