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Gendering Urban Exile

The daily lives of Syrian women in Amman, Jordan

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“How does it feel? To be your own?
With no direction home? Like a rolling stone?”

Bob Dylan, *Like a Rolling Stone*, 1965

“Any group of persons – prisoners, primitives, pilots or patients – develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get a close look at it.”

Erving Goffman, *Asylum*, 1961

Abstract

The current Syrian crisis has pushed over 4.8 million people to seek asylum abroad, mainly in the neighbouring countries. In Jordan urban refugees, who represent 82% of registered refugees, lack visibility and help. Women are in a particularly difficult situation due to their multiple burdens as caregivers and homemakers. Yet, Syrian forced migrant women settled in the capital city of Amman demonstrate great capacities of resilience in their everyday life, in a supposedly constraining situation of forced exile. They survive between the anonymous spaces of the metropolis, and the popular neighbourhoods they inhabit on the margins of the city. Embedded in multiple networks of solidarity and social worlds stretching over national boundaries, they manage everyday life between continuity and change, negotiate gender hierarchies and question the refugee label as a legal category and as an experience of displacement. This study is based on an ethnographic fieldwork conducted between September and December 2015 in Jordan. Using the concepts of social worlds and of gendered geographies of power in transnational spaces, I look at the ways forced migrant women maintain a sense of life and inscribe themselves in the urban spaces of exile through the renegotiation of social networks, resilient gendered hierarchies and refugee bargains.

Keywords: forced migration, refugee women, transnationalism, social worlds, gendered geographies of power

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Thanks, merci, danke, شكراً and tack, to the many people, friends and family who have undoubtedly supported me.

I dedicate this thesis to the women of my family, who have lived and crafted their lives across countries, continents and cultures and who have definitely inspired this research, as well as the person I am.

Je dédie ce mémoire aux femmes de ma famille, qui ont vécu et construit leurs vies au travers de plusieurs pays, continents et cultures, et qui ont inspiré ce travail, autant que la personne que je suis.

à Rakié

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1. Introduction

*We will get you back, dear Syria
We will call for Liberty
We will free you, dear Syria.
Homs, mother of the freemen,
In you the heroes have been reared,
They have raised the free flag
With the help of the Almighty Lord,
The land of glory, the land of love, the land of the free fighters,
God is witness that you, dear Syria, gave us these heroes. ¹*

I could not open this thesis without the words of those who have inspired it and who made it possible. This poem is the work of Rakhiah², one of the Syrian ladies I met during my fieldwork in Amman, Jordan between September and December 2015. Originally from Homs, she introduces in these few words the situation of forced exile and the will to return of most Syrians who have left the country, following the violent outbreaks in 2011. Besides, in a gendered metaphor in which she represents Homs as a mother, she sheds light on the role played by Syrian women. Not only did they give birth to the ‘heroes’ of the Revolution, and participated in the peaceful protests that sparked the conflict, but they are those who ultimately contribute to maintain a sense of life and continuity in exile – that this thesis aims to document.

Between a Skype call with her daughter in Syria, who expects her husband’s liberation from the jails of the regime, and a WhatsApp conversation with one of her sons settled in Saudi Arabia, Rakhiah proudly recites some of the poems she wrote. She sits on the velvety couch her husband Omar found in the streets of Jabal Al Nasser³ a few days ago and points to the frame, nailed on the wall she leans against. It is an ornamented golden metal sign representing Koranic verses she saved from a pile of garbage: “*Haram!* How can people leave such things on the streets?”. Most of their furniture was either found or given by relatives or neighbours. But on

¹ The poem, recited by Rakhiah during our interview, was live translated from Arabic to French by an interpreter. The translation to English is from the author.

² The name of the respondents have been modified. Methodological and ethical aspects of the study are further discussed in the following chapter.

³ A low-income residential neighbourhood located in East Amman.

the wobbly coffee table, stand out the brand new smartphones and the Ipad Rakiah and Omar manipulate with a dexterity I did not expect for people of their age, respectively 60 and 65 years old. Yet these screens are their windows to the world, the medium of their life in exile but also a testimony of their past life. Rakiah takes time to show us pictures of her children, standing in front of a blossoming orange tree in their garden back in Homs, while we enjoy the delicious *makdous* (stuffed confit aubergines) she served us earlier. Omar tells us, unsurprisingly, that Rakiah was known to be a very good cook in their neighbourhood of Al Hamadiyah in downtown Homs. She used to prepare and sell food to neighbours on special occasions. She did that more as a hobby than a real paid activity. Indeed, the family had a good situation in Syria and has not been used to ask for help. Thus Rakiah refuses to ‘beg’ for money or food to charities, although her husband is unable to work due to his health condition. Instead, she rather makes her own money. Thanks to the reputation she starts owning among her neighbours here in Jabal al Nasser, spreading by word of (delighted) mouth, she has now about 4 to 10 customers a month. ‘That’s like my pocket money’ says Rakiah, filling our plates with more *makdous*, pomegranate molasses and vegetable fritters, a satisfied smile on her face.

Though quick and non-exhaustive, this snapshot of the lives of Rakiah and Omar sketches key patterns of their everyday routine, articulating around different spaces and practices, between continuity and change. The couple is able to maintain a sense of life, despite their situation of forced exile, with the help of local networks of solidarity and transnational connections. However, Rakiah is the main caregiver in the household, and exiled in a new urban space, she started experiencing and utilizing the city in innovative ways.

1.1 Research purpose

Placing my research in the field of forced migration studies in the Middle East, and more specifically in the context of the current Syrian mass exodus, I investigate in this thesis Syrian forced migrant women’s everyday experiences of the city of Amman as a lens to explore the ways they intend to maintain a *sense of life* in exile. My main concern can be summed up in the following research question: *How do Syrian forced migrant women maintain a sense of life in exile?*

Thus, I formulated specific research questions, such as:

- *In which ways do Syrian forced migrant women in Amman make use of and (re)negotiate*

local and transnational networks of solidarity?

- *How do they use the city as a resource in the context of forced exile?*
- *What role(s) does gender play in their experience of exile?*
- *To what extent do their lives question the refugee label both as a legal category and as an experience of exile?*

In the face of the disrupting events they have been facing, Rakiah and my other respondents were able to expand “agency despite constraints” (Gren 2015, 4) in order to uphold resilience⁴ and continuity in exile, what I refer to as a sense of life. Previous research highlighted the remarkable resilience of refugee communities, especially of out-of-camp refugees dwelling in self-settlements, where they intend to (re)make home between continuity and change (Zetter 2003). Besides since the mid-1990s a growing number of scholars incorporate transnationalism in the study of refugee communities (Al-Ali et al. 2001, Al-Ali and Koser 2002, Shami 1996, Wahlbeck 2002) that often develop “transnational identities” (Koser 2003), thus bringing forward people’s connectedness and agency in and beyond migration. Simply put, transnationalism is “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 48). Yet, I agree with Mahler and Pessar (2001) who, acknowledging that gender has rarely been the focus of transnational migration studies, argue that “bringing a gendered optic to transnational studies benefits both the study of transnational processes and the study of gender” (441).

Articulating notions of transnationalism and gender in the study of Syrian women’s lives in order to explore the multiple facets of urban resilience in exile, this thesis intends to contribute to scholarship on forced migration. It also promotes a critical use of the notion of refugeeness.

1.2 A note on refugeeness

I rather use the expression ‘forced migrants’ rather than the term ‘refugees’, as some of my respondents have not or could not register as such. They do not all qualify as refugees⁵, yet they

⁴ Here and throughout this thesis, the term resilience refers to the capacity to cope and “adapt existing resources and skills to new situations and operating conditions” (Comfort 1999, 21).

⁵ According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, refugees are persons who, for “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, [are] outside the country of [their] nationality and [are] unable or [...] unwilling to return to it” (UNHCR 1951).

do all experience forced exile. Some are Jordanian citizens, from their husband or from their father, many others benefit from the help of extended family who emigrated prior to the conflict and/or have long established connections in Jordan, and others decided to not register as refugees, for different reasons I will later explore.

The relevance of the term refugee has been extensively questioned in migration studies. As a legal and analytical category, it excludes numbers of forced migrants, such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or binational citizens. Exploring the concepts of labelling and identity formation, scholars have demonstrated the discrepancies that can exist between public policy practices, humanitarian governance, and refugees' lived experiences (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010, 2016, Fresia 2006, Malkki 1996, Zetter 1991, 2007). They also promote the idea that refugeeness is a social and discursive construct, attached to a certain representation of 'the refugee' necessarily helpless, poor and in need. In this way humanitarian practices have created what Malkki names "transnational communalities in both the textual and visual representation of refugees" (1996, 386).

Furthermore, the representation of refugees is often associated with refugee camps. They are the symbols of the form of bare humanity refugees embody, standing at the edges of the world in "off-sites" characterized by a double exclusion from the country of origin and from the host country (Agier 2008, 2009, 2014). Camps are the sites of the extraordinary, the apparatus of the abnormal. Indeed, Arendt (1951) highlighted the role statelessness plays in sustaining the nation-state ideology. She argues nation-states need to regularly exclude undesirable groups of people that are not recognized as part of the one nation expressed by the state, in order to maintain it. Thus refugeeness is seen an exceptional situation, as being national is the norm (Malkki 1995).

Although I emphasize the problematics raised by the "refugee label" (Zetter 1991, 2007), I cannot evacuate it from this study. It entitles to a number of rights⁶ and thus becomes, as I evoked earlier, subject to negotiations. Besides, and precisely because it shapes refugeeness to some extent, the term refugee creates different and specific experiences of forced exile that must be acknowledged. Finally, refugees' experiences of exile should not be reduced to camps, which are often merely one step in the migration process. Camp and non-camp refugees are not

⁶ The 1951 Convention recognizes to refugees the right to be granted asylum, to work, to housing, to education, to assistance, to freedom of religion, to access the justice, to freely move in the host country and the right to be issued identity and travel documents (United Nations 2012). Moreover, national legislations interpret the recommendations made by the Convention and enhance or restrict refugees' rights in their country.

essentially different because of the spaces they inhabit, yet these spaces induce different experiences of exile.

I choose to rather emphasize the day-to-day experiences of forced migrants, understood in a continuum stretching from their lives back in Syria and encompassing the border-crossing, life in camps and ultimately in urban settings. Indeed, Black suggests that “refugee migration must be viewed in ‘context’, meaning that the myriad of connections between different types of ‘forced migration’ and the potential cycle of refugee migration and return, should be considered [...] as a whole” (1993, 5). Therefore, I met with a variety of women, who faced more or fewer difficulties at the border and who have or have not experienced camps⁷.

Refugeeness is also a gendered construct. UNHCR mainstreaming policies carry the concepts of vulnerability and empowerment, assuming refugee women’s powerlessness (Hyndman 2000). Beyond the context of refugee studies, feminist postcolonial scholars have argued that ethno-centred universalism – that is to some extent the trademark of humanitarianism – tends to create the “powerless, exploited and sexually-harassed [...] Third World Woman” (Mohanty 1984, 338).

This is particularly striking “in the portrayal of gender relations among Muslim migrants” (Lutz 2010, 1653). A form of gendered Orientalism depicts, in the manner of a XIX^o century Orientalist painting, Muslim women as either sexualized or oppressed (L. Abu-Lughod 2013). Specifically looking at the representation of Syrian refugee women, Alhayek argues that global media are dominated by images of powerless Syrian women “victims of their uncivilized /barbaric society” (2015, 57). They seem to bear the double burden of forced migration and of their backward Islamic societies, at the intersections of two social structures impinging on them (Lutz, Herrera Viva and Supik 2011).

Given the problematic representation of refugees, and more specifically of Syrian refugee women, this thesis takes a look at Syrian women’s capacities to maintain a sense of life in urban exile. Rather than standing on the edges of the world, they live at the intersections of different temporalities and societies, where they craft and (re)make tangible homes.

⁷ The choice of the interviewees, as well as the data collection process are fully explained later.

1.3 Disposition

After having defined the contours of the research and its purpose, I will provide a context to this study with a section on Syrian forced migration in Jordan. I alternatively look at the situation of camp and non-camp refugees as well as the transborder networks that have eased Syrian forced migrants' journey and settlement in Jordan.

I will then examine previous literature on forced migration in Jordan, which rather focused on the place of refugees in Jordan's national discourse than on migrants' experiences. I also look at current research on Syrian refugees, as well as literature produced on urban and female (forced) migrants in other contexts.

I later engage in a theoretical discussion, in which I articulate the ambivalence of urbanscapes, the concept of social worlds and the notion of home-making under the broader frame of gendered geographies of power. I believe my theoretical choices rightfully highlight agency in the context of transnational urban exile.

I outline and explain later the methodological choices I have made in terms of research attitude and data analysis, as well as the ethical questions that have informed my fieldwork. I also reflect on my position as researcher in the ethnographic relationship.

Then I explore the data collected in a conversation in which findings and theories inform each other. I successively address the uses forced migrant women make of the transnational social fields in which they are embedded, the ways they uphold continuity through home-making and the role of gender a resilient tool in exile and lastly, I critically look at the place of refugeeness in their lives.

Finally, I will bring together the main conclusions and strengths of my research to suggest paths for further research in the field of transnational forced migration.

2 Contextualizing Syrian forced migration in Jordan

The Syrian war is a crucial contemporary issue considering the situation of violence and the humanitarian concern onsite, and the challenging influx of Syrian asylum seekers ensuing from the conflict. Middle Eastern neighbours are primarily concerned by the flow of refugees reaching their borders to settle or to transit towards further destinations, as shown in the following map (Figure 1). Indeed, in five years the conflict has created more than 4,8 million registered refugees in the Middle East and pushed 1,118,000 Syrians to seek asylum in Europe (UNHCR 2016).

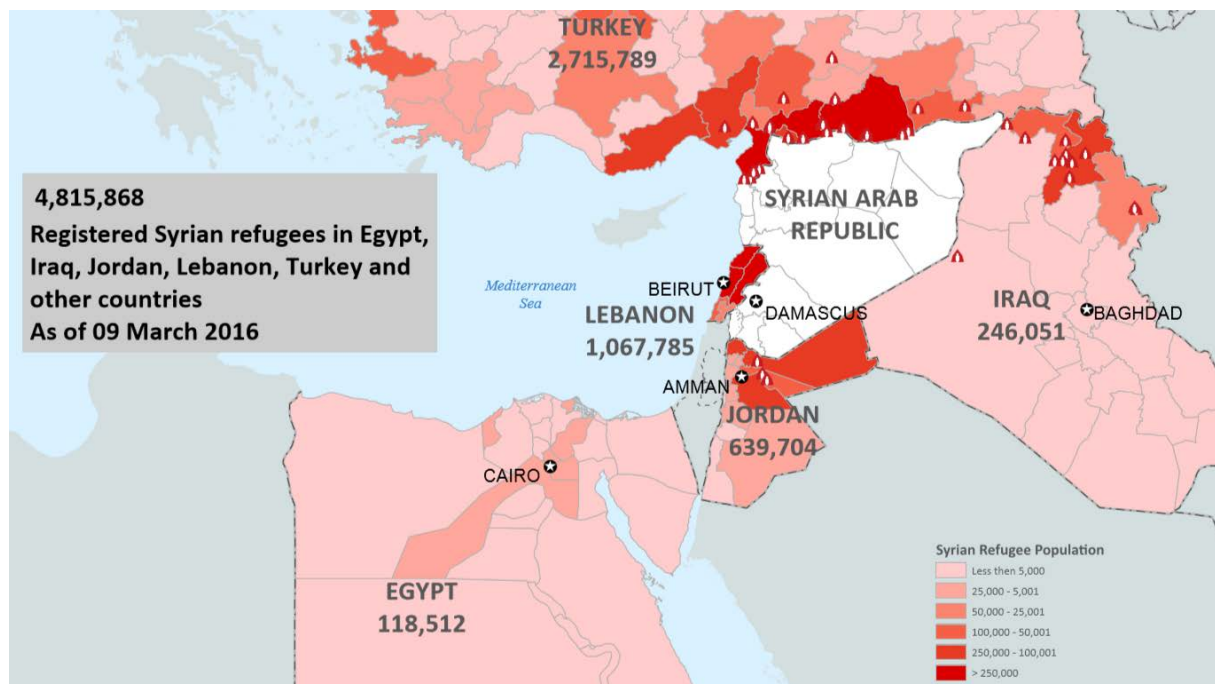


Figure 1- The repartition of registered Syrian refugees in the Middle East as of March 2016. The red spots represent the UNHCR refugee camps. Source: data.unhcr.org, 2016

The UNHCR (2016) registered 655,000 Syrians in Jordan as of November 2016, while the government says it hosts more than 1,4 million (*The New York Times* 2016). Although Jordan recognizes some of the UNHCR principles⁸, the country is still not party to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees, who are left in a legal limbo⁹ (*Chatelard* 2002, 2). Besides, the terminology used by the Jordanian government to refer to refugees underlines

⁸ Following the influx of Iraqi forced migrants in the 1990s, the Jordanian government and the UNHCR agreed on a degree of cooperation in the refugee response. In 1998 with the Memorandum of Understanding, “Jordan has committed itself, among others, to not forcibly return asylum seekers registered with UNHCR [...] to not confine asylum seekers or refugees in camps [and to not restrict] their movements within the country” (*Chatelard* 2002, 9). However, the UNHCR operates at the discretion of the host country. Jordan officially recognizes the principles of the Memorandum of Understanding, yet most of them are actually violated in the case of Syrian refugees.

⁹ When it comes to Syrian refugees, they are allowed to enter Jordan with their passport only and are protected by the principle of non-refoulement. According to the Memorandum of Understanding, can receive there temporary protection from the UNHCR (*Achilli* 2015).

the temporary aspect of their situation in Jordan, as well as the double discourse of the Hashemite Kingdom. Indeed, refugees are considered to be “guests” of the Kingdom (*The Jordan Times* 2016), a lawless category underlining traditions of guesthood and brotherhood in the region. Previously these two ideas have been at the heart of the rhetoric towards Palestinian and Iraqi refugees in the country (*Al Hussein* 2013, *Seeley* 2015). On the other hand, while the Kingdom claims to welcome all “Arab brothers”, the government has shut down its two official border posts with Syria since 2013, and only allows handfuls of refugees to enter via Hadalat and Rukban, two informal border crossings, once they have undergone a thorough screening (*Ababsa* 2015).

Given the numbers of Syrian refugees fleeing to Jordan, the government and the UNHCR have implemented an “encampment policy” since 2012. Zaatari and Azraq camps are jointly managed by the government and the UNHCR, while the Emirates Jordanian Camp (EJC) is under the authority of the Jordanian government and the Emirati Red Cross. Additionally, the camp of Cyber City in Irbid governorate – a brand new high tech complex converted in a refugee camp – hosts about 300 Syrian Palestinians (UNHCR 2015). The infamous camp of Zaatari located in the Northern district of Mafraq, a few kilometres away from the border with Syria, hosts about 80,000 refugees as of November 2016¹⁰ (UNHCR 2016).

Opened in April 2014, Azraq camp was advertised as a “better thought-out” refugee camp. Indeed, Zaatari camp provoked multiple critiques and raised numerous problems among refugees and humanitarian workers. The tents, and later the prefabs¹¹, were overcrowded, protests and violence sparked, families and tribes were separated, and sanitary facilities were not gender safe (*The Jordan Times* 2014). However, Azraq camp remains underpopulated and welcomes less than 54,000 refugees as of November 2016, while it has a capacity of 130,000 (UNHCR 2016). In fact the site opened a few months before Jordan heavily restricted entries at the eastern border crossings, decreasing the influx of asylum seekers entering the country (*Human Rights Watch* 2015). Though presented as “one of the best planned camps in the world” by Andrew Harper, former UNHCR representative to Jordan (*The Jordan Times* 2014), Azraq camp has also been criticized for its harsh living conditions, such as the absence of lighting and

¹⁰ However the camp hosted up to 150,000 at its apex in March 2013 (UNHCR 2016)

¹¹ Prefabricated temporary housing units.

of electricity, the difficult access to services or the impossibility to move the caravans, that have pushed many to leave the camp for self-settled areas or return to Syria (The Jordan Times 2015).

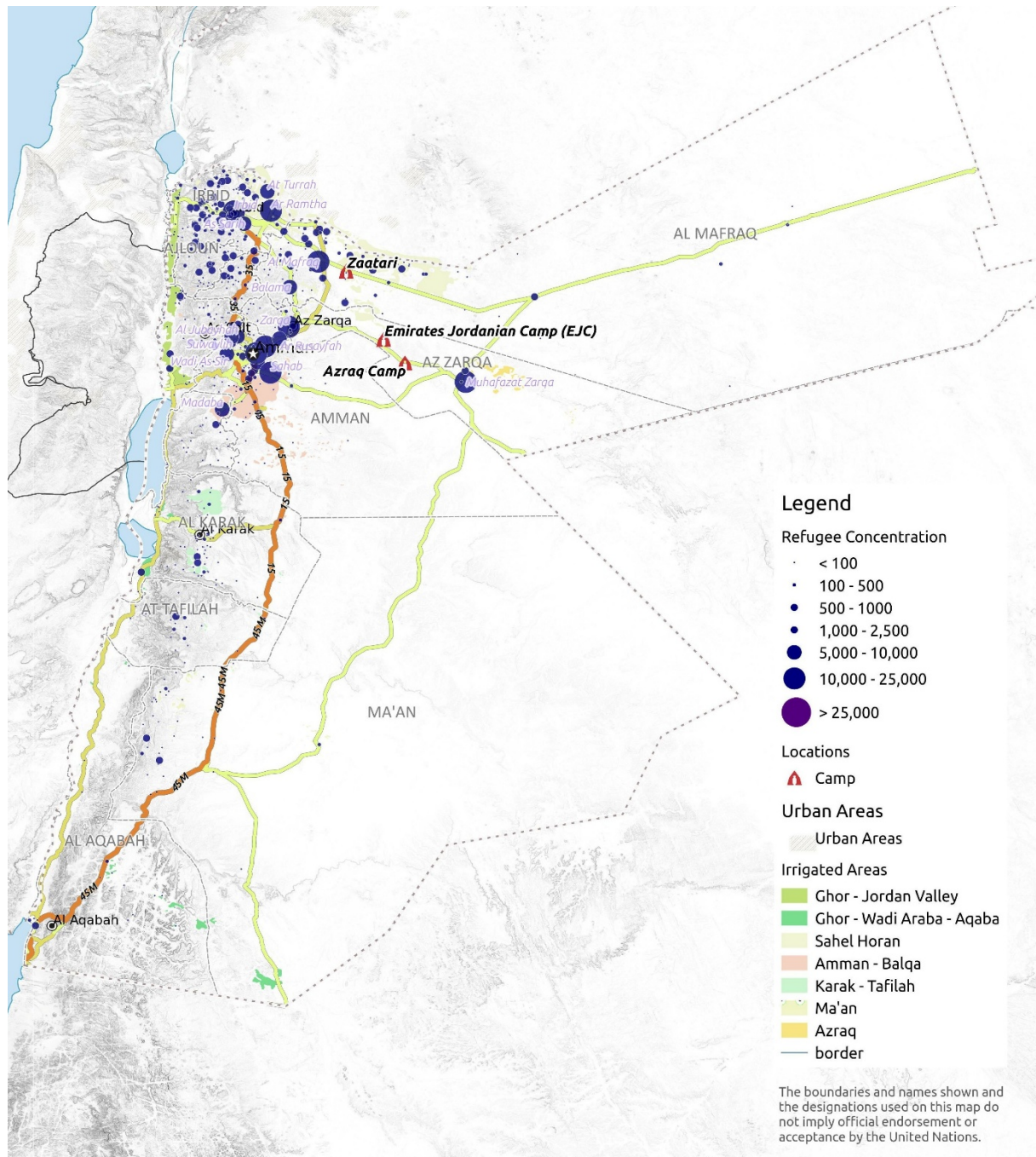


Figure 2- The concentration of Syrian refugees in Jordan as of June 2014. Source: data.unhcr.org

Between camp and non-camp refugees, one main distinction is often operated along their respective levels of autonomy, camp refugees being more dependent on humanitarian assistance than others (Cranfield and Kobia 2009). Despite the analytical divide established between camp and non-camp refugees, I would like to emphasize here again that camp and non-camp refugees are not specifically different in terms of autonomy. In Zaatari for instance, refugees have the

possibility to work for NGOs onsite and many opened small businesses, stores, salons or restaurants, sometimes starting their activity with funds sent by relatives abroad, along the camp main street nicknamed the *Champs Elysées*. As Dorai (2010) highlighted it in the case of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, movements in and outside the camp, social networks, economic activities and the role of non-camp actors blur the lines between the camp and the rest of the urban world.

Yet, urban refugees often demonstrate higher rates of coping strategies and employment and lower levels of vulnerability and dependency on humanitarian aid than camp refugees, mainly because they are less exposed to humanitarian organizations (Cranfield and Kobia 2009). Thus, the UNHCR recommends integrating refugees into the urban fabric, as they often have better access to the (informal) labour market in the cities and develop higher rates of autonomy. However, scattered over the city, they often lack visibility and are hard to reach for relief agencies (UNHCR 2014). Besides, humanitarian assistance outside camps remains minimal (Dalal 2015) and depends on international donors' contributions. As such, the World Food Programme (WFP) aid for Syrian refugees consisting of food vouchers has been suspended, then reintroduced and halved since summer 2015 (World Food Programme 2015).

Therefore, 78% of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan live outside camps (UNHCR 2016) and most of them concentrate in the overburdened Northern governorates as well as in/around the main urban centres, such as the capital city (Figure 2). The majority of them originate from the Southern governorates of Syria and shares “a lot of history, tradition and kinship with the Northern part of Jordan” (Dalal 2015, 267). Old trading routes and regional nomadic traditions have blurred the national boundaries between the two countries. Besides, Syrian migrant workers present in Jordan prior to the conflict¹², as well as transborder families and communities¹³ have eased and oriented the migration of many Syrian refugees, as well as their settlement in Jordan. As many of my respondents, they found their way in the local economy, often counting on active/dormant trading or kin ties. Most of them operate in the informal economic sector¹⁴ that represents 44% of the Jordanian labour market (Dalal 2015), as very few

¹² There were about 4,000 legal Syrian workers in Jordan in 2009 (de Bel Air 2013, 248).

¹³ Such as the non-Arab communities originating from the Caucasus (Circassians and Chechens) who were resettled by Russia at the end of the XIX^o century at the periphery of the Ottoman Empire. They are estimated at between 20,000 and 80,000 in Jordan (de Bel Air 2013, 246) and between 80,000 and 150,000 in Syria (L'Histoire 2012, 67).

¹⁴ A recent ILO/Fafo study argues that “practically all Syrian refugee workers (99%) are working outside labour regulations” (Stave and Hillesund 2015).

work permits are delivered to refugees¹⁵. Besides, in urban areas, refugees have better access to the smuggling and migratory networks if they are planning to transit towards further destinations.

Yet, and despite the UNHCR stipends and/or the WPF food vouchers they can benefit from, and the favoured access they have to jobs, they face price as well as rent inflation, discrimination on the housing and labour market, and the threat of imprisonment or deportation when they work/reside illegally¹⁶ in Jordan (BBC 2014). Before exploring in more details the daily experiences of Syrian women in Amman we shall look at previous and current literature on the topic.

3 Literature review

In this section, I articulate previous research on refugees in Jordan and current research on Syria refugees, highlighting the fact that the question of resilience is often overlooked in such studies. Yet research on other refugee communities focused on aspects of resilience and partly inspire the present thesis.

3.1 Jordan as a refugee haven

Amman is “a passage and a campsite”, said one of its former mayors (Hannoyer and Shami 1996, 67). Since its foundation, Amman and more generally the Hashemite Kingdom, have welcomed several waves of refugees, mainly Palestinian following the *Nakbah*, the 1967 Six-Day war and the First Gulf War; Iraqi after the fall of Bagdad; and more recently Syrian since the beginning of the war. It is important to grasp the historicity of today’s refugee policy in Jordan in order to understand the situation in which my respondents found themselves.

3.1.1 The “Arabs of Palestine”

The difficult and eventful relation between Jordan and its Palestinian refugees has definitely shaped the country’s refugee policy. Indeed the Kingdom received several waves of refugees

¹⁵ Syrian refugees are not allowed to work in Jordan without a working permit that is only given to seasonal and farming workers.

¹⁶ The regime claims to welcome 1.4 million refugees, while the UNHCR has only registered 642,000 of them, what would mean more than half of Syrian refugees in Jordan are not registered as such. However, Syrian refugees residing in Jordan without UNHCR registration are considered illegal migrants. Those caught in irregular situations are often resettled in Azraq camp, if not directly sent back to the Syrian border.

in 1948, 1967, 1990 and 2003¹⁷. Despite the will to welcome the “Arabs of Palestine”¹⁸, tensions between the PLO and the Hashemite monarchy reached their apex in September 1979, and led many Jordanian-Palestinians to immigrate to the Gulf, especially to Kuwait in the need for workforce (Al Hussein 2013).

Yet, Jordan’s Palestinians strategically remained at the heart of a pan-Arab and anti-Zionist rhetoric (Fadhel 2012). In her thorough study of emigration and diasporas in the MENA region, Brand (2006) has highlighted the key role played by the Palestinian-Jordanian diaspora that took shape in the 1970s and greatly contributed to the Kingdom’s economy through extensive remittances¹⁹. In the same way, De Bel-Air (2003) has pointed the place of emigration in the Jordanian politico-economic policy. Until today, Jordan relies heavily on foreign aid and especially on US aid, that dramatically decreased in the mid-1980s, worsened by the return of many Jordanian-Palestinians from Kuwait in 1990. Throughout the 1980s/1990s, the government tried to restore a solid relationship with its diaspora with a series of expatriate conferences, which emphasized the role of the expatriates in the Kingdom’s economy and stressed the Palestinian-Jordanian joint struggle (Brand 2006). On the other hand, many Palestinian refugees who remained in Jordan faced increasingly difficult living conditions. Ababsa extensively documented (2009, 2010, 2012, 2013) the situation of informality, insalubrity and overcrowding characterizing low-income neighbourhoods of East Amman, and particularly Palestinian official and informal camps²⁰. Hence, the degradation of infrastructures and dwellings pushed the city of Amman to embark from the mid-1960s until the early 2000s on a number of costly renovation programmes of the camps of Wardat, Wadi Rimam as well as of other areas of East Amman.

¹⁷ They amounted to 485,000 in 1951, in the wake of the Jericho Conference of December 1948, during which the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was officially created by the unification of the two banks of the Jordan river. They are later joined by more than 400,000 West Bankers, in the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War during which Jordan lost sovereignty over the West Bank. Between 1990 and 1991 during the Gulf Conflict, 250,000 Jordanian-Palestinians, or “returnees”, flew back to the Kingdom, expelled from Kuwait because of the PLO’s (Palestine Liberation Organization) support to Iraq (Al Hussein 2013). Besides, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 led the 50,000 Palestinians settled there to find refuge abroad, mainly in Syria and Jordan (Chatty 2010, 209).

¹⁸ In February 1954 a law defines the status of Palestinians allowed to become full Jordanian citizens, drawing on the 1949 Passport Act. They must be born in Palestine before 15 May 1948 and have resided in the Kingdom between 20 December 1949 and 16 February 1954. It was thought as a temporary solution, accommodating Palestinians until the liberation of their homeland (Al Hussein 2013).

¹⁹ Indeed, in 1976, the Jordanian expatriates’ remittances represented 24.3% of the Jordanian GNP (Brand 2006).

²⁰ 10 official camps are homes to 17% of Jordan’s 1.9 million Palestinian refugees²⁰ (Al Hussein 2013). Two of these camps are in Amman and are surrounded by informal settlements established by 1967 refugees (Ababsa 2009).

3.1.2 *Invisible Iraqis*

Although the country collaborates with the UNHCR since the Gulf War and recognizes some of its principles since the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding, the country is not signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention (Chatelard 2002, 2010). Thus, Jordan has opted for a semi-protectionist policy, engendering invisible and undesirable pools of migrants, which the Iraqi refugee crisis demonstrated.

Since the Iran-Iraq war and following the Gulf War, numbers of Iraqi forced migrants sought shelter in Jordan²¹. Nonetheless, Iraqi refugees in Jordan were given very little attention both from the international community and academia. Chatelard (2002, 2005, 2010) brought forward the inaction of the Jordanian government vis-à-vis Iraqi forced migrants, considered as “guests”, and suggested that this very inaction rendered Iraqis invisible in Jordan. Fearing another refugee scenario “à la Palestinian”, the government restricted aid provided to Iraqis and even questioned their status of refugees (Seeley 2015). As a matter of fact, Iraqis, who were mainly educated and skilled, had no other choice than to consider immigration towards more hospitable havens (Chatelard 2002, 36). While scholars urged the international community to pay more attention to their situation (Chatelard 2008, Chatty and Marfleet 2009), the government started considering from 2007 onwards refugees’ weight on its economy and called for the support of relief agencies and humanitarian donors (Seeley 2015). If the UNHCR had registered 50,000, Jordan claimed to welcome ten times more, based on uncertain calculations²². Here scholarship has interestingly analysed the key role of numbers, data and matters of visibility in the management of a “refugee crisis” and in the ability to attract humanitarian aid (Chatelard 2010, Dorai 2009, Seeley 2015, Turner 2015).

3.1.3 *Encamping Syrian refugees*

Turner (2015) argues that balancing visibility and exclusion in the management of the “Syrian refugee crisis”, the government tries to minimize the impact of refugees on its economy, while attracting the attention of the international community (2). The policy of camps decided for

²¹ Over the 1990s, it is an estimated million of Iraqis who fled to Jordan, for long term settlement or transit (Chatelard 2002, 2010) and 50,000 were registered as refugees in the Kingdom in 2007 (Turner 2015, 8).

²² The Norwegian research centre Fafo was charged to conduct survey of the number of Iraqis in the Kingdom. The estimated figure of 161,000 did not please the regime who delayed the publication of the survey to compile Fafo’s findings with phoning company data and national border-crossing records. An updated estimation of 450,000 to 500,000 Iraqis in Jordan was finally published and used to raise financial aid (Turner 2015).

Syrian refugees seems to fulfil these two considerations²³. Besides, in camps two temporalities overlap, the humanitarian time of emergency and a longer time of wait and absence (Agier 2012), two temporalities differently materialized. Concrete-built buildings are for humanitarians and security staff while refugees are contained in a “temporal space of survival” (Dalal 2015, 265) delimited by fences and barbed wires, ensuring limited interactions between the two groups (Tobin and Otis Campbell 2016). In a country where one out of three persons is a refugee²⁴, the regime intends to manage the current refugee influx in the light of its contemporary hectic history.

The larger bulk of research on Jordan’s refugees address the question of (in)visibility and highlights the ways today’s refugee policy has been crafted since the first wave of Palestinian refugees. However, few studies on Syrian refugees, as well as research carried out in other contexts engage with the notion of resilience, which is the main interest of the present research.

3.2 Approaching Syrian female forced migrants

Current research on Syrian refugees increasingly looks at forced migrant’s networks and experiences of exile. It does not, however, engage yet with the question of resilience, like research on other refugee communities did.

3.2.1 Current research on Syrian refugees

Since the beginning of the war and the massive influx of refugees to Jordan, literature and research on the situation of Syrian refugees in the Kingdom have consistently grown, following the evolutions of the ‘crisis’. If early studies from 2012 to 2014 address refugees’ urging needs and the concerns of host communities, research has gained in maturity since 2014 and pays more attention to refugees’ migration projects and coping strategies. Moreover, humanitarian agencies and relief organizations have produced a large part of the current literature in the forms of assessments and situation reports.

Most of the research focuses primarily on refugees’ access to resources, health services and humanitarian aid, as well as on their (mental)health condition. In parallel, some scholarship sheds light on the failures of the “international refugee regime” (Campbell 2015, Davidson

²³ The policy of camps works hand in hand with a *kafala* (sponsorship) system. Refugees willing to leave the camps need to find a *kafil* or sponsor who can vouch for them.

²⁴ According to the World Bank, see <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/refugees-constitute-third-jordan-population-%E2%80%94-world-bank-official>.

2015) and NGO Governance (Tobin and Otis Campbell 2016) but also on the strategic utilizations of humanitarian and camp policies (Turner 2015). Another large bulk of the literature analyses the impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan's labour market and economy (Fakih and Ibrahim 2015, Davis and Taylor 2013, Phillips 2012, Verme 2015) as well as their integration through labour (Mayer, Doyle 2015, Betts, Collier 2015). Others have studied the change of the national discourse towards refugees. Indeed, from an "open borders policy", the Jordanian government sharply restricted entries since mid-2014, alleging security concerns (Achilli 2015, Carrion 2015, de Bel Air 2016). Human rights organizations have reported cases of refoulement and mistreatment at the border. Yet, Achilli notes that little research has been done on the experiences and strategies of border-crossing (Ibid., 3).

In general, research has mainly been carried out in camps, particularly in Zaatari – though the growing urbanization of the camp remains understudied (Dalal 2015, Fernandez Cortés 2016, King, Smith 2015) – as well as in self-settled and urban areas of Northern Jordan. The thorny situation of Palestinian-Syrians has also been discussed (Al Hussein and Dorai 2013). More recently, scholars entered the city to look at the management of refugee crises and assistance in urban areas (Culbertson et al 2016, Earle 2016), although the fates and lives of urban refugees still need to be investigated.

Linking up market analysis and migration patterns, scholars have defined mobility as a livelihood strategy (Elgendy and Hussein 2016). The decision to flee is indeed triggered by a variety of factors, disrupting events and pre-existing underlying conditions such as poverty and resources scarcity. Thus people flee both for physical safety but also to protect or access the livelihoods they need to survive. "In other words, displacement may be triggered by events related to or caused by the conflict, rather than direct exposure to military operations"²⁵ (Buscher forthcoming 2017, 4).

Scholars gradually started looking at refugees' migration strategies, between long term settlement in Jordan (Davidson 2015) and onward migration to Europe (Achilli 2016, Lyngstad 2015, Lyngstad, Oltedal 2016). Hence, social networks and transnational connections between Syria and Jordan are gaining more attention. Scholars agree to say social networks have eased refugees' journey to, and installation in Jordan. However, it is argued that social networks

²⁵ Mobility is indeed a livelihood strategy for many Syrian refugees who fled Syria, but also for those who navigate within the spaces of refuge. During a fieldwork in Zaatari camp, a hairdresser explained that although he had been able to leave the camp to settle in Amman, he chose to come back. Working as a hairdresser in the camp was more lucrative than in Amman, as he did not pay for housing, nor for the rent of his salon.

generally collapsed and decreased in importance and helpfulness after settlement in Jordan, as my data also suggest, and elsewhere in the region (Stevens 2016, Thorleifsson 2016) mostly due to restrictive border policies (Dorai and Lagarde 2016). Current research projects further explore the role and the historicity of networks, refugees' strategies of settlement, such as the forms of habitat both in and outside camps (Dorai 2016), and their influence on the political fabric of host countries²⁶.

3.2.2 *The fate of (forced) migrant women*

The situation of refugee women in the Middle East has almost exclusively been explored through the prism of gender-based violence, patriarchal pressure and access to health care and humanitarian help. However, a special issue of the journal *Al Raida* (2008) has explored the gaps in literature and produced interesting case studies on refugee women in Lebanon, Yemen and Egypt. Besides the works of Latte-Abdallah increased Palestinian refugee women's visibility in academia (2007, 2015 [2006]). Indeed, research has shown how refugee women experience a continuum of violence (Alsaba, Kapilashrami 2016), which translates in sexual and gender-based violence both prior to, during their flight (Giles 2012, Kelly and Meghan 2015), and afterwards in their country of refuge (Crisp, Morris and Refstie 2012, Deacon and Sullivan 2009, Jacobsen 2004).

Within the household unit, the sudden transformation of gender hierarchies and roles often leads to diminishing men's self-esteem, which in turn can increase risks of domestic violence (Buscher forthcoming 2017, Lutz 2010). The redistribution of labour and care often puts forward women and mothers who tend to become breadwinners while other female family members take over housework (Ibid.). Besides, if women and female heads of households face greater difficulties to support themselves and their family, women's livelihoods proved to be more adaptive to new environments than men's, since childcare and housework can easily translate into service oriented work (Buscher forthcoming 2017, 5). Thus, gender and kinship undergo significant changes in exile. However, Thorleifsson argues that women taking on new responsibilities and the changing of social relations and networks "does not constitute a reversal of traditional gendered roles" (2016, 1076).

²⁶ A broad multidisciplinary research programme has been recently launched by the French Institute for the Near East (Ifpo), together with the LEST (Laboratory for Economics and Work Sociology), IFEA (French Institute for Anatolian Studies) and IMS (Institute for Migration Studies): <http://lajeh.hypotheses.org/>

As for Syrian refugee women, academic and humanitarian research has mainly focused on issues of mental health and gender-based violence, child labour and marriage (Swanson 2013), primarily in camps. Through the example of women's empowerment programmes in Zaatari, such as the Women and Girls Oasis (Jabbar and Zaza 2015, Wells and Kuttiparambil 2016) Tobin and Otis Campbell (2016) showed how NGO governance and donors' request not only frame certain representations of refugees, but also amplify the burden of the most vulnerable (women, youth) who are requested to take part to more activities. Al Akash (2014) nonetheless conducted ethnographic fieldwork on Syrian refugee women in Irbid and collected powerful life stories and narratives of exile, loneliness and hardship.

If women experience specific violence and potential trauma before, during and after their flight, their experience of migration is not limited to suffering and pain. Feminist scholars have underscored the problematics of humanitarian discourse and representation of refugee women and emphasized women's agentic capacities (Corbet 2012, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2010, 2016, Hyndman 2000, Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlon and Moussa 2008). Hence Hyndman argues "women, whose bodies, families, and communities bear the violent inscriptions of war and displacement are neither universal subjects nor essentialized subjects in distinct locations" (2000, 86). In this way, this thesis aims to take a close look at Syrian women's daily routine, beyond ethno-centred and gendered prejudices.

3.2.3 Exiled in cities: urban refugees

Whereas Jacobsen simply qualifies urban refugees as refugees settled in urban areas (Jacobsen 2004), it is very difficult to define urban refugees as much as it is to define urban areas. It cannot be assumed that non-camp refugees are all urban refugees since many of them scatter in rural regions. Besides, geographers have studied the blurred lines between camp and urban areas, questioning the definition of 'urban refugee'. Camps and cities greatly intertwine and merge over institutional and geographic boundaries (Dorai 2010) while the camp is itself an urban space to some extent, or a "camp-city" for Agier (2002). In Jordan, Zaatari camp has become of the fastest growing places (Weston 2015) and it is clear "that the term 'camp' no longer adequately describes the realities for those living there" (Leis 2016, 199). However, for the purposes of this study, I consider as urban refugees forced migrants living in built-up areas located in or on the outskirts of cities, where they experience proximity with others, possibilities of formal or informal employment and provision of goods and services (UNHCR 2009).

If academia has been paying growing attention to urban refugees since the 1970s, it is only since 1997 that the UNHCR started redistributing parts of its aid to urban settlers given the increasing numbers of non-camp refugees (UNHCR 2009). Thus, research has explored the assumption according to which urban refugees are better off than camp refugees, as well as the motives for urban settlement. In cities, refugees are assured a better access to (self, formal or informal) employment and benefit from the help of pre-existing communities, as well as transnational networks and systems of remittances (Cranfield and Kobia 2009, Zetter 2003). On the other hand they have difficulties accessing humanitarian aid, since they often live in slums and marginalized areas on the fringes of the cities, and generally face discriminations in host communities (Cranfield and Kobia 2009, Jacobsen 2004, Malkki 1996). Other studies, such as research on Palestinian refugee communities, looked at refugees' coping strategies and resilience. Buch Segal (2015) hence explores the ways Palestinian detainees' wives uphold dignity and exemplarity, while Gren (2015) writes about daily resilience as an alternative to resistance, in order to uphold continuity and 'normality' despite political turmoil, basing her inquiry on an extensive fieldwork in the Palestinian camp of Dheisheh.

Scholarship has highlighted the ways in which previous waves of forced migrants have shaped Jordan's refugee policy. While research on Syrian refugees in Jordan is in its infancy, it has emphasized the place of networks in refugees' migration project. Besides, previous research on Palestinian refugees demonstrated the interest of placing the research lens on daily lives to highlight agency and resilience. I place my research in line with such studies. Yet, women's voices are given little attention in this particular context, and remain framed by violence and hardship. Though refugee women face multiple forms of violence on an everyday basis, research has not yet explored all the dimensions of their agentic and coping capacities through the lens of their daily routine. In this way, this research intends explore the daily lives of urban refugee women, in order to contribute to literature on forced migrants' resilience in the Middle East.

4 Theoretical framework

In this section I bring together different theoretical stances, such as the ambivalence of urbanscapes, transnational network analysis and the concept of home-making, to create a theoretical corpus that can shed light on notions of agency and resilience in urban exile. I choose

to frame my theories with the concept of Gendered Geographies of Power which enables a multiscale analysis of agency and gender across borders.

4.1 Ambivalent urban spaces

Early urban theorists, such as Simmel (1976 [1903]), presented the city as a rather permissive space. Given the constant heterogeneity and diversity of urbanscapes, “the citizen of the metropolis is free” and can emancipate from the social control of the group (Ibid., 16). This heterogeneity is usually referred to as the fluidity of urban life, which is the potential for personal and role change in the city (Hannerz 1980, 269). Yet, and despite its fluidity, the city remains an arena of normative and symbolic violence that engenders shame and thus, can also be exclusionary (Jackson 2005, 19). Besides, and as the city is a fundamentally gendered space, women – as much as other minorities – are not granted free and full access to the city and face various difficulties and threats (Bondi and Rose 2003). Besides, in Islamic contexts, the distinction between private and public spheres, between the home and the urban, is gendered and materialized, argues Janet Abu-Lughod (1987). Architectural arrangements (such as *mushrabiya*) ensure privacy and a separation of public and private areas, both outside and inside the house²⁷. Thus, parts of the home belong to the public space, such as the main living room from which women are often excluded (Ibid.)²⁸.

However, Wilson (1990), in her critic of feminist urban theory explores the emancipatory potential of urban space for women, freed from suburban domesticity and rural life, and presents the city as a shifting space (2001) that is not essentially disadvantaging for women and that can be appropriated by them. Thus women negotiate urban existence and find their way through discriminatory spaces to “flourish in the interstices of the city” (Asdar Ali and Rieker 2008, 2). Hence the city is an ambivalent space, both emancipatory and exclusionary, and it is precisely this ambivalence of urban spaces that I want to explore here, with the case of Syrian women’s experiences in Amman. While my fieldwork took place in Amman, this study intends to uncover a broad continuum of migration in order to highlight women’s resourcefulness and connectivity. As such, I use the concepts of social world, network analysis as well as notions of transnationalism.

²⁷ Rosaldo (1974) argues that the distinction between public and private spheres is at the basis of women’s subordination.

²⁸ In her fieldwork in Raqqa, Syria, Ababsa (2001) demonstrates that the traditional Bedouin *madâfa*, a living and guest room separated from the rest of the household, is a strictly masculine space.

4.2 Transnational network analysis

Introduced by urban theorists, the concept of social world is useful to approach entangled lives and explore the different webs in which people are embedded. Indeed Park (1952, 44) argues that:

the processes of segregation establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which can touch but do not interpenetrate. This makes it possible for individuals to pass quickly and easily from one moral milieu to another and encourages the fascinating but dangerous experiment of living at the same time in several different contiguous, but otherwise widely separated worlds.

While there is no network analysis as such, it can unravel the different social worlds or ‘moral milieus’ connecting people to one another (Hannerz 1980, 174). Hannerz simply defines it as a research attitude that would favour individuals’ agentic capacities and see individuals using roles and crossing, manipulating institutional boundaries, rather than the other way around (Ibid., 174).

Network analysis and the concept of social worlds have been gradually introduced in transnational migration studies, as they ignore national boundaries and operate across borders (Glick Schiller and Levitt 2004). Thus, Glick Schiller and Levitt (2004) define a social field²⁹ as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (1009), which boundaries are fluid and shaped by the participants of a given field. In their definition of social worlds/fields as resourceful networks, shaped by people’s agency, Glick Schiller and Levitt echo Faist’s (2000) concept of transnational social space, which emerges within the spaces of, and from the practices of, transnational migration. It consists in material and immaterial resources for migration such as people, goods, information, symbols and cultural practices accumulated by previous migrants.

More specifically, Emanuel Marx uses Park’s concept of social worlds to provide a minimal working definition of refugeeness. While numerous labels and categories have obscured the realities of forced migrants’ lives (Zetter 1991, 2007), Marx (1990) considers “a refugee [as] a

²⁹ Scholars tend to use the terms of social ‘world’ and ‘fields’ in the same way. In this case, Glick Schiller and Levitt (2004) draw on Bourdieu’s definition. Indeed, Bourdieu (1977) favours the use of social field (*champ social*) that defines one’s specific social aggregate, contrary to the greater social world or society (*monde social*). While he does not explicitly develop a transnational concept, the theory of social fields he frames is not determined by nation-state boundaries.

person whose social world has been disturbed” (197). From this standpoint, he adds that “the various stages of a person’s career, from the destruction of his or her social world, through camp life, to the growth of a diversified social network, can all be encompassed in the framework of a study” (Ibid., 197).

In this way, the concept of social world becomes a relevant and powerful tool to study, in the frame of network analysis, forced exile in transnational contexts. Not only does it shed light on people’s connectedness, but also on their agency in shaping the networks in which they are embedded, as well as the resources they collect from these networks. It replaces forced migrants in a transnational continuum of migration. Yet, in the ambivalent urban spaces in which they settled, they need to tangibly (re)make home.

4.3 (Re)making home in exile

The concept of home is a rather versatile one. However, scholars tend to define it as both material and imaginative, “a site and a set of meanings/emotions [...] it is material dwelling and it is also an affective space, shaped by emotions and feelings of belonging” (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 22). Besides, postcolonial feminist critique has introduced rather fluid and mobile definitions of home (Ibid., 20). Indeed, “at times, home is nowhere” argues bell hooks (1991, 148). Home can thus be (materially) nowhere, and (affectively) everywhere. Yet, when people’s routines are disrupted, which is the case of forced migrants, they need to “retreat into a microcosm that [they] can trust and manage” (Jackson 2005, 18).

Home-making is thus a way for people to negotiate ruptures and establish continuities, specifically in the context of transnational migration (Salih 2002, 52). Managing continuity and change is one of the greatest concerns of refugees’ lives adds Zetter (2003, 1152), but continuity and change are also key elements with which people make places meaningful, argues Gustafson (2001, 13). Indeed, he defines home-making as an on-going process and a personal project in which people “meet” and “shape” a given place over time (Ibid., 13). They physically and affectively get to know and to alter their environment. Additionally, transnational migrants do not just reproduce traditions, but take part in a dynamic process reflecting their multiple belongings in the tangible making of a new home (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 215).

As such, Miller defines home-making as the process by which people “accommodate” or personalize a place to make it home (2010, 107). Moreover, and bringing in theories of materiality, he adds that things matter. They communicate cultural meanings, differentiation

and take part in the creation of social worlds (1998, 3). Home-making can thus be understood as the process by which people give meaning to dwellings by displaying specific and culturally valued objects.

Exploring and accommodating their environment, people intend to inscribe themselves in new spaces. Hence, the concept of home-making finds its place in this theoretical framework as it highlights people's agency and resilience in relation to spaces, and will be useful to study the ways Syrian women maintain a sense of life in exile. I choose to bring the different theoretical concepts outlined here under the broader model of Gendered Geographies of Power.

4.4 Gendered Geographies of Power

In her overview of the state of scholarship on *Gender in the Migratory Process* (2010), Lutz pleads for a study of the “gender-specific (transnational) migration patterns” through a multi-scaled analysis. Scholars have indeed acknowledged the role of nation-states projects and households on gender roles (e.g. Fournon and Glick Schiller 2001, Pessar 1999), yet they have lacked to take into account the various layers of power affecting migrants' lives. She brings forward “the need to integrate gender aspects into theories based on transnational migration, labour market and network approaches” (Lutz 2010, 1658-1659).

Linking the concept of social worlds to the study of transnationalism, and bringing in the role of gender, Mahler and Pessar (2001) introduce the conceptual model of Gendered Geographies of Power in transnational spaces (GGP). Their framework articulates *geographic scales*, *social locations* and *power geometries*, as well as the role of personal resourcefulness and social imaginaries in the (re)definition of gender through migration (2001, 2003, 2006).

Following Lutz's argumentation, each element of their concept provides a wide and in-depth analysis of gender in transnational contexts, taking into account the various scales impacting gendered aspects of people' lives across borders. They understand it as a framework to analyse “people's social agency – corporal and cognitive – given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple layers of power operative within and across many terrains” (2001, 447). They articulate gender, transnationalism³⁰ and transnational spaces³¹ to craft a concept

³⁰ Mahler and Pessar use here Glick Schiller's (1999) definition of transnationalism, adding to Kerney's distinction (1995) of global and transnational non-state actors in transnational practices, the role of transnational actors' agency.

³¹ Transnational spaces are a form of transnational social world, however more inclusive and broader not only geographically but also in terms of depth (Mahler and Pessar 2001).

that acknowledges power hierarchies and degrees of agency (power geometries) on multiple spatial (geographic scales) and social scales (social locations).

More than an attribute of definition of the self, gender is a process, a set of relations “among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts” (Butler 1999 [1990], 13). Therefore, while gender is a contextualized and specified relation, this relation varies and evolves according to the given setting and the subjects involved. Hence, gender is a social construct and a discursive practice (Butler 1999 [1990], de Beauvoir 1949). Because it carries power distinctions and social difference, gender becomes a meaningful concept in transnational studies to unravel these structures. In this way, gender evolves across borders and is reshaped in situations of transnationalism (Mahler and Pessar 2001). Although convenient to the study of transnational forced migration, the concept of GGP has been little used in this context so far. If GGP is not explicitly designed for the study of refugee communities, Mahler and Pessar argue (2006, 51) that:

as agency is more interrogated the commonplace poles ‘voluntary’ (immigrant) versus ‘involuntary’ or ‘forced’ (refugee, slave?) migration should be rightfully seen as endpoints in a long continuum with many intermediary measures and sites where gendered ideologies and processes operate.

The concept of GGP serves the overall aim of this research, which is to explore the facets of Syrian women’s resilience in transnational exile. Besides, it allows a multiscale and multilevel analysis simultanely looking at the transnational social spaces in which women are embedded (geographic scales), the spaces in which they inscribe themselves (social locations) and the gender roles (power geometries) that define their daily lives.

In the midst of ambivalent and anonymous urban spaces, embedded in multiple transnational webs, forced migrants tangibly (re)make home in order to manage continuity and change. I use this theoretical corpus together with the model of Gendered Geographies of Power in the analysis of social worlds (geographic scales), urban spaces (social locations) and gender roles (power hierarchies) in transnational migration, highlighting their resourcefulness as well as their burdensome potential. Looking at gender and resilience in urban exile, this framework also questions of refugeeness both as a legal and analytical category of exile.

5 Methods and ethics

Researching refugee women, I have articulated tools for data collection and analysis in order to frame a research project both safe for my respondents and academically sound. I elaborate here on the instruments and methods I have used to collect and connect my data, as well as on the ethical concerns and questions of reflexivity that have arisen throughout the study.

5.1 Methodology of the research

I chose to use qualitative methods of research as they suited the needs of my fieldwork for several reasons. On the one hand, feminist critique has argued that qualitative small scale research methods in social sciences are suited best to women studying women, as it increases intersubjectivity with the research participants (McDowell 1992). On the other hand, when it comes to social geography and urban research, ethnographic methods and local scale-approach better reflect the diversity and singularity of spaces (Hayot 2002). Thus, I conducted semi-structured interviews covering three main themes – (1) departure from Syria and travel to Jordan, (2) the settlement process in Amman and (3) the constitution of interior spaces³². This form of interview allowed an inductive approach to the research question, which contours were gradually defined throughout the research process. Besides, it helps the researcher keeping an “open mind” during the interview (Bryman 2012, 12).

A large part of the interview was dedicated to the first theme and retraced interviewees’ often-chaotic way from their home in Syria to their current location. These narratives of exile are of great insight, and draws over time and space the family bounds, the kinship and solidarity networks they have activated throughout their journey. Not only do narratives reveal key information about the different webs in which migrants are implicated, but they are also the expression of their representation of exile and migration. It is useful to study how after the disruption of their social world³³, forced migrants craft meaningful tales of their history, thus giving and making sense of their present lives (Fresia 2005, Eastmond 2007).

Besides, and following the advice of my internship supervisor Dr Kamel Doraï, I have tried to gather additional data using the *AGEVEN* table. The *AGEVEN* (age/event) table is a tool for

³² The full interview guide is available in the appendix.

³³ As I explain it later, I use in this thesis the concept of “social world” following Emanuel Marx’s definition. He argues that “the social world is the sum of all the migrants’ relationships and of the forces impinging on them at any moment. It can be explored through the social networks of migrants and the changes they undergo during migration and resettlement” (1990, 189).

data collection that has been created by demographers working on event-centred research³⁴. It is a simple and efficient tool for data collection to retrace life events in their socio-economic context. I tried to elaborate a simplified version of it to reference women's daily activities in the city³⁵. I originally planned to distribute the tables to my respondents, ask them to disseminate some to their entourage to gather them later. The aim was to eventually reach more respondents, selected according to their profile, and to collect accurate data on women's mobility in Amman (in terms of activities, frequentations, transportations and neighbourhoods). I first tested it with three interviewees, asking them to fill out one table and to give one to another woman of their acquaintance. But, it appeared to be a tedious task. I then decided to fill them out at the end of my interviews to take a snapshot of my interviewees' daily comings and goings. In this way, I could collect additional and accurate information on their activities of the day.

5.1.1 Research setting and field assistants

As an intern at the French Institute for the Near East (Ifpo) in Amman, Jordan, between September and December 2015, I conducted my fieldwork with the valuable help and advises of Ifpo senior researchers and associated PhD students who were my main gatekeepers to the field of study. My first idea was to study refugee women's daily mobilities in camps and their experiences of UNHCR gender mainstreaming policies. However, given the humanitarian situation in both Zaatari and Azraq, camps have become increasingly difficult to access for independent researchers and journalists³⁶. The Emirati Jordanian Camp is impossible to access for researchers who are not expressly working with the UNHCR or the government³⁷. Azraq camp authorities are particularly reluctant to let in independent visitors as the situation in the camp has worsened since its opening. A humanitarian worker argues that the blank caravans

³⁴ Antoine, Bry and Demba Diouf, 1987. The authors were investigating fecundity and infantile mortality in Pikine, a suburb of Dakar, Senegal.

³⁵ See appendix

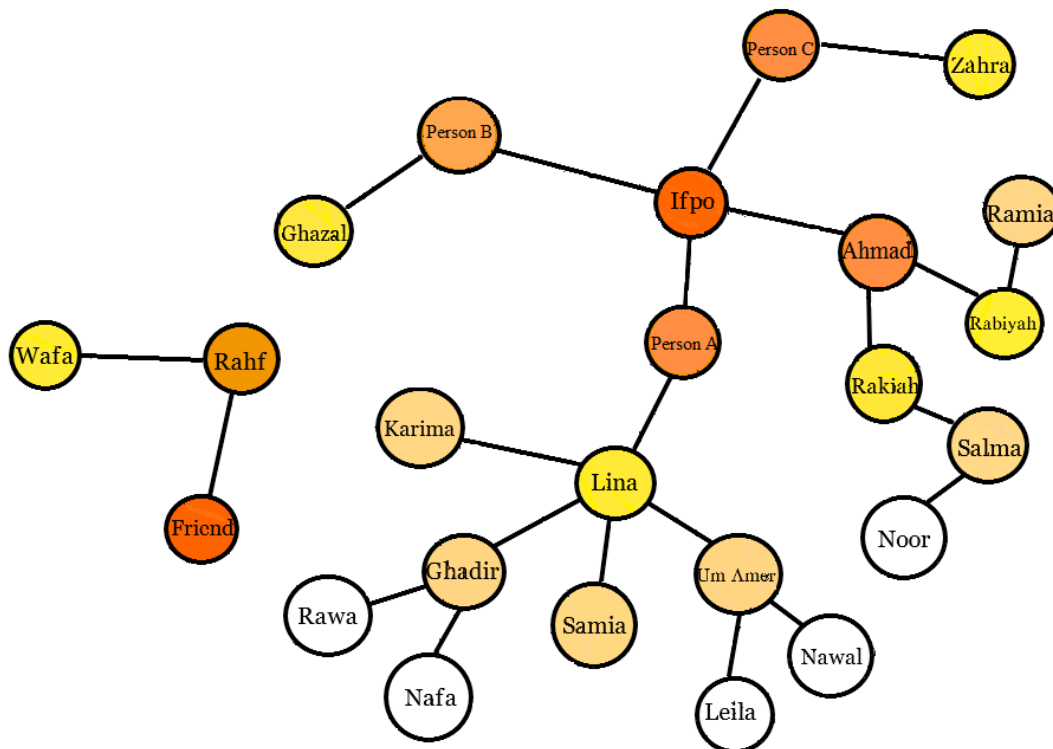
³⁶ However, it is not impossible to enter the camps. Tours of Zaatari and Azraq camps are regularly organized for foreign delegations of students or decision-makers and I could take part to one of them in May 2015. The tour starts with a speech by the head of security forces and is followed by a tour of the camp in a minibus. As for independent visitors, journalists are given a press visa valid for the three camps of the country and researchers can get an official letter from their respective embassy stating their research activities. In both cases, they are obligatory accompanied since autumn 2015 by a member of the security services in uniform and armed, what obviously constricts their work.

³⁷ Interview with Bertrand Blanc, protection officer at the UNHCR on October 6, 2015.

standing in the middle of the desert recall pictures of a “concentration camp to our European imaginaries”³⁸.

Thus, I was advised to refocus my project on urban refugees, scattered all over the city and thus easier to reach than camp refugees. I contacted various relief agencies and NGOs, and met with a protection officer at the UNHCR headquarters in Amman. But it is the meeting with my first interpreter, Lina who also worked with an Ifpo associated PhD student, that was the most helpful. Not only did she arrange and translate the interviews, but Jordanian-Palestinian from her father and Syrian from her mother, she introduced me to her Syrian female friends and relatives, who became my respondents³⁹. I found it very comfortable both for me and my interviewees to work with a female interpreter, who was also a family member or a familiar acquaintance. The respondents felt more confident to open up their homes and their lives to the complete stranger that I was. However, the few hours per week Lina could dedicate to me and the fact that, after some weeks of collaboration, she increased her rate per hour pushed me to find another interpreter.

Here again, Ifpo and its network of researchers and students was very resourceful. I could get in touch with a handful of male interpreters who had previously worked with one of Ifpo’s



³⁸ Interview with Julie Delaire, NGO worker on September 30, 2015.

³⁹ Herself and her mother fled Damascus in November 2012, while most of her relatives came between 2012 and 2014 from the family village in the district of Az Zabadani, North West of Damascus.

former interns. One of them, Ahmad, accepted to work with me, “not only for the money, but for the humanist aspect of [the research]” as he said. Although I thought women would be reluctant to meet me in his company, neither his gender nor the fact that he did not know the respondents were a problem. We were even once welcomed in a female headed-household. During the 4 interviews we conducted together, all questions were answered, even those concerning financial matters and that I had assumed would be a taboo topic with strangers. Besides, his mother, a retired nurse who provides care to elders in Jabal al Nasser, put us in contact with two Syrian families in this neighbourhood. I also got in touch with two women through Ifpo staff, which allowed me to extend my research beyond Lina’s kin network and the neighbourhood of Jabal al Nasser. Additionally, I joined an interview set up by a journalist friend of mine in a Syrian female headed household in Zarqa⁴⁰ where one of my flatmates, an Arabic speaker, carried out the translation. The following schema (figure 3) describes my network of gatekeepers and respondents, and their mutual connections. The different colours illustrate the degree of distance to the researcher.

Figure 3 - A schema of my network of gatekeepers (Ifpo and Friend) and my respondents in Amman

5.1.2 Fieldwork considerations and choice of informants

For the duration of my fieldwork, which lasted three months, I interviewed a total of 18 Syrian women, between 17 and 60 years old, whom I generally met once, sometimes more, or even on a regular basis⁴¹. They all had different marital and economic situations, were from various social backgrounds, places of origin in Syria and areas of settlement in Amman. Bearing in mind the fact that refugee populations are often hard to reach (Jacobsen et Landau 2003), and more particularly refugee women (Vargas 1998), I chose to not limit my sample to a specific category of women. Besides, and as I evoked it in the precedent chapter, forced should be studied in a continuum, in a broader time/space context, including the past lives, the different steps of the flight, and of life in exile. Thus, I did not choose to specifically interview registered refugee women, or women who had lived in a specific camp, women from a specific

⁴⁰ A city at the periphery of Amman.

⁴¹ I mostly met with my respondents for a single interview. However, I met few of them up to three times, like Um Amer, a relative of Lina’s who offered to host interviews with Syrian friends of hers; and one of them, Leila, Um Amer’s neighbour whom I met during or after the meetings at Um Amer’s. Besides, one of my first interviewees was Lina, my interpreter with who I met regularly for the purpose of my fieldwork. I also met once a week with Ghazal, my Arabic tutor in Amman, who eventually became one of my respondents.

community/city, or working women for instance. In this way, I could meet a variety of women who had experienced different situations and who gave me a glimpse of the diversity and complexity of forced migration. Nonetheless, I tried to meet with women aged between 20 and 50, as I assumed they would have better access to the city than the youth or the elders.

As I said, most of the interviews were arranged by my interpreters. However, using the Snowball Sampling Method (SSM) I could get to know more respondents and leave my interpreters' personal networks of acquaintances. The SSM can decrease the representativity of the sampling, but because refugee populations are often difficult to reach, representativity is in any case extremely difficult to implement in forced migration studies (Jacobsen et Landau 2003).

Besides, I met with an NGO worker and a protection officer at UNHCR at the beginning of my fieldwork, who provided me with some background information about the humanitarian situation vis-à-vis Syrian refugees in Jordan. I also joined a French NGO twice as a volunteer for a day of activities with Zaatari village youth, in the self-settlements located at the gates of the camp. These two days of activities gave me a concrete idea of the shape humanitarian actions can take outside camps. As part of my internship, I could also join Dr. Dorai, working on Syrian refugees' habitat in and outside camps, to Zaatari camp and to self-settlements on the outskirts of Azraq city, where we also visited a community centre. We spent a total of two days in each location, conducting interviews and observations.

5.1.3 Data organization and coding

Exploring and making sense of the data collected is an important part of the research project. The different moments of the fieldwork get connected to enlighten each other in meaningful ways. Analytic induction suggests creating codes out of qualitative material, that are schemes or topics repertoires, considered in the light of literature and related readings (Flowerdrew and Martin 2005 [1997]).

The main themes of the interviews became clear during the transcription, which I did using my notes and, when available, records of the conversation. I systematically asked my respondents if I could record the interview. I explained the tape will be restricted to my personal use, yet some of them were reluctant to be recorded. Thus, I often had to take full notes of the interview. I directly transcribed the words of the interpreter in order to keep trace of the translation work (Hyndman 2000, 105). I used a single notebook to keep track in a timely manner of my

interview notes, my field notes (taken during/after interviews and observations) as well as personal notes and informal conversations I had with the different people who have informed my fieldwork to some extent (researchers and PhD students, interpreters, NGO workers and friends in Amman).

During the transcriptions, four topics transpired from the interviews: local and transnational networks (1), urbanity and use(s) of the city (2), continuity and change (3), and notions of resilience (4). These are not clear-cut but rather general schemes of discussion that intertwine and overlap in the interviews as well as in women's lives. To better visualize the connections between these topics in the different interviews, I indexed them in a table where I listed the main, or the relevant, characteristics of each of my respondents⁴². Linking up the data I had at my disposal, further connections enhanced my coding and led me to draw a number of conclusions.

5.2 Ethical concerns and reflexivity

It is important, once methodological choices are clarified, to look at the question of ethics in the research process, and at the position of the researcher.

5.2.1 *Beyond translation*

As my level of Arabic was (and is) insufficient to conduct interviews on my own, I had to work with interpreters. To not be able to fully communicate with my respondents obviously undermined the quality of the ethnographic relationship and the quality of the data collected (Dance, Gutiérrez et Hermes 2010, Maiter, et al. 2008). However, Wikan (1992) recommends to “go beyond words” and explore non-verbal communication, or what Bourdieu names symbolic capital that includes priceless things such as smiles, fair words and attention (Jackson 2005, 50).

Translation can be clumsy and sometimes misses the “finer shades of cultural meaning” (Bateson and Mead 2007 [1942], 389). It can also introduce new concepts and interpretations that “do violence” to the original meaning (Hyndman 2000, 92). Though I could not carry out the interviews in Arabic myself, Arabic is not a complete foreign language to me and I could sometimes notice translation errors. During our first interview together at Rakiah's (mentioned

⁴² The table contains the following information: date of the interview, age, origin in Syria and successive areas of settlement in Jordan, occupation prior to/after the flight, steps during the flight and date of arrival in Jordan, size of the household and head of the household, marital status, core network in/outside Jordan and legal status.

in the introduction), Ahmed kept saying that the couple received money from the ‘municipality’, despite my surprised look. In fact, Rakhiah and Omar received UNHCR stipends. Indeed, the word *mufuwadia*, meaning commissioner, is commonly used in Arabic to refer to the UN agency and led to a misunderstanding. In this case we sorted out the misunderstanding, but there might have been more that I am not aware of.

Despite the bias of translation, interpreters contributed to my research beyond linguistics, in the way of research assistants. Indeed, reflecting on his fieldwork in Morocco, Rabinow (1977, cited in Robben 2007) emphasizes that the intersubjective relationship between the researcher and the participant as well needs to be translated and interpreted, especially in cross-cultural research. For instance, the interpreters I worked with have both travelled to or lived in Syria, and know for instance many of the places mentioned, the customs evoked. Lina often knew the respondents and added valuable information during the interview, and sometimes updated me on someone’s situation. Furthermore, they helped me with gaining legitimacy in the eyes of my respondents. Both Lina and Ahmed enabled me to assert myself in the ethnographic relationship and to gain my respondents’ trust. Lina knew most of the respondents we met together. We also interviewed two women, Leila and Nawal we got to know through the SSM and who were both friends of Um Amer’s. The meetings systematically happened at her place, so that the respondent could be in a familiar space, in the company of a trustful person. As for Ahmad, although he did not know the respondents, they knew his mother which somehow vouched for the two of us and established trust in the ethnographic relationship.

Finally, as Vargas argues, “the delicate condition of refugee families [...] means that service providers and scholars [...] encounter a variety of thorny ethical dilemmas” (1998, 35). Conducting research with forced migrants, it was primordial to preserve and anonymize their information. Indeed, most of them worked or resided in Jordan illegally, some had escaped camps and risked to be taken back. Thus the names of all my respondents, as well as my interpreters’ have been modified.

5.2.1 Matters of reciprocity

Intersubjectivity, argues Jackson, “is universally experienced in terms of relations and reciprocity” (2005, 36). It is the core of ethnographic research and it requires an equitable relation with respondents, based on the three implications of gift theorized by Mauss that are giving, receiving and repaying (*ibid.*39). One can increase the quality of a relationship with

more reciprocity. Reciprocity in social research supposes that the research questions are elaborated with the participants who become partners in research. In a situation of reciprocity, power and resources are shared and the outcomes of the research should benefit both the researcher and the participants (Maiter, et al. 2008, Dance, Gutiérrez et Hermes 2010).

But when traditional social research is carried out, what do the respondents gain from it? The benefits of the interview were never evoked or questioned when Lina accompanied me, since we met with her relatives and friends of them. But it is a question Ahmad had to face twice, when calling women who were recommended by previous respondents to arrange an interview. ‘What do I gain from it? Will it change something to Syria’s fate?’, asked angrily one of them. Indeed, during the time of the investigation, respondents give something (time, information and sometimes contacts, as well as food or beverages) that should be given back, or repaid, in some way. If we were systematically offered beverages, some interviews turned into real dinners, what gave me the chance to spend more time with my respondents, but also put me in an uncomfortable position where the imbalance of the relationship went ‘too far’. During our interview, Samia asked me to “take [her] daughter in [my] suitcase to Sweden” where her father had emigrated. But apart from these (half-)joking suggestions, I was never asked to pay my interviewees, or help them in any way. Thus, how to deal with and pay back the warm welcomes and the time these people took to open up their lives to me?

Investigating squats in Marseille, France, Bouillon (2005) has explored questions of reciprocity and counter-gift. In her experience, respondents never expressly asked her for help or money. The terms of the exchange between her and her respondents were revealed *a posteriori*, when some respondents did not return her calls or stopped meeting her. Thus, she evokes three types of counter-gift, that are presence, alterity and help, and that can tacitly keep the ethnographic relationship alive.

To carefully listen to respondents’ stories and to show interest in the other is obviously an asset in the interview. It increases the quality of the ethnographic relationship and as well as the quality of data collected. Besides, the interview can be a moment of relief for some respondents, who can share their story and their difficulties with a friendly ear. During her study of Hmong refugee women in the US, Monzel (1993) affirms that “the interviews took the character of a testimonial sharing of often lonely and painful experiences that they had previously been unable to communicate” (118). Some of the women I met could not contain their tears when talking about their flight from Syria, and took time to reflect on questions they did not come across in

their everyday routine.

For others, it was the moment to make a statement, to plead for the opening of borders and for a resolution of the war. They perhaps hoped that I, a European student, could be the relay of their voices – which I am in a way, thanks to this thesis⁴³. In doing so, they engaged with my difference, my alterity, as a resource. Indeed, Bouillon also argues that receiving a ‘researcher’ can be socially valorising. For instance, my first interview was with Karima, a friend of Lina’s who studied English literature in Syria. Although Lina could translate and despite her broken English, Karima insisted to answer my questions directly in English, as to show me that she also went to university.

Finally, the researcher can provide help (administrative guidance, material or financial help). The least I could do was to bring with me some fruits, eggs, coffee or sweets, as I did. Today, I am still in touch with few of them and we regularly catch up via Facebook or Whatsapp, a way for me to get updates on their situation but also to follow our nascent relationship up. But despite the possible counter gifts one can provide, the research process generally benefits the researcher much more than the respondents, due to the intrinsic asymmetry of the ethnographic relation (Bouillon 2005, 92). Hyndman adds that the interview reproduces the same imbalance of power it aims to criticize to the extent that “consent becomes meaningless in the wholly unequal relationship between interviewer and interviewee” (2000, 92). Questions of power imbalance induce a reflection on the researcher’s position.

5.2.3 Reflecting on my position during fieldwork

Postmodern theories have criticized the position of Western researchers in developing countries or amid subgroups. It is argued that pathologizing approaches of the field have too often singularly defined studied communities with oppression and hardships (Tuck 2009) and numerous scholars invite social scientists to engage more with respondents (Hyndman 2000, Jackson 2005, Robben 2007). There is a true imbalance of power within the ethnographic relationship. On the one hand, researchers have at their disposal the possibility, or rather the power, to report one’s story. But writing is never replicating true realities and is rather the production of a certain understanding of lived realities at a given moment (Berreman 2007). On

⁴³ I also published a short piece about my fieldwork, in an attempt to share the situation of these women with a more general public : Fakhry, Alia, "Uncovering the realities of refugeeness among Syrian women in Amman." *Your Middle East*. August 3, 2016. http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/culture/uncovering-the-realities-of-refugeeness-among-syrian-women-in-amman_42097

the other hand, respondents have no or very little influence on the written outcomes of the study, yet they possess the information, they *are* the data. They also give, as mentioned earlier, time and trust, provide hospitality and contacts, in ways that cannot be evened. They open their homes and their lives to complete strangers, for the sake of an article or a dissertation. That is perhaps the greatest imbalance I have experienced during my fieldwork, the inability to ‘pay back’ the overwhelming generosity I witnessed.

The position of the researcher affects respondents’ behaviour and responses (Eastmond 2007, Fresia 2005). Some even argue, the “researcher’s role in the creation of the story is not an interference with data, but rather an integral part of it, indeed is the data” (Freeman 1989 quoted by Eastmond 2007, 261). To render visible the researcher, the translation work and the cultural distance, Hyndman transcribes *verbatim*, as I did too, the interpreter’s translation. Interviewees are not anymore the subject ‘I’ but part of a triangular discussion between them, the interpreter and the researcher (Hyndman 2000, 105). Ma Mung (2009) adds that, if reflexivity requires defining the self in the research process, it is also necessary to question the production of this image of the self.

Another key element of the ethnographic relationship is the way(s) in which the researcher is identified. Prior to the interview, I took a moment to introduce my research and myself and explained in which context the data collected will be used. But I could read the confusion in people’s eyes: “I am a French student doing research on Syrian refugee women in Jordan for my university in Sweden. My name? Yes, I am half Lebanese but I can’t really speak Arabic”. In the popular neighbourhoods of Jabal Al Taj or Jabal Al Nasser, I was obviously the only unveiled woman, asking her way to shop sellers in broken Arabic. People looked at me with a surprised look. An old Palestinian woman, whom I helped carrying her heavy grocery bags, absolutely wanted to invite me to her place and offer me coffee: “So who are you? *Mufuwadia* (UNHCR)?”. I tried to explain what I was doing in the neighbourhood, but quite unsuccessfully since she introduced me to her husband as “the woman who helped me. She is from France, in America!”.

If my respondents understood that I was a student and not a humanitarian worker, they could hardly identify me in terms of ethnicity and religion. Once, during an interview Ahmad arranged, the father of the family looked worried when I asked him if they often went to the local mosque, from which they received charity: “I pray there sometimes, but tell her I am not an Islamist” he told Ahmad. The question of Islam in France and in Europe was sometimes

evoked, particularly after the terrorist shootings in Paris in November 2015. Zahra, who studied French literature in Syria and who wished to continue her studies in Paris, asked if “[we] are not afraid of Islam now”.

Furthermore, being a female student was never a problem for me or my respondents. I mostly visited female headed households with Lina and rather met families or couples with Ahmad (we also visited one female headed household with Ahmad). It was not a conscious choice but a consequence of the SSM and of their respective networks. In the two cases I found it to be very comfortable to work with an interpreter. Lina was family and Ahmad had perhaps more legitimacy than I to question 60 years old Syrian men about their lives. In fact they both vouched for me in situations where I felt I had very little legitimacy⁴⁴. Besides, Schwedler (2006) highlighted the fact that female researchers in the Middle East are often less restricted in their work by their gender than assumed. Indeed, they represent a form of “third gender”⁴⁵ (425) that enables them to negotiate both feminine and masculine spaces. However, there are limits to the information female researchers can access, even in feminine spaces or settings⁴⁶.

Studying forced migrant women, I conducted a small-scaled qualitative research that I made sure was safe to my respondents, who often found themselves in thorny legal and social situations. I acknowledged the (double) imbalance of power between my respondents and me, they, opening up their lives to me and crafting meaningful tales of their exile; and I, intending to share their voices but unable to even up their generosity. Going beyond words through symbolic capital (Jackson 2005), presence, alterity and help (Bouillon 2005), I tried to address this imbalance. As I reflect on my position in the ethnographic relationship, it appears that the way(s) my respondents engaged with me and my difference defined me, rather than I chose to position myself a certain way. Talking to me about Europe, speaking English, looking surprised when I showed knowledge about the Middle East, they mostly saw in me a young educated European woman.

⁴⁴ I am not a fluent Arabic speaker, I have never been to Syria and was only conducting at that time my second ethnographic fieldwork.

⁴⁵ Powdermaker already highlighted in 1967 the determining connection between researcher’s gender and ethnicity in accessing information and spaces, in her study of a Melanesian society in New Ireland (2007 [1967]).

⁴⁶ Because women do not veil in the presence of other women or family, I once missed an element of my respondents dress. Indeed, Samia, one of Lina’s relatives, had started wearing a *niqab* upon arrival in Jordan, which she did not wear at home during our interview with Lina.

6 Findings and discussion

Exploring Syrian forced migrant women's agency, I base my inquiry on the scale of their daily life. Indeed feminist scholars favor small scale research which scope can integrate women's everyday rhythm, and argue that such approach underscore the greater ratio of power shaping women's lives (DeVault 1991, Hyndman 2000, Smith 1987). Thus, in her study of Somalian camp refugees, Hyndman (2000) uses accounts of women's daily routine to "incorporat[e] them into imperial geographies" (109). In this way, I discuss here the data collected with the help of the theoretical framework I outlined earlier, such as network analysis and the concept of gendered geographies of power. I use them to unravel data and engage in a broader theoretical conversation in which transnationalism, urbanity, gender and refugeeness intertwine.

6.1 Profiling the respondents

During a three-month fieldwork in Jordan, I interviewed 18 Syrian women, aged between 17 and 60. All of them lived on the outskirts of Amman at the time of the study, or in peripheral areas. Most of them used to live in, or on the peripheries of, large Syrian cities. Some came from rural areas in the North and South West of Syria⁴⁷. They arrived in Jordan between the summer of 2011 and August 2014, mostly coming by road. In general, they first ended up in other Jordanian cities or passed by refugee camps before reaching Amman⁴⁸. Most of them lived in a male headed household, where the male main figure was often their husband⁴⁹.

In Syria, they were mostly housewives (*sitt beit*) or students⁵⁰. While only one of them had already a paid activity back in Syria⁵¹, seven were working at the time of the study. Indeed, widow since 2013, Um Amer started selling accessories back in Syria and cumulated side jobs in Amman. The others were working in factories, as secretaries, housekeepers, language teachers, in beauty salons or with charities and NGOs. If most of my respondents are registered as refugees, four of them are not, either because they are married to, or children of, Jordanians

⁴⁷ 8 were from Damascus and 5 from Homs. 2 came from Lina's village in Damascus governorate, 1 from Deraa governorate and 1 from Homs governorate.

⁴⁸ 8 arrived directly in Amman, 4 in refugee camps – 3 in Zaatari and 1 in Azraq camp – while the rest passed by Zarqa, Irbid or Mafraq.

⁴⁹ 11 lived in a male headed household, with their husband (5), father (2), uncle (2), brother-in-law (1) or father-in-law (1). 6 lived in a female headed household as they are widows (1), their husband has been captured back in Syria (1), has reached Europe and tries to obtain family reunification (2), left the household or divorced them before the war (1) or because the male figure of the family chose to remain in Syria, despite the conflict (1).

⁵⁰ At the time of the study, 7 of them had a paid activity and 2 were studying (high school level).

⁵¹ I use the expression 'paid activity' instead of differentiating between working and non-working women. Indeed, some have side activities, such as cooking for Rakiah, that cannot be compared to a full-time office job. As DeVault (1991) suggested certain aspects of people's (and specifically women's) lives cannot be addressed by analytical divides created by Western sociology.

or because they made the choice not to register. All of my research participants had relatives, friends or business connections in Jordan, who sometimes moved to Jordan long before the conflict in Syria, and who generally eased their arrival and settlement in the country. Their quality of life and living conditions in Amman varied. While Leila dwells in a two-room basement with her four children in the shabby neighbourhood of Jabal al Taj, Ghazal lives in a spacious and bright flat with her family by the university of Jordan, where her brother studies. Yet, they all faced precariousness on a daily basis.

Hence, in order to uncover the ways they maintain a sense of life in exile, and following the research questions and the theoretical framework I outlined earlier, I will use here the concept of Gendered Geographies of Power to explore the geographic scales (1), the social locations (2) and the power hierarchies (3) in which the participants place themselves (Mahler and Pessar, 2001). In other words, I alternatively look at transnational social spaces (1), that often take the shape of networks of solidarity, the urbanscapes (2), in which they manage continuity and change through home-making, and at the gendered hierarchies (3), translating the resilient role of gender. Finally, I demonstrate how Syrian women's experiences of exile in Amman question the refugee label as such.

6.2 From Syria to Jordan: transnational social fields

I emphasized earlier the ways in which network analysis uncovers agency and allows the study of entangled lives (Hannerz 1980). I also highlighted how network analysis has become a tool in transnational migration studies, through the concept of social field (Glick Schiller and Levitt 2004). Both the kin and the community networks my respondents rely on are stamped by transnationalism, as they suppose a simultaneous embeddedness in more than one country (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, 48). Hence, I argue here that Syrian forced migrant women use transnational social fields during the migration process, as well as on a daily basis to maintain a sense of life in exile. Yet, some of them tend to renegotiate the social fields in which they are integrated in order to manage the disruption provoked by forced migration.

6.2.1 A resource throughout forced migration

Community networks, such as ethnic or religious networks, often play a determining role in women's forced migration. Ghazal, who used to study in Damascus and who now works as an Arabic tutor, belongs to the Chechen community, which represents a large part of the non-Arab

minorities in both Jordan and Syria⁵² :

It is easier to come to Jordan as Chechens, we have family here in Jordan, also Chechens. They sent us a letter of invitation so we could come to Amman [more easily].

Ghazal adds that her family receives help from a transnational Chechen charity network:

There is an office here in Amman from a Chechen organization. They are based in... (Grozny! adds her mother), yes in Grozny. It is the capital of Chechnya. My mom registered us there and now we receive 295 JOD a month from them.

In the same way, transborder Syrian-Jordanian or Palestinian families have eased and oriented women's flight to Amman. Um Amer for instance, the Syrian widow of a Jordanian, had difficulties finding a place in Jordan when she first came in June 2014. For four months, she travelled through Jordan, hosted by different relatives :

I went everywhere in Jordan ! A bit in Irbid, Amman, Zarqa... I stayed with family, because I had nowhere to go. Really, life is expensive here. Then I went back to Syria to take my children and came back to Amman with them.

Similarly, Rakhia and her husband stayed in Saudi Arabia, where their two daughters and two sons live, before joining another of their daughters in Amman, who married a Jordanian and moved to Jordan long before the war:

When the revolution started in Homs, we went to Saudi Arabia and visited our children in Riyadh. Then we travelled to Jordan to see our daughter but our family in Homs told us not to come back, the regime had started the massacres already. So we stayed. It is our daughter and her husband who found this flat here [in Jabal al Nasser] for us.

Besides, when possible, their children in Saudi Arabia send their parents money *via* systems of money transfer such as "*Pullman*"⁵³. Following Rakhia, her two sisters Salma (whom I also interviewed) and Um Ali, flew from Homs to Jordan and settled in Jabal al Nasser as well. Salma explains that she first stayed with Rakhia, who then helped her and her husband finding a place of their own:

I wanted to find a flat in Jabal al Nasser. I mean it is cheap here, because we are not far from the *mokhayiam*⁵⁴ but also, I wanted to stay with my sisters !

⁵² See footnote 13

⁵³ The *hawala* system is a mode of cash money transfer traditionally operated *via* road and that is mainly done through bus transportation nowadays, often Pullman buses.

⁵⁴ Camp, but in this context it refers to the Palestinian refugee camps of Amman which are today, as evoked earlier, entire concrete-built low-income neighbourhoods of the capital.

Transnational family networks are often of a great help in the first stages of migration, as suggests Lina:

My brother and my sisters are in Europe for a long time now ! In Denmark, Austria and Belgium. I mean, they are not refugees, you see. So, when we had difficulties with my mom at the beginning here [in Amman], they helped us a bit.

But they also come to use for people *en route* towards further destinations. Indeed, many of my participants have a (male) relative who embarked for the perilous journey to Europe, but most of them do not have the funds required for such trip. Thus, transnational social fields are solicited, as Samia explains:

To answer your question, I borrow money to relatives. We first borrowed when my husband travelled to Turkey. But now that he is gone, we [the children my mom and I] need to survive without him here ! In Sweden, he cannot work, he cannot do anything. So I mean, we still borrow money. It is normal, everyone does it. Who has the money for that ?

The study of my respondents' transnational social fields replaces them amidst dense and resourceful networks of solidarity, stretching over borders and continents, and demonstrates their great connectedness. It also emphasizes the crucial moments of forced migration as they are mainly solicited during the flight, the settlement and on-going migration. Transnational network analysis thus highlights the broader time/space continuum of forced migration. Additionally, the uses they make of these transnational social fields shed light on people's agency, as they select and gather resources from what Faist (2000) names the transnational social space that relies on material and immaterial resources accumulated by previous migrants. As Glick Schiller and Levitt (2004) invoke the fluidity of social fields, agency is also emphasized in the ways people manipulate and reshape the fields in which they are embedded.

6.2.2 (Re)negotiating social fields

While transnational social fields connect Syrian women in the migration process, data collected highlight a fracture in the mobilization of certain networks. Once they have settled, women tend to cease or limit communication with the relatives who had previously helped them finding their way through Jordan. I argue that these breaks witness the transformations of their social world ⁵⁵, following Marx's definition. Marx (1990) theorizes the social world of refugees as

⁵⁵ I already underlined earlier the fact that scholars tend to use social fields and worlds in a rather similar manner. While Glick Schiller and Levitt use the term *field* to specifically refer to a transnational social configuration, Marx integrates in the concept of social *world* the greater variety of connections and networks (see footnote 29).

being the social aggregate of all relationships and networks in which migrants are embedded at a given moment. The concept provides, according to him, a meaningful approach of, and the possibility to follow, refugees' movements as well as the transformations of their networks ensuing from migration and resettlement (197). Screening Syrian forced migrant women's social networks, or social worlds, I could uncover the transformations they have undergone. In the case of my interviewees, some of them confessed that they did not, or very rarely, met with their relatives in Jordan, unable or unwilling to sustain the relation. Um Amer demonstrates the will to emancipate from the social control of the group:

UA: Yes I want to leave, of course. But to somewhere where I can be alone.

A: And what about your relatives, the people from the village?

UA: No, I prefer to be alone. I can do what I want like that. You know, in the village people judge.

On the other hand, Karima highlights the cost of social life and hospitality:

You know, it is difficult to invite the family. Coffee is very expensive here, we cannot serve coffee to our guests ! And we don't want to show what we have, like we have no space for guests, it is not like in Syria, really we have nothing. And also if you want to visit people, the taxi is too expensive. That's why, I can only visit Lina every two weeks.

The renegotiation of social worlds not only highlights breaks in a "person's career" as Marx (Ibid., 197) suggests, but also the renewal of their networks in exile. Indeed, while my participants did not have a large nor diversified network of acquaintances, they met Syrians and Jordanians in their neighbourhoods and slowly grew a local network of solidarity. Um Amer, Ghadir, Rahf, Salma and Rabiya attend more or less regularly classes at local religious centres, belonging to local mosques. There they study the Koran and learn to recite it. But they mostly connect with locals. This is how Um Amer found a job as baby-sitter in Jabal al Taj, how Ghadir started working for an Islamic charity, and how Rabiya got hired for a few months in a sewing factory. Besides, Rahf and her family benefited from the local religious centre as:

They helped us to find this place. At first we did not know where to look, and they helped us to find this house. Before that we stayed for a few months at the centre. It was not nice, at all. Sometimes there was no water even. But then we came here. They also helped with the furniture, for some stuff, you see.

Indeed, local and transnational social fields, and networks of solidarity helped to some extent Syrian women settling down and (re)making home in Amman.

6.3 Home-making, between continuity and change

Jackson (2005) argues that when a routine gets suddenly disrupted and “when we can no longer trust or manage the macrocosm in which we locate ourselves [...] we retreat into a microcosm that we *can* trust and manage”(18). He adds that mundane and meticulous rituals restore a sort of control “in the face of perturbing and overwhelming *everyday* events [...], that people in precarious or critical conditions tend to display” (Ibid., 94 emphasis in original). Migrants tend to give and make sense of their lives in exile through everyday practices, such as home-making (Salih 2002) since “places [...] give individuals a sense of place, a subjective territoriality” where they anchor themselves between continuity and change (Gustafson 2001, 6).

6.3.1 Upholding a sense of place at home

Um Amer makes it clear: “we [Syrians] have customs, and we will take them till the end of this world”. Indeed, in their efforts to (re)make homes, Syrian forced migrant women often reproduce patterns and habits from Syria. The living room, or *madâfa*, is always given more attention than the rest of the habitat, as it is the room visitors enter first. Couches or mattresses are disposed along the walls, forming a U-shape, typical of Syrian homes. With the help of relatives and neighbours, Um Amer could furnish her living room as such:

I bought nothing here [to furnish this room], only the little mirror there I bought it for 2 JOD in downtown. But the rest are gifts from family, from neighbours. Like this table, it is from Lina, the couches here I found in the streets. Really ! Also the carpet, it was in the streets. The armchair there is from my neighbour, and so on. Everything is from someone else.

Attention is also given to the organization of the rest of the habitation, as Nawal suggests:

At my aunt’s place there are two rooms and a living room. My aunt and my uncle they have one room for them, and I sleep in the living room. But the other room is like a storage room (it is a room for mess ! adds Um Amer, sitting with us). Yes, it is a room where we put many things we do not need, like in Syria. There is always a storage room in Syrian houses.

As for Samia while her flat is quite far from the centre of Jabal al Taj and is difficult to access, she is satisfied with it:

It really looks like what we had back in Syria, with almost the same mattresses on the ground like this (drawing a U-shape with her finger). And we also had a frame with Al Aqsa mosque like this one. All of this was already here when we moved in, and we like it this way.

Miller defines home-making as the process by which people “accommodate” or personalize a place to make it home (2010, 107) and give meaning to their new environments. As such, most of my participants have tried to personalize, arrange and finally “accommodate” their interiors. They arrange home as they can, with the little financial resources they have, “because life asks us to be creative” as Salma puts it. Indeed, the place where Salma settled with her husband, their son and their daughter-in-law impress by its creative arrangements. While they dwell in a small and dark basement on the hills of Jabal al Nasser, the place is nicely furnished and decorated with matching curtains and tablecloths. A curtain hanging from a broomstick hides the door of the parents’ bedroom:

All the fabrics come from my husband’s work place. He made of all these [curtains and tablecloths] at work ! It is nice, no? You see, they are very handy in the family (laughing).

And Salma goes on:

You know, my husband used to have a shoe factory in Syria. He started on his own, and it grew. So yes, we are a bit handy. So, you see, everything in the room was found on the street. Only the fridge and two beds, we got them from charities and neighbours. But the rest of furniture, on the streets! The lamps, on the streets! The carpets, on the streets! All of it.

Women often found decorative items, Koranic verses or pictures of Jerusalem, and furniture on the streets, and thus explore the city as a resource to sustain a sense of life in exile. Once they have been brushed off or fixed, these items find their way in the living room. Syrian women’s creative homes, “like many other transnational migrants [...] asylum seekers and refugees are closely shaped by memories of home and homeland” (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 225). Memories of homeland play a role in the reshaping of habitat in exile, yet, home-making, as a dynamic process, is not a mere reproduction of the past but rather reflects the double belonging of migrants (Ibid., 217). In the case of my respondents, home-making does not only reflect their multiple belongings, but also their situation as exiles.

6.2.2 (Dis)continuities in the making of home

Karima reminds us that:

It is not like in Syria. In our house in Damascus, we liked to have big, shiny, expensive chandeliers. Here, no, we don’t even have something to cover the bulbs ! It is not our priority anymore. Really.

Syrian women's interior spaces still bears the traces of forced migration, just like Leila's. The mother of four left Azraq camp illegally with her children to settle in a two-room basement. 'Exile' transpires from every wall and corner of the place. Between broken furniture and an old fridge, she arranged a small living area with mattresses stolen from the camp, spread out on UNHCR plastic rugs.

Furthermore, exiled in anonymous urban spaces and isolated from some of their relatives as they renegotiated their social fields, women can also explore potential life changes through home-making. Miller (2010) discusses agency of things and the shifting meanings of accommodation. He argues that the trivial and insignificant changes one operates in the disposition of a room highlight people's "agency over that of other persons and things. They can demonstrate to themselves that they still retain a capacity for change" (110). As such, Lina my first interpreter spends most of her day in West Amman, a rather modern part of the city, where she gives Arabic classes to foreigners and expat workers: "I like it more in West Amman, it is modern, you know!". Similarly, most of her furniture were bought at the IKEA store that recently opened outside the city:

I like my flat to look modern and European. I like IKEA a lot, it is a bit pricy, but really nice. I also like Syrian decoration, but less. It is more... traditional, you see?

Favouring IKEA furniture, Lina shows differentiation through home-making (Miller 2010), identifying and inscribing herself in European housing standards. Thus, she shows her visitors she can afford expensive and foreign furniture.

In their attempt to (re)make home, Syrian women make places meaningful. They also use the city and its streets as a resource in their interior arrangements and by 'meeting' and getting to know their new environments through such urban explorations (Gustafson, 2001), they inscribe themselves in these spaces, between continuity and change. The modifications gender and household organization undergo also translate such changes and illustrate women's agency.

6.4 (Re)Gendering exile

The modification of women's social worlds after forced migration implied in almost all cases a renegotiation of gender roles in the household unit, reshaping gender roles and household patterns. In order to comprehend the multiplicity of forces operating on gender roles across transnational terrains, I will use here the concept of Gendered Geographies of Power (GGP) developed by Mahler and Pessar (2001, 2003, 2006). It allows a multi-scaled analysis,

encompassing different geographies, integrates social locations reflecting the different power hierarchies in which one can be embedded, and acknowledges various degrees of agency. Using this concept in the study of forced migrant women in urban settings, I have identified three household patterns. They involve various uses of the city and rates of activity, translating diverse levels of agency : the *sitt beit* (1), the collaborative household (2) and the awaiting wife (3). These patterns also relate to matters of honour and shame which echo, as I evoked it, patriarchal pressure (Kandiyoti 1988) and traditional social control (Buch Segal 2015). They highlight questions of sexual (un)availability that are at the heart of the renegotiations of gender hierarchies, and which are perhaps exacerbated in urban contexts. Indeed, feminist scholars such as Wilson (1990) have emphasized the ambivalence of urban spaces for women, being both exclusionary and potentially emancipatory. Besides, Jackson (2005) argues that cities and public spaces are the stage of normative violence engendering shame people tend to escape, often retreating in specific areas of the city, or avoiding it at all. If these matters of honours are not central to my inquiry, they definitely intervene in the renegotiation of gender roles Syrian forced migrants undergo. Finally, the three different roles I have identified are not explicitly communicated, but transpire from data analysis and coding.

First, the *sitt beit*'s activities are traditionally restricted to housework and caregiving. Many of my respondents presented themselves as *sitt beit* (house wife). Yet, for the purposes of this study I use the term to refer to women living in male headed households and who do not engage in any type of paid activity besides housework. That was the case of Noor, who quit her job at Jabal al Nasser hospital when she got married to another Syrian refugee. Since then, she lives at her in-laws, also in Jabal Al Nasser. Her husband works in a fabrics factory and provides the only salary of the household. Noor spends her day with her mother-in-law Salma and helps her with the housework. She has a rather limited experience of Amman:

N: I go shopping with Salma to the *mokhayiam*. Every week we go there.

A: And what other neighbourhoods, or places do you go to?

N: Only the *mokhayiam*. That and the hospital, when I was working there. But that was before [I got married]. And also the UNHCR.

On the other hand, in *collaborative households* women often invest the city on a daily basis and have a rather diversified experience of it. Collaborative patters often occur in male headed households, in which women's activity can be renegotiated with the main male figure. It is typically the situation of Lina, my interpreter:

When we left Syria, I told my mom we had to go to Amman, because I knew I could

give classes to foreigners. Some of them I knew from Damascus already, when I was at university. So when we came to Amman, I started working like this [as an Arabic tutor] and after one year I had like a salary with like six to ten students. I go everyday to West Amman to meet them. Also my husband teaches Arabic. Now he has three students, but they are all from my contacts. But because I could not teach more, I gave them to my husband. He teaches on top of his job.

In this way, both of them collaboratively contribute to support the household. It is precisely because both the woman and the main male figure (who is not necessarily her husband) can contribute to the household economy that Lina and others are able to perform activities outside the household and can navigate in the city. In such situation, the head of the household is shared as much as the financial burden is. Moreover, in this configuration former *sitt beit* begun experiencing the city in new ways as they started working or taking care of the household economy and hence, had to leave the house during daytime. Rada, for instance, lived in the conservative neighbourhood of Al Midan in Damascus where she used to wear a *niqab* when going outdoors:

I used to wear the *niqab* in Syria [...] Why? In Al Midan it is not normal to not wear the *niqab*. Everyone wears it, it is like this.

Since she started having activities outside the house, such as grocery shopping or working as a cook for a local Islamic charity, she changed her outfit for a simple *hijab* as “it is much more practical when you have to talk to people, shop sellers and taxi drivers”.

Within collaborative households, women seem to experience the city as an emancipatory space. Thus the city becomes “as a shifting space that can be appropriated by women” who can explore the interstices of urban anonymity (Wilson 1990, quoted by Bondi and Rose 2003, 230). However, they do not completely escape normative expectations contrary to what Wilson argues. Though free to come and go according to their daily activities, women living in collaborative households still pay attention to matters of honour and shame, such as neighbourhood monitoring. Thus, Lina makes sure that:

when I come back home and it is already dark, I always ask the taxi to drive in front of the gates of my building. It's better. Not that the area is dangerous, really it is safe here. You know, I am married, people speak. And also you see, I am not veiled [laughs].

Contrary to women in collaborative households, *awaiting wives* have the lowest activity rates, barely leave the house and rather experience the normativity and uncertainty of urban space. Though their husbands are “unavailable”, their shadows remain and hover over the family. Samia is one of them, married and yet, *de facto* head of the household. Her husband left Jordan a year ago to reach Sweden. Today the family is hoping to be granted asylum there to obtain family reunification. Since her husband left the house, she remains at home with her 5 children

and her mother:

I go out once a month with my mother to [the Palestinian camp of] Wardat for grocery shopping, because it is very cheap there. We take everything we need, flour, sugar, oil and we take a lot, like this we don't have to go back. Taxi drivers always make fun of us when they see all our bags. Sometimes I also buy fresh fruits and vegetables from a hawker. That is it. I don't like to go out. Before with my husband we visited our relatives in the North, now I feel like I am dying in Jordan, doing nothing.

Besides Samia started wearing the *niqab* upon her husband's departure from Amman. Her limited experience of the city and the change of dress she operated highlight her sexual unavailability and comply with matters of honours. Avoiding public spaces, she makes sure to display her unavailability: if her husband left Jordan, he is still part of the gender equation and becomes visible, through Samia's urban invisibility. Thus awaiting wives might experience the city as a rather constraining and disadvantaging stage (Bondi and Rose 2003). Looking at gender as a social construct, a shifting set of relations, it is important to acknowledge the content of this relation, the term of exchange. As Strathern (1988) argues in her study of Melanesian societies, gender should be seen in terms of what men and women do to define it. In the case of Syrian forced migrant women, and especially awaiting wives, men are traditionally financially accountable to women while the latter are maritally accountable to men.

Samia, Leila and Rahf⁵⁶, all awaiting wives are in the complicated situation where their husband has left the household and is (believed to be) alive. To these three women, I would add women such as Salma and Rabiya, whose husbands are present with them in Amman, but are unable to work due to health issues. In all these cases, women cannot take over men's provisioning duty, as they are supposed to find it back some day (after a knee operation, once they will be reunited in Sweden or when he will be freed from Syria). Thus, depending on people who cannot support them, awaiting wives find help from the people who depend on them. Indeed, Barnes argues that "a subtle shift takes place when women do not have to depend on others, but instead use other people who depend on them in order to meet their needs for security" (1990, 257).

Most of the time, women who found themselves in these situations relied on their children, as Rabiya and her husband relied on their 15 years old son:

He goes to school here in Jabal al Nasser. At two o'clock he comes back because then

⁵⁶ Samia's family hoped to obtain asylum in Sweden, while Rahf's hoped for Germany. Leila's husband was captured by the Syrian regime at the beginning of the war. I do not include in this category the two 2 women whose husbands divorced them or who left the household, because they have definitely left the family and hence, are not part of the gender equation anymore.

the school is for Jordanians⁵⁷. He makes his homework until five and he sleeps until eight and then he goes to the *shawarma* restaurant that is around the corner. And he works until two in the morning. And really you know, his boss loves him, he loves his little employee [proudly smiles]!

Similarly, Leila put at work her two oldest children, two young men (17 and 21 years old). The two of them work in a shop selling plastic containers located nearby their flat:

They work a lot, from eight to eight, everyday even on Fridays. Like this they make 250 JOD [together]. Before they used to do deliveries in the neighbourhood for another shop. But I told them to stop, I was too afraid for them [because they work illegally and are undocumented in Jordan]. You know my brother once he was controlled by the police in a bus. He could give the name of our brother, because he is registered but my sons, maybe they take them back to Syria. So now, it is better that they stay in the shop.

The situation of uncertainty in which awaiting wives find themselves is often reinforced by their thorny legal situation: Leila and Samia are both undocumented as they respectively escaped the camps of Azraq and Zaatari. I further elaborate on the role of the refugee label and experience in women's lives in the following section.

Exploring gender roles that have arisen from forced migration, with the help of the concept of gendered geographies of power, my concern here was to highlight the ways in which gender can morph in exile. As a discursive social construct, gender evolves in various forms and hierarchies, translating different household patterns. These new gender hierarchies involve specific uses of the city, emphasizing the versatility of urban space. Either emancipating or restricting, the experiences Syrian women have of the city of Amman tend to reflect the ratio of power impinging on them. They also underscore the fact that the city is not defined in its essence, but is rather a stage exacerbating specific social configurations. As Lutz rightfully puts it, “in everyday life practices, gender-specific characteristics are mirrored and, simultaneously, the individual migrant's position in transnational spaces is marked by intersections of life-cycle, class and ethnicity that can turn out to be (more or less) resourceful” (2010, 1658). Thus, I argue that gender is not only a powerful tool in the study of forced migration, but that it is a tool in the process of forced migration itself. It becomes a social hierarchy to (re)negotiate, in order to manage the sudden changes that have occurred in women's life, from their flight and their resettlement.

6.5 Negotiating refugeeness

⁵⁷ Schools in Jordan have implemented shifts to provide education to both Jordanians and Syrian refugees and to avoid overcrowded classrooms.

A label, a legal category, a form of forced migration, the term refugee can also entitle one to a number of rights. It also evokes a certain representation of the self and hence, is subject to negotiations.

6.5.1 *The refugee bargain*

Though I have emphasized the problematics raised by the refugee label earlier in the introduction, the term itself can difficultly be evacuated from this study, as it is a real concern for forced migrants who tend to negotiate refugeeness with the (little) information they have at their disposal. Indeed, what transpires from my data is that most of my respondents based their decision regarding refugeeness on rumour spreading by the word of mouth. In this way, Rabiya decided to visit the UNHCR following the advice of another refugee women:

I was queuing at the Red Cross, and I talked to the other women with me in the queue. There are many women, almost only women there. And one of them told me to go to UNHCR to register. She said it is better and that maybe you can have benefits and so on. So I went.

These type of situations underline the lack of communication with and from relief agencies that I witnessed during several interviews, creating misinformation. It seemed that women mainly gathered information relating to refugeeness and humanitarian action from other forced migrants. Karima's family did not register at UNHCR because :

My brother-in-law was told by another refugee that if you register here in Amman, you cannot go to *Alemania* [Germany] afterwards. For that reason, we did not do it. And anyways, you receive no help. I know a woman, she has children, yes. During *Ramadan* you know what she got? A bag of sugar! What is that for a family?

The possibility to be granted asylum in Europe or elsewhere is at heart of some of respondents' concerns who have crafted strategies accordingly. For instance, when Rahf's husband decided to embark on the perilous journey to Europe *via* Turkey in September 2015, he decided to take their youngest son aged 15 with him hoping to obtain family reunification more easily with a minor. Furthermore, as underlined in Karima's words, the refugee label entitles one to a number of rights, defined by the Geneva Convention as well as national legislations⁵⁸.

Thus forced migrants engage in a real bargain in which the costs and benefits of refugeeness are discussed. Earlier I mentioned the cases of Leila and Samia, both awaiting wives. On top of their difficult situation they have to deal with the constant fear of being caught by the police and brought back to the camps. Indeed, Leila left Azraq camp illegally and is now

⁵⁸ See footnote n.4

undocumented⁵⁹. As for Samia:

S: We got a *kafala* [sponsorship] to leave the camp, but if was a fake one, not so good.

A: What does that mean, a fake *kafala*?

S: It was not a *kafala* at all actually. A Jordanian [official] said he could help us but we did not have money to pay him. So he asked for my UNHCR card⁶⁰. And I mean, my husband and I, we did not know what it was. So we said yes.

The lack of “official” information from relief agencies and the government, balanced by informal information emanating from different sources, such as rumours spreading among forced migrants, enhanced by information reported in the media, seem to confuse forced migrants who barely understand the legal situation in which they find themselves. As Zetter argues (1991, 2007), the multiplication of labels and information relating to refugeeness tends to obscure the reality of the forced migrants’ lives, and often refugees’ comprehension of their very position. Thus, forced migrant women collect knowledge from what Faist (2000) named the transnational social space that emerges within the routes of migration and constitutes a resource for forced migrants all along their way. It consists of people, information and practices, and is often made available by technologies of communication (Dorai 2003). Their reachability have consistently grown in the last years as they are now circulating through social media platforms. Moreover these platforms play a great role in forced migrants’ lives. Syrian women keep ties with friends or relatives remaining in Syria, get updated about the situation onsite and communicate with those who crossed the Mediterranean *via* Skype, WhatsApp, Viber or Facebook. Interestingly, Um Amer and her friend Leila got to know each other through Facebook, although one lived in Amman while the other one was in Azraq camp:

My son, Amer, he was friend on Facebook with Qayss [Leila’s son]. I don’t know how but they had friends in common, maybe from Syria. And Qayss told Amer about the life in the camp that it was very, very difficult, and that the Jordanians [the Jordanian officials] were very bad to the Syrians. Then I became friend with Leila and I told her ‘come to Amman, stop it, come I will help you with your family’. So she came and I found a flat for her and everything.

6.5.2 *The urban contours of refuge*

⁵⁹ Camp refugees need to apply for a permit to leave the camp. They receive a document on which is stated the number of days they are allowed to remain outside of the camp and the names of the people who accompany them. In exchange of this document, all recipients have to leave their UNHCR registration cards and IDs at the UNHCR office in the camp. Leila remembers this application process to be very long and exhausting. It took them 3 days to obtain their permit. Yet, today Leila and her children are undocumented in Jordan and risk to be taken back to Azraq camp.

⁶⁰ The UNHCR card refugees are given upon registration is the proof of their identity and status as refugees in Jordan.

Experiencing refugeeness in cities on a daily basis does not limit to a bargain in which the costs and benefits of the refugee status are evaluated. It also translates in specific experiences of urban spaces. Indeed, refugeeness maps spaces of socialization and translate questions of household economy.

I have highlighted earlier how personal networks of women living in collaborative households expanded with their growing mobility in the city. Many of them reported being active and had more friends in Jordan than in Syria. Yet, my respondents' activities were located in a limited number of neighbourhoods, in specific areas and spaces. Hence, when I asked Salma about the places she frequented the most, she answered:

The malls ! and the charities also. I go to charities [WPF distribution centre] to get the coupons and I go shopping in the malls with them. You know, I even met with Noor's mother [Noor is her daughter-in-law] in a mall.

Her husband adds: "We Syrians, nowadays we only meet in malls and charity." And Salma goes on:

Yes I met with this woman in Sunball Mall and I asked, 'Syrian?' and we talked. And she was also from Homs. She told me about her daughter and we decided to marry our children. You know, it is very traditional to marry like that in Syria.

I mentioned earlier the ways in which people tend to retreat in microcosms they can manage after the disruption of their social world (Jackson 2005). In this way most of my respondents, including women living in collaborative households and experiencing greater levels of activity outside the household, demonstrated a highly localized way of life often constricted to a specific neighbourhood, on the fringes of Amman.

Thus, both the experiences forced migrant women have of the city and the "refugee bargain" in which they engage demonstrate the impact refugeeness, as a discursive concept, has on their daily lives. However, they challenge the relevance of the label in terms of legal status and experience of forced exile. indeed, Some of my respondents could not register as refugees in Jordan, because they were Jordanians, yet they experienced forced exile in the same way as others. Furthermore, the concepts of social worlds and gendered geographies of power outlined earlier acknowledge the agency and resilience forced migrant women demonstrate throughout and after their flight, renegotiating their social worlds and gender hierarchies. In this way, they challenge on a daily basis the common representation of refugees as helpless and powerless individuals.

Looking at Syrian forced migrant women's daily routines in Amman, I want to highlight the resilience and agency they demonstrate at the different levels of their lives in exile. Moving beyond the extraordinary in their lives, I paid attention to their mundane rituals and the greater forces they echoed. The concepts of social worlds and gendered geographies of power in transnational spaces enabled the analysis of the multiple renegotiations women have undergone to maintain a sense of life in a disrupted setting. Embedded in various transnational social networks, they make use of this resource in the migration and tend to renegotiate their entourage, adjusting to their new household situation and to the cost of social life. They inscribe themselves in the margins of the city and tend to recreate home. They rely on the versatility of gendered relations to sustain their livelihoods and demonstrate how gender can be a powerful and resilient tool for adjustments in forced migration, translating different household patterns and experiences of the city. They also bargain with the refugee label and question the refugee experience through limited but diversified uses of the city.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed to uncover Syrian forced migrant women's agency and resilience, through the lens of their daily routine, in order to illustrate the ways they maintain a sense of life in exile. They do so through multiple levels of agency. It appears that women make conscious uses of the transnational social fields in which they are embedded, that proved to be resourceful throughout the flight and during the resettlement, and which are later subject to rearrangements. Women experience various gender roles translating in new household patterns, ensuing from such renegotiations. Gender, which can be seen as a constraining element *a priori*, morphs into an instrument of everyday resilience in urban exile, taking different shapes and reflecting the versatility of the city that can be experienced in multiple ways.

Following a rich theoretical corpus, and the model of Gendered Geographies of Power (GGP), I intended to alternatively look at the geographies, social locations and power hierarchies (Mahler and Pessar, 2001) in transnational forced migration. I replaced Syrian forced migrant women amidst the landscapes of relations, namely the social worlds and networks they utilize to some extent, and in the physical landscape of the city, either exclusionary or resourceful space to remake home. Besides, I demonstrated the role of gender as a resilient social construct, taking the example of household patterns. Additionally, my findings, as much as my respondents' lives question the refugee label. The methodologic and theoretical stances proved to be useful to the study of forced migration women. Thus this research intends to add an

interesting case study to the existing literature on refugees in Jordan as well as to the overall discussion on forced migrants' agency and resilience.

Documenting everyday lives of forced migrants is a powerful lens to explore the greater forces shaping them and to reinvestigate gender as a resilient resource. Besides, the study of gender as a discursive practice emphasizes women's agency. Thus, I suggest that the role of gender in (forced) migration as well as the ways it morphs across borders should be better encompass in further research. While it remains little used in the field of transnational forced migration, the model of GGP could also be reinvestigated, as it allows a rather broad multi-scaled study of transnational migration, which shed light on gender roles and agency. It is a rather flexible concept that can add depth and complexity to research.

The thesis has shown how the use of transnationalism in the study of refugee communities widens the scope of analysis, replace them in larger time/space continuum and looks beyond matters of violence and suffering. It goes beyond the extraordinary in their lives and takes a look at their daily routines and mundane rituals. It shows how refugees place themselves in dense and complex sets of relations they use as resourceful tools, intending to design 'normal' lives within the lines of an 'extraordinary' situation of exile.

To conclude, I would like to quote here again Goffman's words (1961), which reflect the feeling of "extraordinarily normality" I experienced during my fieldwork among these women. As he puts it, "any group of persons [...] develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get a close look at it, and that a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject".

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Appendices

Interview guide

General presentation : age, area of origin in Syria, composition of the household, relatives in Jordan, occupation.

Settlement :

- Entering Jordan : date of departure from Syria, steps in the journey to Jordan, date of arrival in Jordan, steps in Jordan until actual location. What motivated these displacements? Who was involved with them?
- Current situation : since when and why did they move to their current place? How do they feel about this location? Can they compare it with their homes in Syria?
- Making home: what were the first items purchased? What was already furnished? What arrangements were done?

Mobility:

- Daily comings and goings: what does a typical day look like? Where, what, how, how long and with who?
- Weekly events? (visiting friends or relatives, the community centre, the humanitarian agencies, shopping...)
- Are there specific places/times to avoid? Do they have favourite places/times to go out?
- What neighbourhood have been visited so far and why?

Continuity and change:

- Are there things they can do here and could not in Syria, and *vice versa*?
- Have they changed specific things in their daily routine (dress code, mobility, occupation...)?
- If so, why?

AGEVEN table

Name : Geographical origin (country, county, city/village) :
 Age :
 Highest education : Situation before coming to Jordan (family, occupation, residence) :
 Family living in the house :

Time	Arrival/Departure + purpose	Location	With who?	How?
5am				
6am				
7am				
8am				
9am				
10am				
11am				
12am				
1pm				
2pm				
3pm				
4pm				
5pm				
6pm				
7pm				
8pm				
9pm				
10pm				
11pm				

الوضع قبل الهجرة :
*الحالة الاجتماعية :
*الحالة الاقتصادية:
آين كنت تعيشين قبل الهجرة ؟

الاسم:
عمر:
دراسة:
مأصل (مدينة، قرية):
من يعيش حاليا في بيتك

مغادرة / وصول + سبب	مكان	مع من؟	كيف؟
٥			
٦			
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