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**Syrian Refugees
in a “Bounded Mobility” Regime
in Europe**

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This paper focuses on the Syrian forced migration experience in a framework of im/mobile or bounded mobility. It goes beyond the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ that argues that all the world is on the move. Compared to other categories of migrants in Europe, there is a rather wide openness towards the recognition of Syrians’ asylum status, and thus a given consent towards their movements in Europe. On the other hand, they are confined within border regimes and conditions applied by the European Union. Those conditions are often not in line with refugees’ expectations and they do not match with their hopes and outlooks. When this happens, insecurity threatens their future and refugees undertake secondary migration movements outside controlled channels. The flaws in the protection system challenge the international human rights legal instruments, which are no more able to guarantee refugees a basic protection. This paper is the result of a qualitative research conducted in 2017 through observation and semi-structured interviews with Syrian refugees, social workers and experts. It argues that refugees are im/mobile actors. Their mobility is fragmented and unsteady, and their movements follow different and more complicated routes that cannot be addressed by the legal and political obligation of states.

INTRODUCTION

As the migration phenomenon becomes increasingly recognized as part of our contemporary societies, a key element has arisen in the framework of globalization – a paradox of mobility. Today, we live in a liquid and globalized world (Bauman, 2000), where capitals and goods, as well as data, cultures and ideas, move across borders more freely than people do. Migration regimes are less accessible than trade and capital-market regimes because it is less contentious and easier to deal with objects than with people and their needs, hopes and conflicts (Solimano, 2010). Syrian forced migration lies within this paradox of mobility. Of around 12 million refugees and IDPs – about half population of Syria – one million has sought asylum in Europe. Germany, with more than 500,000 cumulated applications, and Sweden with 100,000, are the EU’s top receiving countries (UN Refugee Agency, 2017)².

Forcibly displaced Syrians, as other migrants today, do not move through a one-directional path from their country of origin to their receiving countries. They cross several international borders and find themselves forcibly stuck in various geographic areas before reaching their final destination.

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² See UNHCR Population Statistics Database for updated data: <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>. Retrieved 15 December 2017.

Migrants and refugees' mobility is highly affected by EU's policies and attitudes towards them. The way Europe deals with hospitality is crucial to understand how people face mobility today. Since policies towards migrants and refugees are addressed differently, depending on the category of 'movers', we can argue that refugees' movements are considered freer than economic migrants'. As argued by Ambrosini (2005), refugees' movements cannot be forecasted or expected, but the asylum and hospitality obligations, ratified by international law, are fundamental principles of democratic societies, which depict human rights as the heart and soul of their juridical systems. If, in terms of legal aspects, economic migrants can be contested their rights to move to European countries, refugees cannot.³ Nor Europe can formally deny their right to seek protection on its soil – though it attempts to limit their inflow for internal reason of political consent. Europe applies specific instruments that apparently foster refugees' mobility, but since their movements cannot be expected, they do not always match with the legal and political obligations of states.

Syrian refugees started reaching Europe, through Mediterranean migration routes, starting from 2013-2014, pursuing their journey up-north by overcoming Dublin Regulation restrictions. In 2015-2016, with Germany's 'open-borders policy', refugees started crossing the Balkan route and reached directly Continental and Northern Europe. In 2015, the EU Agenda on Migration, recalled member states' legal obligations, by implementing the programmes of resettlement and relocation. Finally, in 2016, the EU-Turkey deal blocked the flow of asylum seekers and officially closed the Balkan migration route. Thousands of refugees remained in a limbo in Greece and in the islands of Eastern Aegean, where they arrived from Turkey. Member states increased their effort to face the so-called "refugee crisis", but the dearth of a long-term communal strategy for human mobility prevented a safe, regular, and accessible mobility to those who are entitled by international law to seek asylum in Europe.

Political and operational miscarriages in the management of the migration phenomenon during the refugee crisis, as well as unilateral national decisions, and the priority given to border control policies, have prevent states from responding to the significant demographic, economic, social, political and cultural challenges that are involving Europe (Crépeau, 2017). This situation, is not only creating the conditions for humanitarian chaos and public fears of a security threat, but is pushing "movers" in a framework of insecurity, instability, irregularity and unsafe state, and thus encouraging secondary movements.

Through the perspective of 'movers', this article aims at giving an empirical interpretation of the policies employed by Europe to enhance Syrian refugees' protection and to support their mobility. The analysis of those instruments will ultimately explain the flaws of the system in protecting people and in providing a durable solution for forcibly displaced persons – resulting in secondary informal migratory movements within a framework of insecurity. In particular, the governmental and non-governmental programmes of *resettlement, relocation and humanitarian corridors* will be discussed.

³ It is worth to recall the legal definition of "refugee" according to the 1951 *Geneva Convention Related with the Status of Refugee*: "The term 'refugee' shall apply to any person who [...] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." For full text see UN Treaty Series: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20189/v189.pdf> (Retrieved 25 July 2017).

The employed theoretical framework for this work will be the im/mobility or “bounded mobilities” paradigm (Gutekunst et al., 2016), which aims at going beyond the dichotomy migration/mobility and the idea that “all the world seems to be on the move” (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 207). It also goes beyond classical migration studies, which confine the movements of people from the Global South in the term ‘migration’ in opposition to the ‘mobility’ of people from the Global North. Indeed, mobility has a double meaning – a positive one, when movements are undertaken by Western European and North American nationals within and across borders (Hannerz, 1990; Calhoun, 2002); and a negative one when it involves non-Westerns and it is perceived as dangerous and threatening of national borders and ethnic boundaries (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013). In this sense, dynamics of power shape inequalities and define the terms ‘mobility’ and ‘migration’, as well as the categories of ‘undesirable migrant’ and ‘likeable expat’ (Sirkeci and Cohen, 2016).

Mobility will be conceptualized within a framework of global migration, where people’s movements are not new social processes but an outcome of broader structural processes (de Haas, 2008) and a total social fact (Mauss, 1925; Sayad, 1991). International migration is only 3% of the world population and it has remained constant over the last twenty years. What has increased considerably is its impact on societies. Many have maintained that our age is “the age of migration”. In particular, Castles and Miller (1998 and 2013), Pugliese and Macioti (2003), and Czaika and de Haas (2014), have argued that although the percentage of people who migrate is still modest, the social relevance of this phenomenon on a global basis has a rather high impact. In fact, the implications of international movements of people do not only involve those who move, but the whole social context of countries of origin and countries of destination. While there have been similar movements of people in the past, this current historical phase differs from any other because of the ‘globality’ of migration movements – and the global participation of people from both sides of the migration process.

CONCEPTUALIZING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES’ MOBILITY IN EUROPE

Within this context of global mobility of some and immobility of others, we can identify numerous theoretical approaches to migrants’ mobility in existing literature. Moving beyond classical migration studies, this section will identify three main orientations in mobility studies and literature approaching migration movements in a framework of global mobility.

The first one is the “new mobilities paradigm” which enhances the narrative of stasis and sedentarism as normative (Malkki 1992). The paradigm has been promoted by Sheller and Urry (2006), and Büscher and Urry (2009). They believe that today’s intersecting mobilities of different travellers have been encouraged by the diversity of places and technologies, which have improved everyone’s mobility. The new mobilities paradigm suggests that all movements are the same and that all travellers have the same possibilities to move. In the framework of this article, this approach prevents a comprehensive analysis of the mutual constitution of mobility and social inequalities.

The second orientation in literature of mobility is headed by Cohen and Sirkeci (2016). They have highlighted advantages of using the term ‘mobility’ in place of ‘migration’. First, ‘mobility’ goes beyond the limitation of the term ‘migration’, that implies a twelve-month residence in a country other than the mover’s country of birth. “Mobility is a dynamic term that emphasizes the changing, floating, fluid nature of this phenomenon and captures the

regular as well as irregular moves of people on the ground regardless of time of destination” (2016:7). Approaching migration as mobility emphasizes the fluid character of the phenomenon and its complexity. It also helps to understand the transformations it underwent in the past decade. The UN Migration Agency has named current migratory flows as *mixed flows* or a “complex population movements including refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants and other migrants” (IOM, 2004)⁴. This concept explains today’s migratory flows which involve different categories of people crossing international borders in an unauthorized manner and under the same migratory drivers. Migration has been always regarded as a phenomenon that is regular and predictable but current movements of refugees and migrants cannot be expected. Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) maintain that there is a cultural framework, or a culture of migration, that helps to define migrants’ mobility in relations to households and sending and receiving communities.

The third orientation sees mobility as strongly connected with relationships of power (Cresswell, 2006). Glick Schiller and Salazar, for example challenge the “conceptual orientations built on binaries of difference that have impeded analyses of the interrelationship between mobility and stasis” (2013: 183). According to them, the on-going global economic crisis has shaped the normalization of national borders and ethnic boundaries and enhanced the interconnection of the concepts of national sovereignty and national security. In this sense, mobility is a threat to national (ethnic, religious, social and geographical) borders while immobility is seen as necessary for national security. This so-called methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) tightly encompasses sedentary bias and it is clearly in contrast with the interconnections that characterise today’s globalised world. A similar line has also been followed by Bloch et al. (2009), and Schuster (2006). The latter scholar, in particular, not only refers that migrants are mobile actors, but also states that they are people whose mobility choices are “limited by a range of factors including migration regimes, social networks and social and economic capital” (2013: 758). Schuster also takes a step forwards when she states that the geographic mobility of migrants is paralleled by the mobility of their migration statuses and categories – documented/undocumented migrant, labour migrant, asylum seeker, refugee, reunified family member etc. Dynamics of inclusion/exclusion and issues of social inequalities have also been highlighted by Bigo (2006), who sees the exclusion of some groups from mobility and the normalisation of those who are included as a new ‘diagram of power’ of the contemporary western world.

In the framework of this third orientation, this article argues that today’s refugees move within a ‘regime of mobility’ managed by relationships of power, where their movements are stigmatised and forbidden (Franquesa, 2011). Deploying the term ‘regime of mobility’ is important to lay emphasis on the universe of policies, attitudes, actions and perceptions which shape the normalised and structured duality of the privileged movement of some and the illegal movements of others. Yet, refugees not only move within a regime of mobility, they are subject to “bounded mobilities”⁵. In this sense, mobility is not necessarily associated with the positive idea of freedom, and the conceptualisation of freedom itself may change on an *ad hoc* basis. Bougleux (2016) uses the term “im/mobile subject” to describe those people experiencing a multi-faced mobility able to challenge existing political, cultural

⁴ See the IOM’s ninety-eighth session on irregular migration and mixed flows: https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/en/council/98/mc_inf_297.pdf

⁵ Gutekunst (2016) maintains that the plural of the term “mobility” used as conceptualised above, expresses its diversity and its many forms.

and capitalistic norms and to “wander beyond limits”. The bounded mobility paradigm maintains that “mobility is always bounded, regulated, mediated and intrinsically connected to forms of immobility and unequal power relations (2016:20).” In this sense, refugees’ mobility is bounded because it is limited and entrapped within a design that counteracts the mobility of people from the Global North and the migration of people from the Global South.

SYRIANS’ BOUNDED MOBILITY IN EUROPE

The bounded mobilities paradigm can be easily applied to Syrian forced migration. Due to the dreadful on-going civil war, Syrians have now a nationality with a EU-wide average asylum recognition rate of 75% or higher. This gives them the chance to access certain EU programmes of transfer and to move more easily across borders. Thanks to those programmes, they can be distributed among member states within a temporary relocation scheme for asylum seekers or to be resettled from a third country as a final durable solution. Nonetheless, this group of forced migrants do not move with more ease than other migrants. Indeed, the system of reallocation of refugees has shown a number of crucial matters that have been raised by scholars (see Moraga and Rapoport, 2014; Carlsen, 2016) and media. Evidence shows that those critical issues have an impact in pushing refugees into secondary migration movements.

Building the empirical outline upon Sirkeci and Cohen’s “conflict model” (2016)⁶, this paragraph aims at showing an interesting aspect of refugees’ mobility: under regular protection channels, refugees’ mobility occurs because controlled, governed and embodied in a framework that relegates movements in a regulated, monitored and sedentary scheme. Nonetheless, it is bounded because it can only happen under certain controlled circumstances. When outside regular protection channels, refugees’ mobility is not controlled and governed, thus if undertaken informally, it happens within a framework of insecurity, where people are freer to move, but by putting their life at risk.

Syrian refugees’ experience first a regional migration, which is likely to be long-lasting as well as circular or multidirectional. Then, if a combination of factors (e.g. financial means, social and human capital, perception of insecurity) occur, Syrian refugees undertake a cross-national journey to Europe, either by crossing borders independently or by joining public and private programmes of resettlement. Those who actually benefit from these legal channels are very few. When they are not able to access those channels, Syrian refugees reach Europe by crossing borders and approaching Greece or Italy irregularly.

To respond to the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, Europe implemented the resettlement scheme. At the same time, under the European Migration Agenda adopted by the European Commission in 2015, member states conceived and implemented the relocation programme, with the aim of unburdening European countries of Greece and Italy, with the load of migratory flows arriving both from Asia and Africa. Other programmes have been created by non-governmental entities in order to help people fleeing first-asylum countries and resettling to Europe. This is the case of humanitarian corridors. This section analyses these three reallocation systems through an empirical approach supported by participant observation and consultations with experts and privileged actors in Italy, Greece, Germany and Lebanon as

⁶ Sirkeci and Cohen’s conflict model is based on the assumption that conflicts are the key drivers of human mobility and they increasingly drive mobility as they lead to a perception of insecurity.

well as by interviews with refugees themselves. The outcomes of the research explain why those systems not only are unable to respond to the so-called refugee crisis, but they foster refugees' informal movements within a framework of insecurity.

Resettlement

Resettlement is a programme of permanent transfer of refugees from a country of first asylum⁷ to another state that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement. When registering as a refugee within the UNHCR lists, one can enrol for being resettled in a specific member state, but being accepted for another state of resettlement.⁸ Refugees can also withdraw from the programme and decide to stay in the country of first asylum. The permanent residence status provided ensures protection against *refoulement* and gives access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. In a regional context, resettlement is a key instrument to reduce burdens and responsibilities of countries of first asylum, as well as to reduce the influence of smugglers and traffickers.

The resettlement of Syrians has resulted in the largest resettlement commitment in recent history (Batchelor and O'Shea, 2017). The Syria Core Group (SCG), formed in 2013, has developed new tools to make the process faster, to facilitate the sharing of practices among states, and to provide information to those in seek of resettlement (*Ibid.*). At the same time, as referred by literature and experts consulted, often the process does not promote equality of access to resettlement to all refugees. For instance, when vulnerability of refugees is the sole assessment criteria, has been noticed that certain categories of people remain left aside – this is the case of unaccompanied heterosexual Syrian men, who, in 2015 have been deliberately excluded from resettlement to Canada (Turner, 2017). In other cases, only a specific category of refugee is selected for resettlement – such as in the case of Kurdish Syrians resettled from Turkey.⁹

Accounting Italy as a case study, we can observe that resettlement mostly involves Syrian refugees from Lebanon and Turkey. In the period between 2013 and 2017 almost 100.000 Syrian refugees were resettled, of whom 1.200 were resettled in Italy.¹⁰ According to actors involved in the migration management in Italy and Greece,¹¹ the programme has shown some crucial aspects. Firstly, Italy is not perceived as a desirable country of resettlement, because it is not very well known as a country of destination by Syrian refugees, who do not have solid social connections in the country. Secondly, refugees in general do not particularly trust Italy for its potential to create labour market inclusion and to deal with

⁷ According to the UNHCR, country of first asylum means the country that permits refugees to enter its territory for purposes of providing asylum temporarily, pending eventual repatriation or resettlement. Usually, first asylum countries receive the assistance of the UNHCR to provide basic assistance to the refugees. See: US Legal 'Country of First asylum', <http://definitions.uslegal.com/f/first-asylum-country>; European Commission Migration and Home Affairs' Asylum Procedures Directive (ADP): https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/common-procedures_en. Retrieved 5 September 2017.

⁸ See: *Resettled persons— Eurostat's Annual data*: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-datasets/-/TPS00195>. Retrieved 5 September 2017.

⁹ Interviews with: Cesare Trentuno. IOM-Italy Resettlement project assistant.

¹⁰ In total, 95.883 Syrians were resettled as of October 2017. See: <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html>

¹¹ Interviews with: Anna Giustiniani, IOM-Italy coordinator of Resettlement and Relocation programmes, Cesare Trentuno. IOM-Italy Resettlement project assistant and Andromachi Maggie Lazaridi, head of project development for IOM-Greece.

refugees' problems (Brekke & Brochman, 2014). Syrians are among them. Southern and rural areas are particularly unlikeable for Syrian refugees, who are aware of the exertions of the labour market integration. Thirdly, there is a divide between people's expectations and the opportunities offered by Italy. Apparently, the Italian migration and asylum regime is not able to decrease refugee's vulnerability, or to improve their empowerment due to the lack of follow-up measures towards a solid integration. As referred by Brekke & Brochman (2014), being a Mediterranean welfare state, Italy is also characterized by both modest compensation levels and limited access to social benefits. Besides, Italy has one of the EU highest levels of youth unemployment – and this is well known by refugees, whose access to information has been improved by technology and transnational communication, in recent times.

The empirical study suggested that when the transfer from a country to another is not likely to improve refugees' situation or to give them at least the same conditions they had prior displacement, insecurity prevails, entailing secondary informal migration. Indeed, according to IOM officers consulted,¹² several Syrian families and individuals have left the Italian reception system and taken on spontaneous secondary movements across borders to reach Northern European countries.

Relocation

The programme of relocation¹³ operates the distribution among member states of persons in clear need of international protection. The system provides the movement and transfer of people whose nationality has a protection recognition rate of over or equal to 75%.¹⁴ The system has been created to face the refugee crisis and to unburden bordering countries of Europe with the load of migratory flows arriving from the Mediterranean and the Balkan routes. For this reason, the main critical aspect of the programme appeared to be the inability of avoiding people's perilous journeys across borders – as refugees who are willing to apply for this programme need to be on the European soil. Nonetheless, the programme provides safe and legal passage across European countries for certain categories of asylum seekers – with the purpose of avoiding irregular secondary migration movements.

The relocation programme is temporary and voluntary, but member states manage the application submissions of beneficiaries according to quota of availability (Carlsen, 2016). As of December 2017, 32,694 persons in need of protection have been relocated from Greece and Italy.¹⁵ Syrians are relocated mostly from Greece. Because the decision on the member state of relocation is made by authorities, the appointment of one country or another cause discontentment – especially when refugees are assigned a country they are not expecting to be

¹² Interviews with: Anna Giustiniani, IOM-Italy coordinator of Resettlement and Relocation programmes, Cesare Trentuno, IOM-Italy Resettlement project assistant and Andromachi Maggie Lazaridi, head of project development for IOM-Greece.

¹³ The relocation scheme, which aimed at moving 160,000 refugees who had arrived in Italy and Greece across member states, has come to an end in September 2017. A new voluntary mechanism for relocating refugees is being discussed as part of an update to the Dublin Regulation.

¹⁴ The eligible countries as of 1st July 2017 are Eritrea, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen or a stateless person previously residing in one of these countries. See European Asylum Support Office (EASO) <https://www.easo.europa.eu/operational-support/hotspot-relocation/relocation/questions-and-answers-relocation>. Retrieved 5 September 2017.

¹⁵ See IOM's Migration Flows portal for an updated table of beneficiaries resettled per country: <http://migration.iom.int/europe>. Retrieved 15 December 2017.

resettled. When migrating to Europe, Syrian imagine their life and their social and educational development in the countries of Northern and Central Europe – where they have solid social networks and higher possibilities to be successfully included into labour market. Beyond basic initial protection, they need to secure themselves and their families a future and some Southern and Eastern European countries are considered “undesirable countries of relocation.”¹⁶

According to IOM officers consulted in Greece, the key strength of the relocation programme are the protection mechanisms of the health assessment component. Many Syrian beneficiaries, because of armed conflict in their country and the long trip to Europe have had no possibilities to access the health care system. Through the relocation procedures, they were diagnosed and treated for medical conditions of which they were unaware.

The main critical elements arisen from the empirical research are three and interconnected. Firstly, the media and institutions’ discourse around relocation seems to address beneficiaries not as individuals but merely as numbers.¹⁷ For this reason, there is an increasing dehumanization of people, both from the political side and from the media. With some exceptions, the general discourse around refugees has made of negative perceptions and dehumanizing terminology – people are often described as hordes or flows invading cities. This terminology implicitly associates refugees with animals (Esses et al. 2017). Secondly, since refugees’ humanity is derogated, their needs and expectations are not addressed by states, nor their skills and abilities are accounted. Outcomes show that neither social nor labour market integration is an element of discussion between sending and receiving states of relocation. As well as resettlement, the programme of relocation does not provide a complementary matching between refugees’ skills, and the opportunities existing in the member states of relocation.¹⁸ Finally, the last element arisen from this study is the division between member states and the fragmentation of European reception system of asylum seekers. This has been a key element that has contributed to the miscarriage of the programme. For example, diversity in addressing health issues of refugees has often delayed transfer operations, and many have been victims of this fragmented system.

Those lacunae have created insecurity, which triggers informal and perilous secondary movements across borders. Although there are no official data regarding secondary migration movements in Europe, evidence show that within the relocation system, the tendency of moving from one country to another have been rather widespread.

Humanitarian corridors

Humanitarian corridors have arisen as an alternative of the UN resettlement system, to provide refugees’ safe transfer from a country of first asylum to Europe. Italy has activated the pilot programme through private religious actors who self-fund the project and provide the transfer of Syrian families and individuals from Lebanon to Italy. The main goal of the

¹⁶ Interview with Anna Giustiniani, IOM-Italy coordinator of Resettlement and Relocation programmes.

¹⁷ For example: European Commission Press Release. “Relocation and Resettlement: Steady progress made but more efforts needed to meet targets”: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-908_en.htm. Retrieved 5 September 2017.

¹⁸ Before the relocation programme was officially closed, the European Commission issued a skills assessment pilot, which was run within the relocation programme and considered a good practise that might have an important role in matching refugee’s skills and member states’ opportunities.

project is to provide safe journeys to Europe to a number of selected refugees. This means of allocation, as the UN resettlement, prevent human trafficking, smuggling and exploitation of vulnerable people, and like the UN resettlement allow legal entry in Europe with a permanent humanitarian visa.

Although undeniably recognized as a good practice, humanitarian corridors show similar discrepancies as resettlement. In this case, secondary movements cannot be empirically accounted although they have been recently reported by media. As referred by one of my interviewees,¹⁹ refugees selected to join the programme are not fully aware of the different life they will have in Europe – in terms of work, everyday life, and social relationships. “Conflicts and violence have uprooted people from their land, and refugees expect the programme to help them to rebuild something similar to what they had in Syria.”²⁰

The outcomes of this research show that similarly to the UN programmes, humanitarian corridors do not focus sufficiently on the autonomy, empowerment and agency of people, through fully supporting them on labour market inclusion or educational attainment. As emerged from my interviews, resettled communities often find themselves isolated, they have no relationship with the neighbours and the territory and no social networks to help them overcoming everyday difficulties. Nonetheless, while labour market integration is a challenge for older generation resettled, young Syrians are effectively given a chance of a better life. Syrian parents often sacrifices their aspiration for their children future, and whilst not completely pleased with their new life they endure trials and difficulties to guarantee their children a better education and better future opportunities.

Although they have similar operational criteria, the fundamental difference between resettlement and humanitarian corridors is that the latter programme is also accessible to those who are not registered under the UNHCR. Nonetheless, also in this case decision-making criteria are rather unequal and arbitrary, and rely heavily on friendship relationships and trust between refugees and humanitarian workers or volunteers. Familiarity with refugees before moving them to Europe help to best meet refugees’ needs, and to match their expectations with the opportunities on the territory. On the other hand, this lead to discrimination towards those who, for different reasons, do not enter the trust network of the corridors. The fieldwork has shown that the crucial issues encountered in the EU programmes remain – the expectations and abilities of people are often not properly accounted by receiving states and although this has not appeared from the fieldwork, the risk is very high that people, especially single individuals, escape from the reception system to continue the journey up-north.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has questioned the idea that the whole world is on the move and it has argued that mobility is only accessible to some and denied or bounded for others. In general, within the perspective of bounded mobilities, this study has confirmed that although the discourse of mobility is often built upon the idea that western governments promote people’s free movements, a fully free mobility is not sustainable.

¹⁹ Interview with Alessandro, a volunteer of Operazione Colomba, an Italian association working in North Lebanon on the implementation of humanitarian corridors along with Sant’Egidio Community.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Three aspects have arisen from this study. Firstly, the fragmented nature of the legal instruments and their application in the real world. While legal instruments seem to foster Syrian refugees' mobility throughout member states, the empirical study has suggested that this system actually confines those movements in a bounded mobility framework. The fieldwork's findings have highlighted that the system that should protect refugees, and at the same time distribute them among member states, does not work on neither of the two objectives. Although Syrians have access to channels that should promote their movements and protect their rights under the 1951 Refugee Convention, they are only able to move under certain controlled circumstances. The second element arisen from this study is the poor attention given to refugees' integration. The lack of skills profiling programmes for refugees is a critical aspect that limits or prevent the matching between people's expectations, skills, knowledge and expertise, and the opportunities offered by states. The involvement of local communities should be also taken into account, as integration should be accounted as a double directional path involving both sides – the (forced) migrant society and the hosting society. Integration is also much related to social connections as well as refugees' perceptions of improvement, personal development and empowerment. Thirdly, provided that adaptation to new living circumstances can be difficult and policies cannot take into account individual expectations, having access to correct, comprehensive and thorough information is fundamental to not to idealize resettlement as the reproduction of their previous living conditions. With this regard, evidence show that information are more likely to be spread within migrant communities, or transnationally among geographically separated refugee communities, than from humanitarian officers to refugees – at times compromising negatively others' decision to migrate.

With regard to secondary migration movements, empirical evidence show that the abovementioned critical elements are likely to mobilize irregular secondary movements in refugees involved in the three programmes analysed. Nonetheless, according to IOM officers consulted in Greece, secondary movements in the relocation project occurred primarily because most refugees wanted to go to Germany or to reach their relatives or friends in other member states. Although previous studies have found that secondary migration of asylum seekers in Europe is driven from economic reasons, state policies, and the search of better opportunities for the future, as evidenced in this study, the social network component also have a role in moving people across countries.

Refugees base their mobility choices considering both gains and losses. Prior to their arrival in Europe their preferences about the country of resettlement is indefinite, because every European county is a gain compared to where they are currently living. After arrival, the balance between gains and losses changes and the country of resettlement make the difference when it comes to labour market and educational opportunities, and socio-economic integration.

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