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## ***Social Networks during Displacement: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and Beyond***

*Dr. Nada Ghandour-Demiri*



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## **ABOUT THE ASFARI INSTITUTE AT AUB**

The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship is a regional hub of a dynamic community of academics, practitioners, policymakers, activists, and members of the general public interested in exploring traditional and innovative forms of collective actions, locally-grounded policy debates and in advancing realistic solutions to the obstacles to effective civil society and citizenship in the Arab world.

In doing so, the Institute provides training workshops and programs beside regular teaching at AUB, encourages and provides evidence-based research in areas related to political participation, accountability and good governance, produces policy/practice recommendations to improve citizens' engagement and civil society roles in mediation, deliberation and self-organization.

It also promotes public awareness of civil society and civic engagement best practices in the region through its monthly meetings and seminars and stimulates fruitful dialogue among the region's varied publics through its programmatic activities of workshops, conferences, blog and publications.

The Asfari Institute is a research center based at AUB since 2012 and is a solid partner in consolidating AUB commitment to serve, educate and engage the Lebanese society. The Institute is mobilized to develop a new minor program on civil society and collective action with relevant AUB faculties. Among its new activities is the consolidation of three new lines of work: Civil Society Law and Governance, Culture as Resistance, and Civil Society in Conflict and Post Conflict Setting.

P.O. Box 11-0236 Riad El Solh,  
Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon  
[www.aub.edu.lb/asfari](http://www.aub.edu.lb/asfari)

 +961-1-350 000-1 ext 4469  
 [asfariinst@aub.edu.lb](mailto:asfariinst@aub.edu.lb)  
 [ActiveArabVoices.org](http://ActiveArabVoices.org)  
  AsfariInstitute

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## ***Bridging Academia and Activism***

# **CONTENTS**

- 02 About The ASFARI Institute at AUB**
- 06 About the Project**
- 08 Introduction**
- 09 Lebanon as a Host and Transit Country**
- 10 Methodology**
- 11 Social networks and social capital – A conceptual framework**

**12 *Social networks during displacement***

**13 *Syrian refugees and social networks***

**16 *Conclusion***

**17 *Bibliography***

# ***About the Project***

## **THE LAY OF THE LAND:**

### ***A Social Mapping of Daily Practices in Informality amongst Syrian Displaced Communities in Lebanon***

#### **Funded by the Ford Foundation**

This research project examines how, in the face of conflict and crisis, Syrian displaced individuals and communities in Lebanon are attempting to (re)organize themselves within the informal sector to secure access to essential services. We understand informality as a sector of goods and services that is outside of, but not necessarily disconnected from the formal purview of the state. In Lebanon, most citizens are already accessing resources such as water and electricity from within the informal sector. Whereas access to such services might ideally be seen as indissolubly linked to the rights of citizens, the distribution of such goods in Lebanon is hardly equal in practice. The access to goods and services by displaced populations is consequently further compounded in such a context where, by the nature of the country's political economy, must also acquire and secure their rights through informal networks.

By addressing this question of informalization and displacement, we reflect on practices of exclusion as experienced amongst Syrian displaced communities from different socio-economic backgrounds who are otherwise perceived as non-citizens in Lebanon. We aim to document through qualitative methods and life history approaches some of the ways Syrian communities have attempted to harness basic livelihood necessities. In so doing, we examine how the Syrian crisis is contributing to the reassembling of these networks, their hierarchies, and ultimately reshaping modes of governance and state borders between Syria, Lebanon and among Syrians themselves.

**Dr. Nada Ghandour-Demiri<sup>1</sup>**

*“I fled Homs in 2014. I first went to Lebanon to join my parents who had been there already for a year. We lived in the area of Akkar. It was there where I met Heba, and we got married. In 2017, we decided to leave Lebanon. We took a boat from Tripoli to Turkey, and then after spending some months in the [Greek] island of Samos we arrived in Athens. My dream is to go to Germany, to Munich, where my brother lives with his family. Inshallah soon.”*

**[Omar<sup>2</sup>, Syrian refugee from Homs. Interviewed by author in Athens, July 2019]**

Every refugee carries a unique story. At the same time, many of the experiences refugees live during displacement resemble each other. Omar’s experience, for instance, is a familiar story that one often hears – with some variations of course – in refugee camps across Greece: a Syrian refugee who has fled his or her hometown because of the war, and decides to join family members in a neighboring country, such as Lebanon. Along the journey, he or she meets new people, makes new friends, and often, even creates his or her own family.

As in the case of Omar, social networks have a profound influence on the lives of refugees. Such networks affect the decisions refugees make about when to leave their home countries and where to target as a destination for asylum (Hanley et al. 2018; Koser and Pinkerton, 2002). Social networks are important sources of information regarding legal aid, housing, employment, education, and healthcare (Beaman 2012; Campbell 2012; Ives et al. 2014; Lamba 2008; Potocky-Tripodi 2004; Williams 2006). Furthermore, they can provide emotional support, which is vital in terms of refugees’ sense of wellbeing and health

(Hanley et al. 2018; McMichael and Manderson 2004). Refugees are constantly building new social ties in new places, as well as negotiating existing long-distance ties (Bilecen and Sienkiewicz, 2015; Lubbers et al. 2010; Ryan et al. 2018). Social relationships are developed and sustained in specific places as well as between geographically dispersed places. For this reason, when analyzing social networks during displacement, it is essential to consider the impact of distance and physical separation on how social ties are maintained, strengthened, or weakened over time, and how their meaning and practical use can change (Ryan et al. 2018, 148).

Based on case studies of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, this paper explores how social ties are impacted by displacement. How are social networks, such as families and friendships, affected during displacement? What is their role in harnessing basic livelihood necessities?

While emphasizing the powerful role of the family in Middle Eastern societies, this paper challenges simplistic analyses of the family (and other networks) as a static entity and suggests a more nuanced analysis of social ties.

<sup>1</sup> Research Fellow in the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies at the University of Bristol

<sup>2</sup> All names and some details in stories told have been changed to protect research participants’ identities.

## Lebanon as a Host and Transit Country

In 2011, the Syrian uprising began with protests demanding the change of the regime which escalated to a relentless war leading to civilian displacement and suffering. By the end of 2018, 6.6 million people remained internally displaced, making Syria the country with the largest number of internally displaced persons in the world (IDMC 2019; UNHCR 2019a). Additionally, more than 7 million Syrian refugees live in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt (3RP 2018, 4).

The situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon must be analyzed within the broader context of the country's history in hosting refugees, particularly Palestinian refugees. At the end of 2018, approximately 948,800 Syrians were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon – a decrease of 48,700 people from the end of 2017. However, according to Lebanese Government estimates, in 2019, the country was hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees, including unregistered and labor migrants (UNHCR 2019b). Lebanon remains the country hosting the largest number of refugees per capita in the world.

The borders between Lebanon and Syria have been historically contested and porous. The areas on the border have witnessed mobility on both sides (Mouawad 2018). For example, Syrian workers used to cross the border to Lebanon for employment, primarily in the fields of agriculture and construction (Sanyal 2017). In 2006, when Israel invaded South Lebanon, Lebanese refugees crossed the border to Syria (Chatty 2016). Over the last eight years, Syrians escaping war are moving to Lebanon through the same borders. In the past, crossing the Lebanon-Syria border was fairly unrestricted. However, as the numbers of Syrian refugees increased and the crisis evolved into a protracted situation, stricter border controls have been set up. Additionally, the escalation of the crisis has led to growing tensions between refugees and the host communities. Lebanese families already struggling to cope economically started to feel pressured because of the rising numbers of refugees, while infrastructure and resources in many parts of the country have also been heavily impacted (Government of Lebanon and United Nations 2014; Sanyal 2017; UN-Habitat and UNHCR 2014; 2018; Yassin et al. 2015).

Syrians fleeing to Lebanon because of the war are often not granted asylum. In fact, the Government of Lebanon does not classify them as refugees, but as “displaced

persons or de facto refugees – categories that do not offer any legal protection in Lebanon, a country that is also not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention” (Sanyal 2017, 118; see also Bidinger et al. 2015; HRW 2016; Naufal 2012). Furthermore, the government of Lebanon refused the establishment of formal refugee camps by humanitarian organizations. As a result, thousands of informal settlements have proliferated in the country – especially in the Bekaa and Akkar regions (Chatty 2016; Fawaz et al. 2014). These informal and temporary spaces are not planned or managed in any formal way. Syrian refugees are allowed to move in and out relatively freely, as well as work and access some humanitarian assistance – when it is available. According to Romola Sanyal, these informal settlements “incorporate spatial features and government practices similar to ‘camps,’ such as forms of screening and policing of residents, but without the formal legitimacy granted to them either through the state or humanitarian organizations, landlords, and the state intersect with each other” (2017, 118). These settlements are often found in unused agricultural fields and access is generally accompanied by a kafala (sponsorship) system between the owners and the refugees. This system leaves refugees vulnerable to exploitation as their housing and legal status is dependent on the good faith of the sponsor (UN-Habitat and UNHCR 2018, 38).

Migration to Lebanon is therefore not a new phenomenon for Syrians. In the past, Syrians were migrating to Lebanon primarily for work purposes, while their homes and families in Syria were still there and awaiting their return. But since the war began, millions of Syrian refugees have fled their homes, and faced a journey entailing displacement; “protracted liminality” — a prolonged situation of insecurity and uncertainty regarding legal status, length of stay, and future moves — and settlement in familiar or unknown localities (Palmgren 2016, 4). Despite the proximity to Syria and the shared ethnic background, Lebanon is often perceived as a transit country for many Syrian refugees. Increasing racism and discrimination against Syrians in Lebanon have been highlighted by recent government policies coercing Syrian refugees to leave, by demolishing shelters and instilling a fear of detention and eventual deportation (e.g. HRW 2019; Vohra 2019). It is within this context that we will explore the effects of displacement on social networks.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a combination of qualitative research methods was used. Seven researchers carried out fieldwork between April and December 2018 in various areas in Lebanon – in particular, Akkar, Bekaa, the South of Lebanon, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon – where a large number of Syrian refugees reside. Ethnographic practices of observation and more than one hundred thirty semi-structured and in-depth interviews with displaced Syrians were conducted. Additionally, the author conducted ten in-depth interviews with Syrian refugees in Athens, who were previously residing in Lebanon. The reason for this additional set of interviews was to explore the ‘fate’ of social networks established in Lebanon, once refugees moved on in their journeys – are these social relations maintained and in what ways do they remain important? Since Syrian displacement is a long-lasting transnational phenomenon, it is important to explore its viability across time and space.

The researchers built a rapport with refugees, mainly through their own social ties (e.g. Syrian family members, friends and work colleagues who happened to know the interviewees), as well as through their proximity to the field (e.g. living nearby a refugee camp

or informal settlement, and/or working on the field with humanitarian non-governmental organizations and solidarity initiatives). The interviews were most often conducted in the refugees’ homes – these being either semi-permanent structures, tents, prefabricated containers (e.g. ISOBOX), or rented apartments. Keeping in mind the diversity that exists across Syrians, the interviewees came from different areas of Syria ranging from the countryside to the cities, and had different social and economic backgrounds, and occupied a range of professions. Given that the clear majority of the interviewees lived in informal settlements and refugee camps, only a few Syrian refugees of the privileged upper social classes were included in this study. This is a limitation of this study, and it would be worth exploring in future research whether displacement affects social ties differently based on social class.

The analysis was guided by the literature on the conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and beyond, and the literature on social networks and social capital, in Arab culture and societies in particular. Through this approach, an in-depth and contextual understanding of the effects of displacement on social networks of Syrian refugees was acquired.

## Social networks and social capital – A conceptual framework

Social support is essential to individual and collective wellbeing, and social networks are an important source of such support (Hanley et al. 2018; Kingsbury 2017; Simich et al. 2003; Wen and Hanley 2016; Wilkinson and Marmot 2003). Moreover, social networks can be mobilized into social capital, allowing access to resources. For the purpose of this study, we will use the social network theory approach, which advocated for the idea that social networks are “bounded sets of actors, be they organizations, institutions, or individuals that are connected by specific relationships” (Schmidt 2007). This approach emphasizes the linkages and relationships between different people, which can have a positive and/or a negative influence on the people involved. Generally, members of a social network are connected by identifiable common variables (Calhoun 2010; Leeners and Gendemann 2012; Lenders 2012). According to Hanley et al., “social networks should be analyzed along such lines as geography (local, national, transnational), gender, religion, race and class” (Hanley et al. 2018, 125). Consequently, one can belong to multiple social networks. However, the fact that someone shares certain characteristics with a group of individuals does not necessarily mean that he or she is “networked” with them or able to draw on a given connection for social support or social capital” (Ryan et al. 2008 in Hanley et al. 2018, 125).

Moreover, social networks are closely associated to social capital. In fact, some scholars insist that social networks and social capital cannot be studied independently of

each other (see Lin 1999; Vertovec 2003). While a number of definitions of social capital exist (e.g. Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993; Lin 2001), for the purpose of this study, Robert Putnam and Nan Lin’s definitions are particularly elucidating. On the one hand, Putnam defines social capital as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam, 1993, 167). Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam, 2000, 18–19). On the other hand, Lin defines social capital as an “investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace” (2001, 19). In other words, it refers to the “resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions” (Lin, 2001, 24–25). In both definitions, the concept is embedded in social relations. It is an “investment in social connectedness through which resources of other actors can be accessed and borrowed” (Bhandari and Yasunobu 2009, 492).

In line with these approaches, the social networks that are explored in this study include family, friends, acquaintances and professional contacts before and during displacement. Additionally, any resource (material or immaterial) which is accessed through social relationships will be considered as social capital. These include financial support, housing, and vital advice, among other things.

The literature on international migration identifies social networks as important sources of social capital (Ager and Strang 2008; Alfadhli and Drury 2018; Darling 2017; Granovetter 1973; Haug 2008; Koser 2007; Poros 2011; Ryan and D'Angelo 2018). Such social ties often play a significant role in reducing costs and risks during displacement, by providing important information, financial assistance, access to employment opportunities, and emotional support. In fact, refugees choose to move to countries where they have social connections and, in this way, transnational social networks are formed (Thorleifsson 2016; Uzelac et al 2018). It is argued that these social networks are the reason "behind the increase in international migration as more people today have family or friends living abroad than ever before due to globalization and the development of communication technology" (Sönmez 2017, 2).

In addition to existing social ties, displacement provides new opportunities for social relationships (Braines and Rosenoff Gauving 2014; Hammond 2004; Lokot 2018). New acquaintances are made, old ones are renewed, new friendships are formed, and sometimes new families are born. Rosemary Sayigh in her work on Palestinian refugees, suggests that "ties of locality" can sometimes become more important than "blood ties" in times of

war and refugeehood (1993, 165). Speaking the same language and sharing the same ethnic background with the majority of the host community, as in the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, can facilitate the establishment of social ties (Ager and Strang 2008; Sönmez 2017). However, this alone is not always sufficient.

Two types of social capital are particularly relevant and important in the context of displacement: 'bonding' capital and 'bridging' capital. These typologies are helpful in making sense of the diversity and importance of the various social ties Syrian refugees maintain and establish during displacement. 'Bonding' capital refers to social ties to people of one's own social group or close to oneself, such as one's family, ethnic community or friends. Bonding capital often leads to close social ties within relatively homogenous groups, and is a key source of social support. 'Bridging' capital refers to horizontal connections to people and groups in the wider community, for example employers or representatives of aid agencies, or from other ethnic communities. This type of capital provides access to social and financial resources that are not usually available in one's own social group (Pittaway et al. 2016). Therefore, these different types of social capital complement each other: if one has both bonding and bridging capital, the more access he or she will have to various kinds of resources.

Before the war, Syrian society was characterized by overlapping social networks based on intersecting religious, ethnic, kinship, and class identities (Batatu 1999; Cunningham and Sarayah 1993; Hadada 2011; Hokayem 2013; Leenders 2012; Lesch 2012; Philips 2012; Rabinovich 2008; Samalandra 2004; Stevens 2016; Wedeen 2013). These social networks have historically acted as “protective shelters in times of crisis, in part due to the various forms of capital which exist in these networks and which members may draw on” (Stevens 2016, 51-52; see also Batatu 1999; Chatty 2013; Chatty and Mansour 2011; Leenders 2012; Leenders and Heydemann 2012; Salamandra 2004; and Wedeen 2013). While such social ties persist during displacement, their significance may be altered dramatically due to new relational and spatial configurations (Massey 2005; Sönmez 2017; Stevens 2016).

Family remains the most powerful social institution throughout the Arab world (Dahlgren 2008; Hopkins 2003; Hudson 2008; Joseph 1999; 2018; Rabo 2008). It represents a “sacred space” (Joseph 2000, 19), where irrevocable social bonds exist. Scholars have highlighted that the family forms “the bedrock of an individual’s identity” in Middle Eastern societies (El Guindi 1999, 164). Nevertheless, academics have emphasized that the family is not a static entity that everlastingly reflects “a sense of changelessness” (Meriwether 1999, 6; see also Lokot 2018). On the contrary, it is an evolving institution, that takes new characteristics, and whose internal power dynamics are constantly challenged and renegotiated.

Suad Joseph uses the concept of “relationality” to describe the importance of relations between family members in Arab societies. She defines relationality as “a process by which persons are socialized into social systems that value linkage, bonding, and sociability” (1999, 9). Within relational societies, decisions are made collectively rather than individually (Abadeer 2015, 87; Deeb 2006, 30; Lokot 2018, 6; Rugh 1984, 33). To

a certain extent, this explains how Syrian family ties influence decision-making processes before and in exile. In fact, the vast majority of the Syrian refugees interviewed in this study stressed the importance of their family, especially in the first stages of their journey. In particular, the closer family members, such as parents and siblings were mentioned as a motivation for moving to a particular location, and as an important source of financial and emotional support.

As in the case of Omar, several interviewees mentioned they decided to go to Lebanon to join their parents or siblings. As a result, for some Syrian refugees the family is the main social network they identify in Lebanon, together with the neighbors and the shaweesh<sup>3</sup>. Jawad, a young man from Homs, currently living in Ghazze, said: “My whole family lives together. I do not really have any friends here.”

It is important, however, to avoid simplifying and romanticizing the nature of social ties. Relational identities are far from static. As Matthew Stevens eloquently points out, “they overlap, jostle, clash, reinforce one another or produce new vulnerabilities, all within individuals and households” (2016, 54). On the one hand, social networks can be a source of strength and support. On the other hand, they can be impeding and a source of negative experiences (Lokot 2018, 6). For instance, Aya, who now lives in Greece with her husband, explained how her brother was not allowing her to go out of their house when they were living in Lebanon, and as a result she felt she lost three years of her life, when she could have at least found some work to help her family.

<sup>3</sup> The shaweesh are often established members of the refugee population who act as middlemen in the informal settlements, between landowners, employers and refugees. Usually a man, the shaweesh is a self-appointed community representative who is well-connected with the authorities, the landowners, and humanitarian organizations (see Abu Kheir 2016; Christiansen 2017; Habib et al 2019).

Some interviewees stated that they prefer not to mingle with people other than their close family members, to “avoid trouble.” For example, Abir, a single mother from

Raqqa who lives with her sister and seven children in the south of Lebanon, told one of the researchers:

*“I have no relations with Lebanese except for you and another lady that used to work with you. [...] I have very limited interaction with the Syrians too, because the more you socialize the more you are risking falling into problems. I’m a single woman and they might hurt us.”*<sup>4</sup>

Apart from risking ‘trouble,’ social ties can be an economic burden for some. Such is the perspective of

Mazen, a Syrian man from Raqqa who lives with his wife and three children in the south of Lebanon:

*“Other than my wife and some friends, I have no active social life because the more people you know the more problems you have. If you have many friends, they will start asking you for money and having an open house brings a lot of expenses which I can’t afford.”*<sup>5</sup>

Strong social ties, such as family and friends, are not always a source of support for basic needs. A recent study by UN-Habitat and UNHCR (2018), surveyed more than 1,500 refugee households from Homs living in Lebanon, and revealed some insightful findings. While the clear majority of the surveyed population chose a specific location in Lebanon to follow family and/or acquaintances, 73.1 percent reported “having received no assistance from social or familial ties to support their livelihoods” (UN-Habitat and UNHCR 2018, 21). Therefore, although they “largely recognized the importance of networks in determining locational

choices, [...] most respondents stated that these networks did not help them secure better shelter and/or livelihoods, reducing the possible role that networks can play as ‘capital’ for this community. The main exception is access to work; many refugees emphasized the importance of social networks in securing work and a source of income” (ibid.).

Friendships can often be as important, if not more, than family ties. Sarah, a young woman from Homs living in Ghazze, characteristically told us about the friends she left in Syria and the new friends she made in Lebanon:

*“I left [Syria] in the clothes I was in. That’s it, I had nothing else with me. I left all my friends back home. But I do have friends here. [...] One of my blessings is that I met my friends here. I met my friend Ahmad’s sister at [the] bakery when I worked there. And in our senior year at school in Ghazze, I met Hanine. Nour is*

<sup>4</sup> Interviewed by Fadel Saleh in South Lebanon, July-August 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Interviewed by Fadel Saleh in South Lebanon, July-August 2018.

*my neighbor. The only good thing that came out of this whole thing is my friends.”<sup>6</sup>*

The importance and use of social networks do not seem to change when Syrian refugees move from Lebanon onwards in their journeys to Europe. Close family

members remain to a great extent the core of their social network, and often support financially and emotionally, at least until the person (or family) has somehow settled in the new locale. In particular, the support of the family was highlighted when our interviewees were describing negotiations with smugglers from Syria to Turkey or/ and from Turkey to Greece.

Alia, a twenty-six-year-old woman from Aleppo, was living in Burj Hammoud for three years with her sister. In 2018, she and her younger sister fled to Greece, with the aim to join their parents and siblings in Germany. Their effort to reach Greece lasted approximately three months. In this dangerous journey, the women had to enter Syria again, walk to the Turkish borders, try and cross the border at least five times before they managed to make it through, interact and pay several smugglers, spend a few nights in Turkish prisons, cross the Aegean Sea in an overcrowded dinghy in pitch darkness, and live in a camp on a Greek island. Throughout this journey, their parents were their main source of support: they were providing important emotional support to their daughters during the rough times they were going through, as well as being in constant communication with smugglers, in order to ensure that their daughters were safe and that all necessary costs were paid.

Alia, Omar, and other Syrian refugees the author interviewed in Greece, have maintained a few contacts with people they met during their stay in Lebanon. While on some occasions, such as when Omar met his future wife, these relationships came to be very important and meaningful in the long term, the majority seemed to be transient relationships, serving certain needs at the time. Examples of such transient relationships could include those with neighbors, co-workers, and the shaweesh. This, of course, does not mean that they did not serve an important purpose at the time of their stay in Lebanon. For example, the neighbor and the humanitarian aid worker, was often referred to as an important source of information regarding access to essential services, such as healthcare and food. Additionally, through the use of social media, the recently established social networks somehow get ‘validated,’ even if their importance diminishes over time and along a refugee’s journey to another locale. In this way, social networks can become reactivated in the future; for example, when another family member or friend will need the same kind of social capital.

<sup>6</sup> Interviewed by Salwa Mansour in Ghazze, May-July, 2018.

Through a variety of social networks – family, friends, acquaintances such as the shaweesh and humanitarian aid workers and professional contacts – Syrian refugees in Lebanon ‘accumulate’ bonding and bridging capital serving several significant functions. The main functions identified in this study include: access to information, material assistance (e.g. financial aid), securing housing and employment, emotional support, and the creation of new social networks. Generally, social networks have proven to be a coping strategy and help improve livelihoods during displacement. Furthermore, maintaining and establishing social networks is facilitated by a number of factors: proximity between network members, shared language and ethnic background, use of social media and other communication technologies, and displacement itself.

Nevertheless, there is always the risk that social networks might collapse during displacement. As the protracted situation continues and resources become scarce, refugees can no longer provide financial and emotional assistance to each other, and might even start competing, instead of supporting each other (Uzelac et al. 2018). According to Sönmez, an important cause for the collapse of social networks is “the financial and emotional strain caused by the long displacement of Syrians” (2017, 3). Additionally, the deteriorating economic situation in Lebanon has led to further strains

on daily life, and affect vulnerable communities the most (Sewell 2020; UNHCR 2019c).

Through ethnographic field work and original empirical data collected with Syrian refugee social networks in two transit countries – Lebanon and Greece – this study demonstrated that social ties are far from static. They are (re)constructed and (re)shaped during displacement. They can expand and condense depending on a wide range of factors, such as gender, age, social background, attitudes of host communities, etc. (Lokot 2018). Rather than a simplistic narrative of social networks during displacement, social ties are complex and unpredictable. Social networks influence Syrian refugees’ decision-making before displacement, as well as along their journey, in a variety of ways.

While kinship ties remain important during displacement, they seem to shrink to the nuclear (or more immediate) family during displacement of Syrian refugees. Additionally, “ties of locality” are established to help navigate in the new locales and improve livelihood. Yet, it is crucial not to homogenize Syrian refugees and their experiences. Each displacement experience can be different – depending on gender, family composition, class, host/transit country situation and social network. Each type of social network and its importance can vary from person to person.

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