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Human mobility as a resource in conflict

The case of Syria

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Abbreviations

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
ASC	Asylum Seeker Certificate
BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (German migration ministry)
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally displaced person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRANS	Joint Rapid Assessment of Northern Syria
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
REACH	Needs Assessment Initiative by ACTED and IMPACT
SNAP	Strategic Needs Analysis Project (NRC supervised research centre)
THAP	Temporary Humanitarian Admission Programme
UN OCHA	United Nations Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

1 Introduction¹

The events that unfolded in March 2011 in Syria as part of protests spanning across the Middle East have culminated today in ‘the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era’ (UNHCR 2015a). With over 4.3 million UNHCR-registered refugees outside Syria, over 5 million people believed to have fled the country, 7.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and an estimated 12.2 million people ‘in need of humanitarian assistance’ according to the UN’s Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA 2015), displacement has figured prominently in the conflict, its reporting and in the humanitarian response to it.

Interestingly, however, the patterns of mobility in the conflict have remained under-explored. Presented as a response to the violence of the conflict, leading individuals to, variably, become IDPs, enter neighbouring countries, or claim asylum further afield, the whys, whens, hows and to wheres of displacement in Syria have received very little attention. I therefore aim to draw attention to the characteristics of individuals caught up in the violence beyond numbers and categories turning on movement. Often in humanitarian action and reporting, human movement is presented as a response to violence indicating vulnerability – the reduced capacity of individuals to cope with conflict - and the need for humanitarian intervention. Indeed, as I set out to study mobility patterns in Syria and analysed over 90 humanitarian and human rights reports, policy papers and needs assessments,² I was surprised at how little information I found that departed from the idea that vulnerability was inherently tied to movement. Out of 75 humanitarian reports and needs assessments consulted on mobility patterns and vulnerability in Aleppo city alone, only three suggested that the inability to move may put individuals in just as vulnerable a position.

Almost completely obscured by human movement as the primary unit of analysis were the many individuals who in early 2015 were still residing in Aleppo city, a city which had seen 80% of its buildings destroyed and continues to be a prime site of the battle between the Assad regime, rebel forces and the Islamic State (ICG 2015). The bias towards movement in (forced) migration studies and practice excludes significant vulnerable groups from the analytic lens, and, thereby, possibly, also from the programmatic levels of humanitarian relief projects.

By critically studying the framing of mobility by humanitarian organisations, the aim of this paper is to propose a different lens through which to analyse mobility in conflict. I suggest thinking of mobility, taking this broader term to signify the ‘freedom to choose where to be’ (de Haas 2014), as a resource through which one can mitigate the consequences of violence and conflict and access a better life ‘somewhere’ (Van Hear 2009). In this context, vulnerability is de-coupled from movement, as mobility includes the option to stay (de Haas 2014). The ability to cope with conflict could be reconceptualised, not in terms of movement, but in terms of the ability to exercise free choice over where to be in conflict, and thereby, the ability to lead a ‘good life’.

Combining de Haas’ (2014) capabilities/aspirations framework where mobility is defined as the ‘ability to choose where to be’ with Van Hear’s reappraisal of the importance of socioeconomic resources in shaping mobility, I put forward the concept of *mobility as a resource*. By reframing mobility in conflict as a differentially available resource, which shapes the experience of

¹ I would like to thank Dr Ben Gidley and Professor Roger Zetter for their ongoing support throughout this research. Further, I would like to thank Nicholas Van Hear for sharing his thoughts.

² Including 35 UN OCHA reports, 2 MSF and NRC reports respectively, 3 UNHCR reports and a range of needs assessments organised jointly by humanitarian organisations, incl. UNICEF, DRC and NRC.

displacement and life chances after the conflict, my lens highlights the importance of exercising choice over mobility in conflict. As such, I suggest adopting a wider lens of analysis to understand better mobility and vulnerability in conflict.

Syria, already in 2013 described as the 'largest humanitarian operation in history' (UNICEF 2013), provides an emblematic example of how the preoccupation with movement by humanitarian actors and policymakers hinders a deeper understanding of the nature of mobility and its role in mitigating the effects of conflict. A recent crisis, reporting on Syria is likely to illustrate contemporary attitudes of humanitarian agencies towards mobility and vulnerability in conflict. Further, this is the first study which sets out to analyse mobility patterns in Syria with a more holistic approach to mobility. Thereby, I hope to inform both humanitarian practice and policymaking, and bridge the gap between migration studies and forced migration practice.

To that end, in this study I set out to answer three research questions. Firstly, to gain a better understanding of the nature of mobility in conflict, I ask how access to economic, social and cultural capital shapes patterns of human mobility in terms of the ability to exercise choice over where to be in conflict. Secondly, I set out to answer how differential access to *mobility as a resource* shapes the environment in which mobility occurs. Therefore, I analyse how the mobility patterns of some individuals are likely to impact on the mobility patterns of others and how, in turn, the (in)ability to rely on *mobility as a resource* is likely to impact on different displacement experiences and life chances after the conflict. In order to understand how my findings could further inform both our theoretical understanding of mobility in conflict and humanitarian response mechanisms, I thirdly set out to answer to what extent, on the basis of my case study, the concept of *mobility as a resource* can enhance our understanding of people's mobility patterns in conflict.

Following the introduction, chapter two will provide a detailed theoretical framework outlining the present state of affairs in migration theory and embed the new concept of *mobility as a resource* therein. Chapter three will expand on the methodological approach taken in the study and its possible limitations. In chapters four to six, three sites of mobility in the Syrian conflict will be analysed: the Syrian city of Aleppo, the neighbouring states of Jordan and Lebanon, and Germany. For each site different instances will be identified, where the lens of *mobility as a resource* can enhance our understanding of the dynamics between mobility and vulnerability in conflict. Chapter seven will conclude with closing remarks on what this concept means, for migration theory, humanitarian practice and the international protection regime.

2 Conceptual framework

Mobility and immobility

Until today, the vast majority of migration literature has focussed on those who move. Ravenstein's (1885) *Laws of Migration* marks the starting point of a long tradition of migration scholarship trying to explain human movement. Whilst neoclassical theories aim to explain migration in terms of interdependent factors within a society – such as labour migrants, goods and capital – which gravitate towards an equilibrium [e.g. Lee's (1966) *Theory of Migration* and the *Harris-Todaro Model* (1969)], historical-structuralist theories present migration as the result of exploitation mechanisms by the capitalist Global North [e.g. Piore's (1979) *Dual labour market theory* and *World systems theory* (Wallerstein 1974, Amin 1974)]. Combined with so-called theories of the middle range [e.g. Stark's (1991) *New Economics of Labour Migration*] and theories on the continuation of migration [*migration network theory* (Granovetter 1973, 1983, Massey et al. 1987,

Boyd 1989), *migration systems theory* (Mabogunje 1970) and *cumulative causation* (Massey 1990)], each theory has, in different ways and to varying degrees, informed our understanding of human mobility (for a more detailed discussion see: Massey et al. 1989; Haas 2009, 2013).

One of the main critiques applicable to all of these above approaches, however, is their conception of migration as variably a response, an outgrowth or a coping mechanism, and as such the result of an imperfect situation. In these strands of migration scholarship, the ‘perfect life’, according to Malkki (1992), is imagined as a sedentary life. Emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s, *transnationalism* and the *new mobilities paradigm* departed from and ruptured with the notion of migration as the anomaly. *Transnationalism* looked at the relations between migrants, non-migrants and not-anymore-migrants across space, arguing that migration was a multi-linear process in which continuing connections between ‘here and there’ led to ‘transnational living’ (Guarnizo 2003). Acknowledging movement as part of human life, the *new mobilities paradigm* went a step further, instating mobility as the primary ordering principle of society (Sheller and Urry 2006).

At the margins of these theoretical framings of migration, as either an anomaly or as an intrinsic feature of human life, is what Bauman (1998) has called the ‘stratifying nature of migration’. Indeed, authors as varied as Standing (1981), Massey (1989), Hyndman (2000), Van Hear (2006), Cresswell (2010) and Franquesa (2011) have made the compelling argument that mobility is far from being equally available to everyone. Whilst Standing (1981) was writing against neoclassical beliefs of migration as a resource for income maximization equally available to everyone, Doreen Massey (1993) went a step further by adding the notion of power to the unequal placement of individuals and social groups vis-à-vis mobility. By adding the notion of power ‘*in relation to* [emphasis added] the flows and the movement’ (Massey 1993: 61), Massey crucially illustrated how some are ‘in charge’, whilst others ‘receive’, thereby adding a relational dimension to the previously dichotomous framing of mobility versus immobility as suggested by Standing (1981). Franquesa further elaborated on this notion by illustrating how the differential access to mobility as a *resource* (as suggested by Cresswell 2010) was the source of power, thus located in the “capacity to manage the relation between mobility and immobility” (Franquesa 2011: 1028), as opposed to the pole of mobility *per se*.

Moving beyond mobility: immobility

In order to understand mobility both beyond the framing of migration as an anomaly (as in functionalist theories), as well as ‘celebrating mobility uncritically’ (Van Hear 2014: 109), we need to study why people move, but also why they do not (Hammar and Tamas 1997, Arango 2000). The insight offered by Bauman and others, namely that mobility as a resource is not equally accessible to everyone, illustrates the crucial importance of analysing mobility and immobility in conjunction. Beyond the often cited argument that ‘almost anybody is affected by migration in direct or indirect ways’ (de Haas 2014: 26), analysing both mobility and immobility allows us to understand how and why those ‘anybody’s’ are affected differently by migration and, indeed, the extent to which they are differently able to rely on mobility as a resource, which may have important repercussions for their lives.

Carling (2002)’s study of Cape Verdean emigration is a case in point. Conceptualising mobility as the result of the interplay between the aspiration and the ability to move, Carling found in his study that the majority of individuals he interviewed had the aspiration to migrate, but were unable to do so, a phenomenon he termed ‘involuntary immobility’. Situated in a context where historical connections with wealthier countries, long-established migration patterns and the

imaginary of the migrant as the successful individual shaped the interest of many to migrate, these aspirations were juxtaposed with the inability to overcome structural (mainly policy) constraints. Interestingly, Carling describes a pattern whereby those with the highest aspirations to migrate (young, male, without secure employment) were, as a result of *the same characteristics* that constituted their aspirations, the least able to move. High aspirations were juxtaposed to a low ability to migrate, constituted by the so-called ‘immigration interface’, an assemblage of constraints ranging from visa requirements to the lack of social networks and financial costs. At the other end of the spectrum, those likely to have a low aspiration to migrate, well-educated with stable employment in Cape Verde – were significantly *more* able to migrate as they were well endowed with the characteristics to successfully navigate the immigration interface.

Carling’s distinction between aspirations and ability is crucial as it illustrates the ‘highly selective process’ (2002: 33) of migration whereby mobility is far from the deterministic process suggested by previous migration scholarship, but the result of a complex interplay between the individual’s aspirations, characteristics and wider structural constraints.

Towards a more holistic understanding of mobility in conflict

Mobility as freedom to choose where to be in conflict

De Haas’s (2014) refinement of Carling’s framework of migration as a function of migration aspirations and capabilities offers a promising point of departure for my lens of *mobility as a resource* in conflict. Drawing on Sen’s concept of human capability, defined as ‘the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have’ (de Haas 2014: 25), de Haas suggests defining human mobility as ‘people’s capability (freedom) to choose where to live’ (de Haas 2014: 26), thus, the ability to exercise choice over moving or staying put and over where to go. The very capability to choose to move or to stay becomes a fundamental human freedom.

Understanding that choice goes beyond choosing to move is crucial as it means that livelihood strategies applied in conflict can rely both on mobility and immobility. A ‘theoretical invisibility in forced migration studies’, Lubkemann (2008b) illustrates how mobility may be a livelihood strategy on which individuals rely for their daily lives, which can be disrupted through conflict. ‘Displacement’, defined by Lubkemann as ‘disruption of key life projects’ (2008b), does not turn on physical movement, but on the inability (or very restrained ability) to exercise choice over mobility. The experience of displacement can thus be disruptive and render one vulnerable, irrespective of actual physical movement. Rather than the mere response to an event outside of one’s control, as suggested by functionalist migration theories (on which much forced migration studies literature seems to remain premised), movement, which may play a role in ‘baseline life strategies’ (Lubkemann 2008b: 267), may be disrupted through conflict, leaving individuals ‘displaced in place’ (Lubkemann 2008b). According to this definition of displacement, which I follow in this paper, displacement comes to mean the inability (or very restrained ability) to exercise choice over mobility, as shaped by external circumstances, such as a conflict, but also by other factors which may impact on people’s capability to choose where to live.

Conceptualising human mobility as freedom to choose where to live and de-coupling our understanding of displacement from physical movement allows us to ‘normalise mobility’ (Malkki 1994, 1997). This is especially important for the field of forced migration, where physical movement remains the prime lens through which crisis and vulnerability are often assessed (Calhoun 2010). Categories like ‘refugee’, ‘internally displaced person’ and ‘forced migrant’, often used as a means to quantify the ‘human costs’ of conflict, all suggest a hierarchy of vulnerabilities

based on physical movement (Black and Collyer 2013). This view, however, based on the notion of the ‘good life’ as sedentary (Bakewell 2008), fails to account for mobility in two ways.

Firstly, associating vulnerability with physical movement, it effectively excludes all individuals who are also vulnerable, but do not move. This may include the ‘displaced in place’ (Lubkemann 2008b), individuals who cannot rely on movement as a livelihood strategy in their daily lives because of the disruptive force of a conflict; individuals trapped in conflict, unable to move because of the violence around them; or individuals, who are vulnerable, but make the conscious choice not to move from violence. Secondly, associating vulnerability with physical movement fundamentally mis-conceptualises the importance and potentially transformative force of movement in conflict. Far from being an indicator of vulnerability, ‘mobility as freedom’, i.e. the ability to rely on mobility as a resource with both options of moving and staying, can be life changing in conflict.

Moving from this premise, in the following I adopt a slightly altered definition of de Haas’ ‘mobility as freedom’ framework as I speak of the ‘capability to choose where to *be*’ in conflict, as opposed to ‘where to *live*’. With this nuance, I wish to stress that such choice in conflict is often about short-term stays or movements, and only rarely leads to premeditated long-term stays as the term ‘where to live’ could imply.

Migratory agency under high external constraints

One difficulty in the ambit of forced migration studies, and possibly one of the reasons why the field remains based on deterministic assumptions, is the conceptualisation of migratory agency under high external constraints (Bakewell 2010). Forced migration literature and practice often portray migrants in conflict as the ‘exemplary victims of war’ (Malkki 1997), passive actors who are pushed by violence to flee their homes. Disassociated from any historical context, so-called forced migrants are often presented as “universal subjects” (Malkki 1995) whose life chances are premised on outside intervention and help. This framing of mobility and agency in conflict has encountered increased criticism in the past decade (see e.g. Harrell-Bond 1985; Malkki 1992, 1995, 1997; Chimni 1998). The challenge here lies in the acknowledgment of the urgency to escape to avoid an external threat, at the root of much of so-called forced migration, but to equally account for the migrant’s agency involved in the process.

Whilst Richmond (1993) was one of the first to put forward a continuum running from ‘proactive’ (voluntary) to ‘reactive’ (involuntary) migration, Van Hear (2000) suggested understanding migration as the result of the interplay between compulsion and choice, a framework in which choice is always available, albeit to very varying degrees. Building on the notion of a choice continuum, the capabilities/aspirations framework suggests that human capability to exercise choice over mobility patterns is constrained by and interacts with macro-structural factors. Adding Berlin’s (1969) distinction between positive and negative liberties allows us to conceptualise migratory agency where mobility as fundamental human freedom is limited in conflict. Whilst negative liberty is the absence of state-induced constraints, as restrictive immigration policies in Carling’s example of the involuntary immobile, as well as obstacles in terms of war and violent conflict (de Haas 2014: 26), positive liberty is ‘the ability to take control of one’s own life’, according to Berlin, derived from ‘the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master’ (Berlin 1969: 131 in de Haas 2014: 26-27).

If we apply this framework to a conflict scenario we uncover important dynamics. To begin with, conflict and on-going violence as low negative liberty (‘freedom from’) (de Haas 2014) constrain the ability to exercise choice over mobility. Positive liberty (‘freedom to’), as adopted by de Haas

(2014), is primarily shaped by access to economic, social and cultural resources, but it is also the result of people's aspirations responding to 'complex opportunity structures' (De Haas 2014: 29). As individuals are endowed with different sets of capabilities and aspirations, these opportunity structures are likely to affect individuals differently. To understand this dialectical relationship between structural conditions and migratory agency, we need to acknowledge the importance of individual characteristics in how individuals face, interact and shape the structural environment.

These same characteristics are also likely to shape people's perceptions of structural constraints, as well as their capability to respond to them. Where there is 'no realistic choice to stay' (de Haas 2014: 26), as in an on-going conflict scenario, an individual is deprived of an essential part of their mobility, but how they respond to the situation is still shaped by a range of factors building their migratory agency. 'The conscious act to escape external threats' as de Haas (2014: 31) conceptualises forced migration in conflict, is an instrumental response to a structural constraint, i.e. the deprivation of negative liberty, but is equally the result of the agentic decision to rely on mobility as a resource.

The role of resources in shaping the capability to be mobile

Aside from the constraints imposed by the conflict itself (the low levels of negative freedom), the extent to which one can exert migratory agency in conflict is also shaped by the resources one can rely on in the choice of 'where to be'. The notion of positive liberty ('the ability to take control of one's own life') illustrates the extent to which individual characteristics, such as differential access to economic, social and cultural resources, shapes the choice of mobility and, thereby, the experience of displacement and the ability to lead a 'good life'.

Still, the role played by access to resources in shaping mobility patterns, I argue, has remained under-theorised in the capabilities/aspirations framework. Whilst a minimum of both positive and negative liberty needs to be present for the individual to be able to choose mobility (including the choice to stay put) (de Haas 2014: 27), especially in a situation with high external constraints (low negative liberty), the level of positive liberty plays a crucial role in shaping the position of the individual vis-à-vis external constraints. Within the category of migration under high external constraints, de Haas differentiates between migration with low levels of positive liberty, so-called 'precarious migration', and 'distress migration', migration under high external constraints, but with high levels of capabilities. Where individuals are exposed to similarly high degrees of external constraints, as is the case in a conflict with high levels of generalised violence,³ mobility patterns are shaped by their respective capabilities.

Access to different resources, as de Haas argues, shapes the 'ability to take control of one's own life' (Berlin 1969). In a conflict scenario this may shape the ability to rely on mobility as a strategy to escape violence, the ability to reach international assistance elsewhere or, possibly, the ability to bribe combatants in order to be able to stay. Thus the role of economic, social or cultural resources an individual can rely on in their mobility pattern matters. Greater attention to an individual's access to resources would enrich this framework, and add to our understanding of how differential access to resources in conflict may lead to differential levels of security. To that end, I suggest adding Van Hear's (2004, 2014) notion of class – discussed below – to the capabilities/aspirations model to illustrate how, beyond the fact that resources influence capabilities, unequal access to resources may also mean that some individuals are able to rely on mobility to mitigate the high external constraints they find themselves in, whilst others are not. Poignantly, class highlights how

³ Of course, in a context where particular groups in a conflict are singled out whilst others are relatively untouched by the violence this would be different.

mobility as a resource may be unequally available to individuals caught up in conflict and that this discrepancy may mirror the levels of protection an individual may be able to access.

Different class – different levels of protection

Building on Carling's (2002) framework, Van Hear (2004, 2014) suggests that class is an important factor shaping the ability to move (including the option to stay), patterns of mobility and life chances after migration. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of class, Van Hear (2014) defines class as the combination of four different forms of capital an individual can draw on: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. Whilst economic capital is the combination of all financial resources an individual can rely on in paying their way to and through mobility, cultural capital is the education and knowledge of an individual which can influence and facilitate mobility. Social capital can be understood as the social networks of individuals which impact on the direction of travel, the means (through potential remittances), and the life chances after migration, as migrants may be able to stay with family members at their destination or rely on their support in settling in. Symbolic capital, as defined by Bourdieu, is 'the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate' (Bourdieu 1987: 4).

According to Van Hear (2004, 2014), Bourdieu's framework of class is particularly helpful to account for the selective nature of migration, as the different forms of capital can be variably combined and converted into one another. In practice, the convertibility of different forms of capital would mean that low financial resources could be replaced by an extensive social network through which the costs of migration decrease, as suggested by *network theory* (Granovetter 1973, 1983; Massey et al. 1987) and theories of *cumulative causation* (Massey 1990).

In line with de Haas' capabilities/aspirations framework, Van Hear does not suggest that class determines migration, but rather that class shapes the capability of an individual to *choose* patterns of mobility, including the choice to stay put. Whilst individuals well-endowed with various forms of capital may be able to rely on more secure or otherwise advantageous mobility patterns (e.g. airplane vs. via land) and be able to move further, others may be much more limited in their ability to exercise choice over mobility.

The role of the different forms of capital, their convertibility and accessibility in conflict, however, may require some further refinement. Far from operating in a static or neutral environment, the different forms of capital can change value in different contexts or prove empowering in one context, and limiting in another. Indeed, Lubkemann (2008a:188) speaks of a multi-faceted 'package of losses' which goes with wartime displacement, whereby capital may be lost through displacement. At the same time, however, he illustrates how some individuals may be able to take advantage of their capital during a conflict and effectively be empowered by wartime migration.

The ability to draw on existing forms of capital is also shaped by the individual's characteristics and the structures within which the individual operates. In his study of mobility patterns during the Mozambican civil war (1977-1992), Lubkemann observed that, as a result of conflict-induced movement, Machazian men established personal relations in neighbouring South Africa, which, with the end of the civil war, allowed them to build business links in their former country of exile, effectively capitalising on their newly-won social capital. This contrasted with Machazian women, who were displaced in place by the conflict, leading to a loss of their various forms of capital, further aggravated by the absence of their husbands who found second wives and were able to build new forms of capital elsewhere.

Bourdieu's four forms of capital therefore cannot be invariably converted, handed over. They may operate differently for different individuals. Also, different individuals may decide to rely differently on their different endowments. Further, conflict may freeze certain forms of capital, or others, which prior to the conflict were not perceived as capital at all, may become much more important. Thus, I suggest adopting a more fluid understanding of capital, to take account of the context in which capital operates, as well as of the individual who, with their individual characteristics, makes the conscious decision to rely on one form of capital, as opposed to another, or, equally, may not be able to rely on one form of capital, because of certain personal/case-specific characteristics.⁴ Class and the value of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital may, thus, be differently useful for different individuals and change throughout the course of a conflict and the location one finds oneself in, at times facilitating, at others limiting an individual's mobility choices.

Introducing a new lens to look at mobility in conflict: mobility as a resource

Within Berlin's framework of positive and negative liberties, in conflict (as a situation of low negative liberty), class becomes not only relevant but crucial in shaping mobility patterns. Arguably, in fact, class is likely to impact on both negative and positive liberties. Whilst negative liberty in conflict is primarily the result of the general violence and restraining conditions of war, (informal) policies by combatants or by neighbouring countries are likely to constrain or facilitate mobility by individuals according to their socioeconomic resources. Equally, class impacts on positive liberty in shaping the ability to exercise choice over mobility. If unequal access to economic, social and cultural capital is further accentuated by conflict, as suggested by Black (2013), access to mobility would be even more socially stratified than under the non-crisis circumstances to which the writings of Standing (1989), Bauman (1998), and Cresswell (2010) (among others) relate.

Considering all the above, I suggest thinking of mobility in conflict as an unequally available resource, the access to which shapes the experience of displacement and life chances after the conflict. Mobility, capturing the freedom to choose where to be in conflict, signifies the ability to choose to potentially move to a safer environment, or the ability to secure one's stay through access to different forms of economic, social and cultural capital. Whilst movement in forced migration studies is often portrayed as an outgrowth of a crisis and thereby a problem *per se*, I suggest thinking of movement in conflict as one possible strategy out of a range of possible repertoires used to mitigate the consequences of conflict.

Poignantly, I do not suggest that everyone, resources permitting, would act as a rational actor and do what is objectively 'safest', but rather that mobility as a resource is about the ability to exercise choice over one's whereabouts in conflict. This may signify that someone who has the resources to flee violence chooses to stay because of, for instance, emotional attachment to one's place of origin or the belief that the violence will end soon. The concept of *mobility as a resource* rather illustrates how the common preoccupation with movement in conflict obfuscates the importance of being able to exercise choice over mobility in the first place.

In doing so, I advocate for closer analytical attention to the socioeconomic factors, which predate the conflict, as factors that are relevant to better understand how different individuals are affected differently by conflict as their ability to adapt to violence through mobility, as one possible strategy, is constrained by their class. This is in line with Amartya Sen's (1981) argument, made in relation to the causes of famine, suggesting that displacement in conflict can hardly be understood

⁴ This is, for instance, the case for Palestinian refugees trying to flee Syria to neighbouring countries, where they are often not welcome because of their status as Palestinians lacking formal citizenship.

without understanding the pre-existing systemic inequalities, which render certain groups more vulnerable⁵ to displacement than others (Van Hear 2009).

According to the analytic lens of *mobility as a resource*, mobility in conflict is likely to function in two ways.

Mobility as socially stratified

Adding the notion of class, as opposed to speaking only about different forms of capital or resources,⁶ adds the crucial dimension of inequality to the discussion of capabilities, and mobility more broadly. As Bourdieu argued, the various forms of capital are unevenly distributed (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 99) in a society, which is why mobility as a resource to mitigate situations of high constraints, such as a conflict, will be available differently to individuals and will be shaped by class. In this context, mobility is socially stratified, as Van Hear (2014) and Black and Collyer (2014) have argued.

Mobility as socially stratifying

Social conditions which exist within a society prior to a conflict, such as inequality in terms of wealth, access to education, and social support mechanisms, may be exacerbated by the conflict. As Richmond (1994) has argued, resilience, as the ability to mitigate external constraints such as conflict, is shaped by access to different forms of capital. By aggravating pre-existing inequalities, conflict is thus likely to accentuate the differential access to mobility as a resource (Black 2013). Here, mobility becomes socially stratifying as the ability to rely on mobility as a resource in conflict, by being differently available, privileges individuals who already have more extensive forms of capital to rely on, whilst increasing the vulnerability ('*vulnerabilising*') those who do not. I suggest this term '*vulnerabilising*', as the notion of '*vulnerabilisation*' illustrates the process through which already vulnerable individuals, because of differential access to mobility in conflict, are likely to be rendered even *more* vulnerable in the course of the conflict and their capacity to cope with the conflict is progressively reduced.

One instance in which this phenomenon is particularly apparent is where socially stratified mobility patterns alter the environment in which they occur and thereby impact on (and potentially render more difficult) later mobility choices. Whilst *network theory* (Granovetter 1973, 1983; Massey et al. 1987) and *cumulative causation* (Massey 1990) often speak of how migration, by altering the structures in which it occurs, facilitates further migration, the concept of *mobility as a resource* rather hints at the fact that mobility in conflict may also have the opposite effect. Such 'negative feedback mechanisms' signify that the mobility of those who decide to move early in conflict, often those who have higher degrees of freedom to choose where to be, may constrain the freedom to choose where to be of individuals trying to move later.

External constraints such as more restrictive entry policies by neighbouring peaceful countries or the introduction of charges to settle in refugee camps because of limited resources, designed as a response to previous mobility patterns, are likely to particularly affect mobility patterns of individuals who made the decision to move later in a conflict, often those who hesitated to move earlier on because of their more limited socio-economic resources. Here, mobility itself becomes a stratifying factor by altering the structures in which it occurs.

⁶ As suggested by de Haas (2014), as well as Kothari (2003) who put forward six different forms of capital (social, cultural, human, economic, geographical and political) which would impact on migration.

The distinction between mobility as socially stratified and mobility as socially stratifying is important, as it stresses pre-existing inequalities within a society which impact on the ability to mitigate the consequences of conflict through mobility, but it also crucially illustrates how these inequalities are further exacerbated through conflict and unequal access to mobility as a resource. Mobility as a differentially available resource in conflict becomes a stratifying factor, as it shapes the ability to rely on self-protection or the ability to access the international protection regime and, in the long run, shapes life chances after the conflict.

3 Context and methodology

The Syrian case study

The first case study, Aleppo city, is one of the hardest hit cities in the conflict. A major site of displacement in terms of human movement, Eastern Aleppo city is also known for hosting one of the largest groups of trapped populations in Syria, individuals who are in the midst of violence with very limited access to services and resources. I chose Aleppo as a location of immobility to illustrate how 'displacement' should be understood as the (in)ability to rely on *mobility as a resource* to exercise free choice over where to be, as opposed to its conventional understanding of so-called forced movement. Taking as a timeframe of displacement the period of early 2013 to early 2015 when the violence was at its height and many had already left, I further aim to illustrate how unequal access to *mobility as a resource*, shaped by differential access to economic, social and cultural capital, can in the course of conflict render already vulnerable individuals even less able to cope with the situation. To that end, I have drawn on UN OCHA's humanitarian news bulletins, monthly updates on displacement within Syria issued between early 2013 and early 2015, as well as analysed over 75 NGO reports, needs assessments, and news items.

For the second case study of neighbouring countries and locations of partial mobility, I decided to focus on Lebanon and Jordan for two prime reasons. Firstly, long-standing ties with both countries and relatively high levels of security have made both Lebanon and Jordan prime destinations for Syrians leaving their country. Also, in both countries humanitarian actors are very active in providing services and protection support to Syrian refugees. Secondly, the two countries are of particular interest as they have displayed important policy changes towards their Syrian guests throughout the conflict. These policy changes illustrate how mobility can never be divorced from the wider socio-political context in which it takes place, and they can serve as indicators of how mobility patterns can shape the environment and impact on future patterns of mobility, the so-called stratifying nature of mobility. Again drawing on humanitarian agencies' reports and needs assessments, I have analysed in total 34 documents on mobility patterns of Syrians in Lebanon and 35 documents on mobility of Syrians in Jordan, again in the timeframe of 2013 to early 2015.

Lastly, as a location further afield, I analyse mobility patterns of Syrians to Germany between 2013 and early 2015. Germany has been celebrated as a role model in its humanitarian response through resettlement schemes and in its provision of protection to Syrians claiming asylum in the country. To analyse how class potentially shapes access to entry routes to Germany's protection regime, I have analysed both resettlement policies and government records on protection granted, as well as a range of news items illustrating individual cases of Syrians in Germany. In total, I have consulted over 30 sources on mobility of Syrians to Germany, accounting for both regular and irregular entry routes.

Analysis of sources

In total I analysed 90 documents covering a timeframe of 2013 until early 2015. For each of the three sites of displacement I took as a starting point all major humanitarian agencies' and organisations' websites⁷ and systematically searched within reports on Syria for mentions of mobility. I read through the documents to identify what they tell us about the different types of capital, as well as to understand how mobility is framed. Thereby, I used my sources not only as sources of information, but also engaged critically with their findings. Against the theoretical framework proposed above, the specific analytical lens of *mobility as a resource* allowed me to note and use recorded findings to support my argument, but also to highlight dynamics which the common lens of movement adopted in humanitarian reports may have obscured.

I analyse patterns of human mobility in three sites of displacement relevant to this context, in order to understand how access to mobility is socially stratified in different places, as well as to show how the process of mobility socially stratifies. Of course, by centring my analysis on socioeconomic resources, I do not account for pre-conflict mobility patterns which, by forming part of everyday social and/or livelihood strategies, are likely to have facilitated mobility in conflict. Also, emphasis on socioeconomic resources may obscure the role of gender, generation, ethnic, political and religious affiliation which may impact on mobility. Basing my analysis on reports on mobility patterns, the conclusions I can draw with regards to actual mobility patterns within Syria are limited. However, my aim is to illustrate how the lens of *mobility as a resource* can inform our understanding of mobility patterns in conflict. By drawing on instances where I found this lens particularly helpful to understand certain dynamics usually obscured by the preoccupation with movement in forced migration studies, I thus aim to illustrate the benefits of a more holistic approach to mobility.

4 A site of immobility: Aleppo city

Aleppo, previously Syria's largest city and the former economic hub of the country, has become a primary site of the fighting between the Assad regime, Syrian opposition forces and the Islamic State. Bomb shelling on the rebel-held areas of Eastern Aleppo by government forces, as well as reprisal attacks by rebels, price inflation of up to 500% (RAS June 2013), a decrease of health facilities to only six fully operating hospitals in an area which previously hosted 50 hospitals (MSF 2015), and some of the highest levels of destruction recorded in the entire country (Amnesty International 2015), have hit the civilian population the hardest. Aleppo has also been one of most difficult areas to access for humanitarian organisations, leaving many vulnerable individuals outside the reach of humanitarian support.

By early 2013, which marks the starting point of my review of mobility patterns in Aleppo, reportedly one million people had already left the city (JRANS 2013). By starting at a point in time in which violence was at its height and many had already left, I aim to analyse the degree of mobility choice available to individuals caught in a shared environment of very high external constraints, exposed to indiscriminate violence and extremely low access to the most basic services. Interestingly, of the 75 documents laying the basis of my research on mobility patterns in Aleppo, only seven reports delve into factors playing a role in mobility beyond the armed conflict itself, and

⁷ These included the websites of UNHCR, ICRC, NRC, DRC, UNICEF, IRC, ICG, UN OCHA, Handicap International, and HelpAge International.

only five specifically mention socioeconomic factors as relevant for the mobility patterns described.

Whilst migration theory and the concept of *mobility as a resource* would suggest that conflict affects mobility patterns of individuals differently, shaped by the individual's ability to access different forms of capital, only very little attention has been given to the stratified nature of the mobility patterns recorded in Aleppo. This, I suggest, is problematic as many of the reports try to assess levels of vulnerability, but only look at *movement* as an indicator thereof. As the two following examples illustrate, however, the very restricted ability to exercise choice over mobility, firstly, in deciding where to move to, and, secondly, in even more dire circumstances, not having the capability to decide to move *at all*, may be even more *vulnerabilising*. Rather than being an indicator of vulnerability, movement in the midst of on-going violence can be a very precious and rare resource.

Choosing informal settlements over camps: a matter of class?

Besides two official camps for IDPs fleeing conflict in the Aleppo governorate, a variety of humanitarian actors have recorded a rise of informal 'camp-like' settlements as a result of the escalation of barrel bombing in Eastern Aleppo city since January 2014 (REACH June 2014: 1). Typically, these settlements are situated in open, unoccupied spaces, closer to the conflict lines and further away from the Turkish border where humanitarian agencies are granted access to vulnerable populations.

A survey conducted in 77 camps and 62 informal settlements in Aleppo and three neighbouring governorates in May 2014 on the displacement patterns⁸ of individuals in camps and informal settlements found three main so-called 'displacement influences': firstly, financial means, cited as often determining the distance travelled, transportation used and the ability to support oneself in the destination; secondly, family ties in the destination, perceived as improving support mechanisms in the destination; and thirdly, the likelihood of securing employment in the destination as a result of the migrant's set of skills and level of education.

Whilst the study tends to imply that socioeconomic factors were the main reason for differing mobility patterns, suggesting a unidirectional logic in which individuals with low socioeconomic resources would settle in informal settlements, whilst individuals with high socioeconomic resources would settle in camps, the analytic lens of *mobility as a resource* allows for a more refined reading of the findings. Indeed, different endowments with economic, social and cultural capital are likely to play an important role in the ability to exercise choice over where to be. Rather than determining choice, these endowments enable the individual to make a choice.

Here we further encounter a fundamental flaw underlying functionalist understandings of migration. The ability to make a rational choice requires full access to information. However, in conflict (as presumably in many other contexts), information is very unequally available. Levels of knowledge about how long a conflict is likely to last, which destinations are potentially safest and how to reach them are likely to differ between individuals.

The concept of *mobility as a resource*, which includes levels of knowledge as part of cultural as well as convertible social capital, can account for this. Indeed, the ability to make an informed choice, as my lens of mobility as a resource illustrates, is again shaped by class. Thus, it is likely that those individuals who already had less economic resources and more localised employment had also

⁸ Here I adopt the definition of displacement as used in the reports analysed, thus, the forced movement of individuals leaving their homes.

more limited access to information. Their ability to make an informed choice, within the ambits of their capabilities (economic, social and cultural capital), was further restricted. In deciding where to move to, it is thus likely that individuals who had more mobility options could receive better protection.

Mobility *vulnerabilises*, as the ability to make an informed choice, within the ambits of one's capabilities, shapes the levels of protection an individual is likely to receive. Indeed, as the report notes, levels of protection between informal settlements and camps differed significantly. 42% of the informal settlements reviewed were established in so-called 'hard-to-reach areas', close to the conflict lines and in very rural environments, where humanitarian support was unlikely to reach. Contrastingly, camps were serviced with humanitarian assistance programmes, schools and health services. Differential ability to make an informed choice over mobility patterns thus led to a 'two-tier system for IDPs' (REACH June 2014: 42), whereby individuals with higher ability to make an informed choice were likely to receive better protection in camps, whilst those who had less economic, social and cultural capital to rely on in their choice were likely to be rendered even more vulnerable, *vulnerabilised* through mobility.⁹

As the report crucially notes, the recent decrease in camp residents can by no means be associated with less people in need (REACH June 2014), but is rather an indicator of how camps have become out of reach for many individuals who are now fleeing Aleppo city (Amnesty International 2015). Indeed, the exponential rise of informal settlements since February 2014 (REACH June 2014: 16) is an important indicator of the different characteristics of the individuals who moved in that period. With growing protractedness of the conflict and depleting resources, *mobility as a resource* has increasingly become scarce, to the extent that one report notes that 'each new wave of IDPs from Aleppo City is composed of poorer IDPs, people who were heavily impacted by the conflict and eventually forced to leave despite having little means to do so. Wealthier population groups had the opportunity to resettle abroad or to camps on the Turkish border before fighting in Aleppo City reached such intensity' (REACH July 2014). With this backdrop it may be particularly troublesome that, as of June 2014, notwithstanding the shortage of basic services, violence and levels of destruction, at least 75,000 individuals were estimated to still reside in eastern Aleppo city.

The remaining 75,000

In the first half of 2014, eastern Aleppo city, known as 'the crescent of the poor' (REACH June 2014), became the centre of violence and destruction with 250,000 people leaving the area between January and early May, and a further 100,000 between May and June 2014 (REACH June 2014). By June 2014, 75,000 people were still estimated to reside in the northeast and east of eastern Aleppo city, the neighbourhoods most severely targeted and damaged by air bombardments (REACH June 2014: 5). Key informants describing the situation in that part of the city, inaccessible to humanitarian aid workers, held that those still there were 'the most vulnerable and poorest groups who do not have the means to leave the city' (REACH June 2014: 17). In a detailed assessment of eastern Aleppo, a further study found that:

⁹ I do not suggest that higher endowments necessarily lead to settling in camps. I suggest that higher endowments enable individuals to make an informed choice and to be aware of protection risks and opportunities, which in this context would suggest that camps are safer than informal settlements. Whilst they may still decide otherwise, individuals better endowed with socioeconomic resources had the crucial ability to make an informed choice, central to the notion of 'mobility as freedom to choose where to be'.

The remaining residents of eastern Aleppo were facing severe constraints preventing them from leaving unsafe areas. Frequently, these residents cannot afford to pay for either: (1) transport costs to leave the city; (2) rental of housing outside Aleppo; (3) the cost of living in neighbouring countries; or (4) the fees associated with housing in collective shelter or border area camps are too expensive (REACH July 2014: 3).

Whilst Black and Collyer's (2013) 'trapped populations' come to mind (individuals who are literally physically trapped in conflict, unable to move even if they aspired to), low levels of negative liberty, matched with low levels of positive liberty can also lead individuals, who are not physically trapped, to believe that movement is out of reach for them. As de Haas notes, capabilities, in the form of class, influence people's 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai 2004; Czaika and Vothknecht 2012 in de Haas 2014: 28), as the following account illustrates:

"Life for us has become unbearable, but we cannot afford to leave as I am fortunate to still have a job in Aleppo. Daily life is full of fear: you don't know who to trust, who you can talk to. [...] The security situation is unpredictable and bombardments can happen at any moment. Life is unbearable." Mahmoud, resident of Al-Salame, eastern Aleppo (MSF 2015: 2)

Low positive liberty affects individuals' aspirations and here the belief that movement is out of reach. Where low negative liberty coincides with low positive liberty, the low capability to choose where to be further negatively impacts on the ability to aspire. In this process, beyond the ability to rely on mobility as a resource, an individual may lose his capability to aspire for a better life (elsewhere). Rather than Schewel's 'acquiescent immobile', who are 'unable to migrate but neither do they desire to do so' (Schewel 2015: 6), in the context of conflict this state seems to me rather the ultimate deprivation of mobility as freedom, as the individual, beyond very limited capabilities, does not have the aspiration that their status quo could somehow be mitigated. Deprived of their mobility rights (de Haas 2014: 27), these individuals are deprived of their hope for a 'good life'.

Of course, among those who stay behind, some may have had higher degrees of choice and have aspired to stay, because of emotional ties to one's origins, or the decision to stay by an elderly person (MSF 2015: 18). However, because this decision is made under such high constraints, I suggest we can reasonably speak of 'displacement in place' (Lubkemann 2008b), as in such circumstances the individual lacks the capability of choosing where to be in the sense of his fundamental human freedom to exercise free choice (de Haas 2014). Freedom of choice, as suggested by the capabilities/aspirations framework, is essential for leading a good life. The extent to which individuals' mobility choices in conflict are constrained by class is therefore concerning, and largely neglected as a phenomenon.

The lack of attention to these populations is thus deeply problematic. Among the 75 humanitarian reports analysed on Aleppo city, only three mentioned those who stayed behind. The bias towards movement as the primary unit of analysis in (forced) migration excludes significant vulnerable groups from the analytic lens, and thereby, possibly, also from the programmatic levels of humanitarian relief projects.

By decoupling vulnerability from physical movement, the concept of *mobility as a resource* can raise the profile of those who stay behind. As the concept illustrates how those who do not move in the midst of violence generally have very low levels of socioeconomic resources, the notion of mobility as a resource may highlight the limited ability to cope with the conflict of those who stay behind, even beyond the ambit of mobility. As a first step, it may thus be helpful to think of vulnerability and displacement in terms of differential access to mobility.

5 Partial mobility: Jordan and Lebanon

Syria's neighbours currently host 95% of the entire Syrian refugee population in the world (UNHCR 2015c). Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have been particularly generous, at least initially adopting an open border policy welcoming hundreds of thousands of Syrians into their territories. The ability to rely on mobility as a resource, to enter and move freely within neighbouring host countries, however, has not been equally available to everyone seeking safety. In fact, the analysis of patterns of mobility of Syrians into and inside Lebanon and Jordan, respectively, yields important insights for our understanding of mobility as a resource in conflict. Firstly, the case of Jordan, for which I analysed 35 articles, humanitarian reports and needs assessments, illustrates that the ability to rely on mobility as a resource is premised upon different forms of capital, in a stage-like system, which are not always invariably interchangeable and convertible. Secondly, as the case of Lebanon illustrates, as time and conflict proceed, the ability of some to rely on mobility as a resource may constrain the ability of others to rely on mobility as a resource, a phenomenon I have conceptualised as 'negative feedback mechanisms'.

Jordan: mobility in stages

Officially hosting over 600,000 Syrian refugees, Jordan claims to operate an open border policy for Syrians leaving their home country (NRC Nov 2014: 9). Entry, however, as well as any other form of access to rights, services and movement within the country, is premised on selection. Indeed, the stage-like process through which Syrians can access mobility as freedom in Jordan illustrates that the ability to rely on mobility as a resource in conflict often remains conditioned upon the availability of different forms of capital, which, contrary to Bourdieu's framework, cannot always be invariably interchanged and converted. In the sections below I will illustrate the four stages.

Stage 1: Entry

Syrians can enter Jordan through two official border crossings, or, alternatively, irregularly along its 370 km long border with Syria. To cross through official channels, individuals need to draw on extensive economic resources to be able to bribe border guards to be entitled to legal entry, allowing residence in urban centres and access to UNHCR registration (SNAP June 2013: 7). Alternatively, Syrians crossing through unofficial border crossings into Jordan are, as of August 2012, picked up by local police forces and transported to the closest refugee camp, mostly the Za'atari refugee camp in the north of the country (SNAP June 2013).

Stage 2: Encampment

Reception centres to which individuals are escorted once they cross irregularly into Jordan offer access to basic services as shelter, food and basic health services. The experience in encampment in terms of personal safety, however, is shaped by economic resources to pay for personal latrines and food to avoid public spaces at night and long food queues, known as sites of harassment.

According to government policy, individuals residing in camps are only allowed to leave and live outside camps through official bailout documentation, which proves that an individual's stay is (financially) sponsored by a Jordanian direct relative (SNAP June 2013).

Stage 3: Access to services outside camps

As of July 2014, UNHCR, by governmental order, can only issue 'Asylum Seeker Certificates' (ASCs) to individuals who can provide credible bailout documentation. ASCs are indispensable not only for accessing the refugee agency's assistance programmes, with access to food and shelter, but also to be eligible for other NGOs' services. UNHCR registration also entitles Syrian nationals

to the Jordanian Ministry of Interior's Service Card, enabling access to public services, such as public schools, subsidized food items, and to health care (Achilli 2015: 5). The ability to access basic services outside camps is shaped by the ability to rely on social capital to receive official bailout documentation.

Stage 4: Access to legal employment

To be legally entitled to work, Syrian nationals in Jordan need to acquire a work permit. Work permits are only available to non-citizens with legal residency, thus only to Syrian nationals who either entered Jordan legally, or received official bailout documentation. As an additional requirement, required skill levels must be unavailable among Jordanian citizens. Beyond the barriers introduced by the requirement of legal stay, Syrian nationals also need to have extensive cultural capital, as unique, highly qualified skill levels, to be entitled to legal employment (ALNAP 2013). Whilst the vast majority of Syrians in Jordan opt for irregular work, these are often accompanied by very low wages and exploitative work conditions.

Selectivity in stages: the different forms of capital

In this stage-like process of entry, encampment experience and bailout, gradual access to assistance, and access to legal employment, every step towards higher degrees of mobility as freedom, and ultimately better protection, requires a different form of capital. Whilst in Bourdieu's framework, as adopted by Van Hear (2014), different forms of capital are convertible into each other (low forms of economic capital may be compensated by high levels of social capital, a starting point of network theory), in the present case, accessing mobility as a resource to reach better levels of protection rather suggests a process in stages. In this framework, the usefulness of one form of capital is preconditioned upon the existence of other forms of capital, as different forms of capital are needed at different stages.

Therefore, to navigate through these stages successfully an individual needs to be endowed with all different capitals combined. The opportunities for convertibility seem rather restricted. As Van Hear (2014) has illustrated, in migration the ability to convert a particular form of capital into a different form is especially important for 'those who can mobilize some level of resources' (Van Hear 2014: 111), but are not among the very wealthy in society. Therefore, it is likely that individuals who under other circumstances would be able to rely on mobility (less-well endowed, but with some resources) are hit particularly hard by this stage-like process of accessing *mobility as a resource*. Mobility would be socially stratifying as the best endowed are likely to navigate confidently through the various stages described above, whilst the others are likely to be made more vulnerable (*vulnerabilised*) at some stage of the process insofar as they would be unable to move up the different stages because of their limited capital.

This stage-like process also illustrates that mobility, and the different forms of capital, which shape mobility, cannot be divorced from the wider socio-political context in which it occurs. As capital moves spatially, its value changes. In an individual's life course, as in the different stages, the different kinds of capital are useful at different points in time. Therefore, the value of one combination of different forms of capital, which are not easily convertible, does not invariably remain the same. The value of capital may also change through historical time, as entry restrictions may become more or less stringent. The same combination of different forms of capital is thus likely to shape the ability to rely on mobility as a resource to very different degrees, depending on the context in which it operates.

Lebanon: mobility as stratified and stratifying

At the time of writing, Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world (NRC 2014: 5), with over 1,183,326 million UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2015b). The ability to rely on mobility as a resource, both to enter the country as well as within Lebanon, has changed throughout the conflict, a process, which I suggest, can at least partially be explained by the dynamics of mobility and the impact of mobility patterns on the host country.

Lebanese entry policies for Syrian nationals between 2011 and 2015

At the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Lebanon adopted an open borders policy whereby all Syrians were granted entry and equipped with a free entry coupon, renewable every six months free of charge. As of June 2013, a yearly renewal fee of 200 USD was introduced for new entries (SNAP June 2013: 5), and so-called ‘courtesy residence permits’ were introduced, alternative entry visas available to individuals who could prove existing family ties with Lebanese nationals in Lebanon (SNAP June 2013: 5). By that time, close to 500,000 Syrians had registered with UNHCR in Lebanon. Their presence had considerable consequences for the local host population.

In the northern, poorer parts of the country, where the majority of Syrians settled, wages for unskilled workers dropped by 60% with a shift from Lebanese to Syrian employees by 40%, which was further mirrored by rising living costs (due to lack of imported goods from Syria) and increased housing prices (ALNAP June 2013). Tensions and negative feelings towards Syrians grew in the country, which, arguably, combined with the increasing depletion of resources, led the Lebanese government to introduce restrictions on further entries.

The second big reform, introduced in January 2015, has featured further considerable entry restrictions, increasingly selective in who is granted legal entry. To be eligible to enter Lebanon legally, Syrian nationals need to fall under one of six prescribed entry permit categories (among which ‘tourism’, ‘business’, ‘real estate owner’, ‘worker’, ‘student’ and ‘traveller in transit’). Entry on humanitarian grounds is only granted in exceptional circumstances (The Daily Star Lebanon 2015). Hosting over 1.2 million refugees, these entry restrictions are portrayed as necessary measures to confront the strains the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ has put on Lebanese society (The Daily Star Lebanon 2015).

The value of capital through time

Legal entry for Syrians into Lebanon has thus become increasingly difficult. The same combination of different forms of capital, which in early 2011 would have allowed legal entry and access to local services, operates very differently only two years later, and even more so four years later. Whilst yearly renewal fees are already very difficult to stem for larger families, the restrictions of 2015 illustrate clearly how the point in time in which one combination of capital is used changes the value of the capital.

Of course, as de Haas (2014) has argued in a different context, entry restrictions do not put a halt to migration. Rather, such policies are likely to lead to more irregular entries. The changed value of capital does not lead to the inability to move, but rather reduces the ability to rely on mobility of individuals who do not have the sets of capital needed to qualify for legal status. Indeed, gradual entry restrictions have culminated in very high numbers of Syrians, unable to renew their entry permits, or through irregular entry, residing in Lebanon today without legal status, putting themselves in a very vulnerable position.

The consequences of irregular status on the displacement experience

The lack of legal status severely restricts the ability of Syrian nationals to move freely within Lebanon, to move on, as well as to potentially return. As a study on mobility patterns of Syrians in the Northern Lebanese towns of Aarsal and Wadi Khaled illustrates, the multitude of checkpoints within the areas makes movement for individuals without legal stay very dangerous, as they are often subject to harassment and arrest at checkpoints (NRC Dec 2013: 18). Involuntarily immobilized (Lubkemann 2008), these individuals are unable to rely on mobility for better livelihood opportunities, unable to pursue work opportunities further afield and unable to access cheaper accommodation elsewhere (NRC Dec 2013: 22). Also, individuals described a feeling of being 'trapped' as their limited legal status considerably constrained their ability to access health care and education facilities for their children. Lacking legal status impacts negatively on the ability to rely on mobility as a resource in everyday life and shapes negatively the experience of displacement.

Beyond the immediate displacement experience, however, the inability to rely on mobility as a resource in everyday life in Lebanon has important repercussions on more long-term life chances of Syrians without legal status. Without legal status and therefore severely restricted on travel within the region, Syrian respondents in Wadi Khaled cited that they were unable to reach the next closest UNHCR office in Tripoli (NRC Dec 2013: 21). Thereby, they were effectively excluded from UNHCR assistance, and also from the option of further third country resettlement (which is administered through UNHCR) (UNHCR 2015d). Further, irregular legal status limits access to the legal system of Lebanon. Syrian nationals who do not have the necessary capital to reside in Lebanon legally are excluded from officially registering their newborns at birth. Lacking documentation for their children, these families may face difficulties in the future when returning to Syria, as their children will be regarded as stateless (NRC 2013: 28).

Here, mobility becomes a stratifying factor, as past mobility patterns constrain the future ability of others to rely on mobility as a resource. This is particularly concerning as those who move later in conflict are often the already less-well endowed (de Haas 2014; Black and Collyer 2014). Their limited resources are contrasted with ever more restrictive entry requirements, granting entry and status according to class. *Mobility as a resource* is thus unequally available, not only because it requires different kinds of socioeconomic resources, but also because the mobility of some can be restrained by previous mobility patterns of others, and the value of capital is changed through time. Whilst *network theory* (Granovetter 1973, 1983; Massey et al. 1987; Boyd 1989) and *cumulative causation theory* (Massey 1990) conceptualise this feedback mechanism in positive terms as facilitating movement, the case of Lebanon illustrates how feedback mechanisms may also have the opposite effect of rendering mobility of others more difficult and their life chances more precarious. Crucially, those who are particularly hit by these *negative feedback mechanisms* are often already amongst the more vulnerable.

6 Further afield: Germany

Within the European Union, Germany has been celebrated as a role model for its extensive entry programme for Syrian refugees.¹⁰ Whilst entry to Germany through the regular visa regime has become virtually impossible for Syrian nationals,¹¹ Syrians can enter and reside legally in the

¹⁰ See for example Amnesty International (2014), UNHCR (2015).

¹¹ A temporary visa requires proof of 'intent to return', which is held to be shaped by family ties, property and employment in the home country. The German government has taken the stand that vis-à-vis Syrians

country either through claiming asylum or through humanitarian resettlement programmes and the federally administered private sponsorship system. For claiming asylum, which is premised upon the physical presence of the claimant in Germany (which, as a result of the virtual absence of legal routes, often entails irregular entry), mobility acts as a resource through which the international protection regime is accessed.

In the case of humanitarian resettlement and private sponsorship, mobility is a gift handed over by the inviting state through which mobility and better life chances can be accessed, but which crucially remains at the discretion of the state. In either of these routes, mobility as a resource is unequally available, shapes entry processes and life chances.

Mobility as a resource to access the international refugee regime: claiming asylum

To claim asylum in Germany, the claimant needs to be physically present on German soil (Orchard and Miller 2014). However, legal entry for Syrians through the regular visa regime is virtually impossible to obtain.¹² Therefore, the vast majority of aspiring asylum seekers move through irregular routes, which means that often it is the individual resources one can gather which enable Syrians to reach the allegedly safe haven of Germany, albeit irregularly (Amnesty International 2014).¹³

Routes to enter Germany irregularly differ significantly, spanning from long journeys overland through Turkey, Bulgaria or Greece, to travelling from Syria via North Africa to Italy by sea, to continue by train and bus, or, in rare occasions, flying with irregular passports, either directly, or, as in one cited case, even via China to Europe.¹⁴ As van Liempt and Doomernik (2006) have illustrated, migrants who rely on agents¹⁵ to facilitate their journey are far from the passive actors they are often portrayed as in the media and policy documents. The decision regarding where and how to move, however, as well as the ability to exercise this choice, remains heavily shaped by class.

Firstly, economic means play an important factor in the routes an individual can afford, as a secretly recorded account by a smuggler in August 2014 in Turkey illustrates:

“There are three ways to get out of Turkey: by air, sea, and land. The sea route goes to Greece. If the client opts for inflatable boats, it’s about 1,600 euros; for a fishing boat, it’s 2,400. If they want to take one of the tourist ships, it’s 3,200. The cheapest way is by land, though – if they ride in a container loaded on a truck to reach Italy or Austria, it’s about 800 euros. Some take airplanes, which cost about 12,000 dollars.”

France 24 (2015)

this requirement is close to impossible to satisfy and therefore almost categorically denies any regular visa applications by Syrians with residence in their home country.

¹² see fn. 19

¹³ According to CSR51 (Art 31) irregular entry into a country of refuge cannot be penalised (see Orchard and Miller 2014: 19)

¹⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/world/middleeast/out-of-syria-into-a-european-maze.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0; <http://sverigesradio.se/fortresseurope/>;

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/11551024/The-escape-routes-taken-by-those-tempted-by-the-chance-to-earn-and-fleeing-war.html>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-32057601>; <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2015/05/deadly-business-migrant-smuggling-150509072521467.html>

¹⁵ Here I adopt Liempt and Doomernik’s definition of ‘any form of Third Party assistance’ (2006: 171), including the more value-laden term of ‘smuggler’.

Also, various personal accounts of Syrians in Europe recounting their journey make reference to family connections in Germany, who facilitated their journey through financial support and information on entry routes and strategies.¹⁶ This knowledge of different entry routes, reputable agents facilitating the journey and strategies of onward travel once within the European Union, as a different form of cultural capital, is an important factor shaping the displacement experience. Differential access to mobility as a resource, as shaped by class, thus significantly shapes the extent to which individuals trying to claim asylum in Germany can choose how to enter the country and their respective levels of safety on the journey. This is deeply problematic, since, as the short examples above illustrate, the ability to exercise choice, and thereby the ability to access safer, shorter routes, is dependent on the socioeconomic resources of an individual fleeing the civil war in Syria.

Crucially, changing mobility patterns from Syria to Europe are also always a response to changing entry policies by the European Union (Lutterbeck 2006; Nessel 2009; Rooney 2013; Castles 2014). The increasing securitisation of the EU's borders, with the enforcement of carrier sanctions (Rodenhäuser 2014; Zetter 2014), increasing border patrols at the EU's borders in Bulgaria and Greece (Amnesty International 2014), and the so-called militarisation of the Mediterranean Sea (Lutterbeck 2006), besides leading to new routes (Lutterbeck 2006; de Haas 2014), also aggravates already existing unequal access to mobility.

Rather than making entry to the European Union impossible, such restrictive policies make the journey more expensive, as well as more dangerous (Betts 2010; Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). This way they impact particularly on those individuals who already have less choice in the routes and modes of transport. The lens of class helps us understand why those who already have less socioeconomic resources to rely on are more heavily impacted by such policies, pushed towards longer and more dangerous journeys. Indeed, the securitisation of the European Union's borders compounds the already unequal access to mobility as a resource and heightens the vulnerability of some of the most vulnerable people trying to reach the allegedly safe haven of Europe.

Mobility as discretionary gift

Humanitarian resettlement

In 2013 the German government introduced a so-called Temporary Humanitarian Admission Programme (THAP), designed specifically to respond to the calls for international burden sharing and the plight of Syrian refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries. In three consecutive schemes, the first initiated in March 2013, the second in late 2013 and the last in 2014, Germany has pledged to welcome 30,000 Syrians, thereby stemming more resettlement cases than the whole of Europe, the US and Australia combined (Lund 2014).

Individuals admitted through THAP receive a two-year, potentially renewable residency permit, the right to work, and entitlement to child and welfare benefits. To qualify for this scheme an individual needs to fall under one or more of three specific categories. Firstly, an individual may be eligible if classified by UNHCR as 'particularly vulnerable', a category usually including unaccompanied children, women with special needs and critically ill individuals (Orchard and Miller 2014: 58). Secondly, 'German ties', such as family ties in Germany or other bonds with the country, such as language skills, are taken into consideration for resettling purposes – as in the category of so-called 'Syrian re-builders', Syrian individuals whose skills are likely to play an

¹⁶ See fn. 22.

important role in the future reconstruction of the country and who could benefit from their stay and further training in Germany (Orchard and Miller 2014: 58).

Whilst for the first scheme in early 2013, which admitted 5000 Syrians, the majority of individuals were resettled as individuals of particular humanitarian concern, and referred by UNHCR, this prioritisation has been reversed in the two subsequent humanitarian entry schemes (UNHCR Deutschland 2014). Indeed, for both the second and the third schemes in late 2013 and 2014 respectively, which lay the foundations for resettling 15,000 Syrians, priority has been given to Syrians who can prove family ties in Germany. Indeed, the process foresees that for 8000 out of the 10,000 available resettling spaces, Syrians residing in Germany refer family members based in Syria or neighbouring countries to local authorities, who refer a selection to the state. Priority is given to those who can further prove the necessary resources to provide financially for their family member's travel and stay in Germany. Particular humanitarian considerations, as well as particular skills, are potential supporting factors, but not primary grounds upon which individuals can be resettled to Germany (BAMF 2013, 2014). Thereby, Syrians who do not have family ties in Germany are effectively excluded from this allegedly humanitarian scheme.

Private sponsorship

Accounting for the remaining 10,000 pledged Syrian refugee entries, Germany's sixteen regions have devised regional entry regimes granting Syrians based in the respective region the possibility of privately sponsoring members of their extended family to come and live with them in Germany (Orchard and Miller 2014: 57). The entry route of private sponsorship is again open to a very selective clientele, facilitating the mobility of individuals well-endowed with social and economic capital.

Portrayed as Germany's contribution to international burden sharing, the admission programme is highly selective. The reversal in the ratio between humanitarian priorities and socioeconomic resources from the first to the second and third resettlement pledges illustrates how class has increasingly become a distinguishing tool. The mobility patterns of Syrians who have more extensive access to socioeconomic resources are thus facilitated by the resettling state. Thereby, Germany sustains and facilitates the mobility of the presumably 'better-offs', as individuals who do not have family ties in Germany – those with presumably less socioeconomic resources, who may be more vulnerable – are effectively excluded from accessing Germany's humanitarian admission programme.

7 Rethinking mobility in conflict

Re-thinking mobility in conflict as a resource which is unequally distributed and shapes life chances after conflict calls for re-visiting both theorising on human mobility in conflict and humanitarian practice in crisis situations.

By moving beyond human movement and putting pre-existing inequalities within a society at the centre of the ability to be mobile, the concept of mobility as a resource firmly situates mobility within wider social processes. Indeed, by stressing how mobility, as part of wider processes, can shape the structures in which it occurs, the concept informs previous findings on *networks* (see for example Boyd 1989) and *cumulative causation* (Massey 1990) in migration studies by suggesting possible *negative feedback mechanisms* of mobility. The cases of Jordan's and Lebanon's

increasingly restrictive entry policies show how mobility can be a stratifying factor, as the ability to rely on *mobility as a resource* in conflict, by being differently available, privileges individuals who already have more extensive forms of capital to rely on, whilst further reducing the coping strategies of those who do not, thereby increasing their vulnerability. Highlighting the role of mobility in accessing public services and livelihood strategies, the concept of mobility as a resource also illustrates how these mechanisms not only affect the ability to be mobile in itself or temporary levels of vulnerability, but more broadly impact on long-term life chances. Thereby, it raises the profile of the importance of mobility in conflict.

Whilst reaffirming the role of socioeconomic resources in shaping mobility patterns, the concept of *mobility as a resource* refines Van Hear's (2004, 2014) notion of class. By drawing attention to the changing value of capital in conflict and the sometimes limited ability to convert one form of capital into another, the concept suggests that capital, far from operating in a neutral space, is invariably tied to the environment in which it operates. Further, the concept of *mobility as a resource* enriches the concept put forward by de Haas (2014), by raising the profile of the role of differential access to information in making an 'informed' choice on mobility in conflict, as was the case for less-well-endowed individuals in Aleppo city in their decision to move to informal settlements as opposed to camps. Here, the concept of mobility as a resource illustrates that mobility is not only about aspirations and capabilities, as shaped by respective levels of positive and negative liberties, but also informed and mediated by the level of information available in exercising choice. Whilst my framework suggests that class fundamentally shapes the ability to access information, further refinement and research is needed to substantiate this claim.

For humanitarian practice the lens of mobility as a resource in conflict suggests a shift from movement as primary indicator of vulnerability to greater attention to the ability to exercise agency over mobility. As such, the lens teaches us to look at refugees as individuals who the international community should support in finding their own solutions according to their personal preferences. This may entail humanitarian relief in Syria's neighbouring countries, but equally supporting policies which treat refugees as active agents in their own destiny and not as pure aid receivers. This means that individuals must be enabled to 'lead a life they have reason to value' (de Haas 2014: 25), left to make their own choices regarding where and how to live. The lens of mobility as a resource, beyond assuming what people want, illustrates the importance of widening humans' capabilities, be that the capability to move or the capability to stay, as already suggested by Van Hear (2009).

In practice, the lens of mobility as a resource highlights opportunities for humanitarian actors to support self-protection mechanisms in accordance with the preferences of beneficiaries. For instance, in the case of Aleppo city many local groups, which do not present themselves as humanitarian or, indeed, NGOs at all, are known to offer crucial informal services in areas where humanitarian actors can hardly reach (Svoboda and Pantuliano 2015). The lens of mobility as a resource, which puts individuals' and communities' differential capabilities to cope with conflict at the centre, would magnify the opportunity for humanitarian organisations to support such self-protection mechanisms, beyond movement.

Analysing the current international protection regime through the lens of mobility as a resource illustrates how international protection continues to favour the better-offs, as opposed to those most in need; how it often compounds inequalities by facilitating mobility and offering protection to the lucky few, at the expense of the rest.

Moving away from the current control-based approach (Aleinikoff 1992), rethinking international protection through the lens of *mobility as a resource* may then provide promising lessons. If we were to understand protection as a means of enhancing the capabilities of individuals and households to do what they want (Van Hear 2009), the international protection regime may achieve much more than it does at present without necessarily investing more.

Initiatives like opening up more possibilities for legal employment in host countries and designing more legal entry channels for individuals would allow individuals endowed with different forms of capital to capitalise on their resources and enhance their capabilities to lead a ‘good life’. As anecdotal evidence of young, well-educated Syrians who left Syria at the onset of the crisis for the Gulf states suggests (BBC 2011), individuals, where they have the choice, often do not want to become subjects of the international protection regime, which victimises and fundamentally constrains the ability to choose where and how to live.

Policies designed to promote individuals’ capabilities (Van Hear 2009) would enable individuals to follow their aspirations, play in favour of host states and lighten the current burden on the international refugee system. The international refugee regime would be reserved for those individuals who lack such forms of capital, providing an international safety net to individuals who cannot protect themselves, on the grounds of vulnerability, and not desirability.

However, beyond such propositions, it may be that the lens of mobility as a resource does not uncover something unknown to policymakers. What it may expose are the contradictions of a system which portrays itself as humanitarian but remains fundamentally shaped by a logic of exclusion.

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