

Refugees' Onward Migration Decisions and the EU– Turkey Deal

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TESI DOCTORAL UPF / 2021

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Acknowledgements

During the past three years I spent between Catalunya, Greece, the Netherlands and Turkey, I have met numerous people without whom this Ph.D. thesis would not come together. To start with, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr John Palmer. I am profoundly grateful for his guidance and support throughout both my master and Ph.D. research. Dr Palmer is an inspiring, devoted and extremely supportive mentor who allowed me to go through my Ph.D. journey on my own terms and was there for me whenever I felt stuck. I would also like to thank members of GRITIM-UPF especially Ricard Zapata, Lorenzo Gabrielli, Zenia Hellgren, Evren Yalaz and Martin Lundsteen as well as Political and Social Sciences Faculty and my other Ph.D. fellows -among many: Abe, Begüm, Berj, Beyda, Carlos, Iren, Luisa, Mina and Jon- for enabling a safe environment for me to grow in professionally and personally. I also wish to thank the members of my jury to have agreed to provide me with feedback and their expertise.

During my fieldwork in Greece, I had the support of an amazing team led by Dr van Liempt, including Annelies Zoomers, Harald Glöde, Jill Alpes, Orcun Ulusoy, and Saima Hassan who all inspired me to continue working on the field of forced migration. In the Netherlands, I would like to thank Dr Katie Kuschminder who has invited me to do a research stay at Maastricht University and guided and supported me since then. I would also like to thank Iman Rajabzadeh. During my research stay in Maastricht, Iman helped me every day with his outstanding quantitative skills although he was working on his own Ph.D. project. In Turkey, I would like to thank Koc University and specifically Dr Aysen Üstübici who welcomed and supported me during my fieldwork in Istanbul.

I am especially grateful for those people who trusted me and opened their lives - even the most difficult parts- before, during and after the interviews. My only wish that the findings of this Ph.D. research can somehow contribute to the lives and rights of those who have been excluded and marginalized.

Barcelona has given me more than I could ever imagine: a second home, a family and life-long friendships. Antoine, since I have met you everything else in my life became more meaningful, thank you. Moreover, my dear friends Ilgi, Gülce, Marina, Javi, Pedro, among others, thank you for always challenging me intellectually and otherwise.

Last but not least, I thank my family. To my father who has encouraged me to take up social sciences because the rest of the family were engineers. I remember you every day. To my mother who has been beside me praying for funding and acceptance letters as I continue my academic journey. To my brother who always inspires me to be the best version of myself. I love you all very much.

Finally, I thank AGAUR-FI and European Social Fund for their generous financial support during the three years of my Ph.D. research.

**To my grandfather Halife Altay
who led and documented a
sixteen years migration journey
on foot ...**

Abstract

Adopting a bottom-up approach, and taking the EU–Turkey deal as a case study, this Ph.D. thesis provides empirical evidence about the impact of externalisation policies on refugees’ daily lives and on their onward migration decisions. Chapter 1 briefly introduces the topic and the conceptual and contextual background. Chapter 2 focuses on the daily experiences and coping strategies of those who have been contained on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios. Chapter 3 explores the onward migration aspirations of Syrian men with precarious legal status living in Istanbul. Chapter 4 analyses the impact of humanitarian aid on Syrian refugees’ aspirations to move on from Turkey. And finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the contributions and limitations of the Ph.D. thesis as well as providing pathways for future research. In sum, this Ph.D. thesis constitutes an effort to highlight the harm that these policies inflict on refugees and to bring refugees’ own voices into the dialogue about immigration policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Setting the Scene

The preliminary idea for this Ph.D. research was formed approximately five years ago when asylum seekers, who had crossed the Aegean Sea from Turkey to the Greek islands in rickety boats, were returned to Turkey on 4 April 2016. These returns were based on a recent deal that the EU had made with Turkey; no one was certain who would be returned and what would happen to them after their return to Turkey. At that time, I was living in Istanbul and working for a research project that focused on post-deportation risks for third country nationals deported to Turkey, principally those who would be held in the international zone of airports in Istanbul. Post-deportation research is particularly challenging, since governments tend not to be transparent about who is being deported, when and why. Even if one manages to access this information, it is still difficult to reach people after deportation, since their telephones are often confiscated while they are held in detention and they have limited or no contact with the outside world. It is also hard to monitor other remote control tools, i.e. to see what is happening behind the closed doors of pre-removal centres and in other barbican spaces such as refugee camps at the margins of urban areas or on isolated islands, as well as during maritime controls on the high seas (FitzGerald, 2019:20).

In order to research the returns under the EU–Turkey deal, I managed to get in touch with volunteers and activists on the Greek islands over the weekend prior to the 4th of April. They provided me with a list of the names and nationalities of those who were likely to be deported. This list was then passed on to human right lawyers in Turkey –for the purpose of providing legal aid– through a network of academics, journalists, activists and volunteers on both sides of the Aegean Sea. In the end, 147 people were returned on 4 April (EC, 2016), and among them, many were on this list. They were taken to the pre-removal centres to be detained with the purpose of deporting them back to their countries of origin. The exception was the Syrians, who were transferred to the Düziçi Temporary Accommodation Camp in Osmaniye city and were released a few weeks later.

By the end of 2016, 777 people had been returned to Turkey from the Greek islands under the EU–Turkey deal (Tunaboylu and Alpes, 2017). From then on, the number of returns remained relatively low. By the end of March 2020 –the four-year anniversary of the implementation of the deal– the total number of people who had been returned was 2140 (UNHCR, 2020), while tens of thousands of asylum seekers were stuck on the Greek islands waiting for their asylum processes to be completed. When I visited the islands for my first batch of fieldwork in the summer of 2017, some of the asylum seekers had been living in degrading conditions there for up to two years, without any indication about when their asylum cases would be finalised and whether the outcomes would be positive. Moreover, people kept arriving on the islands from Turkey, only to be contained in the already overcrowded camps.

Even though the EU–Turkey deal may seem like an ad hoc response to the high number of irregular arrivals in 2015 –strategically referred to as a ‘refugee crisis’ by the EU–, bilateral deals, containment and returns are not unique to the present day nor to Europe. In fact, these deterrence policies can be traced back to the 1930s and 1940s and have since been applied by many other countries including Australia, Canada and the US (FitzGerald, 2019). At the same time, critics of government policies have questioned the effectiveness of such policies in deterring irregular migration (Massey et al., 2016; Czaika and de Haas, 2013; Crawley, 2010) as well as highlighting the harm these policies inflict on refugees (FitzGerald, 2019). In fact, I have experienced first-hand that asylum seekers have not been deterred by these policies and have still found creative ways to move on. My Ph.D. project came to life within this context of, on the one hand, a global tendency of adopting harsher migration and asylum policies and, on the other hand, mounting evidence both of the harm caused by such policies and of their ineffectiveness. Thus, this thesis contributes to this debate by focusing on the perspective of the refugees themselves¹ in the study of the impact of externalisation policies, both within the academic debate on forced migration and within policy making.

¹ Throughout this Ph.D. thesis, the term refugee is used to refer to anyone who has fled war, violence, conflict or persecution, irrespective of their current legal status, unless specified otherwise.

1.2 Externalisation of European Asylum and Migration Policies

Migration is a fact of life. However, the growth of international migration driven by a complex and overlapping set of economic, political and social factors goes hand in hand with harsher migration and asylum policies. One of the major component of repressive migration policies has been externalization. Externalization can be defined as a social mechanism “composed of a set of specific actors, regulations, practices and discourses involved in migration management, which in conjunction produce similar effects on mobility and settlement dynamics in different contexts” (Stock, Ustubici and Shultz, 2019:3). Externalization policies occur when a certain type of mobility is seen as a security threat to nation state. There has been an increasing tendency in countries of immigration such as EU, US, Australia to transfer migration management to not only neighbourhood and so called transit countries but also more distant countries. These efforts are often coupled with development aid to the origin or transit countries.

The effects of externalisation policies on refugees, their families and communities have been widely researched. Externalization policies produce “geographies of control as well as spaces of resistance, changing the lives and migration trajectories of migrants and their families.” (Stock, Ustubici and Shultz, 2019:4). It does not only create selected mobility, but also results in involuntary mobility for many during or before migration (Carling, 2014; Collyer, 2007). Moreover, these policies results in the production of massive “immigrant illegality” (De Genova, 2002; Schuster, 2011; Menjivar and Kanstroom, 2014) as they force refugees into irregularity, which exposes them to exploitation and marginalization (de Genova, 2002; de Genova, 2017; Ustubici, 2019), as well as to differential inclusion when protection and services are not guaranteed by rights in the transit country (Baban et al., 2017). Moreover, externalisation have direct harmful effect on those who are crossing borders, as they opt to more dangerous routes (Massey et al., 2016), and are increasingly vulnerable to robbery, rape, and even murder (Collyer, 2007, Menjivar, 2014).

Externalization of European migration and asylum policies began with the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999, as part of the conditionality process for candidate countries to adjust their migration and border management to the Schengen *acquis* (Karadag, 2019) and has been implemented in the last two decades. Via externalization policies, border management has been transferred to third countries (Üstübici, 2019) with the aim of preventing migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the jurisdiction of the destination countries (Frelick et al., 2016).

These policies often encompass remote control tools such as increased maritime controls and push backs at sea, containment of asylum seekers at external borders, and returns based on concepts such as *safe third country* and *safe country of origin* through bilateral agreements with buffer countries, such as those set out in the EU–Turkey deal. It is important to note that most techniques of remote control go back almost a century ago, when the British government, inter alia, used pressure on buffer countries, naval interceptions, and sabotaged vessels in the countries of transit to keep Jewish refugees from reaching Palestine (FitzGerald, 2019). Although these policies are not new, they have proliferated in Europe as a response to the arrival of over one million refugees in 2015 to its shores and land borders.

These policies assume that refugees are aware of and able to understand the nuances of the EU’s changing asylum and border policies (Crawley, 2010) and therefore, that more restrictive policies will have a deterrent effect on irregular migration. However, refugees do not often have access to accurate and complete information about changing policies, and are not deterred by them. In many cases, even though they have a preconceived idea of the type of border control they may face, they still choose to move on once they decide to do so, especially with the help of an established social network and a global smuggling industry which act as antagonists to state control (FitzGerald, 2019).

1.3 Contextualisation: Turkey as a Buffer State and The EU–Turkey Deal

Before 2015-

The migration practices between Turkey and the European Union are not a new phenomenon. The historical trends in migratory flows between Turkey and Europe

have implications not only for the current status of migration flows but also for any contemporary evaluations and discourses in their regard (Icduygu, 2011). Within the concept of the European migration system, Turkey has long been known as a country of emigration. However, since the 1970s, Turkey has also become a receiving country, due to the conflicts in its neighbouring countries, the economic problems in the region and its cultural and religious proximity to its neighbouring countries (Icduygu, 2011). Yet while some perceive Turkey as their final destination, as Turkey became both the sea and the land border of the EU in the southeast in the wake of European Union's expansion, others began to consider it as a transit country, a stepping stone for reaching Europe.

The proceedings for Turkey to one day become a full member of the EU began in 2005, with a challenging process of negotiations largely constituted around migration concerns (Icduygu, 2011). Some of the main concerns regarding migration along this route have been whether Turkey will adjust its asylum and migration system to the needs of the EU and will become successful in managing and controlling its external borders. In an attempt to fulfil this aim, on 26 June 2014, Turkey ratified a readmission agreement with the EU. Bound by this agreement, Turkey was expected to improve its border security and build higher capacity detention centres over the course of three years. After three years, Turkey should have also started to readmit rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants from the EU member states. Although the anticipated deadline has passed, the implementation of readmissions from the EU countries remains on hold.

After 2015–

The situation changed drastically in 2015, when over one million refugees arrived in Europe. Around 850.000 of them travelled from Turkey to Europe via the Greek Islands, and most were nationals of countries affected by wars and violence: 90% of those arriving on the Greek islands came from just three countries: Syria (56.1%), Afghanistan (24.3%) and Iraq (10.3%) (Crawley et al., 2016: 16). In order to respond to the significant number of irregular arrivals, Europe has considered and implemented several categories of remote control policies. These include, first, assigning some countries “safe country of origin” with the purposes of accelerating

the asylum procedure of those who come from these countries -mainly consisting of Balkan countries but also Turkey- (Ruhrmann and Fitzgerald, 2017). However, this policy tool is criticized as it is at odds with the Geneva Convention: even though a country is considered generally safe, minority can be at danger due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

Second remote policy tool is readmission agreements and capacity building which is implemented through Turkey: The Joint Action Plan in 2015 and thereafter. The Joint Action Plan which was based on two pillars: i. improve the conditions for refugees in Turkey and ii. prevent irregular migration. On March 18, 2016, the EU and Turkey issued a joint statement also known as the EU–Turkey deal. The aim of the deal was to stop irregular crossings by curbing motivations to migrate through (1) external funding that aimed to improve conditions for refugees in Turkey, and (2) border control and enforcement that increased the cost and risk of irregular migration. The former is implemented through the largest EU external investment ever: the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (EP, 2016). A primary component of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey is the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) cash transfer programme, which is worth over one billion euros and has reached 1.7 million Syrian refugees as of 2020 (WFP, 2020). The remaining investment is distributed to support longer-term socio-economic and educational perspectives (EC, 2019). The latter part of the deal has required a twofold plan: not only does the deal encourage increased border controls in Turkey, but it also deems Turkey a ‘safe third country’ to which refugees can be returned (Frelick et al., 2016).

While many authors who study the impact of externalization policies draw attention to the hierarchical relationship between European Union and its peripheries, few scholars “decolonize” study of externalization and highlight the agency the candidate countries which are not just objects of externalization policies but geopolitical subjects (Karadag, 2019, Ustubici, 2019). In the case of externalization of European migration and asylum policies to Turkey after 2015, due to the ambivalent nature of the EU-Turkey deal, Turkish Coast Guards were able to escape accountability and create antagonist relationships blaming EU and claiming moral superiority as gatekeepers. In that way, externalization achieved the opposite of EU by moving

away from democratic reforms by using its role in “migration diplomacy.” (Karadag, 2019).

In order to implement the second part of the deal, refugee camps called *hotspots* have been set up on the Greek islands, where newly arrived refugees have been forced to remain while their asylum claims are processed, with the goal of telling apart genuine refugees from illegal migrants as quickly as possible. However, the notion that “genuine refugees” can be distinguished from “illegal immigrants” has been criticised, since it is based on a false dichotomy. The only way for refugees to be able to seek asylum is usually to enter a country through irregular means. The main alternative to this route would be through refugee resettlement, but the opportunities for resettlement are tiny, with only 1% of the global refugee population benefitting from these programs annually (UNHCR, 2020).

The closure of the Greek islands to prevent asylum seekers from migrating onwards has meant that many asylum seekers had to stay in these *hotspot* camps which were designed to provide only temporary accommodation. The fast-track asylum procedure has failed, as the critical human rights situation in Turkey, coupled with the lack of administrative and physical capacity to process the applications efficiently in Greece, has resulted in a very low number of asylum cases being resolved (EPRS, 2018). As a result, many people have become stuck and forced to live in limbo for lengthy periods.

On the other hand, the number of crossings has dropped significantly after the implementation of the deal. Whereas in 2015, 857,723 people arrived in Greece by crossing the Aegean Sea, this number plummeted to 173,450 in 2016 (UNHCR Data: Mediterranean, 2017). The significant drop in the number of arrivals by sea from Turkey to Greece is often interpreted as something that is due to the EU–Turkey deal. However, this drop has raised questions regarding future migration trends, such as what has happened to those who opted not to go to Greece after the deal came into force. Have other travel routes and strategies emerged? How have migrants’ perceptions of this deal had an impact on their onward migration aspirations and plans?

This research aims to highlight refugees' trajectories towards and away from the Greek islands and illustrates the importance of studying the onward migration aspirations of refugees in response to policy changes, rather than only focusing on the numbers and on the big picture. Much of the discussion in the field concentrates on a top-down analysis of laws and policies. Some work has focused on the decision-making process of individuals within asylum systems (Carling and Schewel, 2018; Koser and Kuschminder, 2016; Schuster, 2011). But these studies mainly focus on how protection is understood by asylum seekers, their ideas about where best to find protection, and which countries are considered the most favourable by asylum seekers and for what reasons. Very little attention has been paid to how aspirations are formed within a context that is extremely dynamic, where policies change very rapidly, and where access to information is very poor.

It is important to understand aspirations, as they can have implications for migrants' interactions with their current environment and for their well-being (Carling, 2019). Migrants' involuntary immobility, i.e. their aspirations to leave and inability to do so (Carling, 2014) may have negative consequences for their human development and potentially for those around them. Moreover, migration aspirations can be a potential indicator of future flows, if migrants are indeed able to turn their aspirations into reality (Carling, 2019).

1.4. Research Questions and the Objectives of the Thesis

The overall aim of this Ph.D. research is to gain a deeper understanding of daily experiences and onward migration aspirations of the refugees who have become immobilised in Turkey and in Greece as a result of EU externalisation policies. In particular, it focuses on the coping mechanisms of those who have become stuck on the Greek islands and also on the onward migration aspirations of those who have remained in Turkey after the EU–Turkey deal was implemented. This research has a bottom-up approach, investigating the EU's externalisation policies based on how refugees experience and respond to them. By looking at the world from refugees' perspectives, the thesis links their changing onward migration aspirations to the macro-level structural constraints that ultimately shape the way in which refugees

interact with their current environment and form future migration trends (Carling, 2019).

The objectives of this research are as follows. First, the thesis presents daily experiences and migration aspirations of people who have sought asylum on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios, and of refugees who live in Istanbul with precarious legal status. It is an illustration of how refugees perceive and react to policies based on the information they receive and its influence on their migration decision making. Second, the thesis adds to the evidence on the harm that deterrence policies inflict on refugees, including lack of access to protection, the violation of the non-refoulement principle, as well as lack of access to adequate shelter, food, clean water, medicine and healthcare. Third, the thesis presents an analysis of quantitative data on the impact –or lack thereof– of humanitarian aid on refugees’ migration aspirations through the largest cash transfer programme funded by the EU, which has predominantly targeted Syrian refugees in Turkey. Additionally, the thesis does not only look at the constraints that such policies place on refugees, but also how refugees perceive and respond to such policies with creativity and determination. Finally, it questions how policy makers label refugees as deserving and undeserving according to the way they deal with the constraints encountered.

In order to achieve these objectives, I have written three journal articles; each focuses on a different aspect of the EU–Turkey deal, its associated policies and its relationship with the daily experiences and onward migration aspirations of refugees (Figure 1).

Figure 1

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| | General Research Question: What are the daily experiences and future migration aspirations of refugees in relation to EU externalisation policies? | | |
| | Chapter 2 | Chapter 3 | Chapter 4 |
| Research Question | How do asylum seekers experience liminality and respond to it on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios? | What are the daily experiences and onward migration aspirations of Syrian men with precarious legal status living Istanbul? | How does receiving an unconditional cash transfer affect Syrian refugees' onward migration aspirations in Turkey? |
| Objective | <p>To understand the impact of containment on refugees' daily lives and onward migration decisions.</p> <p>To challenge the discursive categorisation of those who wait it out through containment as 'deserving refugees' and those who move on as 'undeserving migrants'.</p> | <p>To understand the factors behind refugees' aspirations to leave Turkey.</p> <p>To understand the impact of gender in forming these aspirations.</p> <p>To provide a critical analysis of the role of restrictive policies on onward migration aspirations.</p> | <p>To look at the impact of humanitarian aid on refugees' onward migration aspirations.</p> <p>To provide a critical analysis on the effectiveness of externalisation policies in reducing motivations to migrate onwards.</p> |

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Why a Case Study?

I chose to study the EU–Turkey deal as a case study because case study research allows the researcher to form a holistic and meaningful picture of real-life events. According to Yin (1984), case studies are the most appropriate tool when: a) the research questions start with 'how' and/or 'why', b) the researcher has little or no control over the event, and c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. The topic of contemporary migration flows within the Mediterranean region fulfils all the criteria to be studied as a single case study. However, within the study, variations among migration aspirations will be considered and compared.

While providing a means of identifying and assessing detailed explanations of a phenomenon, single case studies have limited ability to allow for generalisations. However, it is possible to use case studies to generalise about theoretical propositions (Yin, 1984), even if it is not possible to generalise universally or about a whole

population. Moreover, case studies have considerable academic value as they can be used to better understand other similar contexts.

1.5.2 Research Design and Analysis

My research design used multi-sited groundwork to gather evidence; the main data source was information provided directly by the refugees themselves. I conducted a total of 54 in-depth interviews with refugees at the two key points of irregular migration to Europe – Turkey and Greece (Figure 2). The Ph.D. thesis is strengthened by the use of quantitative data in Chapter 4.

As Bonfanti (2014) argues that in order to operationalize an aspirations/capabilities framework in migration, one must combine qualitative and quantitative data collection methods together. However, the aspiration/capabilities approach in transnational migration research has been mostly operationalized through quantitative research. Following Bonfanti's (2014) example, this research use qualitative in depth interviews as a method to use migration trajectories as the main empirical data source where the individuals and their experiences are placed at the centre. This technique is useful to investigate decision making processes, especially with regards to collecting in depth information about the factors operating at micro and meso levels (Bonfanti, 2014). For chapter 2 and chapter 3, I used qualitative in-depth interviews as a method to gather information about migration trajectories. Interviewees were chosen by using key informants who are active in the refugee communities, and by snowball sampling from participants as they were interviewed. Although the samples are non-random and do not claim to be representative, the snowball sampling method was chosen to increase the chances of reaching hidden populations, such as unregistered refugees, smugglers and deportees: this would otherwise have been impossible.

On the other hand, quantitative data is necessary to link the individual trajectories with macro level changes. Therefore, in Chapter 4, I analysed secondary survey data in link to the empirical data. More specifically, I used survey data about 1,019 Syrian refugees in Turkey collected in May/August 2017 and September/November 2017 by the World Food Programme – Turkey in order to carry out a larger-scale test on the

relationship between unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) and refugees’ aspirations to move on.²

Figure 2

| Activities | ARTICLE I | ARTICLE II | ARTICLE III |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Desk Research | <p>Review of the literature on waiting, limbo, liminality and deservingness.</p> <p>Review of the literature on remote control tools including the hotspot system, containment and deportations based on the “safe third country” concept.</p> <p>Analysis of the EU–Turkey deal and other policy documents at the national (Turkey) and international (European Union) level.</p> <p>Review of NGO reports.</p> | <p>Review of the literature on stuckedness, temporality and aspirations.</p> <p>Review of the literature on externalisation policies and the role of gender.</p> <p>Analysis of the EU–Turkey deal and other policy documents at the national (Turkey) and international (European Union) level.</p> <p>Review of NGO reports.</p> | <p>Review of the literature on aspirations and the role of conditional and unconditional cash transfers on migration.</p> <p>Review of NGO and academic reports on conditions for Syrian refugees in Turkey.</p> <p>Analysis of the EU–Turkey deal and other policy documents at the national (Turkey) and international (European Union) level.</p> |
| Meetings | <p>Various meetings with NGO workers, activists, volunteers and human right lawyers.</p> | <p>Various meetings with migration experts, community leaders and NGO workers.</p> | N/A |
| In-depth Interviews | <p>30 in-depth interviews with people who have sought asylum on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios.</p> <p>Follow-up interviews with seven participants 1 year and 2 years later.</p> <p>The interviews included collecting information on migration trajectories, conditions in the</p> | <p>24 in-depth interviews with Syrian men with precarious legal status who live in Istanbul.</p> <p>The interviews included collecting information on amongst other things, current living conditions, migration experiences, aspirations, and perceptions of Europe.</p> | N/A |

² Please find the detailed explanation of the methodology used for each study in the methods section of the corresponding chapters.

| | | | |
|---------------|---|-----|--|
| | hotspots, the legal process, deportation and post deportation, and future aspirations, enabling us to understand the decision-making process in the hotspots and the related coping strategies. | | |
| Survey | N/A | N/A | <p>Secondary analysis of data from a survey called the "Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise" (CVME) collected by the World Food Programme (WFP) in Turkey in two cycles: May/August 2017 and September/November 2017.</p> <p>By using propensity score matching, we tested the relationship between receiving the ESSN cash transfer and refugees' aspirations to move on.</p> |

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

The Ph.D. thesis consists of five chapters, including a general introduction (Chapter 1) and a general conclusion (Chapter 5). The three central chapters are self-contained scientific articles that have either already been published in peer-reviewed journals or that are in the review process (Figure 3).

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the impact on refugees' aspirations to migrate of restrictive policies such as increased police control, containment and deportation. More specifically, Chapter 2 focuses on the Greek islands as liminal spaces where people are caught between nation states and their jurisdictions, and also between socio-legal categories. In these liminal spaces, asylum seekers are expected to wait out their containment with limited or no information on the asylum process, its length and the likelihood of eventually receiving protection. The chapter concludes that asylum

seekers adopt coping strategies to move on, despite the risk of losing their legal status. In this way, it challenges the discursive categorisation of those who wait out their containment as ‘deserving refugees’ and those who move on as ‘undeserving migrants’, and provides a critical analysis of current European migration policies. Chapter 3 takes us to the other side of the Aegean Sea and looks at what happened to those who had to change their initial plans to move on, and ended up staying in Turkey. This chapter argues that many of these people, especially those with precarious legal status, aspire to leave Turkey. Moving on is associated not only with changing one’s country of residence, but also with moving on with the course of one’s life. Chapter 4 looks at the impact of another component of the EU–Turkey deal, one that aims to reduce people’s motivations to migrate by improving conditions in Turkey, especially those of Syrian refugees. However, the findings of this chapter suggest that the cash transfer programme, which is the largest investment within the 6 billion euros of aid provided by the EU to Turkey, does not affect the aspirations of Syrian refugees to migrate onwards to Europe, and discusses why this could be the case.

Figure 3

| Chapter 1: Introduction | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Thesis Chapters | Chapter 1. A Lack of Legal Protection and Limited Ways Out: How Asylum Seekers Cope with Liminality on the Greek Islands of Lesbos and Chios. | Chapter 2. Settled or Stuck: Onward Migration Aspirations of Syrian Refugees in Turkey and the EU–Turkey deal | Chapter 3. Syrians Refugees’ Onward Decision Making in Turkey: The role of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) cash transfer. |
| Co-authors | Dr Ilse van Liempt, Utrecht University. | N/A | Iman Rajabzadeh, Maastricht University & Dr Katie Kuschminder, Maastricht University. |
| Approach | Empirical | Empirical | Empirical |
| Presentation | <p>11/2019 MiReKoc Seminar Series of Fall 2019, Koc University, Turkey.</p> <p>04/2019 Graduate Network Conference (funded), London School of Economics, UK.</p> <p>05/2019 Migration Working Group Workshop (funded), European University Institute, Italy.</p> <p>09/2018 IMISCOE Conference, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Catalonia, Spain.</p> | <p>11/2020 European Sociology Association PhD Summer School (funded), University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.</p> <p>05/2020 The Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) 25th Annual World Convention, the Harriman Institute at Columbia University, City of New York, USA (Cancelled due to Covid-19).</p> | <p>03/2021 GRITIM-UPF Research in Progress Sessions, Barcelona, Spain.</p> <p>05/2020 Graduate Network Conference (funded), Sciences Po, Paris, France (Postponed to 02/2021 due to Covid-19).</p> |
| Publication | <p>Published: 19 February 2020 Journal of Refugee Studies https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa002</p> <p>Other publications based on this research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alpes, M. J., Tunaboyle, S., van Liempt, I. (2017) ‘Human rights violations by design: EU–Turkey Statement prioritises returns over access to asylum’, EUI Policy Brief (29). Alpes, M. J., Tunaboyle, S., Ulusoy, O., Hassan, S. (2017) ‘Post-deportation risks under the EU–Turkey Statement: What happens after readmission to Turkey’, EUI Policy Brief (30). van Liempt, I.C., Alpes, M.J., Hassan S., Tunaboyle, S., Ulusoy U., Zoomers, E.B. (2017) ‘Evidence-based assessment of migration deals: The case of the EU Turkey Statement’, Utrecht University. | <p>Submitted: 18 December 2020 Journal of Refugee Studies In the review process.</p> | <p>The article will be submitted to the World Development Journal In March 2021.</p> |
| Chapter 5: Conclusion | | | |

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2. A LACK OF LEGAL PROTECTION AND LIMITED WAYS OUT: HOW ASYLUM SEEKERS COPE WITH LIMINALITY ON GREEK ISLANDS: LESBOS AND CHIOS

Tunaboğlu M. S. and van Liempt I., [A Lack of Legal Protection and Limited Ways Out: How Asylum Seekers Cope with Liminality on Greek Islands: Lesbos and Chios](#). *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Published on 19 February 2020, doi:10.1093/jrs/feaa002

Abstract:

This article focuses on the experiences and coping strategies of those who have sought Asylum on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios after the EU–Turkey deal of March 2016. Based on semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers and participatory observation on the two islands between July and August 2017, we explore the impact of the EU–Turkey deal on asylum seekers and how they cope with it. Although the implementation of the deal has an effect on their ability to cross irregularly to Europe, our findings show that many asylum seekers still come to the islands, aspiring to move on and, in some cases, succeeding. A combination of factors facilitates or hinders a secondary movement from the islands despite the structural constraints. We saw that, often, those with a genuine asylum claim choose to move on despite the risk of losing their legal status. In this way, our research challenges the discursive categorization of those who wait through containment as ‘deserving refugees’ and those who move on as ‘undeserving migrants’ and provides a critical analysis of current European migration policies.

Keywords: restrictive migration policies, asylum seekers, liminality, deservingness, Greek hotspots, EU–Turkey deal

2.1 Introduction

Almost 36000 asylum seekers are currently living in the Greek islands (Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros), which is more than five times the official capacity (HRW, 2019), and the number of sea arrivals keeps increasing compared to the year before (UNHCR, 2019). In September 2019 alone, 12530 people arrived in Greece by sea (UNHCR, 2019). Initially, these hotspots were places of first reception and registration for the sea arrivals in Europe but, since the EU–Turkey deal in March 2016, they have become places of containment, as the islands have been shut down to prevent onward movement to the mainland. Their transformation from temporary reception centres into containment zones means that migrants arriving in the islands have found themselves stuck and their trajectories disturbed.

The hotspot system has been designed to quickly separate arrivals into asylum seekers and migrants (Tazzioli, 2017) through a fast-track procedure based on nationality and admissibility criteria prior to the assessment of individual asylum applications. In the Greek asylum procedure, nationality groups with a low recognition rate (below 25 per cent) are systematically detained on arrival in the islands and therefore risk being denied access to a fair and efficient asylum process (Alpes et al., 2017; Fili, 2018). At the same time, nationality groups—such as Syrians—with a high recognition rate (above 75 per cent) are subjected to an admissibility interview in which they are questioned not about why they left their country of origin, but about their trajectories and specifically the time they spent in Turkey. The objective of these interviews is not to assess the asylum claim, but to determine whether or not Turkey is a safe third country to return asylum seekers to. Although the 1951 Refugee Convention dictates that asylum claims should be assessed on an individual basis without discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or nationality, Europe’s policy on asylum and migration uses these fast-track procedures and the safe-third-country concept to implement what may be viewed as deservingness criteria—prioritizing one over another before assessing the validity of the asylum claim (Sigona, 2018: 457). Therefore, asylum seekers’ likelihood of gaining asylum in Greece is biased, based on their nationality or their pre-arrival trajectories.

In practice, both the fast-track procedure and the deportation of refugees to Turkey based on the ‘safe-third-country’ concept have proved to be all but straightforward (Alpes et al.,

2017; Tazzioli, 2017). The fast-track process is not, in fact, fast at all and many asylum seekers are forced to wait for months, if not years, for their asylum-application process in the hotspots—spaces that have thus become ‘the chokepoints of protracted wait’ (Tazzioli, 2017: 7). The critical human-rights situation in Turkey, coupled with the lack of administrative and physical capacity to assess the applications efficiently in Greece, has resulted in a very low number of asylum cases being closed (EPRS, 2018). Deportations remained relatively low: only 1652 people were deported under the deal between March 2016 and March 2019 (EC, 2019). Although the deal has affected their ability to cross irregularly (EC, 2019), people keep coming to the islands. As a result, more and more asylum seekers have become stuck and forced to live in limbo for prolonged periods of time.

In this article, the islands of Lesbos and Chios are referred to as liminal spaces where people are caught between nation states and their jurisdiction and between sociolegal categories. In these liminal spaces, asylum seekers are expected to wait through containment with limited or no information on the asylum process, its length and the likelihood of eventually receiving protection. They are expected to live in degrading conditions within the hotspot camps—which were designed as temporary reception centres, not to accommodate asylum seekers in the long term. Thus far, studies focusing on the experiences of asylum seekers during the asylum process argue that being in sociolegal limbo can force asylum seekers into an existential and temporal condition of waiting, liminality and feeling stuck (Brekke, 2004; Hage, 2009; Sutton et al., 2011; Kohli and Kaukko, 2017). Other authors look more specifically at how liminality is created by the asylum and migration policies (Menjívar, 2006; Mountz, 2011; Papoutsi et al., 2019) and experienced by border crossers (Brekke, 2004; Kohli and Kaukko, 2017; O’Reilly, 2018), locals and everyone else in between (Tsoni, 2016).

This research aims to contribute to this debate by asking how the response to liminality plays a role in determining the deservingness of asylum seekers. Deservingness is here understood as the prioritizing of one over another before assessing the validity of the asylum claim (Sigona, 2018: 457). We argue that, within the context of the EU–Turkey deal, the deservingness of asylum seekers is not only determined by nationality and vulnerability, but also by how asylum seekers deal with liminality. Hyndman and Giles (2011: 367) argue that those who wait in refugee camps are often considered innocent

and helpless, and are therefore framed as ‘deserving refugees’ in need of help. However, once they move on, they are considered politically dangerous and self-interested, and framed as no longer needing protection and therefore ‘undeserving’. This argument is useful in the context of the Greek islands whereby those who wait through liminality are considered deserving refugees while those who contest and find ways to move out are criminalized and seen as undeserving. Drawing on 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation on the islands of Lesbos and Chios, this article looks at how asylum seekers deal with liminality and problematizes the assumed relation between responses to liminality and deservingness.

2.2 Greek Islands as Liminal Spaces

The concept of liminality was first introduced in 1960 by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, in his study of ‘rites of passage’. Van Gennep defined the liminal phase as a transition period—i.e. during a marriage ceremony—where individuals have completed one part of their life but have not yet entered into the next part (1960: 3). Victor Turner (1969) revived the concept and extended its implications beyond ritual ceremonies (Thomassen, 2009), which made the concept applicable to other transition periods in human life. Turner (1969) emphasized the importance of understanding the experiences of liminality and how it shapes people.

The concept of liminality can be used in reference to the situation of asylum seekers who are stuck on the islands, as they have left the protection of their country of origin but are not yet incorporated into the social, economic and political life of a host society. As such, they are at a liminal stage in which they often wait for prolonged periods of time in juridical obscurity. Several authors have studied the liminal spaces that emerged as a result of restrictive asylum and border policies whereby asylum seekers are marginalized and excluded from society (Brekke, 2004; Hynes, 2011; Mountz, 2011; Sutton et al., 2011; Kohli and Kaukko, 2017).

Agier (2011: 278) refers to these liminal spaces as *hors-lieux* (off-places). The time spent in off-places is relatively slow for asylum seekers as they wait and feel stuck while the rest of society gets on with their lives in a seemingly more rapid fashion (Griffiths et al., 2013). Asylum seekers in these off-places are expected to wait in an orderly fashion.

Queuing and waiting symbolize being civilized (Hage, 2009; Agier, 2011). Thus, enduring waiting through a crisis can be considered as the internalization of self-government (Hage, 2009) and used as a tool for sovereign nation states to legitimate their protection of the common good from ‘unorderly’ movement and the threat to social cohesion. It is migrants’ duty to wait in an orderly fashion until their turn comes to be incorporated into the host society.

Under the EU–Turkey deal, the deservingness of asylum seekers is determined through the fast-track procedure, where their right to protection varies based on their nationality. Moreover, only those recognized as vulnerable are granted the right to mobility within Greece. Asylum seekers’ deservingness is also emphasized in the one-for-one resettlement scheme within the EU–Turkey deal that aims to resettle one Syrian national from Turkey to one EU member state for each person returned. Between April 2016 and December 2018, 18640 Syrians were resettled from Turkey to the EU (EC, 2019)—a significantly low number compared to the 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees living in Turkey (DGMM, 2019). According to the one-for-one scheme, those who arrive on the Greek islands through their own means are punished, deemed undeserving of protection and therefore deported back to Turkey. However, those who wait in Turkey are considered deserving and might get resettled in Europe. In this article, we voice asylum seekers’ narratives and experiences of liminality and (im)mobility to challenge the discursive assumption of restrictive policies and containment.

2.3 Methodology

The fieldwork took place in July and August 2017 on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios. The empirical data was collected as part of a larger project *Evidence-based assessment of migration deals: the case of Turkey*. The specific data underlying this article is based on 30 semi-structured interviews conducted with refugees who have sought asylum on these two islands in different localities and temporalities, including those who were stuck in the hotspots of Chios and Lesbos and those who had been sent or moved away from there. The interviews asked about respondents’ migration trajectories, conditions in the hotspots, the legal process, deportation and post deportation, and their future aspirations, enabling us to understand the decision-making process in the hotspots and the related coping strategies.

We reached our first respondents through key informants (such as lawyers, volunteers and refugees who were well connected in their communities). The rest were selected through snowball sampling. Deliberative efforts were taken to include participants from countries that produced the largest number of asylum seekers on Lesbos and Chios (Afghanistan 10, Syria 7, Pakistan 4, Bangladesh 3, Iraq 2 and other 4). We conducted follow-up interviews with seven respondents 1 and 2 years later.

Among the 30 asylum-seeker interviewees, 13 were staying on the islands at the time. Eleven non-Syrians had been deported from there to Turkey—among whom only four were still in Turkey; another five were deported further to their country of origin and two were back in Europe. Five Syrians had ‘voluntarily’ returned to Turkey—two of whom were ‘secondary-return’ cases from Turkey to Syria. Last but not least, one was returned to Afghanistan directly from Chios. All 13 on the islands had been there for between 10 and 18 months, except an Afghan family and an Afghan man who had just arrived on Lesbos and Chios when we interviewed them. Among these, seven were in immediate danger of deportation, as their asylum application was rejected and appeals were denied. Among those who had been deported, only four were still in Turkey, three were deported to Pakistan, one to Afghanistan, one to the Ivory Coast and two were back in Europe at the time of the interview.

Although our sample is small compared to the number of people who have sought asylum in the two Greek islands, our goal is not to generalize our findings, but to shed light on the diverse ways in which asylum seekers perceive and respond to structural constraints imposed by European migration policies and practices. Most of the interviews were conducted in the numerous cafe’s in the city centre; interviews in the refugee camps were not practical because entrance to them is subject to permission from the Greek authorities, with a limited time allowance. Due to overcrowding in the camps, many shelters were shared by multiple families, which also made it difficult to maintain privacy throughout the interview. It proved particularly difficult to interview those on the islands who had had their asylum applications rejected, as they risked detention and deportation. It was only possible to reach such people through refugees and volunteers who acted as gatekeepers. For those whose cases were extremely risky, we adjusted to the conditions imposed by the respondents: one interview was conducted in the house in which the

respondent was hiding, another via mobile phone as the respondent was hiding from the authorities and did not want to disclose his location and, finally, another by mobile phone because the respondent was being held in the pre-removal detention in the hotspots.

In many cases, reaching asylum seekers after deportation was also extremely difficult, as they were immediately detained on arrival in Turkey and had their mobile phones confiscated. Moreover, neither the Greek nor the Turkish authorities were transparent in terms of the identity of the deportees or the time and date of the deportations. Our limited contact with deportees was established after they were released from the removal centres or were deported back to their country of origin. These connections were again possible through the key informants, who knew the respondents before their deportation and were able to trace their whereabouts.

Our desire to explore how refugees deal with liminality forced us to be mobile in our methodology. The objective was not only to understand how liminality had impacted on the daily lives of asylum seekers stuck on the islands, but also to learn how some asylum seekers contested their containment there and found a way out. We were inspired by the trajectory approach (Schapendonk et al., 2020). Although we did not physically follow people to Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and other countries, we reached out and conducted phone interviews with asylum seekers who were once on the islands but had moved on. As such, we did not restrict our interviews to one country, on the contrary, we were flexible and interviewed people who were actually staying in eight different countries. This flexibility helped us to obtain a fuller picture of what being stuck on the two Greek islands meant for migrant trajectories and also allowed us to include return in these trajectories. Most research on transit migration focuses on onward migration whereas our context of liminality resulted in considerable return migration too. The difficulty in getting access to Turkey as a field and, more particularly, to Turkish detention centres where migrants who are sent back from Greece are held also forced us to think in flexible and creative ways about how to conduct interviews. Overall, phone interviews were considered safer and the respondents felt more comfortable explaining their situation. Although we acknowledge that phone interviews do not have the same quality as face-to-face in-depth interviews, they at least made it possible for us to connect with a diverse representation of people who had sought asylum on the two Greek

islands—which would not have been possible otherwise due to the limitations of the project.

2.4 Asylum Seekers' Perceptions of the Deterrent Effect of Restrictive Policies

Restrictive policies are based on the assumption that those on the move are aware and able to understand changing policies (Crawley, 2010). Following this logic, a containment and deportation policy was thought to have a deterrent effect on irregular movements. In fact, one of the major stated objectives of the EU–Turkey deal and the hotspot system was to ‘stop irregular migration flows from Turkey to Europe’ (EP, 2016: 1).

After the deal, the number of arrivals dropped significantly due to Turkey’s intensified efforts to prevent irregular departures, controls on the Aegean Sea and relocation of people under refugee protection who were apprehended trying to cross to Greece from accommodation centres in eastern Turkey (EC, 2019: 46). However, since then, the numbers crossing have increased, with 43683 sea arrivals on the Greek islands only between January and November 2019 (UNHCR, 2019). Our interviews revealed that asylum seekers were often not aware of the EU– Turkey deal and the exact implications of these new policies. None of our respondents had reliable and accurate information about the situation in Greece. Only one asylum seeker said that he knew about the deal but still decided to take a chance and come. An Afghan refugee who was travelling with his four children recalled the night they arrived on Chios by boat:

When we arrived at the beach, some of us fell into the water, we were all very wet. We walked around for ten minutes until the police arrived. Then, they took us by bus to Vial [the hotspot camp in Chios] ... I didn’t know anything about the problems in Greece and nothing about the deal. We were just thinking that the EU is better than the war in Afghanistan. When we arrived, there was no war and no killing in Greece but there was something else, another problem. No-one was responding to our asylum claim and no-one was treating us like humans ... there were no human rights for refugees.

Like this family, many asylum seekers who arrived on the two Greek islands with the intention of moving on found that they were not able to exercise their right to seek asylum

in their desired destination and that they had to stay in the hotspot camps on the islands until their asylum process was complete. Thus, for all our respondents, applying for asylum in the Greek islands was instrumental and directed at the specific goal of not being deported back to Turkey while gaining time to look for alternative strategies. These results show the limited effectiveness of deterrence policies and the need for a bottom-up understanding of how asylum seekers on the move perceive and respond to such policies of containment.

2.5 The Experience of and Responses to Liminality on Lesbos and Chios

Many non-governmental organization (NGO) reports have shown the inhumane conditions in the Greek hotspots (HRW, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017; MSF, 2017). While the hotspots were supposed to be ‘temporary’, for those living there, the dominant feeling was of being stuck in a liminal space. As a Syrian refugee who had been in Chios for a year stated:

My mind is always exhausted. Living with people who don’t know what is their destination and who are stuck in this island, you can imagine, how the atmosphere is and how stressful it is.

Waiting was a recurring concept when the asylum seekers talked about their lives in the camps. They waited for food, for the toilet, for a doctor’s visit and for their medication, for a call from their lawyer, to be heard by officials and to be transferred. Waiting, coupled with feeling stuck, frustration, anger and anxieties were concepts frequently mentioned when asylum seekers described their experiences in the hotspots. While this situation led to psychological and physical problems among asylum seekers, passively waiting through this process was not their only option. Although they believed that nothing they did would have an impact on their asylum procedure, they continued with their lives, invested in language and vocational skills and/or looked for alternative strategies for escaping the islands.

2.6 Responses to Liminality

Our study shows that asylum seekers constantly resist the liminality imposed upon them by continuing with their daily lives, interacting with other actors in their migration field

and developing coping strategies. Mountz (2011) illustrates that, while ‘waiting’, life continues; marriage and childbirth, sickness, death, learning a new language and other survival strategies continue to occur. Therefore, the concept of waiting, here, is not considered a passive act but, on the contrary, as something actively experienced by those who are stuck. In the hotspots of Greece, asylum seekers who wait might incorporate this within their lives and actively choose between waiting—even if that means containment—and finding alternative pathways out of it. By resisting the state of liminality, refugees’ actions challenge the link between asylum and lack of agency. In other words, such refugee actions problematize the link between the deservingness of protection and waiting or moving on.

We found three important strategies through which people in the Greek hotspots coped with liminality: 1) moving onwards via irregular means, 2) negotiating vulnerability and 3) reinitiating movement after voluntary return/deportation. These strategies mostly focus on circumventing regulations. The first and most obvious is the emergence of a new irregular crossing route between the Greek islands and Athens. These can be either individual attempts or crossings enabled by a network of refugees acting as facilitators. The second is negotiating vulnerability in a bid to be transferred to the mainland via regular channels, which contributes to a system that prioritizes vulnerability over protection. The third is voluntary return as a way of reinitiating movement or moving on after deportation. In these cases, refugees opt for voluntary return not out of a direct desire to go back to their country of origin, but because such a decision enables them to ‘move on’. In the next section, we discuss these different strategies and the consequences for the deserving/undeserving dichotomy around asylum seekers in Greek hotspots.

2.6.1 Moving Onwards via Irregular Means

Many asylum seekers hoped to move on from Greece to a desired destination. Containment within the island did not seem to change their initial plan except in a very few cases in which they decided to settle in the islands. However, the risk of detention and deportation has led many to seek (irregular) means to move out of liminality.

Sayid is a 21-year-old Syrian man whom we met in a cafe’ close to the Souda camp on Chios. At the time of the interview, he had already been in Chios for 16 months. He had

a deportation order and was in the process of appealing. He was hiding from the authorities in order to avoid detention and deportation, and was thus able neither to stay in the hotspot camp nor to receive the monthly stipend given to asylum seekers. Believing that there was no future for him in Chios, he attempted twice to go to Athens, paying a smuggler 1400 dollars. He was caught each time by the police at the port of Chios and held in detention for 1 and 4 days, respectively. Other respondents attempted to move to the mainland by paying facilitators and, in some cases, succeeded.

According to our interviews and observations, access to these facilitators was fairly easy. Everyone knew how and where to find them, their different modus operandi and the prices charged. However, the challenge was whether or not they were able to afford to pay for an irregular crossing. For those who had exhausted their savings and/or those who could not risk losing their money, paying a facilitator was not an option. In some cases, asylum seekers had to choose between paying a lawyer or a facilitator—a difficult decision. While neither could guarantee protection, irregular crossing meant a faster way out than hiring a lawyer and appealing the negative decision. We also saw that, while most of the asylum seekers aspired to move on by whatever means were available to them, only a few had the financial capability to do so.

However, it is not only those who are at risk of deportation who consider crossing irregularly to the mainland; living in limbo and uncertainty, many others attempt to leave the islands by their own means, even though this results in their becoming even more vulnerable, as they lose their right to access asylum on the islands. One Iraqi asylum seeker who crossed to the mainland irregularly said that all his money was stolen in one of the transit cities. He could not go to the police and was not able to move on so had to return to Chios, from where he was subsequently deported first to Turkey and then to Iraq.

Our respondents argued that, despite the risk of detention or even post deportation, they would consider irregular ways to leave the islands. Those who had a social network and economic means were more likely to opt for this, as it did not depend on whether a person had a convincing asylum claim, received asylum status in Greece or was deported back to Turkey or their origin country. From their accounts, we know that almost all aspired to move on or return to Europe and that the main obstacle was money. In this way, the EU–

Turkey deal has not decreased, but increased, the avenues for irregular crossing, by creating a further border between the island and the mainland to be crossed irregularly.

2.6.2 Negotiating Vulnerability

Within the context of the EU–Turkey deal, being vulnerable relates directly to the deservingness of asylum seekers, as only those officially recognized as vulnerable are allowed to go to the mainland to complete their asylum procedure. However, vulnerability assessments carried out on arrival in the hotspots are inadequate due to the lack of medical actors and other staff, including interpreters, translators and lawyers providing legal assistance to correct procedural mistakes (DRC, 2017: 6). Moreover, in a system that prioritizes vulnerability over protection, some refugees opt to circumvent the existing law and negotiate their vulnerability so they can move on. To illustrate this, some women or couples may choose to have a baby not out of a direct desire to become parents, but because this might allow them a faster asylum process under slightly better conditions on the mainland. Another volunteer spoke of couples resorting to physical violence so that the women attacked and the mothers abandoning their under-age children could all be certified as vulnerable (Ghulam, 2019). Many others resort to self-harm in order to prove that their mental health is unstable. According to an MSF report (2018), there has been a significance increase in self-harm and suicide attempts by children on Lesbos as conditions in the camps deteriorate rapidly. Hansel (2017: 2), who wrote about the dire conditions in Lesbos, quoted a young woman from Afghanistan:

They say you can only leave Moria when you are vulnerable. So they force us to stay there until we are made vulnerable. This is crazy, no one can live in Moria; especially for women it is really dangerous.

One could say that, due to the politics of humanitarianism, there has always been an emphasis on vulnerability. In order to require protection, one needs to suffer, be vulnerable (Ticktin, 2011). As a result of this system, asylum seekers become further marginalized and more dependent on government and NGO aid. Emphasizing the fact that what makes refugees deserving of protection is their vulnerability, the system strengthens the representation of refugees as passive victims based on gendered assumptions. On the contrary, the narratives of asylum seekers show that they are able to

circumvent the law in order to negotiate their vulnerability and thus challenge the link between vulnerability and lack of agency.

2.7 Voluntary and Forced Returns

During our fieldwork, we met a couple of asylum seekers with genuine protection claims who opted for ‘voluntarily’ return to Turkey or their country of origin as a way out of the situation. The Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme is directed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with transit or origin countries. The official motto of the IOM is ‘to help migrants repatriate safely’. However, from our interviews, we know that refugees opted for this choice as a last resort and not willingly.

One year after their return, we were able to contact one family online who opted to return to Afghanistan ‘voluntarily’. At the time of the interview, Abed was in Kabul, Afghanistan, with his wife and three children. When he heard that we were contacting him from Chios, he immediately commented that it was no place for refugees to be. He explained why they decided to voluntarily return and how they were now regretting going back to Afghanistan because of the security issues they faced there:

Our decision to go back voluntarily was not made under normal circumstances. There was no food, no clean water. We had children and a baby, and Vial (the hotspot in Chios) was not an option to keep my baby alive... It [going back to Afghanistan] was the biggest mistake of our lives. Hundreds of people, civilians are dying every week. Maybe I will be the next one. I would like to go back to Greece where there is no war, no conflict and no firing of weapons.

However, the insanitary conditions in the camp were more pressing at the time of the decision-making, as they had a sick baby; if they had stayed there without proper treatment and medical care, they would have lost her. During the ‘voluntary return’, they were transferred to Athens and detained separately for 5 days—for Abed, these 5 days felt like 5 years. The IOM uses detention during transfers so that people do not give up on returning to their home countries and decide to stay on in the transit zone. The contradictory concept of having to detain a ‘voluntary’ returnee is an excellent illustration

of how involuntary these returns are. Refugees opt to go back not because of a real desire to return, but because they risk arbitrary detention, violence and deportation in the transit space and have little certainty about their future.

When the future and the possibility of incorporation into the host country are uncertain, those asylum seekers who cannot risk being stuck in the liminal phase for longer periods of time opt to return voluntarily. This is often a decision related to the wellbeing of their children. As Kohli and Kaukko (2017: 492) say, children who wait for prolonged and open-ended periods of time are at risk of long-lasting harm. For them, there is also the risk of never being fully incorporated into the host society. If those who stay in the liminal zone long-term maintain their feelings of frustration and anger, they may not be ready, even after receiving their refugee status, to be incorporated into the social life in the host country.

2.7.1 The 'Voluntary' Return of Syrians from Greece to Turkey and from Turkey to Syria

Thus far, there have been two separate return processes for Syrian and non-Syrian nationals. The latter were forcibly returned to Turkey and, immediately on arrival, detained in pre-removal detention centres before being deported to their origin country. On the other hand, Syrian nationals were able to voluntarily return to Turkey and were given the opportunity to either stay in the camp or move to a satellite city determined for them. However, they often struggled to register for their ID, access to healthcare, education and the labour market in these locations. While Syrians may register in any one of 81 cities, registration was temporarily suspended in 10 cities -including Istanbul and Hatay- by late 2017 (HRW, 2018). Once registered in a city, Syrians' mobility within Turkey is limited, as they can only travel to other cities with a special permit given by the government. Moreover, in practice, Syrian refugees can apply for a work permit, although only 38289 were issued by the end of 2018 (EC, 2019: 47) compared to 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees (DGMM, 2019).

Due to the consequences of suspended registration, lack of work and living in liminality, two out of five of our respondents returned to Syria. According to EC data, of 212 Syrians who returned voluntarily to Turkey, 16 decided to go back to Syria afterwards (EC, 2017:

6). For our respondents, the main reasons for returning to Syria were the extremely poor living conditions in the camps, the lack of job prospects or government assistance in the cities and difficulties in obtaining registration-ID cards.

Adnan is a Syrian refugee who arrived on Chios with his pregnant wife. They were detained in Vial and given no information about their asylum status. They were told by the authorities that, according to the EU–Turkey deal, they would probably be deported to Turkey. Adnan repeated that the problems in the camp -overcrowding, no adequate healthcare or shelter for his family and the lack of food- meant that there was no way for them to survive there. They lost hope and decided to go back to Turkey. There, they remained in a closed camp for 16 months and had their first baby. They could not afford to live in the city so they stayed in the camp until the authorities told them that it was closing. With no other plausible option, the family agreed to return to Syria and were taken to the border by the Turkish authorities, who left them to their destiny. At the time of the interview, the family was in Syria, under siege and fearing daily for their lives and those of their two children. They said how much they regretted their decision to go back to Turkey and Syria, and still aspired to go to Europe, where they thought they could find protection. However, it did not seem possible to cross the Syrian-Turkish border again with their small children.

2.7.2 Going Back to Europe after Forcible Return to Turkey

Non-Syrian nationals who are forcibly returned from the two Greek islands to Turkey are faced with severe problems such as immediate detention upon arrival, a lack of access to asylum in Turkey and unlawful deportation to their country of origin. At present, Turkey has 18 removal centres with a capacity of 8276 persons and aims to open another 16 by 2020 (EC, 2019: 46). However, the removal centres are not guaranteed to correspond to EU standards, especially regarding to access to legal counselling and the asylum process. Our respondents who were detained in removal centres were given no opportunity to apply for asylum. When they asked for international protection or legal assistance, it was denied because they had already been deported by ‘Europe’ so had no right to apply for asylum in Turkey. Furthermore, threatened with detention in Turkey for indefinite periods of time, they were forced to collaborate and sign voluntary-return papers. Some

respondents decided to collaborate and return, although they were afraid because they found the conditions and the prospect of staying in a detention centre unbearable.

From the limited number of people who were released in Turkey, only a few remained in Turkey while others returned to Europe and other countries. Abdul is a 16-year-old Afghan refugee. At the time of his interview, he and his younger brother had been in a shelter for unaccompanied minors in Germany for 2.5 months. Abdul and his family fled Afghanistan in 2016, running away from Taliban forces targeting the family. They arrived on Chios just as the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal had started. They were among those who were deported despite expressing their wish to seek asylum in Greece. Like them, many asylum seekers were deported to Turkey without their case being processed early in the implementation of the deal.

In Turkey, the family was detained in a pre-removal centre for 6 months before being released. As they had no economic resources or social networks in Turkey, they were forced to live on the streets and struggled to live with the help of relatives. However, as they saw no future for their children in Turkey, they wanted the two brothers to make the journey again, the prohibitive cost preventing them and their daughter from going with the boys. Abdul's family was rightfully worried, as the chances of irregular asylum seekers registering and accessing protection in Turkey is very low (Alpes et al., 2017; Ulusoy and Battjes, 2017). Turkey ratified the Geneva Convention with a geographical limitation -those who are from non-European countries are not granted refugee status. Instead, there is only partial protection status in Turkey- such as temporary protection for Syrians and subsidiary protection and conditional refugee status for individuals from other countries (LFIP, 2013). What is common among these protection regimes granted by the Turkish government is that they expect the protection holder to either repatriate or resettle in a third country; therefore, they do not implement any long-term integration policy.

Since September 2018, the Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management or DGMM has been the main institution determining refugee status; however international-protection applicants have significant difficulty in registering and obtaining ID due to backlogs and long waiting times (EC, 2019: 47). In 2018, Turkey granted international protection (conditional and subsidiary refugee status) to 72056 applicants (EC, 2019: 47–

48) compared to 370932 non- Syrian asylum seekers registered (46 per cent Afghans and 39 per cent Iraqis). Conditional refugees are required to live in one of the 62 satellite cities to which they are assigned (EC, 2019: 48), meaning their mobility within Turkey is limited. Like Abdul, another respondent went back to Europe after his deportation to Turkey from Greece—all our respondents expressed their wish to go back. The protection that was not granted for these respondents in Greece and Turkey was granted in other member states. In these and many other cases, the pursuit of safety and protection has become one of luck and not of legal claims.

Overall, being flexible in our methodology, not focusing solely on those who were stuck on the islands and following up with our respondents 1 or 2 years after the original interviews enabled us to gain in-depth insights into how people deal with liminality in Greek hotspots and what happens to those people who find a way to escape. Our data confirm studies that show that frustration and anxiety are common during periods of liminality (Brekke, 2004; Hynes, 2011; Mountz, 2011; Sutton et al., 2011; Kohli and Kauko, 2017) but we also witnessed an active period of waiting, in which the asylum application was, in some sense, instrumental and asylum seekers continuously sought alternative strategies. The narratives we collected thus challenged the link between asylum and lack of agency while making us reconsider the general assumptions on which restrictive policies are based. Not restricting ourselves to one country and reaching people at different periods of their journeys allowed us to see the bigger picture of the impact of EU restrictive policies, especially those related to the readmission agreements with third countries and the hotspot system. We saw that detention and deportation did not always deter asylum seekers from reaching Europe, but were seen as yet another challenge on their trajectories—challenges to which they actively responded in their search for the safety and protection to which they aspire.

2.8 Conclusion: Labelling Depending on How We Deal with Waiting

The literature on the decision-making of asylum seekers mostly focuses on their decision to leave the country of origin and motivation for a particular destination country. Work by Carling and Schewel (2018), Kuschminder and Koser (2016) and Schuster (2011) has focused on the decision-making process of individuals within asylum systems but mainly looks at how protection is understood by asylum seekers, the ideas they have on where

best to find protection, and which countries are preferred by asylum seekers and why. Our article looks at how a specific context of liminality impacts on decision-making, where access to information is limited and where conditions are so poor that leaving there becomes more important than thinking where to go next. These decisions -like voluntary return- are not rational or logical and are certainly not always what people prefer.

The asylum seekers we encountered on the two Greek islands continue to exercise a degree of agency despite the structural constraints imposed on them. During their stay, they learn about the regulations, recognition rates and vulnerability clauses, and meet with others who are further along in the process and who shed light on their future and possibility of accessing asylum in Greece. While some gave up and returned to Turkey thanks to this knowledge, for others, even being deported back to Turkey did not stop their journey and they travelled back to Europe and sought asylum in another member state.

These findings confirm the need to study people's trajectories in order to understand the paradox between increasing restrictive migration policies and migration itself. We saw that asylum seekers adopt and react to the structural limitations imposed upon them by restrictive policies. Without the narratives of asylum seekers at different moments of their trajectories, it would be impossible to understand the impact of policies and how asylum seekers challenge them. Thus, the trajectory approach allowed us to go beyond the limitations of traditional migration research that takes the nation state as its centre. Turton (2003) questions the tendency among humanitarian organizations to cast refugees as helpless, passive victims of circumstances—as the objects of interventions rather than the authors of their own lives. Even if the refugee experience is marked by compulsion, those living as refugees may participate in the shaping of outcomes and conditions in their lives while also negotiating new forms of identity and membership.

There is a tendency among politicians and media to portray refugees as either criminals or victims, depending on how they deal with the waiting. If an individual stays put and waits through containments, s/he is more probably an actual victim who needs the protection of the North. This assumption separates asylum seekers into two categories: those who move on as undeserving migrants and those who stay put as deserving refugees.

Our research questions the validity of this assumption by showing that there are a variety of strategies by which people cope with waiting, regardless of why they left their country.

Overall, our data shows that it was common to opt for crossing by irregular means for those who had the resources. Women and children were more likely to opt for the second option, which we identified as ‘negotiating vulnerability’, while those who were truly desperate and without any resources were likely to choose ‘voluntary’ return. Although there are many reasons for choosing one strategy over another, it is important to stress that the eligibility of the asylum claim was similar for all our respondents—in fact, they all claimed rightfully that they needed international protection. This is unsurprising considering that 90 per cent of arrivals on Greek islands are from refugee-producing countries such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan (UNHCR, 2019), though it is important to refute the common assumption that those who opt for alternative strategies are not genuine, undeserving asylum seekers.

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3. SETTLED OR STUCK: ONWARD MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS OF SYRIAN REFUGEE MEN WITH PRECARIOUS LEGAL STATUSES IN TURKEY

Tunaboylu M. S., [Settled or Stuck: Onward Migration Aspirations of Syrian Men with Precarious Legal Statuses In Turkey](#), submitted to Journal of Refugee Studies on 18 December 2020, in review process

Abstract:

This article focuses on the daily experiences and onward migration aspirations of Syrian men with precarious legal status living in urban areas. Based on in-depth interviews with Syrian refugee men who live and work in Istanbul without registration, I explore the impact of precarious legal status on their migration aspirations. While majority of Syrian refugees are registered with Turkish authorities, a large number is estimated to leave their registered cities for work purposes despite they lose their right to access basic services and risk arrest. The findings show that for those with precarious legal status, lack of formal employment, uncertainty, fear of deportation and no long term perspectives have led to onward migration aspirations. These problems were often linked to a feeling of being stuck within their life course and an onward migration was not only perceived as spatial - moving to another place - but also *temporal* - transitioning the next chapter of their lives -.

Keywords: Migration Aspirations, Refugees, Syrians, Turkey, Precarious Legal Status

3.1 Introduction

By the beginning of 2020, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey reached over three and a half million (DGMM, 2020) and while some aspire to settle in Turkey, others aspire to move on (Kuschminder et al., 2019; Müller-Funk, 2019; Hess and Heck, 2017). In 2015, over 800,000 people made the crossing from Turkey to Greece, the majority of them Syrian nationals (UNHCR, 2020). In response, in March 2016 the European Union made a deal with Turkey to control, deter and return irregular arrivals (EP, 2016). According to the deal, Turkey was to increase its efforts to prevent irregular departures, strengthen maritime controls and expand ‘relocations’ of refugees who were apprehended at the sea border to accommodation centres in Eastern Turkey (EC, 2019a). At the same time, 1,762 people were deported from the Greek islands to Turkey and 18,640 Syrians were resettled from Turkey to EU member states under the deal’s one-for-one scheme (EC 2019a: 46).

After the EU-Turkey deal was struck, the increased cost and risk of an irregular crossing to Europe (Kuschminder et al., 2019) as well as the possibility of containment in the Greek islands and deportation to Turkey have affected the ability of refugees to move on to Europe. However, several studies conducted after the implementation of the deal have shown that the aspirations to migrate to the EU have remained high among refugees in Turkey (Kuschminder et al., 2019; Müller-Funk, 2019; Hess and Heck, 2017). In fact, some refugees have continued to reach Europe since the EU-Turkey deal: only in 2019, almost 75,000 people made the crossing from Turkey to Greece irregularly (UNHCR, 2020). At the same time, many others who aspire to move on have found it impossible, and thus have become ‘stuck’ in Turkey. Several studies have looked at the impact of being stuck or ‘stuckedness’ (Khan, 2013; Stock, 2013; Hage, 2009) and feeling trapped (Bhugra, 2004). Also conceptualized as involuntary immobility (Carling, 2014) or forced immobility (Stock, 2013), stuckedness is a crucial concept in helping us understand the daily experiences of refugees in transit and their future migration decisions.

This article is exploring migration aspirations of Syrian refugees with precarious legal situation in Turkey. Pinedo Caro (2020) estimated that 38.9 percent of all Syrian refugees registered under temporary protection (1,196,894) live in provinces other than the ones where they were initially registered by the authorities. However, once moved outside of

their registered province, Syrian refugees lose their right to basic services such as healthcare and education for children, and face arrest and deportation (European Commission, 2018). Many of those who move out of their registered cities for work are refugee men who are traditionally expected to assume the bread winner role and work away from home, while women are expected to do so at home (Pinedo Caro, 2020). In fact, the percentage of Syrian men working are much higher (81%) than of those women (13%) mainly due to the unequal employment rates and conditions of informal work (Pinedo Caro, 2020). While research on refugee vulnerability often focus on women and children, few studies show particular changed refugee men face such as the emotional and financial pressure of a global breadwinner role (Stoll and Johnson, 2007) as well as challenges to their idea of masculinity under the context of existential uncertainties (Carpar and Yaylaci 2021 and Jaji, 2009), for example men who cannot perform their traditional role because of poverty and unemployment.

This article focuses on these Syrian men who live and work in Istanbul precarious legal situation. So far studies focusing on the impact of precarity for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants highlighted the uncertainty and instability of their situation and how the precarious status shape their experience in terms of exposing them to exploitative work, poor housing conditions, lack of access to healthcare and education (Baban et al., 2017). Studies argue that temporary protection status for Syrian refugees in Turkey is a precarious one as it does not guarantee any long term settlement prospects such as acquiring citizenship or residency as well as being resettled (Ustubici, 2019, Baban et al. 2017) which also referred as permanent temporariness (Icduygu, 2019). This precarity is further increased with the mobility restrictions, as those who move from their registered province out of necessity are forced into irregularity, which exposes them to exploitation and marginalization (de Genova, 2002, de Genova 2017, Ustubici, 2019) as well as to differential inclusion when protection and services are not guaranteed by rights (Baban et al., 2017).

This research focuses specifically on this often invisible group of mostly young Syrian men in order to understand the impact of precarious legal status in their lives and their future migration aspirations. Migration aspirations are important to understand as they may have an impact on future migration flows and they affect how refugees interact with

their current environment thus the wellbeing of refugees and host society (Carling, 2019). However, onward migration aspirations in Turkey so far have been studied based on data collected mostly on Syrian refugees under temporary protection (Kuschminder et al., 2019, Müller-Funk, 2019, Hess and Heck, 2017). As a hard-to-reach population, studies focusing on those who are unregistered or registered in another city than the one they are currently living are limited. Therefore, this article addresses this gap in the literature by looking at the impact of precarious legal status on onward migration aspirations.

This article makes three main contributions to the migration field. First, limited research has been carried out on how migration decisions are made within a context that is extremely dynamic, with policies changing rapidly, and poor access to information. The article addresses this gap by looking at the impact of the EU-Turkey deal from the perspective of refugees themselves through a case study of Syrian men in Istanbul. Secondly, this analysis opens a path to understand how migration aspirations are formed in transit while incorporating *temporality* into the analysis. Finally, it gives refugees a voice in order to understand their gendered experiences and perceptions to better inform refugee-oriented policies. Understanding the experiences and perspectives of refugees is an important, yet neglected area of policy making.

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 The Externalisation of EU Asylum Policies and Gender

Over the past 25 years, the European Union's migration governance has been externalized (Spijkerboer, 2018), meaning that border management has been transferred to third countries (Üstübcü, 2019) with the aim of preventing migrants, including asylum seekers, from entering the jurisdiction of the destination countries (Frelick et al., 2016). The externalisation of EU migration policies, also known as "remote control" (Zolberg, 2003), targets third country nationals in bordering countries (Lavenex, 2006) and encourages increased border controls and sometimes the readmission of third country nationals in exchange for financial, political and/or logistical support (Frelick et al., 2016). These policies often encourage readmissions between the third country and country of origin

(Hyndman and Mountz, 2008) as well as the Europeanization of migration and asylum in these third countries (İçduygu, 2007).

Externalisation has been an essential part of the EU's response to the increase in refugee arrivals in Europe since 2015 (Üstübcı, 2019; Spijkerboer, 2018), with its main instrument being the EU-Turkey deal. This aims to stop irregular crossings by curbing the motivations to migrate through (1) external funding that aims to improve the conditions for refugees in Turkey, and (2) border control and enforcement that increases the cost and risk of irregular migration. The former is implemented through the largest EU external investment ever: the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (EP, 2016). A primary component of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey is the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) cash transfer programme, which is worth over one billion euros and has reached 1.7 million Syrian refugees as of 2020 (WFP, 2020). The rest of the investment is distributed to support longer-term socio-economic and educational perspectives (EC, 2019b). The latter part of the deal has required a twofold plan: not only does the deal encourage increased border controls in Turkey, but it also deems Turkey a 'safe third country' to which refugees can be returned (Frelick et al., 2016).

These policies reflect the gendered externalisation policies of the EU: camps and urban spaces where asylum seekers are immobilized and passive in the south are feminized, while refugees who move on to the north are seen as a threat and represented in masculinist terms (Hyndman and Gilles, 2011). In this case, the EU-Turkey deal claims to protect and reward refugees who stay in Turkey, presenting them as deserving of protection (Tunaboylu and van Liempt, 2020); conversely, it problematizes those who move on to Europe as undeserving of protection, politically dangerous and self-interested (Hyndman and Giles, 2011).

3.2.2 The Impact of Externalisation Policies on Refugees and Migrants

While the externalisation of migration policies is increasingly being adopted by destination countries (mainly the EU, USA and Australia), a growing literature questions its impact on different migrant groups (Üstübcı, 2019). The effects of externalisation policies for migrants are multifaceted and highly complex, as they do not only affect

migration from the transit to destination countries, but also result in: (1) a state of involuntary (or forced) immobility (Carling, 2014; Collyer, 2007), (2) immigrant illegality (De Genova, 2002; Schuster, 2011; Menjivar and Kanstroom, 2014), (3) an increased risk of violence against migrants (Menjivar, 2014; Collyer, 2007) and (4) an unequal burden on the bordering countries (Stock et al., 2019; Frelick et al., 2016).

First, externalisation policies not only result in selective mobility, by separating migrants based on deservingness (Sigona, 2018), but also in forced immobility for those who aspire to migrate but cannot (Stock et al., 2019; Carling, 2002; Collyer, 2007). Second, these policies have resulted in the production of massive “immigrant illegality” in the United States and Europe (De Genova, 2002; Schuster, 2011; Menjivar and Kanstroom, 2014) as they force refugees into irregularity, which exposes them to exploitation and marginalization (de Genova, 2002; de Genova, 2017; Ustubici, 2019), as well as to differential inclusion when protection and services are not guaranteed by rights in the transit country (Baban et al., 2017). Third, several studies show that increased policing and enforcement of the rules in transit countries result in violence against migrants by making them vulnerable to robbery, rape, and even murder (Collyer, 2007; Menjivar, 2014) as well as by increasing the cost and risks of making crossings (Massey et al., 2016). Finally, externalisation policies have been criticized for creating unequal burdens for bordering countries (Frelick et al., 2016) and transferring the moral responsibility for migrants’ well-being to transit countries (Stock et al., 2019).

3.2.3 Externalisation Policies and Aspirations for Onward Migration

Studies show mixed results about the effectiveness of externalisation policies in reducing refugees’ aspirations and abilities to migrate. The EU-Turkey deal aims to reduce these aspirations by improving conditions in Turkey through the cash transfer programme and better healthcare and education, as well as by increasing the cost and risks of travelling, through stricter border controls and enforcement. However, studies carried out years after the EU-Turkey deal was implemented show that refugees still aspire to migrate (Kuschminder et al. 2019; Lea-Müller, 2019; Heck and Hess, 2017). Other studies show no evidence that humanitarian aid decreases aspirations to migrate. In their comprehensive review of studies about the impact of cash transfers on individual and

household propensity to migrate, Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2012) found that unconditional cash transfers actually increased international migration (Ardington et al., 2009; Inder and Maitra, 2004; Poset et al., 2006; Sienaert, 2008 and Sienaert, 2007, cited in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine 2012) by providing additional income, and allowing the elderly to stay at home to take care of children while adults migrated for work opportunities elsewhere (Poset et al., 2006, cited in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine 2012).

On the other hand, the EU-Turkey deal aims to make it more difficult for migrants to make irregular crossings by increasing border controls and readmitting those who have already reached the Greek islands. The implementation of the deal has seen the number of crossings indeed dropping significantly and the cost and risk associated with crossings increasing (Kuschminder et al., 2019). As a result, many people have changed their initial plans and while some refugees decided to stay in Turkey longer, others opted for different routes (Heck and Hess, 2017). In their comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of migration policies, de Haas et al. (2018) conclude that while restrictive policies tend to decrease migration, they often have substitution effects, such as a changes in travel routes and/or timing of migration; these unintended effects limit the effectiveness of such policies.

3.2.4 Aspirations, Temporality and Stuckedness

Scholars who have worked on the intersection of time and aspirations (Hage, 2009; Stock, 2013) argue that when people are faced with involuntary (or forced) immobility in which their aspirations to migrate are repressed, they feel a sense of ‘stuckedness’. This stuckedness not only reflects restricted mobility, but also an existential problem, since people need to have a sense of going somewhere throughout their lives (Hage, 2009: 1). However, stuckedness has become normalized in the discourse of a crisis, and people are expected to ‘wait it out’ (Hage, 2009: 2).

When refugees do not wait it out but make an active choice to move on, they are labelled as migrants who are undeserving of protection (Hyndman and Giles, 2011). However, research shows that refugees who experience this stuckedness in the liminal zones of

transit often find coping strategies to ‘move on’ rather than wait it out (Tunaboylu and van Liempt, 2020). In her research on migrants in Morocco, Stock (2013) argues that when faced with stuckedness, onward migration becomes a necessity rather than choice. Many will end up wasting another couple of years of their lives, but it may be the only way to move forward (Stock 2013).

Building on the literature, this study illustrates how EU externalisation policies relegate refugees in transit to spaces of liminality, which shape their aspirations to migrate or to stay. Often, aspirations to migrate are studied in their relation to space. For example, Carling (2014) introduced the concept of spatial aspiration where aspirations are linked to a certain space. I extend this view by arguing that migration aspirations are not only spatial but also *temporal*. Refugees in liminality construct a new form of aspiration, where the aspiration to migrate is linked to a particular period in the evolution of their lives.

3.3 Methodology

The fieldwork for this article took place between September and December 2019 in Istanbul, Turkey. Before the fieldwork took place, all methodology and ethical considerations, including personal data protection, a risk assessment and a management plan were submitted and approved -approval no:128- by the Institutional Committee for Ethical Review of Projects (CIREP-UPF).

During the fieldwork, 24 in-depth interviews were conducted with Syrian refugees regarding their current living situations, migration experiences, aspirations, and perceptions of Europe. This paper focuses on Syrian men with precarious legal status who live in Istanbul. Diversity was achieved through multiple entry points. Interviewees were chosen using key informants who are active in the Syrian refugee communities in different neighbourhoods and by snowball sampling from the participants. Although the sample is non-random and does not aim to be representative, the snowball sampling method was chosen to increase chances of reaching hidden populations, such as unregistered refugees, smugglers and deportees: this would have otherwise been impossible. An Arabic-English translator was present during the interviews.

Of the participants, 19 were in Istanbul, two were in other cities in Turkey, one had recently arrived in Greece and two were back in Syria. The interviews in Istanbul took place in cafes or parks near the participants' accommodation in three different Istanbul neighbourhoods: Fatih, Esenyurt and Gazi Osman Pasa. These neighbourhoods host high numbers of refugees (Elicin, 2018) and are poorer and more disadvantaged than others (Basu and Ascı, 2020). However, the neighbourhoods differ in terms of socio-economic position and quality of life. Gaziosmanpasa and Esenyurt have a very low quality of life, while that of Fatih is ranked the highest of the three neighbourhoods (Seker, 2015). Participants in Gaziosmanpasa and Esenyurt were more vulnerable, often lacked proper documentation and worked informally; participants in Fatih had somewhat more stable incomes and social networks. Including different neighbourhoods in the study thus helped increase diversity in terms of the background of the participants. In order to increase diversity in terms of migration experiences, an additional five telephone interviews were conducted with Syrians outside Istanbul, including: a Syrian refugee on his way to Europe, a Syrian refugee working as a smuggler in Izmir, and a Syrian refugee who recently crossed to the Greek island of Lesbos. Finally, I interviewed two Syrian refugees who were deported from Istanbul to Syria in August 2019 and who were in Syria at the time of the interview.

Of the nineteen participants who were in Istanbul at the time of the interviews, three were university students, another three were unemployed, twelve were working without work permits and only one was employed officially. Ten participants had completed at least primary school, while nine had completed high school. The majority of participants (fifteen) came from rural areas in Syria. Twelve had been in Turkey for between one and three years, while seven were in Turkey between three and six years. Seventeen stated that they wanted to move on to Europe and two said that they wanted to settle in Turkey.

3.4 The Role of Legal Precarities on Migration Aspirations

Since 2013, there have been several legal and administrative improvements, including the introduction of Turkey's first comprehensive Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2013), the establishment of the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) as a separate institution to oversee the field of migration, the introduction of

the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) to regulate the situation of Syrian refugees, and the Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection (2016). Under the new legal framework, Syrian refugees are protected from refoulement and have access to residence permits, basic services such as education and healthcare and may receive work permits. However, there are still many shortcomings.

The daily lives of young Syrian men interviewed in Istanbul were rendered by difficulties of their precarious legal status. During the interviews, problems related to temporary protection status were cited as the key reason for wanting to move on, and included: a) the *temporal nature* of the temporariness protection status, b) restricted mobility within Turkey, c) lack of access to formal employment, d) lack of access to education and healthcare, e) fear of deportation and f) safety.

Despite the legal limitations, these young men exercised agency and in most cases moved from their registered city to find ways to work and support their families, despite this had places them into irregularity. Once they arrive in Istanbul, they found work and accommodation often through their social network, friends and acquaintances who work and live in Istanbul in similar legal status.

However, after spending up to years in this situation, they started to feel ‘stuck’ within their lives, and breaking this liminal phase has become the next challenge often overcome by dreams of moving onwards to Europe. Not only conditions in Turkey but also perception of Europe in general and countries like Germany, UK, Sweden in particular were perceived as places that provide education and work opportunities and respect diversity and human rights. These perceptions were often shaped by family and friends of the respondents who live in these countries.

Participants commonly described that an uncertain future, current and expected changes towards more restrictive policies, not being able to travel within or outside Turkey and the limited opportunities to obtain a residence permit or citizenship meant that they could not plan ahead and invest in their future. In fact, this was the main reason that many participants gave for their aspirations to move on to Europe, a place where they believed they would be able to continue with their studies or work and build a life.

3.4.1 Temporal Nature of the Temporary Protection Status

First of all, the *temporal nature* of the temporary protection status means that there is no guarantee of long-term residence or citizenship opportunities for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Temporary protection holders can only access naturalisation through marriage to a Turkish citizen or through an exceptional circumstance procedure. Citizenship under exceptional circumstance is granted on the basis of certain profiles and criteria such as skills which could benefit Turkey. However, Syrian nationals cannot apply for this type of citizenship themselves. Instead, the government chooses who will be granted this type of citizenship, but with no clear regulations. In general, citizenship is granted to highly qualified Syrians, but the numbers remain very low: the Interior Minister stated in January 2019 that there were 53,099 naturalised Syrians in Turkey; this number includes persons who arrived with residence permits prior to 2011.

Thus, the temporary protection regulation hinders the integration process (İçduygu, 2018) and creates a feeling of uncertainty about the future, since it is an “ambiguous status” that can be terminated at any time at the discretion of policy makers (Üstübici, 2019; İğneli-Ciğer, 2015). The limitations derived from the temporary protection status put strain on Syrian refugees’ personal and professional lives. Even for the participants who were registered in Istanbul, the uncertainty and temporary nature of their status was a cause of constant anxiety.

Mohammed, a 24-year-old Syrian man who came to Turkey in 2013, said that he had initially planned to stay in Turkey for five or six months and then return to Syria. As it is, he has been living in Turkey for the past six years. Once he realized that he could not go back to Syria, he wanted to move on to Europe. However, he was not able to save enough money to do so, since he was taking care of his mother and sisters. Even though he is registered with temporary protection status in Istanbul, since he arrived in Turkey he has worked without a work permit, cannot continue his studies due to lack of finances, and fears an uncertain future and deportation; all of this has made him consider onward migration:

‘I don’t like the temporary protection status because by name it is temporary so I can never feel relaxed and safe as long as it is called that... We left the war to come to a situation that is even harder. Now, no one is accepting us, no one wants to hire Syrians to avoid problems as we do not have work permits. So it is very difficult to find a job.’

Out of nineteen participants who were in Istanbul at the time of the interviews, seventeen wanted to move on and only two wanted to stay in Turkey. Of those who wanted to move on, only six were registered in Istanbul, nine were registered in another city and were residing in Istanbul irregularly, and two were not registered at all. The two participants who said that they wanted to settle in Turkey were both registered in Istanbul and studying at the university. Other research has emphasized that refugees want to move on from Turkey due to the temporary nature of their status and the uncertainties created by the restrictive policy framework (Kuschminder et al., 2019; Müller-Funk, 2019 & Baban et al., 2016).

3.4.2 Restricted Mobility

The mobility of Syrian refugees is restricted to the province they are registered in, so those who chose to live in other provinces for work or family reasons become irregular. Although initially, Syrian refugees could register in any of the 81 Turkish provinces, as of 2016, eight cities including Istanbul and Hatay no longer accept new registrations, barring exceptional circumstances (HRW, 2018). Consequently, the Syrian refugees who arrived in Istanbul for work reasons after 2016 reside irregularly in Istanbul. This means that they cannot access basic social services such as healthcare and education and are at risk of being detained and deported to the registered province or in some cases to Syria (AI, 2019).

Temporary protection status and restricted mobility can be analysed by De Genova’s concept of illegality. De Genova argues that when they are illegalized, migrants lose control over their labour (de Genova, 2002; de Genova, 2017; Ustubici, 2019). The refugees who live in Istanbul participate in the informal economy, although they have been stripped of all the rights provided by temporary protection status. Most participants

in this study were either registered in another city or not registered at all, which meant that they had to live and work in Istanbul irregularly. As a result, the risk they ran of detention and deportation was further exacerbated.

Mahdi is a 25-year-old Syrian man who arrived in Turkey in 2017. He is registered in another city and working in a factory in Istanbul. Because of legal uncertainties and fear of deportation, he wants to leave Turkey. Over the past few years, he has twice approached a smuggler, but in both cases, the cost was too high for him. He now lives between his house -which he shares with other Syrian men- and his workplace:

‘We can’t even walk to our job on the main street, we have to take the side streets to go to work and life is becoming more and more difficult.’

Many respondents explained that they only travel between work and home, and on Sundays, their day off, they prefer to stay at home; or if they have to go out, they stay very near their houses. This is a common experience for many Syrian refugees working irregularly in Istanbul. In fact, in a recent survey Müller-Funk (2019:24) found that most Syrian refugees found a way to adapt to the mobility restrictions, often preferring irregularity over living in a province where finding a job or being with their families was impossible.

3.4.3 Lack of Access to Formal Employment

Syrian refugees mostly rely on government aid or informal employment for their livelihoods, as access to work permits is extremely limited - only 20,000 work permits had been issued as of March 2018 (Üstübici, 2019). This is due to several reasons, including not being able to register with authorities in Istanbul where most work is to be found, the fact that only employers can apply for work permit for employees and have little incentive to do so, and that many jobs (such as dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary work, law etc.) cannot be practiced by foreigners in Turkey. The lack of economic opportunities in Turkey is a key factor in motivating onward decision-making, since Syrian refugees are often employed in the informal market, have to work long hours and are open to being exploited by their employers (Kuschminder et al., 2019).

Of the participants who wanted to move on, the majority (thirteen) were working without a work permit and two were unemployed due to the recent increase in government inspections, and had no source of income. Only one was working formally as he found a job through United Work, an NGO funded by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development. Another was a student at university and the main source of his income was the ESSN cash transfer.

The obstacles to working legally are a cause of significant anxiety among the respondents. Temporary protection with no legal work means that they live under the fear of deportation and do not see any future for themselves in Turkey. These conditions make refugees open to exploitation: they work long hours in unsafe job environments for less than the minimum wage, and they struggle to receive their salary from employers that have no legal obligation towards them. As Mahdi (a 25-year-old Syrian man) explained:

‘I work in a factory that produces paint products. The factory owner does not respect any of our rights, but we have no choice. We work long hours and it is a very hard job. I told the factory owner that he should ask for a work permit for us. But he told me that those were his terms and if I did not want to work under his terms, I could leave. But we have no other choice because policemen regularly come to other factories - we cannot work there; this factory is safer. When the police come to our factory, the boss gets us to leave by the back door then we come back after the police leaves.’

3.4.4 Fear of Deportation

Fear of deportation was a very common source of anxiety for Syrian refugee participants who lived and/or worked irregularly in Istanbul. As De Genova (2017) argues, *deportability* - the constant fear of deportation among migrants with precarious legal status - exposes them to further exploitation and marginalization.

The Syrian men interviewed for this research were increasingly worried about being deported, especially after the summer of 2019, when many Syrian nationals- all men - were arrested in Istanbul and deported back to Syria (AI, 2019). Indeed, a study with

refugees who had already left Turkey found that the fear of deportation was a particularly important reason for moving on (Kuschminder et al., 2019).

I interviewed two Syrian men who were arrested in Istanbul in August 2019 and who were deported to Syria. They were both registered with Turkish authorities in another city, but they were living in Istanbul so that they could work in a factory. They were arrested by police in Istanbul in July 2019 on separate occasions. Both argued that the police detained them for several weeks and forced them to sign voluntary return documents.

Ahmad is a 26-year-old Syrian refugee who had been living in Turkey since 2015. He was registered in another city but he came to Istanbul to find work. In July 2019, on his way home from work, he was stopped by the police. Despite having his *Kimlik* (temporary protection identification document), he was arrested and detained at the police station. He was then deported to Syria without being able to collect his belongings:

‘Once I was arrested, the police forced us to sign some papers. They told us that we had to sign, that we had no choice, that they would make us sign if we refused. They wrote in Arabic: “I have the choice and I want to return to Syria.”, but it was not my choice. I told them that I was not going to sign it and that I needed a lawyer. Then, they brought four policemen, grabbed my hand, and made me stamp my thumbprint. I stayed in detention for one month. I could not contact anyone outside, they did not allow us to call anyone. Inside we were mostly Syrians and in each room, there were about 12 people.’

He was deported to Syria by bus with 30 other people. He said that most people in the detention centre had the *Kimlik* but were registered in another city and they were all forced to sign voluntary return papers. They did not have access to legal aid or lawyers, and they were told by the police that they were not wanted in Turkey and would be deported.

‘From the beginning, they kept saying that we were Syrian and that they did not want us there, that the war was over so we should go back to Syria. All of them said the same thing, from the people who arrested us to the prison workers.’

3.4.5 Lack of Access to Education and Healthcare

Lack of access to healthcare and education are two important reasons for Syrian refugees wanting to leave Turkey. For example, those who work and reside in Istanbul without temporary protection status do not have access to social services such as education and healthcare. Furthermore, even those who are registered under temporary protection status face barriers to accessing healthcare (Kuschminder et al., 2019) due to lack of knowledge of the system, prejudices in the healthcare system and language. According to Muller-Funk (2019) insufficient healthcare, especially for those with chronic conditions, was cited as the top reason for leaving Turkey, followed by imagining a better future and education opportunities in Europe.

It is important to note that access to education is also not straightforward in Turkey due to administrative and legal problems as well as refugee households' financial difficulties. For example, in extreme cases, some families may opt to send their children out to work instead of going to school as a coping strategy due to lack of income (Kuschminder et al., 2019). The World Food Programme (WFP) survey (2020: 26) with refugees in Turkey confirms that many families resort to withdrawing children from school to take up some form of work and thus contribute to household finances.

For the young men interviewed in this research, education was one of the primary reasons behind their aspirations to leave Turkey. They wanted to be able to gain the skills that they needed to have the future they imagined for themselves. Many wanted to continue studying, but since they had to work to make a living and take care of themselves and send money to their families, they were not able to continue their education.

Youssef is a 24-year-old Syrian man who arrived in Turkey in 2014, thinking that he would stay three or four months and then would go back to Syria to continue his studies. He has now been in Turkey for six years, during which time he has not been able to continue his studies and has always had to work without a permit. He attempted the crossing to Greece twice but both attempts were unsuccessful:

‘I wanted to study, but in Istanbul you have to work all day for your food and rent, and then you have no time to do anything else. I feel like I am doing nothing with my life. For the first year in Istanbul, I was back to normal. I felt comfortable but since then, I started to feel afraid of the police and other people... I am scared to look at the future. Before, I made plans for the next two three months to do this or that. Now I cannot think about the future; instead I go to sleep...’

3.4.6 Security Concerns

Finally, while refugees were initially considered as guests in Turkey, in recent years hostility and tension has increased. Many participants gave accounts of direct and indirect discrimination faced while working or using public spaces. These experiences have made it harder for refugees to integrate into Turkish society.

For many, all these issues led them to think about moving onwards to Europe, where they believed that they would be welcomed by a more open society. Although the culture in Europe is considered radically different, there is a belief that people can be themselves there, without being harassed. Ayham, a 30-year-old Syrian man who arrived in Turkey in 2016 and was preparing to make the crossing to the Greek islands at the time of the interview argued that he had difficulties integrating into Turkish society:

‘I’m afraid for my family. We escaped the war to find a safe place and we don’t want to feel unsafe again. I feel unsafe, for me and my family, because of the tension here and because whenever any incident happens, they generalize (blame Syrians in general...). Europe hosts various cultures, people from all over the world, and they accept other cultures more than here.’

3.5 *Settled or Stuck*

Aspiring to move on with their lives but being unable to do so damages refugees’ personal growth and potential and puts their lives on hold. As one participant described, it is impossible to move on with your life when you are irregular and working in an informal

job. There is no opportunity to grow, to be promoted, or to integrate. All these factors prevent Syrian refugees from moving on with their lives, planning and achieving major life goals that come naturally to others, such as graduation, job promotion, marriage and raising children. As argued in recent studies, not being able to achieve core life aspirations becomes a reason to move on, with migration behaviour influenced by the hope for a better future somewhere else (Lea-Müller, 2019; Koikkalainen and Kyle, 2016; Kuschminder, 2018). The aspiration to leave Turkey and go to Europe gives people the hope that one day they can achieve these life goals.

It is also important to note that not all Syrian refugees in Turkey aspire to move on. Some aspire to return to Syria one day due to emotional attachments, family and friends (Müller-Funk 2019: 18). Müller-Funk (2019) argues that many Syrians would like to go back to Syria but this is based more on wishful thinking rather than on a concrete aspiration, as it depends on Syria returning to a pre-war situation of normality. Studies show that some refugees who did not aspire to move on argued that moving on to Europe would cost them another few years of their lives, as they go through the process of requesting asylum and learning a new language, and finish studying for/gaining a vocational qualification (Müller-Funk, 2019; Kuschminder et al., 2019). Schewel (2015) categorizes this as acquiescent immobility, where people do not aspire to migrate regardless of their abilities. This category could include people who lack the ‘capacity to aspire’ to migrate such as the most disadvantaged communities, or people who have all incentives to migrate however do not do so because of non-economic values, such as family (Carling and Schewel, 2018).

For example, Rottman and Kaya (2020) in their fieldwork with refugees in Turkey in 2018 found that many of the participants hoped to remain in Turkey despite the legal and social problems they faced. Over time, their participants, unlike the ones in this study, developed a sense of home, because people appreciated a cultural and religious closeness in Turkey as well as similar gender norms. According to Rottman and Kaya (2020), cultural and religious values, as well as family, play a significant role in migration aspirations: their participants often articulated that they did not want to move to Europe as it would have a negative impact on their children’s upbringing. Since the participants in my study were mostly young single men, their perception of Europe was different.

They repeatedly said that Europe, although culturally and religiously different, was more welcoming than Turkey and had a history of tolerance towards difference.

I found that individual aspirations were complex, depending on age, gender, household characteristics, and time spent in Turkey. In particular, young single men who had been in Turkey longer and felt stuck aspired to move on, while those who lived with their families and had stable incomes and social networks had hopes of settling there. Those who were the most desperate were attempting to go to Europe, or were already on their way there. In a recent survey with refugees in Turkey, Muller-Funk (2019:22) also found that many people who aspire to stay in Turkey had ‘capabilities to stay’ in Turkey, meaning that they were politically neutral, managed to generate sufficient income, and did not suffer from chronic health problems.

3.6 The EU-Turkey Deal and Onward Migration Aspirations

The border controls erected through the EU-Turkey deal have hampered the ability of refugees to reach Europe. They have also increased the risk and cost of the crossings that do take place. Nevertheless, the majority of participants interviewed said that they were still aspiring to make the crossing to Europe, even if they did not have the funds to do so yet. Some people said they changed their minds after border controls were increased, making it more difficult to make the crossing. One person said he changed his mind at the last minute because he was afraid to make the journey with his family.

However, those who were sure about their decision to move on argued that, despite the deal and being aware of the risks of the crossing and the possible containment in a camp on the Greek islands, they were still going to make the crossing to Greece. They also knew of opportunities for being smuggled from the islands to the mainland. As one of the respondents said: ‘I won’t leave Turkey to be stuck in a camp on the islands’.

The benefits of the deal seem to be scant for the type of participants interviewed in this research. Only one of the respondents benefited from monthly cash transfers under the ESSN programme funded by the Facility for Refugees, and he argued that it was still not enough to survive. The rest of the respondents were either not eligible or did not apply.

Citizenship seemed to be a lottery rather than a right. Resettlement was considered even more impossible than getting citizenship.

In sum, refugees face multiple challenges in Turkey. Based on the interviews, the greatest vulnerability suffered by the refugees is their uncertain legal status, since this determines their employment status. The difficulty of obtaining stable employment in an already precarious labour market traps vulnerable groups in a vicious circle that makes the social and economic integration of refugees in Turkey almost impossible while preventing them from moving forward with their lives.

3.7 Conclusion

By exploring how refugees perceive policy changes and respond to them, this article sheds light on the complex decision-making processes behind refugees' aspirations for onward movement. The main data of this article comes from in-depth interviews with refugees, based on the idea that listening to the experiences and perceptions of refugees themselves is crucial in informing better – and refugee-oriented - policies (BenEzer and Zetter, 2015).

I have drawn on the literature about hope, waiting, aspirations, time, legal liminality, illegality, and deportability in order to explain the everyday experiences and onward migration aspirations of refugees in Turkey. This interdisciplinary discussion has led to an argument that refugees with a precarious legal status who face illegality and deportability have created a new form of *temporal* aspiration where they hope to migrate elsewhere as a way to move forward in their lives.

By linking the aspirations with externalisation policies, I was able to answer the question in the title: Settled or Stuck? While policy changes were mentioned in relation to migration aspirations, we have seen that individual aspirations were complex depending on age, gender, household characteristics, and time spent in Turkey. While young single men, especially those who had been in Turkey longer, aspired to move on and felt stuck, those who were living with their families and had a stable income and social network

were planning to settle. Those who were the most desperate were finalising plans to go to Europe or were already on their way there.

The EU-Turkey deal, and the externalisation policies of the EU in general, are a result of negotiations between Turkey and Europe and have a volatile nature. When we look at the refugees' experiences, it is obvious that such policies limit access to a fair asylum procedure, adequate shelter, education, healthcare, and employment, and in some cases violate the non-refoulement principle. Without systematic national and international monitoring, there is no accountability regarding what happens to those who are on the road and are stuck in these liminal transit zones within nation states.

Both Turkey and the EU must share responsibility for considering refugees' interests and safeguarding them. Including refugees' own voices in their representation is crucial to safeguarding Europe's common values and human rights. Legal pathways to long-term prospects in Turkey as well as access to Europe are both essential in order to achieve the wellbeing of refugees and the inclusive and sustainable economic growth of host countries.

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4. SYRIAN REFUGEES' ONWARD MIGRATION DECISION MAKING IN TURKEY: THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET (ESSN) CASH TRANSFER

Tunaboylu M. S., Rajabzadeh I. and Kuschminder, K. **Syrian Refugees' Onward Decision Making in Turkey: The role of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) cash transfer**. This article will be submitted to the journal of World Development.

Abstract

Approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees live in Turkey, and close to 1.7 million of them receive cash transfers through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme. This study looks at the role of receiving unconditional cash transfers on refugees' aspirations to migrate onwards. It uses data from face-to-face surveys of the World Food Programme–Turkey, Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise (CVME), carried out in May/August 2017 and September/November 2017. We use the propensity score matching method and compare households that receive ESSN with non-beneficiaries as counterfactuals. Once we have controlled for individual and household characteristics and resources, current living conditions, economic status, migration status and duration of stay, we find that in the short term, there is no statistical support that the ESSN programme might have an impact on refugees' aspirations to stay in Turkey or to move on. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first quantitative paper to measure the impact of unconditional cash transfers on the onward migration aspirations of a refugee population in a host country.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, Turkey, cash transfer, aspirations, onward migration

4.1 Introduction

Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world: roughly four million people. The majority of them are 3.6 million Syrian refugees, many of whom have been in Turkey for several years as the crisis has become more protracted. In 2015, the so-called refugee and migration crises in Europe, during which more than a million migrants arrived in the EU over a matter of months, prompted the EU and Turkey to set up the Joint Action Plan (JAP) in November 2015; this was the precursor to the EU–Turkey Statement that came into force on 20 March 2016. The main objective of these policies was to stop the flow of irregular migrants into Europe and at the same time to improve conditions for refugees in Turkey through the largest EU external investment ever: the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (EP, 2016).

A primary component of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey is the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) cash transfer programme, which was introduced in November 2016 (Cuevas et al., 2019). This is the largest individual humanitarian project ever funded by the EU, with a budget of €998 million (European Court of Auditors, 2018). The objective of the ESSN is to support the most vulnerable refugees through a monthly cash transfer. Beneficiaries receive 120TL (roughly €12) per person each month to meet their basic needs, with additional quarterly top-up payments based on household size (WFP Market Bulletin, 2019). Research has demonstrated that the ESSN helps keep families out of extreme poverty (WFP Turkey Country Office, 2020). However, due to the high unemployment rates and low wages encountered by refugees in Turkey and the increasing cost of many commodities such as energy consumption, it is becoming increasingly hard for ESSN support to meet the true scale of need (WFP Market Bulletin, 2019, Kuschminder et al., 2019).

Research conducted in 2015, before the EU–Turkey Statement came into force, demonstrated that Syrian refugees in major Turkish cities such as Istanbul and Izmir primarily aspired to migrate onwards from Turkey (Duvell, 2018; Kuschminder and Koser, 2016). Reasons for this included poor living conditions, lack of employment and education opportunities, and experiences of discrimination. The implementation of the

JAP led to tightened border controls and surveillance along the Turkish coastline, as well as raids on beaches, guesthouses and factories that produced dinghies and lifejackets (Duvell, 2018). Leaving Turkey suddenly became even more difficult. Nandram (2019) found that the cost of migrating from Turkey to the Netherlands increased from an average of €3189 per person in the period before the EU–Turkey Statement to an average of €5313 after the EU–Turkey Statement. Research has demonstrated that for many Syrians in Turkey the EU–Turkey Statement did not diminish their aspirations to leave Turkey, but did reduce the capacity of people to move on, thus rooting them in place (Tunaboylu & van Liempt, 2020, Kuschminder et al. 2019, Hess & Heck 2016).

In this paper, we specifically examine the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme and its relationship to Syrian refugees' aspirations to stay in Turkey or to move on. It is important to understand migration aspirations, since they relate to humanitarian and development initiatives for three reasons. First, migration aspirations can have implications for migrants' behaviour and well-being (Carling, 2019). For example, if a migrant aspires to leave, they may not engage in integration activities that are important for their development. Second, migration aspirations can be a potential indicator of future migration flows, in the case of migrants eventually being able to realize their aspirations (Carling, 2019). Third, migrants' involuntary immobility, i.e. their aspirations to leave and inability to do so (Carling, 2002), may have negative consequences for their human development and potentially that of those around them. The relationship between migration aspirations and humanitarian and development initiatives is unclear. It is possible that receiving a cash transfer might increase migration aspirations, reduce aspirations, or not have any effects on this decision.

Therefore, our paper aims to analyse whether there is a relationship between receiving the ESSN and Syrian refugees' aspirations to stay in Turkey or to move onwards. By doing so, this article contributes to the literature by first addressing the significant gap in understanding refugee journeys during transit (Kuschminder, 2018), and second, by proposing the novel approach of combining three different aspects of cash transfers: (1) their unconditionality, (2) their targeting of refugee populations in the host country, and (3) their impact on onward migration aspirations. We test the relationship between unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) and refugees' aspiration to migrate onwards by using

the secondary survey data of 1,019 Syrian refugees in Turkey collected in May/August 2017 and September/November 2017 by the World Food Programme–Turkey.³

In the next section of this paper, we further examine the literature on cash transfers and migration, recognizing that there is a dearth of literature that specifically addresses the role of unconditional cash transfers and refugees’ aspirations to move on. At the end of the section we explore this relationship further and establish our hypothesis statement. The following section of the paper details our data and methodology, which is followed by descriptive statistics, our results, a discussion and our conclusion.

4.2 Literature Review

4.2.1 The Role of Cash Transfers on Refugee Populations

The EU (counted as the member states together with the EU institutions) is the world’s biggest humanitarian and development assistance provider (Temprano Arroyo, 2019:12) and most of its humanitarian aid targets either refugees’ host countries or their countries of origin (Temprano Arroyo, 2019:14). This humanitarian aid has been an essential part of the EU’s response to the increase in arrivals of refugees to Europe since 2015 (Lanati and Thiele, 2018) and most of this financial assistance, including the ESSN cash transfer programme, has focused on meeting the basic needs of Syrian refugees in their host countries, such as rent, transport, bills, food and health expenses.

Cash transfers are increasingly being adopted as part of poverty reduction and social protection strategies in low-income and middle-income countries (Bastagli et al., 2016), with over 130 countries adopting at least one unconditional cash transfer (UCT) programme. These programmes are considered an effective way of meeting the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations (Bailey and Harvey, 2015). In the case of the EU, the UCTs that target refugee populations in the origin and host countries also intend to reduce refugees’ aspirations to migrate to Europe. Temprano Arroyo (2019) argues that this works in two ways: firstly, the refugees’ economic opportunities are increased and thus their incentives to migrate are reduced and secondly, refugees’ motivations to

³ We combined the two data sets which will be explained in detail under the methodology section.

migrate are diminished by raising their disposable income and thus increasing the opportunity cost of migration.

Cash transfers can have a positive social and economic impact for beneficiaries. Studies show that cash transfers can help the targeted populations by improving well-being (Haushofer and Shapiro, 2013), nutrition and human capital (Aguero et al., 2006), by boosting health and educational outcomes (Marinescu, 2018) –for example promoting dietary diversity–, and by improving use of health services and levels of school attendance among children (Bastagli et al., 2016). Cash transfers also help improve strategic livelihood choices and stimulate productive investments (Fisher et al., 2017) as well as reducing self-perceived stress and other poverty indicators (Bastagli et al., 2016; Hjelm et al., 2017).

Several other studies that have focused on the impact of cash transfers specifically for refugees in the host countries have also shown positive results. For example, research conducted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Turkey showed that cash transfers provided important material and psychological support to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees (DRC, 2016). Hagen-Zanker et al. (2018) also found that cash transfers for Syrian refugees in Jordan reduced stress and anxiety among the beneficiaries.

However, studies looking at the impact of cash transfers highlight the need for long-term solutions, including a broader enabling policy environment for refugees (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2018). Jacobsen and Fretzke (2016:15) further elaborate that for livelihood strategies such as cash transfers to be successful, these programmes have to be supported by advocacy efforts to improve the policy environment, including access to legal status and work permits. Cash transfer programmes can be seen as a bridge between humanitarian aid and long-term development objectives. However, little is known about the more far-reaching, longer-term impact of cash transfer programmes on refugee populations (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2018).

4.2.2 Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers and Onward Migration Aspirations

While there are several studies that look at the impact of cash transfers on migration decisions, these studies show conflicting results in terms of the relationship between cash transfers and international migration trends. Some studies suggest that cash transfers might increase migration by providing financial means (Angelucci, 2012 & Posel et al., 2006), and others show that cash transfers might decrease migration by weakening the motivations to migrate (Behrman et al., 2008 & Stecklov et al., 2005). When looking at the relationship between cash transfers and migration aspirations, it is important to understand the difference between conditional and unconditional cash transfers. Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes give money to beneficiaries in return for them fulfilling specific conditions, e.g., their children attending school. These conditions might affect migration decisions differently to unconditional cash transfers, where money is given without any requirements, allowing the recipient the freedom to choose how to spend it.

If we look specifically at conditional cash transfers (CCTs), half the studies argue that access to conditional cash transfers (CCTs) increases international migration (Angelucci 2004, Angelucci, 2011 & Azuara, 2009, cited in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine, 2012), while the other half show that they decrease international migration (Behrman et al., 2008, Stecklov et al., 2005 & Da Mota, 2008, cited in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine, 2012). The first set of studies argue that CCTs may not be considered sufficient to meet household needs and may be used to finance migration, and the second set of studies suggest that CCTs may reduce migration in the short term due to school attendance or other conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to receive the cash transfers. Therefore, it is not clear whether cash transfers decrease migration by improving conditions, and thus reducing incentives for migration, or by restricting individual choices through the imposition of conditions (Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine, 2012:3).

When it comes to the impact of unconditional cash transfers on migration decisions, Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2012) analyse five studies that focus on one of the most fully researched unconditional cash transfer (UCT) programmes: the Old Age Grant in

South Africa. All five studies conducted on this grant confirmed that receiving the grant increased international migration (Ardington et al., 2009, Inder and Maitra, 2004, Poset et al., 2006, Sienaert, 2008 and Sienaert, 2007, cited in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine, 2012) by providing an additional income and allowing the elderly to stay at home to take care of children while adults migrate to find work opportunities elsewhere (Poset et al., 2006, cited in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine, 2012).

Temprano Arroyo (2019) explains this by emphasizing the difference between humanitarian and development aid. He argues that humanitarian aid is likely to help economic growth and facilitate migration by financing potential migrants. On the other hand, development aid funds healthcare, education and governance, and can improve non-financial aspects of well-being that are behind migration aspirations (Temprano Arroyo, 2019). Therefore, a mixed aid strategy is essential, i.e. one that combines both short-term cash transfers and development aid, with the latter focused on improving public service, governance, and rural development (Temprano Arroyo, 2019; Lanati and Thiele 2018; Hagen-Zaker et al 2018). This type of combined strategy is needed to enable refugees to settle rather than move on.

While these studies provide arguments related to the links between migration decisions and cash transfers, this article contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of the unconditional cash transfer programme in Turkey on Syrian refugees' aspirations to stay in Turkey or to migrate onwards.

Based on the literature review, we would expect a cash transfer programme to have either a positive or a negative effect on Syrian refugees' aspirations to move onwards from Turkey. It could either provide financial means to fund onward migration (Angelucci, 2012 & Posel et al., 2006) or it could provide additional income and reduce their motivations to migrate (Behrman et al., 2008 & Stecklov et al., 2005). Therefore, in this paper, we test if there is a relationship between the ESSN cash transfer programme and onward migration aspirations of Syrian refugees in Turkey. We do not make a formal hypothesis regarding the relationship, as the literature review demonstrates the effect can go in opposing directions. We use propensity scores –the conditional probability of receiving a treatment given pre-treatment characteristics– for matching ESSN beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (those who did not apply for ESSN or those who

applied to ESSN and were deemed ineligible) to determine if there is any significant difference in their aspirations to stay in Turkey or to move on.

4.3 Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Several studies conducted before the EU–Turkey deal went into force showed that most refugees in Turkey aspired to move on to Europe (Koser and Kuschminder, 2016; Duvell, 2018). Many of those aspirations had turned into concrete migration plans and in 2015 alone, nearly 800,000 refugees (roughly half of them Syrian) arrived on the Greek islands from Turkey, something that eventually resulted in the EU–Turkey deal. After the deal, the heightened controls on the sea border and the increased cost and risk of crossing (Kuschminder et al., 2019), as well as the possibility of containment on the Greek islands and deportation back to Turkey, have all made it more difficult for refugees to move onwards to Europe. However, the deal did not have the same impact on refugees’ aspirations to migrate onwards. According to Heck and Hess’ ethnographic research in Turkey in spring and summer 2016 (2017:37), many of their respondents expressed “a sense of feeling trapped in limbo” as a result of the EU–Turkey deal; while some had to postpone their migration plans, others decided to travel, and to use different routes to try and access the EU.

Since 2013, there have been several legal and administrative improvements made in Turkey. These include the introduction of the country’s first comprehensive Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2013), the establishment of a Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) as a separate institution to oversee the sphere of migration, the introduction of the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) to regulate the situation of Syrian refugees, and the Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection (2016). However, despite these efforts, many of the reasons behind the refugees’ aspirations to leave Turkey have remained relevant. Under the temporary protection regime, Syrian refugees are protected from refoulement and have access to legal residency as well as basic services such as education and healthcare. However, there are many shortcomings in the current policy framework, and aspirations to leave Turkey still remain strong for many Syrian refugees (Kuschminder et al., 2019).

Studies have shown that most common problems faced by Syrian refugees in Turkey are related to the temporary protection regime that they are granted. The temporary protection is considered an “ambiguous status” that leaves refugees’ futures uncertain, and without any long-term guarantees and prospects (Üstübici, 2019). Another major problem it entails is related to mobility restrictions. Syrian refugees cannot leave their satellite city –where they are registered with the DGMM– without a special travel permit. In 2018, Human Rights Watch reported that 9 cities including Istanbul suspended the registration of Syrian refugees for temporary protection barring exceptional circumstances (HRW, 2018). This means that many Syrian opt for irregularity over living in a province where they cannot find a job or be with their families (Müller-Funk, 2019). In fact, lack of access to formal work is often cited as a problem and amongst the main reasons that refugees want to leave Turkey (Kuschminder et al., 2019). Despite new regulations regarding work permits, access to formal employment is still very limited. According to the Turkish authorities, by the end of 2019, the number of work permits issued to Syrians was around 100,000 (EC–Turkey Country Report, 2020); this is a very low figure compared with the 3.5 million Syrians living under temporary protection status (DGMM, 2020).

Similarly, access to education and health care may also be a factor behind Syrian refugees’ onward migration aspirations. On the one hand, Syrian refugees living under temporary protection status have access to public healthcare services free of charge throughout Turkey. Surveys show that health expenditures are low and that many Syrian refugees do use the services for sick children and adults (Doocy and Leidman, 2019 & WFP, 2020). On the other hand, access to healthcare was cited as one of the reasons for wanting to leave Turkey, especially for those with severe health issues (Müller-Funk, 2019; Kuschminder et al., 2019). Doocy and Leidman’s (2019) analysis argues that households with a disabled or chronically ill member have higher health expenditures and were significantly more likely to report borrowing to meet their basic needs, which could explain higher aspirations to move on.

Likewise, access to education is not straightforward for Syrian refugees in Turkey, and in extreme cases of lack of income, some families may opt to send their children to work instead of school as a coping strategy (Kuschminder et al., 2019). The WFP report (2020: 26) shows that many refugee households withdraw children from school to take up some form of work and thus contribute to household finances. Overall, 13% of boys and 3% of

girls under 15 are working. Lastly, Syrian refugees increasingly face security concerns and conflicts with locals in Turkey. Based on the interview data with refugees who have left Turkey, exploitative and discriminatory practices and threats of violence were cited as of the main reasons to leave (Kuschminder et al., 2019).

It is also important to note that not all Syrian refugees in Turkey who aspire to move on want to go to third countries. Some aspire to return to Syria one day. WFP (2020: 14) reported that almost one quarter of Syrians of those who planned to move on wanted to go home, whereas this was less than 1 percent for other nationalities. Studies have explained that this due to emotional attachments, family and friends who still live in Syria; however, these aspirations to return were conditional on life in Syria returning to normal (Müller-Funk, 2019: 18). Finally, most still aspired to stay in Turkey despite experiencing one of several problems that we have listed above. It is important to understand the reasons given by those who aspire to move on since these constitute such a large group: 24% of Syrian refugees in Turkey said they planned to move on according to the WFP survey of a representative sample (WFP, 2020). Refugees' aspirations have an impact on their daily lives and the way in which they interact with their current environment including their social, economic and political participation in the host country. Moreover, once the aspirations are transformed into actual migration plans, they have an impact on future migration trends.

4.4 Data and Methodology

For this study, we first conducted a literature review on the role of cash transfers and migration aspirations, and then analysed the “Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise” (CVME) data collected by the WFP in Turkey in two cycles in May/August 2017 and in September/November 2017, the year following the implementation of the ESSN programme. An identical sampling methodology was used for both cycles. Using the ESSN beneficiary lists, 30 clusters (neighbourhoods) with the highest probability of ESSN beneficiaries living there were selected. The total number of interviewees per neighbourhood was 20 households, yielding a total sample size of 600 households per cycle. Of the 20 households, eight had ESSN beneficiaries, eight had applicants who had been deemed ineligible, and four were households that had not applied for the ESSN. Due to data privacy, only a list of eligible candidates was available to the WFP. Therefore in

addition to the ESSN beneficiaries being randomly selected from the ESSN list, snowball sampling was used in each neighbourhood for ineligible applicants or those who had not applied for the ESSN. The results confirm that the two cycles were very similar in terms of demographic characteristics. Therefore, for our analysis we can typically assume that the surveys had a similar framework and measurement error characteristics (Elliott et al., 2014), and allowed for a pooled approach in which the individual records from both surveys were combined and the estimation was based on the pooled sample and using the original weights (Roberts & Binder, 2009).⁴

The survey question that most interests us is: “Does your household plan to move from Turkey?” and “If so, where?” with the options of 1= Europe, 2=Back to home country⁵, 3=Canada/USA and 4= Other. Questions on migration aspirations can be posed in multiple ways, by including the following as considerations: preference, willingness, necessity, intention, plan, expectation or likelihood (Carling, 2019). The question formulation in the WFP survey fits the category of a *plan* to move onwards from Turkey, which “typically implies more specific thoughts about how and when to act” (Carling, 2019: 12). While this question reflects the migration aspirations of the refugees, it clearly does not reflect any actual movement.

We observe that while some households receive the ESSN, others do not. However, a simple comparison between these two groups’ plans to stay in Turkey or to move on would be problematic. This is because other unobserved variables, such as individual and household characteristics and resources, current living conditions, duration of stay in Turkey and legal status could also be correlated with their plans to stay or to move on. Therefore, to test the relationship between receiving the ESSN and refugees’ aspirations to move on, we use propensity score matching and compare households that are alike in all respects except being a beneficiary of the ESSN programme or not.

Any standard treatment effect analysis should start from a counterfactual in order to infer the outcomes for treated groups were they not to be treated. Since the data does not

⁴ As a robustness check, the analysis is also carried out within each survey sample separately. The results are very similar to the result of the combined data.

⁵ For the purposes of this research, we removed from the sample the respondents who plan to return to Syria.

include a pre-test control group, a quasi-experimental method would be appropriate in order to analyse the effect of cash transfer programmes. We apply Rosenbaum and Rubin's (1983) approach of using a propensity score –the conditional probability of receiving a treatment given pre-treatment characteristics– for matching groups:

$$p(X) \equiv Pr(D = 1|X) = E(D|X)$$

where $D = \{0,1\}$ is the indicator of being an ESSN beneficiary or not, and x is the set of pre-treatment characteristics.

This simple non-parametric estimator⁶ is used to select a sample of the most comparable counterparts, which can provide counterfactual information to reflect what the treated group's outcome would be if they had not received the treatment. In this way, we allow for observable heterogeneity between participants and non-participants, also correcting for selection bias arising from differences between the two groups.

A Propensity Score Matching method (PSM) follows several steps: separating the treatment and control groups, identifying the conditioning covariates, calculating the propensity scores using those covariates, creating the matching groups based on their propensity scores (PS), and finally, choosing a matching method to estimate the average treatment effect on the outcome (to be precise, the average treatment effect on the group being treated). If we know the propensity score for each member of the population $P(X_i)$, the Average effect of Treatment on the Treated (ATT) can be estimated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \tau &\equiv E\{Y_{1i} - Y_{0i} | D_i = 1\} \\ &= E[E\{Y_{1i} - Y_{0i} | D_i = 1, p(X_i)\}] \\ &= E[E\{Y_{1i} | D_i = 1, p(X_i)\} - E\{Y_{0i} | D_i = 0, p(X_i)\} | D_i = 1] \end{aligned}$$

Where Y_{1i} and Y_{0i} are the potential outcomes (respectively) of an ESSN beneficiary and a non-beneficiary.

We used two categories of conditioning variables for the matching algorithm. The first group was based on the theoretical background, where we identified five dimensions that might affect people's aspirations to move on (following Kuschminder, 2017). The first is individual and household characteristics and resources such as age, gender, health, origin, and education level. The second is the respondent's current living conditions in Turkey

⁶ Having a broad set of conditioning variables can make the matching process more difficult. Therefore, a simple estimator such as propensity score could be a suitable approach.

which includes housing quality, school attendance, sickness and experiences of insecurity. The third is economic status, including income type and category such as skilled, casual and seasonal. The fourth is migration status, that includes the variables of being registered with the DGMM and receiving the ESSN or not. The fifth and final dimension is time: how long refugees have spent in Turkey since they first arrived. The second set of variables corresponds to the ESSN targeting criteria: the number of children in the household, whether there is a single parent, or a single female parent, and household vulnerability.

For each subsample, we use a Probit regression model to estimate the propensity score (PS) as the predicted probability of treatment (ESSN beneficiary or not), conditional to the observed covariates (Austin, 2011).

For the final step, we needed to decide whether to perform a match with a replacement while implementing the matching process; this offers a qualitatively better match. Here we use different estimators in which all matches are performed with a replacement: this means each treated individual can be matched to the individual closest in similarity more than once. The first estimator is a kernel-based match using a bootstrap algorithm to obtain bootstrapped standard errors. “With Kernel matching, all treated units are matched with a weighted average of all controls. Weights used are inversely proportional to the distances between the propensity scores of treated and comparisons” (Becker & Ichino, 2002). Secondly, we use the nearest neighbour matching method, in which each treated member is matched with the member in the control group that has the smallest propensity-score distance from them. We also compare the results with radius matching and with the stratification method. In the first method, using a predefined neighbourhood (radius), each treated member is matched with control members whose PS is within the radius of the treated PS. In the stratification method, different intervals of the propensity score are introduced so that within each interval, the treated and control units have, on average, the same propensity score. Then the average outcomes of the treated and control group are compared within each interval.

All the estimators are used to analyse the effect of the ESSN programme within different categories such as individual and household characteristics and resources, current living conditions, economic status, migration status and duration of stay.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics

Studying the background characteristics of the Syrian respondents (Table 1)⁷ who would like to stay in Turkey compared to those who plan to move on to other countries shows that of the total 1,019 respondents, the majority would like to stay in Turkey (885 families). Thirteen percent (134) plan to continue their migration journey. Descriptive data show that 5.9 percent of all families are single parents and that 19.8 percent of the heads of household are female. The majority of the interviewees are from rural areas in Syria (52.2%) and their ages range between 26 and 40 (47.5%) or 41 to 59 (35.7%). Most of the refugees interviewed have been in Turkey for between three to six years (55.6%). Around 80 percent of the family members are registered with the Directory General of Migrant Management (DGMM), and over 30 percent of all the refugees are current beneficiaries of the ESSN programme. More than 84 percent have not been able to work over the previous 30 days, and around 39 percent are not happy with their current housing situations. Around 41 percent have family members with special needs, such as someone who is chronically ill, a pregnant or breastfeeding woman, or an elderly person who cannot take care of themselves.

Most participants are interested in staying in Turkey, and only 13.2 percent of families plan to move to other countries, especially within Europe (55.4%). Although the total percentage is relatively low, if the data were to be considered representative of the Syrian population in Turkey, it would represent approximately 475,000 people. When we look at the descriptive statistics of those who want to move on, we see differences in individual and household characteristics and resources. Plans for migrating onwards are observed more for families with secondary or higher education, skilled professions, and households with sick or vulnerable members. The findings also show that single parents are more likely to plan to move to other countries, as well as those who have not been able to work over the previous month.

In terms of current living conditions in Turkey, four variables were examined. First, it is unsurprising that among those who want to move on from Turkey, the majority consider their housing situations bad (61%). Second, respondents who have at least one child who

⁷ Tables and figures are at the end of this chapter.

did not attend school over the previous year were more likely to plan to move on from Turkey (14% compared to 11%); the rest either did not have children or if they did, all their children attended school. Third, respondents who had at least one sick member in their household were more likely to plan to move on from Turkey (16%) than households where everyone was healthy (10%). Fourth, among those who plan to move on, there were no major differences between those who experienced insecurity in Turkey and those who did not. This contrasts with other studies that show that suffering discrimination and insecurity is an important factor in onward migration decision-making (Kuschminder, 2017). Overall, the majority of those who plan to move on experience problems regarding access to adequate housing, education and healthcare.

In terms of employment, of those who plan to move onwards, the majority receive a regular income (46%) followed by those with a temporary income (37%); the rest either had no income (10%) or a seasonal income (7%). There are also variations according to income categories. The majority of those who plan to move on are from households with casual labour as their primary source of income (38%), followed by skilled work (31%), then followed by ESSN assistance (16%).

When we look at the respondents' DGMM (Directorate General of Migration Management) migration status, we can see that most of those registered with the DGMM plan to stay in Turkey (85.9%). Similarly, of those whose registration is pending or who are not registered, the percentage who would like to stay in Turkey is very high (around 91%). However, when comparing the percentages of the people who would like to move on in these three categories, one can see that of the registered refugees, 14% would still like to move on to other countries, and for those whose registrations are pending or who are not registered, this is around 10%.

In addition, descriptive statistics show us that of those that plan to move on, compared to the beneficiaries of the ESSN cards, the majority did not apply for the ESSN programme (31.34%) or were found ineligible (38.06%). It seems that the beneficiaries of the ESSN are less likely to want to move on compared to the non-beneficiaries (13% compared to 14%), although this was not statistically significant.

When we analyse the temporal element of the refugee journey, we see that the majority of the refugees who are planning to move on are respondents who have been in Turkey for over three years (56%), followed by one-to-three years (38%) and less than 1 year (5%). The descriptive statistics show that, of those who have not been in Turkey for very long (less than one year), 9.5% are planning to move on, while this percentage is around 13.5% for those who have been in Turkey for over one year. Although the difference is not significant, this might indicate that those who have lived there one to three years or three to six years are more likely to move on than the new arrivals. This again contradicts the general assumption that a person who has stayed a while in the host transit country is more likely to stay to live there long term (Kuschminder, 2017). One explanation for this could be that Syrian refugees who have been in Turkey longer, but with no prospect of a long-term solution such as work permit, residency and citizenship, might aspire to move on more than others.

In summary, the descriptive profiling indicated that the majority of Syrian refugees planned to stay in Turkey; however, there were differences in onward migration plans based on temporality, current living conditions, employment, and legal status. The next section will further examine the relationship between receiving the ESSN and Syrians' migration aspirations to move onwards from Turkey.

4.6 Results

Table 2 presents the probit model results that were used to estimate the propensity score conditional to the covariates, such as the main characteristics of the households and the sets of variables used for the ESSN targeting criteria. The propensity score models' sole purpose is to match and balance the treated group with the control group. We do not use it for causal statistical inference (Heckman and Navarro-Lozano, 2004) or for estimating the likelihood of migrating onwards (Tran et al., 2012).

Figure 1 depicts the propensity score distribution and the common support range. As a result, 19 of the respondents, whose estimated propensity score is above the maximum or below the minimum propensity score for the control group, are dropped from the matched

sample (Smith and Todd, 2005). The results of the matching test show that the balancing property is satisfied. The Dehejia and Wahba balancing test shows that the observable characteristics between the treated and control groups are not systematically different (Appendix A1). The t-test in mean differences for each covariate after matching also confirms that the difference between the two groups is not significant (See Appendix A2).

We proceed with a kernel-based matching algorithm, using the bootstrap option to get bootstrapped standard errors. For the robustness check, we compare matching estimates using radius matching (with a radius of 0.05), nearest-neighbour matching, and stratification matching.

Table 3 shows the estimated average effects (AEs) on the decision to continue the migration journey. The AEs of the ESSN programme ranges from -0.004 to -0.02. While the negative sign shows that this programme can negatively affect the decision to migrate onward, the t-statistics in Table 3 show that this effect is not statistically significant. The results from the endogenous treatment effect model are comparable to the matching estimates in Table 3. Table A3 (appendix A3) presents the AE of the ESSN programme, which is also negative but not statistically significant.

Further analysis of the AEs within different categories, such as the province the respondent is living in currently, income categories, different age groups or the educational level of the respondent's parents shows no robust effect of the ESSN programme on the attitude towards onward migration, and only in one of the provinces (Sanliurfa) it seems that the AEs are robust and significant. Table A4 (appendix A4) displays a summary of this analysis.

4.7 Discussion

Once we control for individual and household characteristics and resources, current living conditions, economic status, migration status and length of stay to date, we find no systematic differences in Syrian refugees' plans to move onwards in relation to being beneficiaries of the ESSN programme in the short term. The evidence presented contrasts

with the findings of earlier studies, which show a positive or negative correlation between receiving unconditional cash transfers and onward migration.

One explanation for why the ESSN programme did not increase refugees' aspirations to move on in the short term may be related to the rather low value of the transfer. The ESSN programme provides its beneficiaries with 120 TL (12 euros) per person per month. Taking account additional quarterly top-ups based on household size, this goes up to 133 TL (14 euros) per person per month on average across a year. By the end of 2017, the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) cost for refugees was equal to 1.962 TL per month for a six-person family household –based on the average size of refugee families– (equating to about 327 TL per person) (WFP Turkey – ESSN Market Bulletin, 2017). According to the WFP (2017) refugees are able to generate 133 TL per person through their own means. The ESSN cash transfer covers only 71% of the estimated gap between MEB cost and refugees' own income generation. Ever since the economic slowdown that began in summer 2018, increasing price levels for commodities and high (formal and informal) unemployment rates, the gap between MEB cost and the sum of average generated income through refugees' own means and ESSN support continues to increase, causing households to resort to other coping strategies, such as incurring debt (WFP Turkey- ESSN Market Bulletin, 2019). Therefore, the amount paid out in cash transfers may be too low to be considered as a way to eliminate financial constraints and permit households to fund onward migration costs that are currently approximated at over €5000 per person (Nandram, 2019).

The low value of the cash transfer could also be a potential explanation for why receiving the ESSN did not decrease the refugees' aspirations to move on –in the short term–, as it may be too insignificant to change refugees' plans from those of moving onwards to settling in Turkey. The recent studies looking at why Syrian refugees want to leave Turkey and migrate onwards to Europe show multiple reasons that cannot be altered by accessing this cash transfer. Among these reasons, the most frequently cited were the problems associated with temporary status, anxieties related to an uncertain future, the difficulties in obtaining a residence permit or citizenship, fear of detention and deportation, exploitation of labour and restricted mobility within the city they were registered in, as well as problems related to accessing healthcare, especially for those with severe health conditions, access to education, security reasons and conflict with locals

(Kuschminder et al.; 2019, Müller-Funk; 2019, Heck, G. and Hess, S.; 2019; Rygiel, K. et al., 2016). Clearly, the cash transfer cannot overcome these challenges. Moreover, more recent trends show that the number of Syrians who wanted to leave Turkey increased dramatically from 2018 (10%) to 2020 (24%), mainly as a result of the economic slowdown, since 69 percent of the beneficiary households planning to move out of Turkey live below the poverty line (WFP 2020:13).

This leads to another and potentially more important explanation regarding why the ESSN alone does not have an impact on the migration aspirations of refugees. The literature shows us that migration aspirations are very complex (Koser and Kuschminder, 2016), especially in transit countries –here understood as a third country that hosts a migrant who aspires to move on– and we cannot expect one intervention to significantly affect the ever-changing decision-making process regarding onwards migration.

4.8 Conclusion

This paper carries out an analysis of the impact of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) unconditional cash transfer programme on aspirations to migrate onwards for Syrian refugees in Turkey. This case is important, since Turkey is the largest global host country of refugees and the ESSN is the largest cash transfer programme for refugees ever implemented. It presents a significantly different model of refugee hosting through social protection that is within the community, versus the large-scale and widely ineffective refugee camp model that is most commonly implemented by refugee hosting countries. Furthermore, the ESSN is the largest humanitarian aid programme ever funded by the European Union. It is currently worth over one billion euros and was helping close to 1.2 million refugees at the time the data was collected –late 2017– (WFP Emergency Social Safety Net Quarter Monitoring Report, 2017), reaching 1.7 million in 2020. The funds are distributed by the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which aims to improve the conditions for Syrian refugees in Turkey and was introduced within the EU–Turkey statement.

The overall objective of the EU–Turkey statement was to stop irregular migration, and an important part of the statement was about reducing the migration aspirations of refugees through humanitarian aid including the ESSN programme fund. The objectives

were firstly to increase income opportunities and thus reduce motivation for onwards migration and secondly, to raise income and thus increase the opportunity cost of onward migration. It should be pointed out that the ESSN programme's main goal was to provide humanitarian aid and help vulnerable refugees meet their basic needs. Notwithstanding this goal, it was also adopted under the assumption that improved conditions in Turkey would decrease refugees' aspirations to migrate to Europe.

In our paper, we have examined the impact of the ESSN programme on aspirations to move on for Syrian refugees in Turkey using the propensity score matching method. Once we control for other variables that might have an impact on migration aspirations, our data show that there is no relationship between the ESSN programme and refugees' aspiration to move on in the short term. This result is at odds with the results of the literature reviewed, which had indicated that cash transfers might increase or decrease migration aspirations.

The results must be contextualized within the unique situation of Turkey. On the one hand, the ESSN programme helped a very large number of vulnerable refugees to meet their basic daily needs, i.e. to pay for food, fuel, rent, medicine or bills. In fact, the most recent WFP surveys show that overall multidimensional poverty rates are decreasing among Syrian refugees in Turkey (WFP Turkey Country Office 2020). On the other hand, research shows that even among the ESSN recipients, 3 out of 4 refugees live in poverty and 1 out of 4 lives in extreme poverty⁸ (Cuevas et al., 2019: 29); the cash transfer only enables them to barely survival, affording them no quality of life (Kuschminder et al., 2019). Therefore, it may be possible for a family to be so dependent on the cash transfer that they cannot afford to become citizens and lose the funds, which are only granted to refugees and not to citizens.

The plan to migrant onwards therefore persists amongst Syrian refugees that have this aspiration, regardless of the ESSN. Studies have shown that Syrian refugees aspire to migrate onwards from Turkey due to discrimination, lack of access to adequate housing, education and health care, as well as the difficulty of finding formal employment, and that sustainable, long-term policies are necessary for the wellbeing of refugees as well as

⁸ Calculated by the World Bank to measure poverty in lower-middle-income countries.

that of the host populations. This study has also shown that the majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey plan to stay in Turkey, raising several questions regarding the ‘permanent temporariness’ (İcduygu, 2018) the refugees suffer and a search for long-term solutions.

Returning to the policy objective of the Facility for Refugees and the EU-Turkey Statement, it is an important finding for the EU that the ESSN has had no effect on the migration plans of Syrian beneficiaries. This analysis is conducted on the short-term effect of the ESSN and at a moment when the ESSN had its greatest impact on purchasing power and poverty for recipients.

The results could be considered a policy failure or a policy success, depending on the framing. On the one hand, Syrian refugee onward migration from Turkey to the EU has decreased significantly from 2015, never returning to levels in any way comparable to 2015. On the other hand, the ESSN has not increased the motivation to stay in Turkey as it was intended to do so, and as found in other studies there is concern that the situation in Turkey may only be one of short-term containment as refugees wait for an opportunity to realize their migration aspirations (Kuschminder et al., 2019).

Further analysis is needed on the longer-term effect of the ESSN that also contextualizes the economic changes in Turkey post-2017. However, understanding the short-term effects of the policy is also important for future programming. Considering further the context of the ESSN, allowing refugees to live outside of camps is an essential factor for improving their quality of life and cash transfers would be a vital component of this. Decreasing barriers for funders and host countries to be able to implement such policies is important for the future of refugee protection. Understanding policy makers concerns regarding the relationship between cash transfers to refugees and onward migration aspirations emphasizes that more research is needed in this area.

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Descriptive statistics of variables used for PSM and their incongruencies

Dependent variable is a dummy variable which shows if a person intends to move onward to another country or not. ESSN status is used as a treatment variable to check if this program has any impact on the dependent variable. We use other covariates to predict the probability of moving onward and estimating the effect of government policy on this probability.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of variables used for PSM and their incongruencies

| | ESSN status | | | | | | Stay or move to another countries (9 missing) | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|---|-------|----------------|-------|-------|--|
| | Nonapplicant or Ineligible | | Beneficiary | | Total | | Move onward | | Stay in Turkey | | Total | |
| | n | Row % | n | Row % | n | Col % | n | Row % | n | Row % | | |
| Total | 712 | 69.3% | 316 | 30.7% | 1028 | | 134 | 13.2% | 885 | 86.9% | 1019 | |
| Gender | ** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| male | 588 | 71.4% | 236 | 28.6% | 824 | 80.2% | 112 | 13.7% | 704 | 86.3% | 816 | |
| female | 124 | 60.8% | 80 | 39.2% | 204 | 19.8% | 22 | 10.8% | 181 | 89.2% | 203 | |
| HH_Age | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-25 | 70 | 74.5% | 24 | 25.5% | 94 | 9.1% | 11 | 11.8% | 82 | 88.2% | 93 | |
| 26-40 | 324 | 66.4% | 164 | 33.6% | 488 | 47.5% | 66 | 13.6% | 419 | 86.4% | 485 | |
| 41-59 | 259 | 70.6% | 108 | 29.4% | 367 | 35.7% | 51 | 14.1% | 311 | 85.9% | 362 | |
| 60 and above | 59 | 74.7% | 20 | 25.3% | 79 | 7.7% | 6 | 7.6% | 73 | 92.4% | 79 | |
| HH_Education | | | | | | | *** | | | | | |
| none | 140 | 72.9% | 52 | 27.1% | 192 | 18.7% | 14 | 7.4% | 176 | 92.6% | 190 | |
| until secondary school | 435 | 67.7% | 208 | 32.4% | 643 | 62.5% | 84 | 13.2% | 553 | 86.8% | 637 | |
| secondary school and higher | 137 | 71.0% | 56 | 29.0% | 193 | 18.8% | 36 | 18.8% | 156 | 81.3% | 192 | |
| Origin | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| rural | 379 | 70.6% | 158 | 29.4% | 537 | 52.2% | 70 | 13.2% | 461 | 86.8% | 531 | |
| urban | 333 | 67.8% | 158 | 32.2% | 491 | 47.8% | 64 | 13.1% | 424 | 86.9% | 488 | |
| Housing quality | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| bad | 442 | 70.4% | 186 | 29.6% | 628 | 61.1% | 82 | 13.2% | 541 | 86.8% | 623 | |
| good | 270 | 67.5% | 130 | 32.5% | 400 | 38.9% | 52 | 13.1% | 344 | 86.9% | 396 | |
| Duration of stay | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 6 months | 12 | 36.4% | 21 | 63.6% | 33 | 3.2% | 2 | 6.1% | 31 | 93.9% | 33 | |
| 6 months to 1 year | 26 | 65.0% | 14 | 35.0% | 40 | 3.9% | 5 | 12.5% | 35 | 87.5% | 40 | |
| 1 to 3 years | 261 | 68.5% | 120 | 31.5% | 381 | 37.1% | 51 | 13.5% | 326 | 86.5% | 377 | |
| 3 to 6 years | 411 | 72.0% | 160 | 28.0% | 571 | 55.5% | 75 | 13.2% | 492 | 86.8% | 567 | |
| Before conflict | 2 | 66.7% | 1 | 33.3% | 3 | 0.3% | 1 | 50.0% | 1 | 50.0% | 2 | |
| Children school attendance | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------|-----|-----------|----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| No | 32 2 | 69.3% | 14 3 | 30.8% | 465 | 45.2 % | 55 | 11.9% | 409 | 88.2% | 464 |
| Yes | 39 0 | 69.3% | 17 3 | 30.7% | 563 | 54.8 % | 79 | 14.2% | 476 | 85.8% | 555 |
| Family health | | ** | | | | | | | | | |
| All Healthy | 27 3 | 70.7% | 11 3 | 29.3% | 386 | 37.5 % | 35 | 9.1% | 350 | 90.9% | 385 |
| At least one member Sick | 43 9 | 68.4% | 20 3 | 31.6% | 642 | 62.5 % | 99 | 15.6% | 535 | 84.4% | 634 |

Table 1: Continue

| | ESSN status | | | | | | Stay or move to another countries (9 missing) | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|---|-------|----------------|--------|-------|
| | Nonapplicant or Ineligible | | Beneficiary | | Total | | Move onward | | Stay in Turkey | | Total |
| | n | Row % | n | Row % | n | Col % | n | Row % | n | Row % | |
| Total | 712 | 69.3% | 316 | 30.7% | 1028 | | 134 | 13.2% | 885 | 86.9% | 1019 |
| Children health | | ** | | | | | | | | | |
| Healthy | 383 | 73.2% | 140 | 26.8% | 523 | 50.9% | 62 | 11.9% | 459 | 88.1% | 521 |
| Sick with treatment | 295 | 66.3% | 150 | 33.7% | 445 | 43.3% | 61 | 13.9% | 377 | 86.1% | 438 |
| Sick without treatment | 34 | 56.7% | 26 | 43.3% | 60 | 5.8% | 11 | 18.3% | 49 | 81.7% | 60 |
| Adult health | | * | | | | | | | | | |
| Healthy | 402 | 66.2% | 205 | 33.8% | 607 | 59.0% | 67 | 11.1% | 535 | 88.9% | 602 |
| Sick with treatment | 277 | 74.3% | 96 | 25.7% | 373 | 36.3% | 62 | 16.8% | 307 | 83.2% | 369 |
| Sick without treatment | 33 | 68.8% | 15 | 31.3% | 48 | 4.7% | 5 | 10.4% | 43 | 89.6% | 48 |
| Experience insecurity | | *** | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 319 | 60.1% | 212 | 39.9% | 531 | 51.7% | 68 | 12.9% | 459 | 87.1% | 527 |
| Yes | 393 | 79.1% | 104 | 20.9% | 497 | 48.3% | 66 | 13.4% | 426 | 86.6% | 492 |
| Provinces | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ankara | 33 | 82.5% | 7 | 17.5% | 40 | 8.2% | 2 | 5.0% | 38 | 95.0% | 40 |
| Kayseri | 14 | 82.4% | 3 | 17.7% | 17 | 3.5% | 6 | 35.3% | 11 | 64.7% | 17 |
| Kilis | 16 | 80.0% | 4 | 20.0% | 20 | 4.1% | 2 | 10.0% | 18 | 90.0% | 20 |
| Gaziantep | 56 | 80.0% | 14 | 20.0% | 70 | 14.3% | 10 | 14.5% | 59 | 85.5% | 69 |
| Maras | 16 | 80.0% | 4 | 20.0% | 20 | 4.1% | 5 | 25.0% | 15 | 75.0% | 20 |
| Hatay | 43 | 74.1% | 15 | 25.9% | 58 | 11.9% | 6 | 10.3% | 52 | 89.7% | 58 |
| Osmaniye | 13 | 76.5% | 4 | 23.5% | 17 | 3.5% | 2 | 11.8% | 15 | 88.2% | 17 |
| Istanbul | 47 | 81.0% | 11 | 19.0% | 58 | 11.9% | 6 | 10.5% | 51 | 89.5% | 57 |
| Bursa | 28 | 77.8% | 8 | 22.2% | 36 | 7.4% | 5 | 13.9% | 31 | 86.1% | 36 |
| Sanliurfa | 36 | 76.6% | 11 | 23.4% | 47 | 9.6% | 4 | 8.5% | 43 | 91.5% | 47 |
| Izmir | 15 | 79.0% | 4 | 21.1% | 19 | 3.9% | 0 | 0.0% | 17 | 100.0% | 17 |
| Mersin | 29 | 80.6% | 7 | 19.4% | 36 | 7.4% | 7 | 19.4% | 29 | 80.6% | 36 |
| Adana | 16 | 84.2% | 3 | 15.8% | 19 | 3.9% | 4 | 21.1% | 15 | 79.0% | 19 |
| Kocaeli | 12 | 80.0% | 3 | 20.0% | 15 | 3.1% | 5 | 35.7% | 9 | 64.3% | 14 |
| Mardin | 14 | 82.4% | 3 | 17.7% | 17 | 3.5% | 1 | 5.9% | 16 | 94.1% | 17 |
| Worked last 30 days | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 606 | 69.9% | 261 | 30.1% | 867 | 84.3% | 112 | 13.0% | 747 | 87.0% | 859 |
| Yes | 106 | 65.8% | 55 | 34.2% | 161 | 15.7% | 22 | 13.8% | 138 | 86.3% | 160 |
| Regular income | | | | | | | | | | | |
| regular income | 261 | 64.3% | 145 | 35.7% | 406 | 39.5% | 62 | 15.4% | 341 | 84.6% | 403 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| temporary income | 280 | 73.5% | 101 | 26.5% | 381 | 37.1% | 50 | 13.3% | 326 | 86.7% | 376 |
| seasonal income | 105 | 71.0% | 43 | 29.1% | 148 | 14.4% | 9 | 6.1% | 139 | 93.9% | 148 |
| no income | 66 | 71.0% | 27 | 29.0% | 93 | 9.0% | 13 | 14.1% | 79 | 85.9% | 92 |

Table 1: Continue

| | ESSN status | | | | | | Stay or move to another countries (9 missing) | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|---|-------|----------------|-------|-------|
| | Nonapplicant or Ineligible | | Beneficiary | | Total | | Move onward | | Stay in Turkey | | Total |
| | n | Row % | n | Row % | n | Col % | n | Row % | n | Row % | |
| Total | 712 | 69.3% | 316 | 30.7% | 1028 | | 134 | 13.2% | 885 | 86.9% | 1019 |
| DGMM status | ** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Registered | 591 | 71.1% | 240 | 28.9% | 831 | 80.8% | 116 | 14.1% | 707 | 85.9% | 823 |
| Pending | 82 | 63.6% | 47 | 36.4% | 129 | 12.5% | 12 | 9.4% | 116 | 90.6% | 128 |
| Unregistered | 39 | 57.4% | 29 | 42.7% | 68 | 6.6% | 6 | 8.8% | 62 | 91.2% | 68 |
| Members with special needs | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 411 | 67.6% | 197 | 32.4% | 608 | 59.1% | 80 | 13.3% | 524 | 86.8% | 604 |
| Yes | 301 | 71.7% | 119 | 28.3% | 420 | 40.9% | 54 | 13.0% | 361 | 87.0% | 415 |
| Single female head | ** | | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 670 | 69.9% | 288 | 30.1% | 958 | 93.2% | 128 | 13.0% | 854 | 87.0% | 982 |
| Yes | 42 | 60.0% | 28 | 40.0% | 70 | 6.8% | 6 | 16.2% | 31 | 83.8% | 37 |
| single parent | ** | | | | | | * | | | | |
| No | 662 | 70.4% | 278 | 29.6% | 940 | 91.4% | 121 | 13.0% | 810 | 87.0% | 931 |
| Yes | 50 | 56.8% | 38 | 43.2% | 88 | 8.6% | 13 | 14.8% | 75 | 85.2% | 88 |
| More than 3 Children | *** | | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 361 | 81.1% | 84 | 18.9% | 445 | 43.3% | 62 | 14.0% | 382 | 86.0% | 444 |
| Yes | 351 | 60.2% | 232 | 39.8% | 583 | 56.7% | 72 | 12.5% | 503 | 87.5% | 575 |
| experience a lack of food | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No | 390 | 69.4% | 172 | 30.6% | 562 | 54.7% | 65 | 11.6% | 494 | 88.4% | 559 |
| Yes | 322 | 69.1% | 144 | 30.9% | 466 | 45.3% | 69 | 15.0% | 391 | 85.0% | 460 |
| Number of Income sources | * | | | | | | | | | | |
| 0 | 100 | 75.8% | 32 | 24.2% | 132 | 12.8% | 17 | 13.0% | 114 | 87.0% | 131 |
| 1 | 361 | 71.6% | 143 | 28.4% | 504 | 49.0% | 57 | 11.4% | 443 | 88.6% | 500 |
| 2 | 187 | 63.4% | 108 | 36.6% | 295 | 28.7% | 48 | 16.4% | 245 | 83.6% | 293 |
| 3 or more | 64 | | 33 | | 97 | 9.4% | 12 | | 83 | | 95 |
| Occupation | ** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Skilled work | 205 | 70.5% | 86 | 29.6% | 291 | 28.3% | 41 | 14.4% | 243 | 85.6% | 284 |
| Casual labour | 298 | 76.6% | 91 | 23.4% | 389 | 37.8% | 51 | 13.1% | 337 | 86.9% | 388 |
| Agricultural Labour | 16 | 80.0% | 4 | 20.0% | 20 | 1.9% | 1 | 5.0% | 19 | 95.0% | 20 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|------------|-----------|----|-------|-----|-------|-----|--|
| ESSN Asistance | 91 | 47.2% | 10 2 | 52.9% | 193 | 18.8 % | 22 | 11.4% | 171 | 88.6% | 193 | |
| Other | 10 2 | 75.6% | 33 | 24.4% | 135 | 13.1 % | 19 | 14.2% | 115 | 85.8% | 134 | |
| Movement | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| move on to another countries | 93 | 69.4% | 41 | 30.6% | 134 | 13.2 % | | | | | | |
| stay in Turkey | 61 4 | 69.4% | 27 1 | 30.6% | 885 | 86.8 % | | | | | | |
| destination | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Europe | 53 | 68.8% | 24 | 31.2% | 77 | 55.4 % | | | | | | |
| Canada/USA | 40 | 70.2% | 17 | 29.8% | 57 | 41.0 % | | | | | | |
| Other country | 2 | 40.0% | 3 | 60.0% | 5 | 3.6% | | | | | | |

Table 2: Propensity score matching regression

Probit regression
obs = 1028

LR chi2(16) = 116.96
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Pseudo R2

Log likelihood = -575.79276
= 0.0922

| ESSN_Treatment | Coef. | Std. Err | z | P>z | [95%Conf. Interval] |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|---------------|----------------------------|
| HH Gender | 0,317 | 0,125 | 2,530 | 0,011 | 0,072 0,563 |
| HH age | -0,001 | 0,004 | -0,230 | 0,822 | -0,008 0,007 |
| HH education | 0,062 | 0,072 | 0,860 | 0,389 | -0,079 0,204 |
| Worked last 30 days | -0,026 | 0,155 | -0,170 | 0,865 | -0,329 0,277 |
| Adult Health | -0,235 | 0,081 | -2,910 | 0,004 | -0,392 -0,077 |
| Child health | 0,263 | 0,075 | 3,500 | 0,000 | 0,116 0,411 |
| Have three children and more | 0,657 | 0,097 | 6,770 | 0,000 | 0,467 0,847 |
| Housing | 0,172 | 0,092 | 1,870 | 0,061 | -0,008 0,353 |
| Number of Income sources | 0,105 | 0,060 | 1,760 | 0,078 | -0,012 0,222 |
| Income level | 0,064 | 0,037 | 1,750 | 0,080 | -0,008 0,136 |
| Food expenditure | -0,001 | 0,000 | -1,970 | 0,049 | -0,002 0,000 |
| Single mother | -0,823 | 0,368 | -2,240 | 0,025 | -1,544 -0,102 |
| Single parent | 0,780 | 0,310 | 2,510 | 0,012 | 0,172 1,387 |
| origin | 0,040 | 0,086 | 0,470 | 0,641 | -0,129 0,210 |
| vulnerability | -0,115 | 0,091 | -1,260 | 0,206 | -0,292 0,063 |
| Duration of stay | -0,222 | 0,059 | -3,750 | 0,000 | -0,339 -0,106 |
| _cons | -0,571 | 0,333 | -1,720 | 0,086 | -1,220 0,082 |

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1 depicts the propensity score distribution and common support range

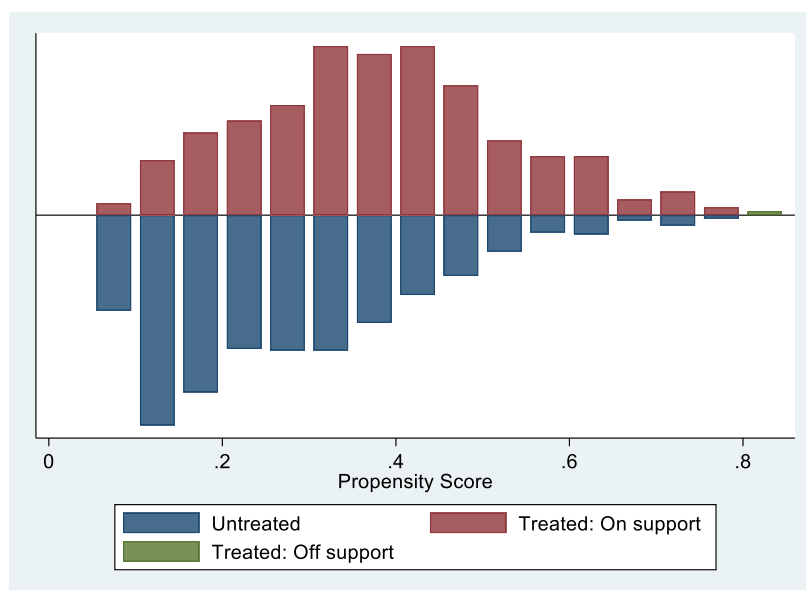


Table 3: Average effect of ESSN program using different estimators

| AE estimators | No. observation in | | Estimated effect on the decision to move onward | T-Statistic |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---|------------------------|
| | Treatment group | Control group | | |
| Kernel (100 reps) | 316 | 693 | -0,00391 | -0,16 |
| Stratification | 315 | 694 | -0,01698 | -0,45 |
| Radius (0.05) | 316 | 693 | -0,02583 | -0,67 |
| Nearest neighbour | 316 | 202 | -0,00624 | -0,20 |
| <i>t* at 1%:</i> | 2.57 | <i>t* at 5%:</i> | 1.96 | <i>t* at 10%:</i> 1.64 |

Appendix A1: Test of balancing property of the propensity score

Use option detail if you want more detailed output

The region of common support is [.07424104, .82323936]

The balancing property is satisfied

Table a1: the inferior bound, the number of treated and the number of controls for each block

| Inferior of block of pscore | ESSN Treatment Dummy | | Total |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| | Non-applicable | Beneficiary | |
| 0,074241 | 256 | 37 | 293 |
| 0,2 | 298 | 138 | 436 |
| 0,4 | 120 | 115 | 235 |
| 0,6 | 19 | 25 | 44 |
| 0,8 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 693 | 316 | 1,009 |

Note: the common support option has been selected

Appendix A2: t-test in mean differences and standardized % bias across covariate

Table a2: t-test in mean differences

| Variable | Unmatched | Mean | | %bias | %reduct bias | t-test | | V_e(T)/ |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|--------|--------------|--------|------|---------|
| | Matched | Treated | Control | | | t | p> t | V_e(C) |
| HH Gender | U | 0,25 | 0,17 | 19,30 | | 2,94 | 0,00 | 1,29* |
| | M | 0,25 | 0,23 | 6,80 | 64,60 | 0,71 | 0,48 | 1,10 |
| HH age | U | 39,79 | 40,50 | -5,90 | | -0,86 | 0,39 | 0,81 |
| | M | 39,79 | 39,99 | -1,60 | 72,80 | -0,19 | 0,85 | 0,95 |
| HH education | U | 20,13 | 19,96 | 2,80 | | 0,41 | 0,68 | 0,88 |
| | M | 20,13 | 20,11 | 0,20 | 91,40 | 0,03 | 0,98 | 0,88 |
| Worked last 30 days | U | 0,17 | 0,15 | 6,80 | | 1,02 | 0,31 | 1,15 |
| | M | 0,17 | 0,17 | 1,20 | 82,80 | 0,13 | 0,90 | 1,03 |
| Adult Health | U | 13,99 | 0,01 | -14,30 | | -2,10 | 0,04 | 0,96 |
| | M | 13,99 | 14,26 | -4,60 | 67,80 | -0,51 | 0,61 | 1,02 |
| Child health | U | 16,39 | 15,10 | 21,20 | | 3,18 | 0,00 | 1,14 |
| | M | 16,39 | 16,00 | 6,50 | 69,30 | 0,70 | 0,49 | 1,02 |
| Have three children and more | U | 0,73 | 0,49 | 51,10 | | 7,38 | 0,00 | 1,21 |
| | M | 0,73 | 0,69 | 9,90 | 80,60 | 1,14 | 0,26 | 1,09 |
| Housing | U | 0,41 | 0,38 | 6,60 | | 0,98 | 0,33 | 1,05 |
| | M | 0,41 | 0,41 | 0,00 | 99,40 | 0,00 | 1,00 | 1,00 |
| Number of Income sources | U | 14,65 | 1,32 | 16,40 | | 2,41 | 0,02 | 0,96 |
| | M | 14,65 | 14,33 | 3,80 | 77,10 | 0,40 | 0,69 | 0,81 |
| Income level | U | 26,99 | 24,20 | 19,80 | | 2,95 | 0,00 | 1,01 |
| | M | 26,99 | 25,99 | 7,10 | 64,00 | 0,77 | 0,44 | 0,94 |
| Food expenditure | U | 188,78 | 187,32 | 1,30 | | 0,20 | 0,85 | 1,10 |
| | M | 188,78 | 189,54 | -0,70 | 48,10 | -0,07 | 0,94 | 1,07 |
| Single mother | U | 0,09 | 0,06 | 11,30 | | 1,74 | 0,08 | 1,47* |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| | M | 0,09 | 0,08 | 3,00 | 73,90 | 0,30 | 0,76 | 1,11 |
| Single parent | U | 0,12 | 0,07 | 17,10 | | 2,65 | 0,01 | 1,61* |
| | M | 0,12 | 0,10 | 6,10 | 64,30 | 0,62 | 0,54 | 1,16 |
| origin | U | 0,50 | 0,47 | 6,50 | | 0,96 | 0,34 | 0,99 |
| | M | 0,50 | 0,48 | 3,80 | 41,00 | 0,42 | 0,68 | 0,98 |
| vulnerability | U | 0,38 | 0,42 | -9,40 | | -1,39 | 0,17 | 0,97 |
| | M | 0,38 | 0,38 | -1,70 | 82,20 | -0,18 | 0,85 | 1,00 |
| Duration of stay | U | 33,35 | 35,13 | -23,40 | | -3,64 | 0,00 | 1,69* |
| | M | 33,35 | 33,95 | -7,80 | 66,50 | -0,80 | 0,42 | 1,31* |

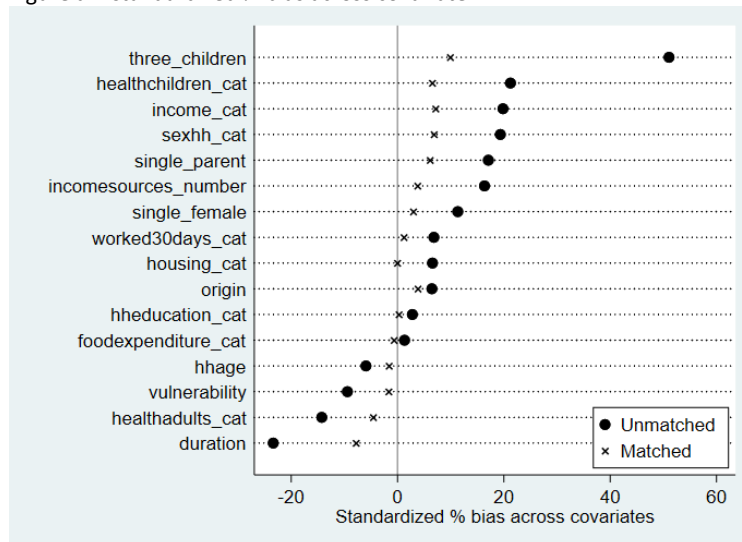
* if 'of concern', i.e. variance ratio in [0.5, 0.8) or (1.25, 2]

** if 'bad', i.e. variance ratio <0.5 or >2

| Sample | Ps R2 | LR | chi2 | p>chi2 | MeanBias | MedBias | B | R | %concern |
|------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|----------|---------|------|----|----------|
| Unmatched | 0.092 | 116.96 | 0.000 | 14.6 | 12.8 | 76.4* | 0.83 | 25 | 0 |
| Matched | 0.008 | 5.53 | 0.992 | 4.1 | 3.8 | 21.5 | 1.05 | 6 | 0 |

* if B>25%, R outside [0.5; 2]

Figure a1: standardized % bias across covariate



Appendix A3: Endogenous treatment effect estimation

Since there is high possibility of endogeneity problem between the effect of covariates on the treatment effect and outcome variable, endogenous treatment effect method can help to overcome this. Here we use “**eteffects**” estimator from the stata package (developed by Jeffrey Wooldridge) in which we can determine which variables are the source of endogeneity but also, we can determine which method to use for the regression on the outcome variable. The results from ATET suggest that when there is no treatment the probability in average is around 6% and it will be 8% more when all receive the treatments. However the effect of the program is not significant.

Table a3: Endogenous treatment effect regression

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Endogenous treatment-effects estimation | Number of obs = |
| 1,018 | |
| Outcome model : probit | |
| Treatment model: probit | |

| moveon_cat | Coef. | Std.Err. | z | P>z | [95%Conf. | Interval] |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| ATET | | | | | | |
| ESSN_treatment (1 vs 0) | 0,080 | 0,058 | 10,380 | 0,168 | -0,034 | 0,194 |
| POmean | | | | | | |
| ESSN_treatment (0) | 0,050 | 0,056 | 0,890 | 0,374 | -0,060 | 0,160 |

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Appendix A4: AEs within different categories

| table a4: AEs within different categories | | ATTK | ATTND | ATTR | ATTS |
|---|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Provinces | Sanliurfa | -0,109 | -0,091 | -0,116 | -0,140 |
| | Std. Err. | 0,065 | 0,161 | 0,055 | 0,065 |
| | T Stat | -1,685 | -0,564 | -2,111 | -2,146 |
| | Ankara | -0,058 | 0,000 | -0,081 | -0,100 |
| | Std. Err. | 0,148 | 0,190 | 0,045 | 0,096 |
| | T Stat | -0,395 | 0,000 | -1,783 | -1,044 |
| | Maras | -0,272 | -0,500 | -0,333 | -0,242 |
| | Std. Err. | 0,222 | 0,312 | 0,134 | 0,224 |
| | T Stat | -1,224 | -1,602 | -2,481 | -1,084 |
| HH Education | No Education | -0,014 | 0,037 | -0,077 | -0,038 |
| | Std. Err. | 0,045 | 0,069 | 0,024 | 0,071 |
| | T Stat | -0,311 | 0,537 | -3,250 | -0,540 |
| | Secondary School and Higher | -0,033 | -0,003 | -0,187 | -0,068 |
| | Std. Err. | 0,072 | 0,095 | 0,035 | 0,093 |
| | T Stat | -0,460 | -0,034 | -5,423 | -0,733 |

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Providing evidence on the impact of restrictive policies on refugees' daily lives is one of the most important objectives of this research, and is a way of bringing refugee voices into the dialogue about immigration policy. Examining how these policies have violated human rights norms provides a way of holding governments accountable. Discussions about the ethics of social justice and global responsibility can help us evaluate the origin and impact of migration and asylum policies critically, and to advocate for migration and asylum policies that are informed by refugee experiences and perspectives. How do securitisation and realpolitik affect the development of these policies? How do they inflict harm on refugees? Who is accountable for refugees who have died because their escape has been blocked by barriers – particularly the so-called “remote control tools” being implemented by the EU? How does the possession of a passport –something that most individuals have no control over– determine the value of a human life?

One of the underlying tensions in debates about international migration is between notions of sovereignty and hospitality. Hospitality means, in a Kantian vein, all human rights that are cross-border in scope (Benhabib, 2007). The right to asylum and protection from non-refoulement is an area in which international human rights norms have created binding obligations that have limited governments' restrictive migration control tools and practices. This is often interpreted as shrinking the capacity of the nation state to exercise its autonomy and power. Coming from a Westphalian understanding of state sovereignty, many argue that states must reassert their sovereignty. Among other things, this has led governments to use criminalisation and externalisation of migration policies as ways to try to legitimise practices and avoid the principle of non-refoulement. The effects on the individual lives of refugees and other border crossers have been devastating.

A Kantian view of the world sees states as dependent upon common values, and grounds human rights, the rule of law and the right to seek asylum and non-refoulement on two principles. The first is that “All men who can reciprocally influence each other must stand under some civil constitution” (Kant 1795:5), meaning that people are considered citizens of a universal state of humankind in their external mutual relationship (*ius*

cosmopoliticum). The second principle is that “The law of world citizenship shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality”. (Kant 1795:10). Therefore, every person has a right to temporary sojourn, meaning not to be treated as an enemy when first arriving in someone else’s land. This is based on the idea that originally no one had more right to the earth than the other (Kant, 1795:11). Kant argues that everyone must act in accordance with this right and only then there can be peaceable relations with each other and the human race can be brought closer to a constitution that establishes world citizenship. What we see today, however, are nation states repeatedly and increasingly taking inhospitable actions towards people seeking asylum at their borders.

With these ethical dilemmas in mind, the main aim of this Ph.D. thesis has been to document and describe the current living conditions of refugees in Turkey and Greece who are affected by EU externalisation policies, specifically the EU–Turkey deal. Whereas refugees are generally the targets of policies that they have no ability to shape, this thesis centres its discussion around their perspective. As addressed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, refugees experience the EU–Turkey deal mainly through containment or involuntary immobility. However, their onward migration aspirations are formed by a combination of factors –such as individual and household characteristics and resources, current living conditions, economic and legal statutes– which in return affect their current behaviour and future migration plans. Chapter 4 supports the previous findings by providing quantitative evidence on how a policy intervention such as humanitarian aid is not sufficient by itself to change migration aspirations –even though the stated objective of such policies is to reduce migrants’ motivations to move on. In particular, the thesis attempts to uncover why deterrence policies can fail, by providing the perspective of refugees who are subjected to these policies and the ways in which they respond to them. In Chapter 2, we saw that despite structural conditions, refugees exercised a degree of agency by findings coping strategies and circumventing and negotiating ever changing regulations. Even if the refugee experience is marked by compulsion, those living as refugees may participate in the shaping of outcomes and conditions in their lives while also negotiating new forms of identity and membership. It also aims to highlight the harm these policies inflict on refugees, such as limiting their access to a fair asylum system, not ensuring non-refoulement principles, and a lack of access to adequate shelter, food, medicine and healthcare.

The description of refugee experiences has been framed according to the scholarly discussion on *Why people move?* with specific attention given to *onward* migration decisions of refugees (Kuschminder, 2018). Therefore, the thesis investigates not only the impact of policies on onward migration aspirations but also the impact of individual and household characteristics and resources, current living conditions, economic status, migration status and duration of stay on those aspirations. As has been repeated in the previous chapters, governments do not have the capacity to turn migration on and off completely (FitzGerald, 2019), since social networks, the smuggling industries and the aspirations and determination of refugees act in complex ways to shape human behaviour. In Chapter 3, we saw that despite the legal precarious, young Syrian refugee men left their registered provinces even though this has put them at risk of detention and deportation. Once they arrived to Istanbul, they were able to find accommodation and work through the informal arrival infrastructures, existing and new social networks between established migrant communities and new comers. In Chapter 4, we saw that development aid contrary to its stated goal did not decrease the aspirations of Syrian refugees who want to move on from Turkey and their aspirations were shaped by a complex set of factors, including living conditions, access to employment, experience of insecurity as well as long term prospects. Aspirations are chosen as one of the core concepts in this dissertation since they allow us to study the state of involuntary immobility, to examine how refugees interact with their current environments, and to understand future migration trends from the perspective of the refugees themselves.

5.2 Contribution

Chapter 2 contributes to the academic debate on socio-legal limbo, waiting, liminality and feeling stuck (Brekke, 2004; Hage, 2009; Sutton et al., 2011; Kohli and Kaukko, 2017), by looking at how one's decision-making process is affected by a specific context of liminality, in which access to information is limited and where conditions are so poor that leaving that place becomes more important than thinking where to go next. These decisions –such as voluntary return– are not rational or logical and are certainly not always what people would ideally prefer. The asylum seekers we encountered on the two Greek islands continue to exercise some degree of agency despite the structural constraints imposed upon them. The findings confirm the need

to study people's trajectories in order to understand the paradox between increasingly restrictive migration policies and migration itself. We saw that asylum seekers adapted and reacted to the structural limitations imposed upon them by restrictive policies. Without listening to the narratives of asylum seekers at different moments of their trajectories, it would have been impossible to understand the impact of policies and how asylum seekers challenge them.

Chapter 3 makes three contributions. First, by exploring how refugees perceive policy changes and respond to them, it sheds light on the complex decision-making processes behind refugees' aspirations for onward movement. Second, building on the literature about hope, waiting, aspirations, time, involuntary immobility, illegality, and deportability (Hage, 2009; Stock, 2013; Carling, 2019; Carling, 2014; Collyer, 2007; De Genova, 2002; Menjivar and Kanstroom, 2014; Hyndman and Giles, 2011, Tunaboylu and van Liempt, 2020, Carling, 2014), the chapter incorporates a new form of *temporal* aspiration in which refugees hope to migrate elsewhere as a way of moving forward in their life aspirations. Finally, by linking aspirations to externalisation policies, the chapter gives refugees a voice in order to understand their gendered experiences and perceptions in order to better inform refugee-oriented policies.

Chapter 4 contributes to the literature by first addressing the significant gap in understanding refugee journeys during transit (Kuschminder, 2018), and second, proposing the novel approach of combining three different aspects of cash transfers: (1) unconditionality, (2) the targeting of refugee populations in the host country, and (3) their impact on onward migration aspirations. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first quantitative paper to measure the impact of unconditional cash transfers on the onward migration aspirations of a refugee population in the host country. The findings of this paper challenge previous studies that have found that cash transfers have either positive or negative impacts on migration aspirations and plans (Angelucci, 2012; Posel et al., 2006; Behrman et al., 2008; Stecklov et al., 2005).

5.3 Limitations and future lines of research

This Ph.D. thesis has several limitations. When I first started to design this research project, I planned to have a transnational approach that went beyond a nation-state analysis. However, I encountered methodological and practical challenges throughout my Ph.D. research. The first batch of fieldwork I conducted on the Greek islands was successful in terms of including many different nationalities; I also managed to interview people who were seeking asylum on the islands but who then returned to Turkey or to their countries of origin. However, during my fieldwork in Turkey, I narrowed my focus to Syrian men who live in Istanbul and who have precarious legal status. The reason for this focus is twofold: as I was carrying out interviews, I realized that problems related to exploitation, risk of detention and deportation were more prominent for men, and while new studies that look at the onward migration aspirations of refugees in Turkey have been published over the last few years, there was a gap related to this specific group. For these reasons, in chapter 3 I decided to focus on Syrian men, and did not use the interviews I conducted with Syrian women. For both batches of fieldwork, my samples were small and non-representative; however, gaining the trust of my participants through in-depth interviews and discussions allowed me to reach hidden populations such as people at risk of deportation, people in detention, people who had been deported, and people in hiding, as well as giving me access to smugglers; none of this would have been possible otherwise. Therefore, the goal of this Ph.D. thesis is not to use these findings to generalise, but to shed light on the diverse ways in which asylum seekers perceive and respond to structural constraints imposed by European migration policies and practices.

Future research should investigate how onward migration aspirations are formed and are mediated by nationality, gender, age, and migration status, as well as by culture and religion. For example, similar qualitative research carried out with refugees of other nationalities –such as Afghan or Iraqi refugees who are afforded even less protection by asylum law in Turkey– would enable us to compare and further investigate the findings of this Ph.D. thesis. Another very interesting future research topic might deal with what happens to refugees who have lived in hotspot camps for many years. How do experiences at these border zones affect their integration later in the destination country? Moreover, one of the most difficult questions is, what happens to those who voluntarily or were forcibly returned from the Greek islands to Turkey and their countries of origin? Even though Chapter 2 provides some insight into the experiences of those who were returned from the Greek islands, a more in-depth study on the post-return risks for Syrian and non-

Syrian refugees would be crucial for providing evidence on the impact of the EU–Turkey deal in particular, and bilateral agreement with buffer countries in general.

Chapter 4 also has its limitations, as the survey samples are not representative of the whole Syrian refugee population in Turkey. Even though the registered refugees were chosen through random sampling, unregistered refugees were reached through snowball sampling. This is because there was no list of unregistered refugees with which to draw a representative sample; however, recent WFP surveys managed to overcome this limitation through the use of the Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) method (WFP–Turkey Country Office, 2020). Moreover, the two surveys used in this thesis were conducted only six months and one year after the implementation of the cash transfer programme. Thus, they only give us an oversight of the impact –or lack thereof– of onward migration aspirations within the short term. A further analysis on representative CVME data collected in 2018 and 2019 could help us understand the longer-term impacts of the ESSN on migration aspirations, and enable us to compare and further investigate the topic of humanitarian aid and migration.

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