What makes a house a home?

The meaning of housing for Syrian refugees in their process of constructing a home in Istanbul

Tamara van der Sar

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Master Thesis Sustainable Development - International Development

Supervisors: Annelies Zoomers & Griet Steel

Period of research: Dec 2014 till August 2015

Fieldwork in Istanbul: Feb 2015 - May 2015

SUMMARY

Four years have passed since the Syrian crisis emerged in the spring of 2011. Four million refugees have sought refuge in the Syria's neighbouring countries, of which Turkey has received 1,9 million of these refugees so far. The majority of these refugees resides in urban areas in Turkey, of which an estimated 330.000 stay in Istanbul. Refugees in camps are appointed a form of residence but urban refugees have to find their new houses with very little assistance. The aim of this study is gaining a better understanding of the housing and home situation of these Syrian urban refugees. In a fieldwork period of three months, in depth interviews were held with 42 participants about their housing situation in Istanbul and about the meaning of this housing in their process of constructing a feeling of home in Istanbul.

For this research I have used the concept of a housing pathway as a basis of analysis, meaning the patterns of interaction concerning house and home, over time and space. There is a mutual influence between these housing pathways and a feeling of home. The main finding of this research is that housing functions as a means and a marker to the way in which Syrian refugees construct their homes. Housing is a *means* to a stronger sense of home, because it provides a space where social connections within communities can be maintained and serves as one of the relational hubs in Istanbul. Housing can be a *marker* of the social and economic status and of a refugee, acquired in Turkey.

Factors that contribute to constructing a feeling of home can be found in the economic, relational and legal domain. Economically, job security affect this process; an important factor in the legal domain is the type of residence; and socially, creating social bonds, social bridges and the arrival of close kin in Istanbul provides social security that leads to a stronger sense of home. However, there are also obstructing, or even destructing factors in creating a feeling of home among the Syrian participants. Socially, processes of discrimination cause a feeling of non-belonging; legally, interactions and bureaucratic annoyances about residence permits result in the feeling that there are very few opportunities to ever establish a legal life in Istanbul; in the economic domain, exploitation in a job can initiate a negative loophole that is difficult to escape within Istanbul's borders.

Though I have observed that for most refugees there is process of positive progress going on during the time that they stay in Istanbul, their feeling of home has developed in a fragmented way in which they relate to both their old homes in Syria and their new experience Istanbul.

PREFACE

> *"My grandmother always said: "look at fruit and the fruit tree. To become big and fruitful, first you have to dug under the earth as a seed. You will be covered with earth and nobody knows you are there. People walk on you. Then you grow and you start to draw attention. People think: 'Hey, there is a small plant, I will walk around it now'. Finally you grow and grow and you become big. People start seeking for shelter under your leaves and finally they take the fruits from your tree."*
>
> *Eric, a refugee from Congo living in Istanbul, musician and entrepreneur*

I find Eric's quote above inspiring and fitting to refugees who have arrived in Istanbul and have shown resilience and growth. I've witnessed trauma and strength of many refugees who fled their homes in Syria and came to Istanbul. I developed great respect for their resilience and I wish to contribute to their further growth by sharing their stories in this document and elsewhere.

This research studies the meaning of housing for Syrian refugees in their process of constructing a home in Istanbul. This contribution is part of a larger research project with the aim to provide insights in the urban refugee experience of Syrian refugees along the trajectory from Syria to Europe. A total of five master students from Utrecht University cooperate in this project: One student in Athens and three others in Istanbul. Claire Pursey researched the aspirations and strategies of Syrian refugees upon arrival in Greece (Pursey, 2015); Jolinde Dermaux researched the role of social networks in the integration of Syrian refugees in Istanbul (Dermaux, 2015); Teun Smorenburg researched occupational mobility on Istanbul's labour market of Syrian refugees (Smorenburg, 2015); and Pedro Valarini researched the business strategies of Syrian entrepreneurs in Istanbul (Pereira-Valarini, 2015). The aim of the overall research project is to present five complementary studies that together provide an in-depth insight in livelihoods and experiences of Syrian urban refugees in two major hubs of migration along the borders of Europe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With pleasure I present this master dissertation in front of you. The past nine months of desk research and fieldwork have lead to the production of this document, with which I will finalize the research master Sustainable Development at Utrecht University in the track International development. The whole research process has been an interesting project that I could not have executed without the help of the many people that I met during this time.

First of all I would like to thank the participants in this research, who were so willing to share their experiences with me. I am happy that I was able to meet them and have some amazing and open conversations with them. I respect their strength and resilience to build up their lives after losing so much. I would like to thank Jamila, Kafeel, Talhah and Mujab for their translating work during the interviews. I would like to thank the volunteers at IIMP for their welcoming attitude during my stay in Istanbul and all other people I met during this research process who helped me understand the dynamics and developments of refugee life in Istanbul.

The process of this research has been challenging and interesting. I have been able to develop myself throughout this project and I am thankful to the people that have made this research such an inspiring experience. I would like to thank my fellow students: Teun Smorenburg, Jolinde Dermaux, Claire Pursey and Pedro Pereira for the lively discussions and valuable input and feedback during our group meetings and the writing process. I am happy that we were able to connect our talents and knowledge and make this project possible.

A great thanks goes out to the supervisors of this research, Annelies Zoomers and Griet Steel. I very much valued their feedback and I am thankful that I could enjoy their experience and knowledge in my advantage.

Finally I would like to thank my boyfriend, family and friends for their support and love during this project.

Tamara van der Sar

August 2015

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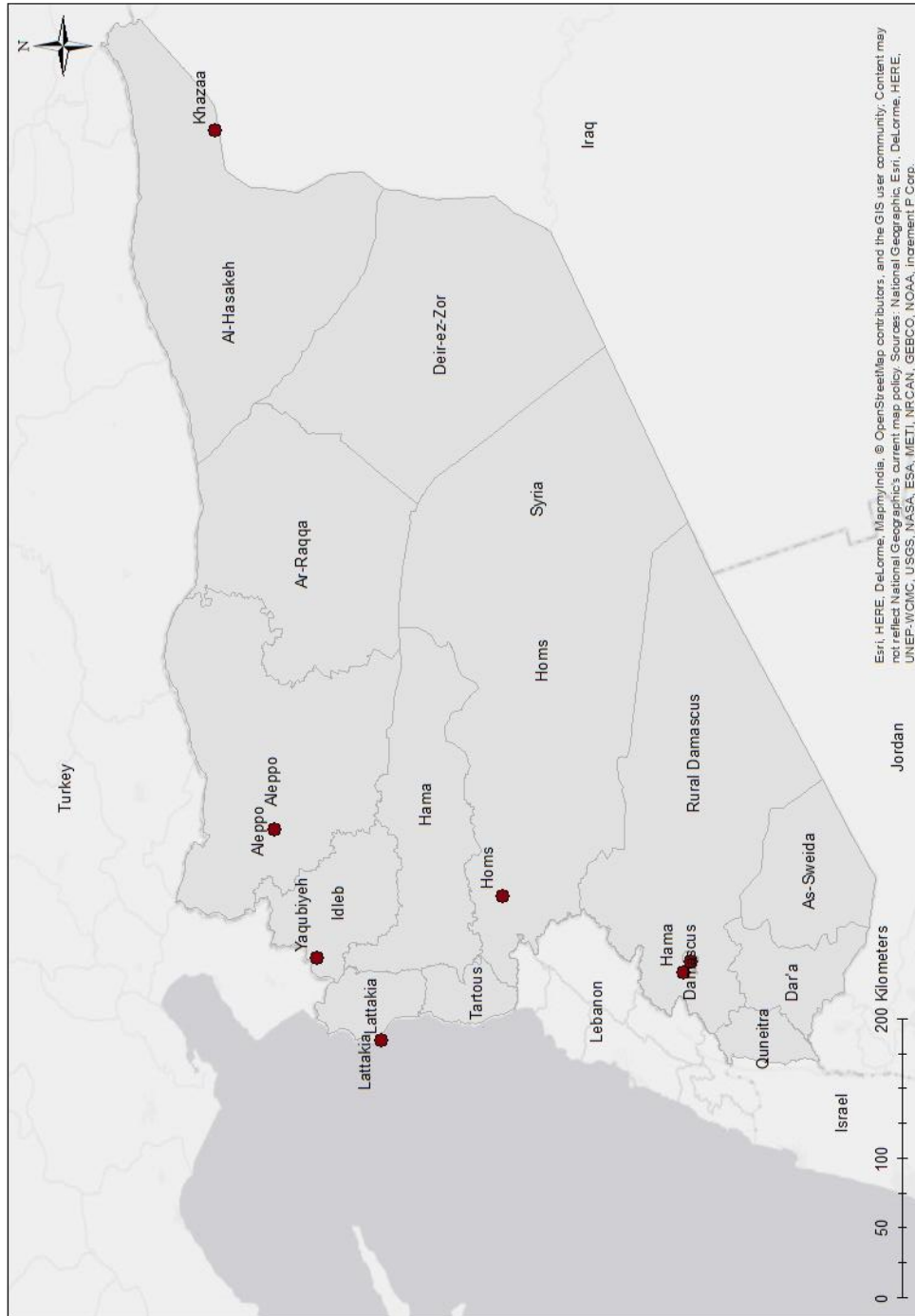
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Map of Istanbul's districts

FIGURE 2: MAP OF METROPOLITAN AREA OF ISTANBUL'S, DEPICTED IN DISTRICTS (BY MAXIMILIAN DÖRBECKER, WIKIMEDIA)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Syrian crisis that started during the Arab Spring of 2011 has turned into a crisis that has lead to the displacement of more than four million refugees outside Syria and seven million internally displaces persons (UNHCR, 2015). Turkey has received and registered the biggest group of 1,8 million Syrian refugees of the four million people that left Syria (UNHCR 2015). In the Turkish region along the border of Syria, 22 refugee camps have been established by the Turkish government in 10 provinces, where 220.052 Syrians are staying (AFAD, 2014), which means that all other refugee (88%) reside outside these camps. Syrians in urban areas have faced difficulties finding housing, paying rent, obtaining employment or accessing the education system or health services they needed (Içduygu, 2015). Most Syrians have chosen or were forced to live in urban areas for four main reasons: firstly, the camp capacity (220.000) has been exceeded by the amount of Syrians who came to Turkey, secondly family connections and financial independence have enabled Syrians to access shelter and livelihood opportunities in Turkey's urban areas; thirdly, Syrians who entered Turkey in a way that is considered illegal[1] are not allowed to register in camps (Içduygu, 2015) and lastly a large group of refugees prefers to self-settle instead of camp-settlement (Bakewell, 2014).

Turkey is currently the only country near Syria who keeps its border open, which results in an ongoing entrance of Syrians into Turkey. Most of them stay in cities in the border region with Syria. Istanbul as Turkey's biggest city hosts the second largest concentration of Syrian refugees. An estimation of the amount of Syrians that have moved to Istanbul is 330.000 people (Erdoğan, 2014). All Syrians have received temporary protection status since April 2014 in Turkey and are entitled to free healthcare and education[2] upon registration. Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), indicated that more than one third of the urban Syrian population in Turkey is not registered and can therefore not receive any assistance (AFAD, 2013). The Syrian community in Istanbul has increased largely in a very short period of roughly three years, from the beginning of 2012 onwards. Syrians who arrive in Istanbul most often arrange their lives without assistance from national or international organizations and are dependent on assistance from their co-nationals already living in the city (Jacobsen, 2006). Syrian refugees have settled down in rented apartments, at host-families or other types of shelter in urban areas (Bahad et al., 2013; Kirisci, 2014). The Turkish government has published surveys on the living conditions of Syrian refugees who stay inside camps or who are outside camps in the border region (AFAD, 2013, 2014). Data on the living conditions of Syrians outside the border provinces is lacking in the national reports. Information on the conditions of Syrians in Istanbul is fragmented and has not received much academic attention.

The living conditions of Syrians are important to research, because the Syrian conflict has become more complex over time and there seems to be no point in the near future on which the Syrians in Turkey will be

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[1] Illegal way to enter Turkey is mainly entering without passing the customs at an official bordercrossing. People who have no passport were forced to enter this way in particular periods when the border could not be officially crossed without passport.
[2] Next to healthcare and education, they are also entitled to employment, but this is only the case in the Syrian economic zones, located in the border region

able to return home. Regarding the protracted situation of the ongoing conflict, it becomes more and more likely that a substantial part of the Syrian community will stay in Turkey and will not return when the conflict would end. In the Global South and in this case Turkey, support mechanisms for newcomers are underdeveloped (Didem Daniş, 2006) and because of the sheer amount of the refugee influx in Turkey these mechanisms do not comply with the demand for assistance. Despite the fact that refugees in urban areas are recognized as legitimate in UNHCR's urban refugee policy of 2009 and officially protected by international law since 1951 (UNHCR, 2009), there is little implemented assistance towards urban refugees finding housing or in obtaining other basic needs (UNHCR, 2014b). Refugees are dependent on their own networks and agency to provide these things for their households. This study researches refugees' processes of arranging housing and the housing outcomes in urban areas and how refugee households construct their own homes in the city.

Academic debates on refugee settlement often have a geographical focus on camps in the Global South (Bakewell, 2014; Marfleet, 2007), but there is much less attention for the urban refugee in the global South. Refugees in urban areas are researched, but not proportionately according to their numbers. The majority of refugees resides in the global South and the majority of this group lives indeed in urban areas (UNHCR, 2015). Research done on urban refugees points out that this group is hard to identify and study (Didem Daniş, 2006; Grabska, 2006; Jacobsen, 2006; Leenders, 2008; Sommers, 2001) as well as hard to give assistance to (Morand, Mahoney, Bellour, & Rabkin, 2012; UNHCR, 2014b). Refugee settlement and integration in urban context is more often researched in industrialized societies in the global North and Australia (Connor, 2010; Fozdar & Hartley, 2014; Mullins & Jones, 2009; Poppe, 2013; Wright, Ellis, & Parks, 2005), where stronger reception mechanisms exist. These researches address for example refugees' preferences and attached meanings to housing (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014; Poppe, 2013; Settles, 2001), showing that not only the physical conditions of shelter but also the meanings that are attached to housing have an important impact on the residential behaviours and belonging of refugees.

The recent development of the urban refugee situation in the middle east; the increasing number of urban refugees and the underrepresentation of urban refugees in literature makes research on this group very relevant. Housing is the first problem to be solved when refugees enter a city, and is one of the first human needs, which also points out the importance of research on housing and the meanings this housing has for the development of the urban refugee households.

In this study I research the housing circumstances of Syrian urban refugees and the meaning that this housing has for refugees' process of constructing a new home in Istanbul. The housing pathway, as described by Clapham (2010) offers an analytical framework in this study, that allows to understand the meaning of housing in the broader development of a household during their pathway towards and in their new host society. The aim is to provide a better understanding of the housing and home circumstances of refugees in urban areas and therewith contribute to the academic debate on the urban refugee experience and the process of urban settlement of refugees in society's in the global South. The question that will be central to this research is:
What is the meaning of housing for Syrian refugees in their process of constructing a home in Istanbul?

Housing and home are both explored in this research by building on the concept of a 'housing pathway', meaning the patterns of interaction, concerning house and home, over time and space (Clapham, 2002). Using a housing pathway is unique in the sense that it does not only look at the residential history of refugees (housing career), but does also include how this relates to the broader meanings given to these patterns of housing. I argue that the housing pathway of refugees is of importance to understand how they are able to settle and construct a home in Istanbul, because refugees left their homes under extreme circumstances and because their pathway to a new house, inside or outside Istanbul, is subject to many influences and dynamics. This perspective of time therefore provides insight in how refugees construct their homes in Istanbul.

The main question is answered by analyzing three topics. Firstly the meaning of housing in Syria and during refugees' pathways to Istanbul, in relations to their feelings of belonging. Secondly current housing dynamics of these refugees in Istanbul, consisting of both the structure in which these houses are found (the legal context and housing market of Istanbul) and the agency of refugees to look for and find housing. Thirdly the process of constructing a home is assessed with links to the housing outcomes and reflections of the refugees in this study. The combination of these three topics will give a broad perspective on the practical and meaningful ways in which refugees build up their lives by looking at their houses and feelings of home.

In this dissertation I will first introduce my theoretical framework as the basis for my analysis, explaining how I build on the 'housing pathway' of Clapham (2010). I discuss in the methodology how I approach housing and home of refugees with the use of the concepts of a housing career and an indicator framework for integration; and in what ways I conducted this research in the field. From that point on, I will introduce you to the housing and home situation of Syrians in this study and how this situation has changed from the moment they left Syria in chapter 4 and 5. In chapter 6 I will give an overview of the reception mechanisms in Turkey and the context in which Syrians are looking for a new house and home. I will continue by showing how the Syrians in this study live and how they found their housing. I will finalize the empirical part by explaining how the refugees in Istanbul constructed a home in Istanbul and how this relates to the meaning they attach to their housing.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this theoretical framework I will give an overview of relevant theories related to home and housing of refugees in the academic debate. First I will introduce the debate on the urban refugee and the development of research and policy on refugee settlement in urban areas. Then I will explain how I use the concept of a housing pathway to analyze how house and home are related for the Syrian refugees who stay in Istanbul. I will further explain the concept of a housing career, the relevance of the factor time in a housing pathway and the debate around belonging and the construction of home and therewith provide the framework that is used in this study.

2.1 URBAN REFUGEES

Estimations of the United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR) estimated from 2010, that as many as 7 million refugees and asylum seekers - representing almost half of all refugees - live in cities, in comparison to one third of the refugees who live in camps (Morand et al., 2012; UNHCR, 2009). Though this number is not recent anymore -especially since the dramatic changes in the refugee situation of the Syrian crisis- it gives an impression of the scale of the urban refugee situation and provides an explanations and motive for increased attention to this group of refugees outside camps. In the jargon of international NGO's, they are spontaneous or self-settled refugees (Marfleet, 2007). It is logical that refugees are attracted to urban centres like all urban migrants: there are more economic resources and opportunities, education for children is concentrated in cities, and urban refugees can access the social networks and ethnic enclaves that support newcomers, which initiates the process of integration(Jacobsen, 2006, p. 276)

Though urban refugees outnumber refugees in camps, the academic and policy attention has only recently shifted towards urban refugees instead of refugees in encampment. Not only were urban refugees underrepresented in literature, but also misrepresented: Marfleet (2007) points out that the first policy of the UNHCR on urban refugees from 1997 depicted them as people who violated 'normal' patterns of migration by evading or escaping rural encampments and therefore would behave dysfunctional. This rhetoric led to a lack of assistance to refugees in urban areas (Marfleet, 2007), resulting in marginalized urban refugee situations (Sommers, 2001). Since 2009, UNHCR has developed policies pointing out the dynamics of the refugee situation in urban areas, depicting the urban refugee rather as a pro-active actor than as a person who is violating 'normal' refugee patterns of migration (Morand et al., 2012; UNHCR, 2009). This change in policy perceptions brings the urban refugee more to the attention and over time might cause an improvement in urban refugee situations.

'The urban refugee' has a variety of possible legal statuses. The term includes (Jacobsen, 2006, p.274):

- recognized refugees, who have undergone determination procedures;
- asylum seekers, who have applied for asylum and are to undergo determination procedures;
- refugees with temporary protection, as is the case with the Syrian refugees in Turkey;
- and those refugees who are denied refugee status but still remain in the country.

Though starting a new life in a before unknown city is challenging in itself, refugees differ from other migrants in a city in the sense that they have either personally experienced or witnessed conflict, torture and other human rights abuses and have often undergone long and arduous journey's. Unlike voluntary migrants, many refugees are not self-selected, prepared, and motivated seekers of economic opportunity (Poppe, 2013). As a consequence, it is argued that refugee groups show signs that they are at a socio-economic disadvantage over other migrants (Connor, 2010) .This can create more difficulties for them to establish livelihoods without assistance in an urban context (Jacobsen, 2006).

Theoretically urban refugees have a right to protection and assistance. Recognized refugees and asylum seekers fall under the protection of the host state according to international law. The rights that are entitled to this group are specified in the 1951 convention. Despite this convention, this protection has not been implemented strongly in urban areas (Jacobsen, 2006, p. 276). The kind of protection that UNHCR aims to offer, distinguishes three categories of objectives which would promote the protection of refugees in urban areas and contribute to improvements in the urban refugees' situation (UNHCR, 2009)

1) Documentation and Status determination: with objectives to providing adequate reception facilities for refugees and asylum seekers; undertaking registration and data collection; ensuring that refugees are documented; and determining refugee status.
2) Community relation: community outreach; fostering constructing relations with urban refugees; and maintaining security.
3) Safe and sustainable existence for urban refugees: includes objectives to address livelihoods; access to services (healthcare, education); meeting material needs; freedom of movement; and durable solutions for urban refugees.

UNHCR's promotion of these protection objectives in an urban context is a complex task, because the different administrative levels in a country have power over the different objectives. For example refugee determination happens on a national level, while community relation is supposed to exist on a municipality level. Refugees and host-communities often perceive their stay as being temporary, or pending for resettlement which even further complicates the opportunity to promote the protection and sustainability of refugees livelihood (Morand et al., 2012). The above targets show that reaching out to urban refugees is very challenging and that the aims for assistance of UNHCR are not fitting to the scale of the refugee situation in cities like Istanbul. The above section shows that urban refugees are officially protected, but that policies are not well enough

implemented. It means that urban refugees cannot count on assistance from the UNHCR or governments in the Global South for practical problems like finding housing and have to rely on their own networks.

2.2 HOUSING PATHWAYS

Many different frameworks can be used to describe and understand the field of the 'consumption of housing' and residential behaviour of its users. Housing can be viewed in the perspective of government policies towards the housing field (NRC, 2015; UN Habitat & Ohchr, 2014); it can be viewed from an economical perspective as a housing market, in which actors and their supply and demand in this field determine prices of housing for example; it can also be researched from a geographical point of view, in which the factors that influence the spatial distribution of housing are researched (Alkay, 2011; Koramaz & Dokmeci, 2012; Pinarcioɭu & Işik, 2009). The geographical point of view provides some useful concepts to examine the residential behaviour of refugees in urban centres. From the geographical perspective the focus is on the choice to move made by households, resulting into research on concepts like mobility, tenure choice and housing search (Alkay, 2011). However, this approach tends to view households to be rational and instrumental towards housing, while their perceptions and reactions towards the housing context facing them can be much different (Clapham, 2002). To overcome the limitations of these housing approaches, Clapham provides a tool to analyse housing by using the concept of a *housing pathway.* This is defined by Clapham as: 'Patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space' (Clapham, 2002). Or in other words by Clapham:

> *The housing pathway of a household is the continually changing set of relationships and interactions, which it experiences over time in its consumption of housing. These may take place in a number of locales such as the house, the neighbourhood or the office of a landlord or estate agent* (Clapham, 2002, p. 64)

The housing pathway is a personal approach, focussed on the actor, in this case the household and the individual in the household. The emphasis on relationships and interactions shows that housing is not viewed as an end in itself, but that it is inter-related with other aspects of life and therewith can rather be perceived as a means to build a life, instead of a goal in itself. Housing is not consumed in isolation from other aspects of life, but it may be triggered by changes in family structure or employment opportunities (Alkay, 2011; Clapham, 2002).

This makes the housing pathway more suitable to use in the context of urban refugee research than more objective concepts like a housing career, because appropriate housing is one of the many concerns that refugees have when entering a society that is new to them and does not offer opportunities right away. The interactions with the society are of important social matter to a refugee as a newcomer. One of the major strengths of the pathways approach is the recognition that changes in housing can involve a different set of social practices as well as the more widely recognised physical changes (Clapham, 2002).I believe that the emphasis on relationships and interactions in the housing field is useful and relevant to use in the context of

housing and home of urban refugees, because they rely on the existing networks of their connections, but will have to construct most other aspects of their 'home' from scratch. The role of these relations is therefore more essential for refugees than for other urban dwellers.

Because the housing pathway frameworks leaves room for empirical choices and interpretation, the following paragraphs will elaborate more on the various aspects of a housing pathway and the usage of these concepts this research. The aspects focussed on will be the housing career, the element of time in the housing pathway and the interpretation of the meaning of housing in relation to the process of constructing a home, which forms an extension of Clapham's concept of housing pathway.

2.2.1 HOUSING CAREER

A 'housing career' is a term used to describe the way in which households change their housing consumption as they move through their life course. It is assumed that individuals (or households) take steps during their life course to improve their housing circumstances (Murdie, 2002). A housing career of a household is affected by the household characteristics, the housing search process and the housing outcome. The housing outcome and other changes in family or income circumstances can lead to changing characteristics, resources and preferences of the household and therewith provide the circumstances that lead the a possible new move. The housing career is an essential basis of a housing pathway, because it structures the sequence of events that lead to a new housing outcome and therefore are a good analytical tool in this study.

The process of housing career as described by Murdie (2002) provides this research with a framework of possible factors that could affect the housing pathway of an individual or household (figure 3). This framework consists of five boxes that each show a part of the factors that can affect a housing career of an immigrant in the USA, but is now applied to the housing career of refugees in Istanbul.

1. household / individual characteristics: affects both the preference of refugee households for different types of housing and also the social and economic resources that these households have available to access housing
2. the housing search process and the so-called filters in the housing search process: filters in the housing search process provide constraints and opportunities to the process of finding a new place to live. The housing search is the decision making process that households go through in their search for a new place to live.
3. The housing outcome can be assessed by looking at the nature of dwelling and surroundings, but can also be assessed by the degree of satisfaction with this residence.
4. The last box connects the outcome of the housing search with the household/individual's characteristics, because the interactions and experiences in a house will influence the characteristics of its users. When the household preferences and resources change, this can lead to a new housing search and possibly a new move in the housing career.
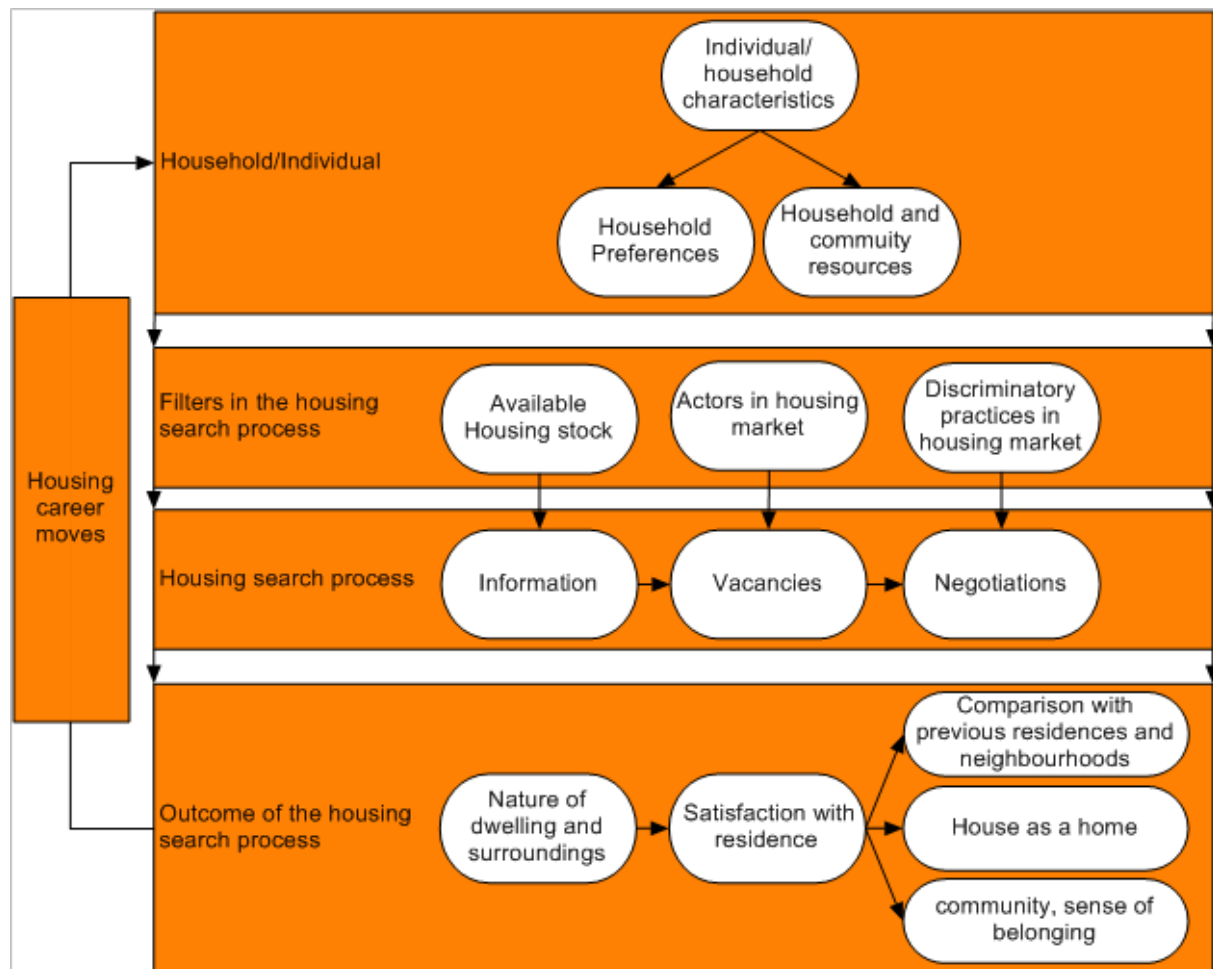
FIGURE 3: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF A HOUSING CAREER, FACTORS AFFECTING A HOUSING CAREER MOVE, BASED ON MURDIE, 2002

As explained in the previous section, the housing career is a useful way to assess how a household or individual creates a sequence of housing during his or her life course and how one moves from one place to another. The concept of a housing career comes short in explaining how this housing career is related to the dynamics of other aspects of life. It explains what factors are of influence, but not *how* these factors influence satisfaction. Especially in the last phase, described as an assessment of the satisfaction with the residence (see figure 3), there is little explanation of why or how someone makes a house into a home or about the moment that someone starts to belong in a new locality. I believe that this part of a housing experience is very important to understand what the aim of moving is, which is also in line with Clapham's argument that the meaning of that house as well as the interaction that are related to it are of importance to someone's housing career or housing pathway and can have very different interpretations. Studies on housing career aim to find a more universally applicable set of preferences on which households act in a rational manner. Clapham argues that these moves from house to house are rather motivated by the pursuit a the greater goal of self-fulfilment and are not rationally intended, but very personally evaluated. Households may vary significantly in the meaning, which they attach to the physical structures or location of houses.

The elements that form the indicators of satisfaction with housing come back in this research are the comparison with previous housing, the ways in which a house feels like a home and the influence of the community and neighbourhood on this feelings of home and belonging. There three elements return in this research and receive more extensive theorization in the following paragraphs.

2.2.2   TIME

A housing pathway and housing career describe a residential history during an individuals or household's life course and are therewith aiming to capture the dynamics of a life in a housing pattern (Clapham, 2002; Murdie, 2002; Poppe, 2013). The life course of refugees took a drastic turn when they were forced to leave their homes. Normally moving houses would be a slow process. Housing is a means to build capital and to settle on long term. In the case of a refugee, the mobility of a household can quickly accelerate. The interactions that have taken place since leaving home result in changes and developments of the household's or individual's characteristics, preferences and resources. These changing circumstances require adaptations from the household and the new circumstances will be compared with the old, which can result into changing values of what is good enough or what is not. The housing pathway of a refugee should therefore include the previous housing situation in the country of origin (Syria in this study) and the residential moves that were made between the moment of leaving Syria until the current situation. In much literature this period between home and the current location of a migrants is referred to as a migration trajectory, but will be named the housing pathway in this research.

As Clapham acknowledges, the reconstruction of a housing pathway in history can only be based on the memories and perceptions of a refugee him/herself (Clapham, 2002). Current residential preferences are observable and measurable, an understanding of participants' preferences and meanings related to housing are rather partial, situated, contextual, and contested (Poppe, 2013). The reconstructed pathway therefore has limitations, because the context of all former residences cannot be completely understood. Therefore at the location of study - Istanbul in this case- the development of the housing pathway can be understood and observed in the right context, but understanding the search for and outcome of housing in other localities is more challenging. Reconstructing the housing pathway based on memory is still of value however, since the interactions during the housing pathway can be of influence to the current households characteristics, preferences and resources.

2.2.3   HOME & BELONGING

Belonging as a concept is closely linked to a feeling of home. Antonsich (2010) argues that belonging needs to be explored both as a personal feeling of home in a place (territorial belonging) as well as through a construction and claim that justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusions (politics of belonging). The notion of belonging can benefit from a perspective that aims to map belonging as the intersection of the dynamics of both kinds of belonging. It is the personal experience that shapes a feeling of home, but it is the society that enables this feeling. Both dimensions will be discussed in this paragraph starting with a personal feeling of belonging, followed by the politics of belonging.

Belonging in a home, or place belongingness is a kind of belonging that is a personal, intimate, private sentiment of place attachment ('sense of belonging'). A home stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security and emotional attachment and does not directly connect with the physical quality of a house. The physical place and quality of a house can be a means to reach this personal sentiment of place-belongingness. This kind of belonging is built up and grows out of every day practices. Antonsich names five distinguishing factors that can contribute to this sense of belonging:

- auto-biographical, including memories and present family members;
- relational, meaning the personal and social ties that enrich life of an individual in a given place;
- cultural, with language as its most important feature, but also religious practices;
- Economic factors, as they contribute to create a safe and stable material condition for the individual and his/her family;
- and lastly legal factors, as an essential component in producing security and a vital dimension of belonging.

Though the factors are very likely to be of influence, there is no clarity on how these factors contribute to a feeling of belonging. These factors link back to household characteristics, resources and preferences as well as linking forward to a feeling of being at home. Because household characteristics, resources and preferences do have influence on the search and choice process of finding adequate housing, I argue that the degree in which a house can be a home is dependent on the physical quality and location of the home (Murdie, 2002) as well as the meaning this home has to the household and individual (Clapham, 2002). Quality of a house and creating a home are not directly causally related, but are rather parallel processes: the meaning given to a house and the quality of the house are both of importance to a feeling of home and a sense of belonging in a place.

A house will have a particular set of meanings to the household, which may relate to its use as a home and the patterns of interaction that are connected to that house, location and time (Poppe, 2013) The house may be an element in the identity of the household and the individuals of the household and can be part of a lifestyle choice. The interactions with the people in that location; neighbours and others in that place are an important aspect of the consumption of that particular house and can therefore contribute the identity of its users. This process exists in two ways: the meaning of a house can influence identity, for example it is argued that house-ownership is an important source of identity for people; but a households/individuals identity also shapes housing preferences. As Poppe (2013) argues: 'housing preferences need to be viewed as products of a variety of individual and household identities'(Poppe, 2013)

These identities and the linked meanings of housing and neighbourhood can be formed by circumstances earlier in life (Clapham, 2002). In the case of refugees, the home is lost. Taylor (2013) researched the different dimensions in which a lost home can be represented. Because the physical house as well as the constructed home are lost, it is mainly the perception and the memory that forms the representation of this home. She makes a distinction between four dimensions of a home:

1. *the spatial home*, which includes not only the home but also the physical environment in which someone functioned and felt in place; the houses and other places of dwelling, but also the habitual places of every day activity, streets, mosques, shops and nature.

2. *the temporal home*, in which the circumstances of daily routines and the cycles of nature and life (birth, childhood, adolescence, birthdays, religious feast, death) all came together and in which memories of the past take place in a way that cannot be repeated;

3. *The relational home*, consisting of social networks, the accumulative value of this social network and the social practices and habits that make people feel at home, meaning the interactions, negotiations, intimacies and exchanges with close kin, extended family and acquaintances; lastly

4. *the material home,* consisting of the financial impacts of losing capital (house, crops, other belongings) and materials that were owned (Taylor, 2013).

These kinds of home relate to the loss of a home, which is a sentiment that is linked to a particular space and time that cannot come back (Taylor, 2013). Taylor argues that the representation of a lost home is necessary to understand the experience of exile as a refugee. In this line of reasoning these dimensions can be used as a framework to analyse how refugees refer to their homes now and how these dimensions contribute to their current characteristics, preferences and resources. Taylors dimensions provide a more explicit explanation of the practice of home construction and also puts more emphasis on the spatial dimension where this process takes place.

The second kind of belonging, is an official, public-oriented 'formal structure' of membership. This kind of belonging is highly influenced by the working of power relations: the politics of belonging. Every politics of belonging involves two opposite sides: the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of 'granting' belonging (Antonsich, 2010).

> *Those who claim belonging often claim the right to stay or to work in a place. This might vary from resident permits to full citizenshop which explains why citizenship is often treated as a synonym for (political) belonging (...) yet even when political belonging is granted, this might still not be enough to generate a sense of place belongingness*
>
> *(Antonsich, 2010, p. 650)*

The politics of belonging are influenced by structures in a society and as Antonsich points out, enabling structures in society do not always cause a personal sense of place belongingness. It is an important element in the process of constructing a feeling of home. Rights and citizenship, a claim to political belonging are an important element that lead to integration in a society (Ager & Strang, 2004a). As a refugee, political belonging can be described as a claim. An example of this kind is manifested in citizenship for instance (Antonsich, 2010),

but can also be represented by one of the filters in the housing search process in Murdie's housing career framework (available housing stock, actors in housing market and discriminatory practices).

2.3   CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained how the housing pathway is a useful way to analyze the housing situation of urban refugees. A housing pathway is based on the process described in a housing career with the addition that it is the meanings of housing that explains how a sequence of housing is established. The meaning of housing is an element in the process of constructing a home, because the physical features as well as the relational aspects of a house influence the every day practices and can create a personal sentiment of place-belongingness. In the following methodological chapter I will explain how I use these theoretical relations in my research design.

3. METHODOLOGY

For answering the research question of this research, I did desk research and a fieldwork of three months in the city of Istanbul, Turkey. The fieldwork took place from February till May 2015. During the this fieldwork I used open and semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and participant observation to be able to understand and observe the housing situation of Syrian refugees in Istanbul and relate this to their process of constructing a home. In the following chapter I will explain how I approached the set-up of this research, how and where I got in contact with the research population, how the data collection developed during the research period and what the limitations of this method were.

3.1 OPERATIONALIZATION

The main question of this research is:

What is the meaning of housing for Syrian refugees in the process of constructing a home in Istanbul?

By using the housing pathway framework, I engage the experiences and memories of the refugees who arrived in Istanbul in their current construction of a home in Istanbul. I look at the physical sequence of housing as well as the meanings of these houses to these refugees to explore how this housing pathway has lead to home-construction. The main question is divided into three sub questions.

1. What was the home and housing situation of Syrian refugees before they came to Istanbul?
2. What are the dynamics of the housing situation of Syrian refugees in Istanbul and how do they access housing?
3. Do the Syrian refugees feel at home in Istanbul and what is needed for them to do so?

For answering the first question, I focus on the meaning of people's houses in Syria and the interactions that created their perception of home in their former homes in Syria. These interactions and meanings are specified by using Taylors (2013) dimensions (spatial, temporal, relational, material) of home. These dimensions are interconnected but also each present a part of the home-experience in Syria. This will be analyzed in chapter 4. The other time frame that provides the experiences and memories for the refugees is the time during the trajectory to Istanbul. I look for common experiences during the trajectory between Syria and Istanbul to find out if the experiences during the trip to Istanbul are of influence to the construction of a home in Istanbul. I will mainly focus in the changing household dynamics during the trajectory, because this is the most influential element of the trajectory on the housing pathway in Istanbul. This will be analyzed in chapter 5.

The second question on the current housing situation, encompasses the housing conditions now as well as the process of searching for housing in Istanbul. The housing pathway within the borders of the Istanbul

metropolitan area are analysed by using Murdie's 'housing career framework' (2002) (see appendix I). This framework is built up of four elements: household characteristics, filters in the searching process, the searching process itself and the final housing outcome. Household dynamics are addressed in chapter 5.

This research touches just slightly on the topic of the filters that influence the housing search process. The reason is that this research focuses on the experience of Syrian refugees, which means that the broader filtering processed on the housing market fall out of this study's empirical scope. These topics are researched via secondary sources in literature in the contextual framework in chapter 6.

The access to housing is described by looking at the searching process and the housing outcomes. These will be analyzed by looking at the different types of housing where participants currently live and the ways in which these houses were accessed. The different types of housing bring forth different dynamics. I will analyze these dynamics that mainly consist of the interactions with the other house-users, the interactions with the local (Turkish) community and the searching process that took place before being able to live in these houses. The second element of this question is how Syrian refugees were able to make progress and development on the housing market and how their *housing careers* have developed. I will address this topic by addressing the decision making process previous to a move. Search process and outcome will be discussed in chapter 7

The third question addresses the process of construction of a home by the Syrian refugees in Istanbul. This process is described, using an indicator framework of Ager and Strang (2004). This framework is developed in Britain to improve policy and practice on refugee integration, by pointing out the domains in which integration takes place and by showing how these domains can be interrelated (see figure 4). This process is different from constructing a home, but it relates to the same domains that are described in the theory on home and belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Taylor, 2013). It shows the complexity of the process of constructing a home and therefore is used in this chapter to address the relation between houses and homes.
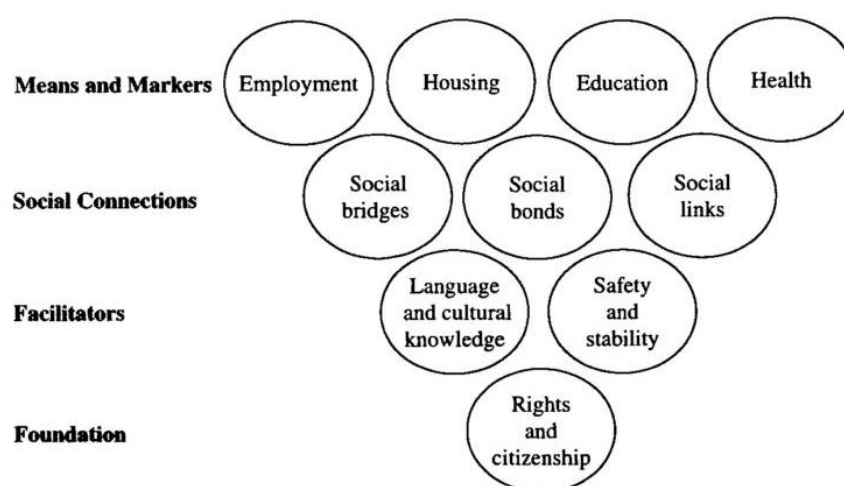
FIGURE 4: THE INDICATORS OF INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK (AGER & STRANG, 2004A)

The process of constructing a home is broadly analyzed addressing the legal and auto-biographical aspect of home, the social connections enabling a sense of home, cultural factors and the aspect of identity.

3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION

The population of Syrians in Istanbul consists of an estimated 330.000 people (Erdoğan, 2014). During my fieldwork I was in contact about the topic of housing and home with a little more than fifty Syrian people who lived in Istanbul at the time of my fieldwork. I found these people through snowball sampling, on location visits during volunteer work at two different organizations[3] and during a Turkish speaking class. Also I made house visits where I met family members and housemates of my informants. The intensity of the contact with these informants varied between one informal conversation to several in depth conversations and informal meetings.

Conversation with the participants were focussed on their current house and their housing conditions in Istanbul. My fellow student Pedro Pereira held interviews with entrepreneurs in Istanbul and also asked questions related to their housing situation for me. This gave me an extra group of informants. In total I know from 42 informants where and how they live and how they found their house in Istanbul. From a part of them I also know where they lived before, how much they pay for their houses and how they feel about their neighbourhood. This group forms the basis of my data analysis on housing conditions and access to housing. The range of ages in the group of participants was between 14 and 58, with a majority of the participants between 21 and 30 years old. Representation of male and female informants was unequal. The group consists of 8 women and 33 men (see table 1), mainly because the gatekeepers I used were male and linked me to other male informants. When I interviewed female informants, they told me that they had very few female Syrian friends in Istanbul who they could connect me to. The time that they had already lived in Istanbul varied between one month and four years[4].

Age	Male	Female	Total
14-20	1	2	3
21-30	25	6	31
31-40	3	0	3
41+	5	0	5
Total	**33**	**8**	**42**

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN AGE GROUPS, DIVIDED BY GENDER

The group of informants in this research has a relatively large group of people from Damascus (53% in comparison with 5,3% country wide) and Homs (19,5 in comparison with 2% country-wide), and has a relatively

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[3] One of these organizations is a Church-based organization who wishes to be anonymous because of bureaucratic issues with the government of Istanbul. The other organization is a recently started NGO, called 'small projects in Istanbul'.
[4] The majority of informants arrived from April 2013 onwards, but there were some entrepreneurs who arrived in Istanbul much earlier. Especially these entrepreneurs were already in Istanbul for longer than two years.

small group people from Aleppo, Al-Raqqah & Al-Hasakah in comparison to the group of Syrians that has been found in national researches on the urban Syrian refugee population (see figure 5). The majority of the Syrian population in Turkey comes originally from the Northern located Syrian provinces, Aleppo, Al-Raqqah & Al-Hasakah, together representing almost eighty percent of the Syrian population outside refugee camps in Turkey (see map figure 1). It shows that the group of informants in this research is not representative in terms of their cities of origin with the larger Syrian population in Turkey. Especially the difference in representation of Damascus in this research group in comparison to the complete Syrian population in AFAD's report is large. It could indicate that the group of informants that I found is overrepresented by Syrians from Damascus and that this is the result of my snowball sampling method.

Original provinces of Syrian refugees
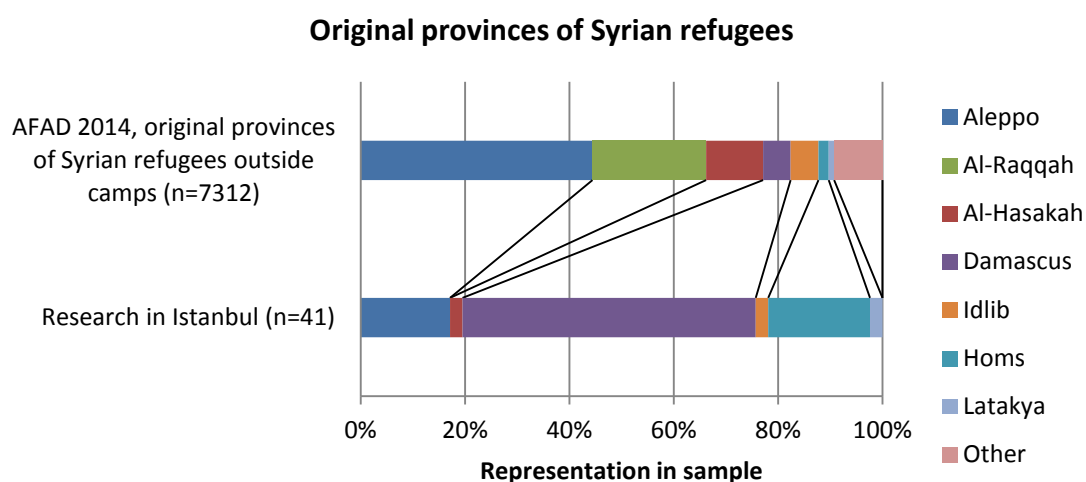
FIGURE 5: ORIGINAL PROVINCES OF SYRIANS IN AFAD 2014 REPORT AND THIS RESEARCH

Out of the group of Syrians I met I was able to build up a personal relationship with eighteen informants. I had two or more meetings with each of these informants and this increased the reliability and detail of the information that they gave to me. Because of the multiple interviews and conversations, the more personal topics of belonging and having a home were easier to discuss after the contact was more established. I discussed their home in Syria, their trajectory to Istanbul, their feelings about living in Istanbul and how this changed during their stay in Istanbul. With the six women in this group, I also spoke about their position as women in Syrian and Turkish society. With some people I discussed the role of ethnicity in their lives in Syria and in Istanbul. This was especially relevant for the six people who were part of a minority[5] and experienced exclusion or difficulty because of this. However, it was also a topic for the informants from the ethnic majorities, Sunni or Alewites, who sometimes also described particular experiences in Istanbul because of their ethnicity. The majority of this group was younger than 30, one participant was 58, showing that this group consisted of mainly young people and the majority of these informants (15 out of 18) spoke English. This made the existing language barrier much smaller and made it easier to build up a personal relationship with each

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[5] Basimah and Salah are Christians, Kalila is Kurdish, Nimerah and Fidyan are Palestinian Syrians, Shaista is from the Druz sekt and Amilah is from an Ismaeli minority.

individual. I believe it was easier to connect to these people, because we were of similar age and arranging meetings could be in a flexible manner, because the majority of them did not have children to take care of for example. Two people in this group, Kalila (14) and Karim (25) already stayed in Istanbul for 2 years. All others arrived more recently in Istanbul.

As mentioned before I found my informants through snowball sampling and via connections I established at refugee organizations and Turkish class. Facebook has been a valuable medium to get in touch with some key contact persons. Pedro Pereira (one of the student-colleagues) established a connection with Kafeel via a Facebook group 'Syrian students in Istanbul'. Kafeel is a Syrian student (22) who was able to introduce me to seven informants, who brought me into contact with three more informants. The same Facebook medium was used to meet Mujab, who also formed a connection with two of my informants. The other three important snowball-locations were:

- a Christian NGO where I worked as a volunteer during their meetings for Syrian women. I had very short conversations with several women in this organization, but I was able to conduct an interview with three informants, who I met via this programme.
- The meetings of Small Projects Istanbul, via which I got to know five informants. During volunteer work I spoke to several Syrian people, but I conducted interviews with five Syrians I met here.
- The Turkish speaking club, where I met two informants

An overview of the different snowball mediums and corresponding informants is given in figure 6, showing the names of informants in this research. The names in this research, as well as in the visualisation of the snowball method are pseudonyms, to ensure anonymity of the informants.

Because of the snowball sampling, the researched informants are a selective group, which is also represented in the geographical locations of their current housing. The majority of informants lived in the two districts of Avcılar and Fatih. Both these districts are known to have a large Syrian community, but the fact that the majority of the informants in this research is from these areas can be caused both by the selective nature of the snowball, as well as the larger presence of Syrians in these areas, as well as other reasons. It is not possible to distinguish a patterns of residency of Syrians in Istanbul, because of the limited and selective research group, but an overview of the residential locations of the informants is given in figure 16 in paragraph 7.2.

In addition to research via interviews and conversations with the Syrian population, participant observation was used. During eight house visits and by informal meetings I observed how the Syrians that I met, dealt with their residence and lives in Istanbul.
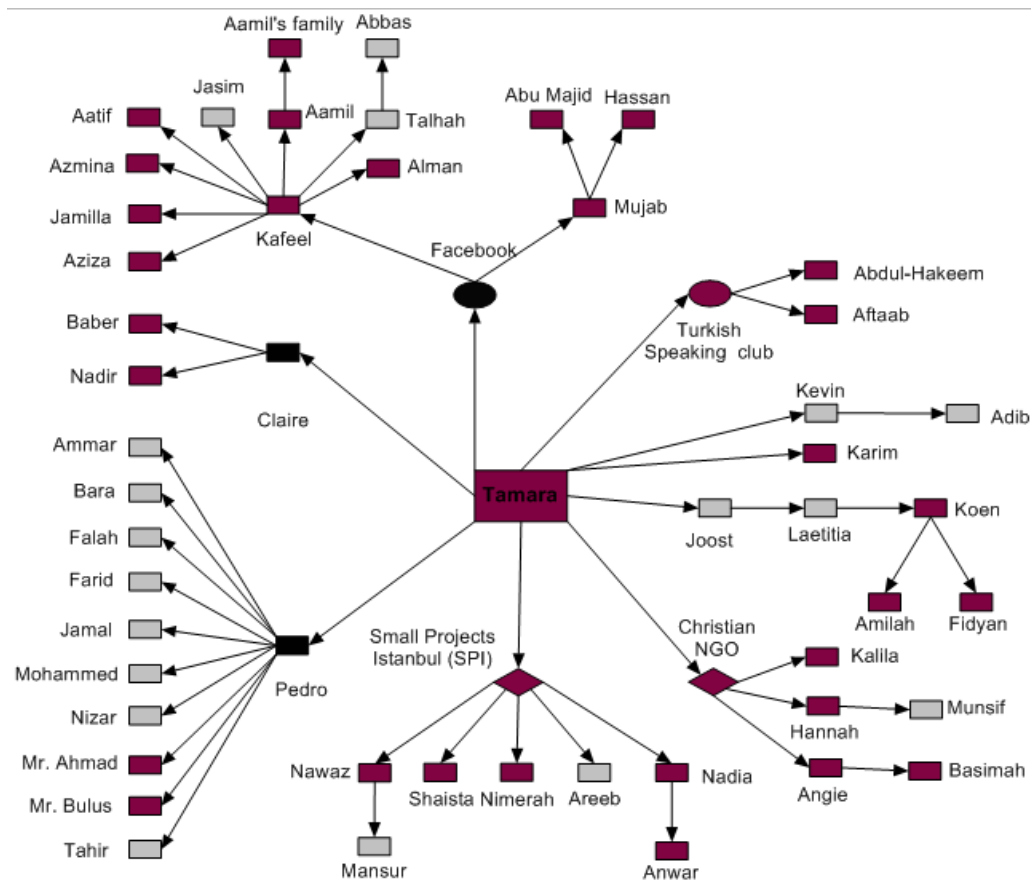
FIGURE 6: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS AND SNOWBALL METHOD VISUALLY

Besides the research with Syrians themselves, I had conversations with 11 people who were somehow involved with the refugee situation of Syrians in Istanbul:

- Six conversations were held with NGO personnel and volunteers about the different refugee dealings in their experience.
- Four representatives of organizations were spoken to during interviews:
  - The Kurdish migrant organization 'Göçder', Interview with Ilias, Nour and Övgü, 6-3-2015
  - Koen van Lieshout, The Syria office of the Netherlands, Istanbul, 4-3-2015
  - The medical 'Al-Nour' organization, 14-4-2015
  - the school director of 'Shamouna primary school' in Esenler, Istanbul, 17-3-2015
- Informal conversation with a Turkish real-estate owner and landlord, Mustafa, 10-3-2015

These conversations and interviews gave context and background to the situation of Syrian refugees and increased my understanding of how Syrians in Istanbul are coping. They are used as a contextual background in this research.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

In my contact with Syrian informants I made sure that the people I spoke to were aware of my intentions of meeting them. I explained in the initial phase of our contact that I was in Istanbul to do research, that I would stay in Istanbul for three months and what my topic of research was about. I made sure that I was clear on this topic to avoid wrong expectations and to make sure I had their consent to use the interview, but at the same time I would try to make the informants feel at ease and not scare them away. Especially in the case where I build up a relationship with people who shared their personal information with me, I would ask again after our conversation if they were ok with me using that information in my research. Their consent was important to make sure I did not compromise their lives by using the information they gave me. All informants gave their consent about these interviews, although some excluded some parts of information they gave.

During the first couple of interviews, I used a topic list to help me remember the topics that I would focus on. When I learned more and trained myself in this interview technique, I found that interviews became more informative if I let go of the topic list. In this way there was more space for the informants' opinions and input. This does not mean I let go of the structure completely, but the topics came up in the conversation more naturally. The method of recording an interview was variable, depending on the nature and setting of the conversation or interview. In most cases, I used a notebook to write down the information I heard, but this was not appropriate for all interview settings. During informal conversations I did not use my notebook and I would record the information as soon as I could afterwards. When an interview was planned beforehand, I could make notes during the interview. However, some topics were so personal that it felt inappropriate to write everything down during this kind of conversation. When this occurred I tried to record the information as soon as I could afterwards.

Connecting to Syrians who were of my age was less difficult than I expected it to be. People were very willing to cooperate in the research, often because they felt that their voices were not heard and that their situation should be more known in international setting. Some were also interested in establishing friendship during my time in Istanbul. This was especially the case with Syrians who spoke English or who wanted to practice their English. I felt that some informants were interested to have a new connection in the Netherlands or asked me about procedures for Asylum or enrolment in Dutch universities. Almost everyone knew someone who was staying in Europe or had friends or family members who made it to Germany, Sweden or the Netherlands and were interested in the culture of the Netherlands. Another reason for appreciation of my research and having an interview was the fact that I was someone to share experiences with. Because I was interested in the informants' personal motivations and situation some informants were very happy that there was someone who would listen to them. Amilah (24) specifically appreciated this:

> *'It felt good to tell you my story. It does not happen often that somebody is really interested in my experiences and wants to hear it just out of interest, instead of out of functionality. - Amilah, 24*

During the research I experienced no wrong expectations from the Syrian informants. They were aware of the fact that I was a student and that I could often not improve their situation in Istanbul or in the Netherlands in case they were planning to move. As the above shows however, for many it was important to establish new friendships, and to share their experiences to someone who was not so much involved in the conflict or Turkish society. Especially women explained me that it was hard to build friendships with other Syrian women and that the language barrier with Turkish people was too high.

Because of the cooperation between four research students, interviews were often held by two students, in most cases I interviewed respondents with Jolinde Dermaux and in some cases with Pedro Pereira or Teun Smorenburg. In this way, one could lead a part of the conversation, while the other could put her/his efforts in registering the shared information. An advantage of this interview strategy was the fact that interviews could be cross-referenced and the shared information could be discussed afterwards. Disadvantage of interviewing in duos was that the interview could be less 'intimate' which could have caused participants to be more shy. However, the experience of having an interview with two interviewees at the time has been good. Not much disadvantages were experienced.

Out of the 42 informants, 26 people spoke English and the other 16 informants spoke only Arabic. The interviews with these informants were held with the use of a translator. These translators were Kafeel (Male, 22), Jamila (female, 27), Talhah (male, 27) and Mujab (male, 22). These four Syrians helped as a translator and also functioned as gate keepers, because they arranged new interviews and helped in interpreting conversations and observations. Kafeel brought me into contact with Jamila and Talhah. Mujab was found via Facebook. All four research assistants were also informants.

There were several locations where interviews were held. With the female informants, the majority of interviews and conversations were held in their homes. With male informants, the majority of interviews were held in a café or teahouse. I let the informant often choose the location, because I did not want them to make any costs for travelling and also because that location was probably the place where he or she felt most comfortable to talk to me.

3.4   LIMITATIONS

The first limitation is the bias of this group of informants. The group of informants has a young bias, because this group was most available at the places where I found participants, this group dominantly spoke English next to Arabic which decreased the language barrier and made communication and building a relation much easier. Limitation to this bias is that my conclusions are mainly based on the opinions and experiences of young people who are in a phase of their lives in which changes come more naturally than older people. Linked to the bias of the informants group, there is very little data known on the whole Syrian population residing in Istanbul. Neither UNHCR nor the Turkish government have published detailed data of the Syrian population in Istanbul. An estimated number of 330.000 Syrian refugees are in Istanbul, but this is a number from 2013 and it is very

possible that this number has increased by now, besides the fact that a large part of the population is not registered. This makes extrapolation or generalizations impossible.

Second limitation of this research is the language barrier. Because I am not able to speak and understand Arabic I could either use a translator to communicate with Syrians or focus on Syrians who knew how to speak English. I made use of translators during my research, but because of the availability of English speaking informants, I focussed on this group for more in depth and personal information about their belonging. This presents another bias in my data, because most English speaking people were able to enjoy a relatively good education, which could mean they are from relatively higher social classes. The above shows that it should be kept in mind that this research just represents the opinions of the informants.

Third limitation and finding of this research is that the informants I met had lives that were very dynamic and prone to change. Some of the Syrians that I was in touch with during the first months of my fieldwork had chosen a very different location or occupation in the last months of my fieldwork. These dynamics are very interesting, but also show that opinions and experiences expressed at one time can quickly change. This is part of the reason that I chose to speak to my informants during several meetings (if possible). I found that opinions and feelings about housing, jobs, friends or anything could change due to events that happened in the meantime between the first and second meeting. It increases the validity of my data to notice the different opinions over time, but it also limits the validity of the data that I gathered. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the collected information for most people was a snapshot of their experiences and opinions.

Fourth limitation comes forth from the interaction between me and the informants. I find it unethical to ask an informant to share his or her information and then to let go of them. I want to observe and analyse, but I feel that the interaction between me and the informant also increases the depth of the information. That is why I found it important to build up a relationship that was based on two-way interactions. This could have influenced my opinion on the informant as well as the other way around, which makes this research not objective. During interviews I found that some topics were difficult to discuss. Topics of ethnicity could be sensitive, but also the (secret) activities of family members or memories of violence were topics that were not easily discussed. Even though these were not directly related to my topic of housing in Istanbul, it was related to feelings of belonging and memories of home in Syria. Therefore these topics could only be discussed with some informants, especially the informants who I met during several interviews and conversations. The time used for collecting this kind of information limited the time used to reach a larger group of participants.

The following empirical chapters will use the information retrieved in the above described manner. In appendix II I will provide a list with all interviews that were used for this research. In the text I will refer to these interviews in quotes. When I conclude something on the basis of empirical information, I will make a footnote with reference to the interview used for that information.

4. HOME IN SYRIA

As explained in the theoretical framework, constructing a home is influenced by the comparison with former homes and houses (Murdie, 2002) and the perception of a home can be remembered in four dimensions: Spatial, relational, material and temporal. This chapter aims to see how Syrians in this research refer to and remember their homes as to understand what the meaning of home is to them, based on their background. The different dimensions will be used to structure this chapter and to therewith explore what the meanings of home is in each of these dimensions. Using this structure does not mean that certain aspects of home belong exclusively to that dimension. The following quote of Aatif illustrates how it is not a single aspect but a combination of things that construct a home:

> *What made me feel at home in Syria were my friends, my neighbourhood, my family, the common language and my football team. The first three streets of the neighbourhood he was living in were like one big family.*
>
> *Aatif, 29, left home since July 2012.*

The dimensions are a way to structure aspects that are very much interrelated and together combine into what used to be home. First the spatial setting of Syrian homes is explained, followed by material, relational and temporal dimension explained.

4.1   SPATIAL HOME IN SYRIA

The spatial dimension of home includes the emplacement of the place where home is, but also consists of the physical environment in which someone functioned and felt in place, on streets, in the mosque, in shops and in nature. The emplacement of the majority of informants in this research was in urban centres of the big cities in Syria: Damascus, Aleppo and Homs (see table 2). Only two families have come from a village in a rural area.

Cities		Villages	
Damascus	23	**Yacubiye (Idlib)**	1
Homs	8	**Khazaa (Al-Hasakah)**	1
Aleppo	7		
Latakya	1		

TABLE 2: PLACE OF THE LAST HOME IN SYRIA (FOR LOCATIONS, SEE FIGURE 1)

The spatial dimension was described very differently between the Syrian city-dwellers and the two informants from rural areas. Basimah (14) and Kalila (14) and both their families were from (different) villages and described a small but very tight community and enough space to live in:

> *'There were three Christian villages in my area. We had a piece of land on which our house was standing, it was a big house! We had a beautiful church, and everybody in the 3 surrounding villages was Christian. We didn't even know what a Muslim was.' - Basimah, 14, left home in March 2013*

This quote also illustrates that the community in Basimah's village was very tight and secluded from other communities in Syria. This strong sense of the own community is also found in urban descriptions of home. Neighbourhoods were of important social matter to many informants and their families. People would recognize your ethnicity from the neighbourhood where you lived, which at the same time meant that most communities lived very close to each other. The segregation of communities was an essential part of Syrian culture[6]. This segregation of communities is common in Syrian cities and especially informants from ethnic minorities would tell about their neighbourhoods in this way, like Salah from a Christian community and Shaista from the Druze community.

> *'I remember the times that I would pass by my friends who lived very close to my house. I would promise to stay for an hour, but finally would stick around all night. I would walk home in the middle of the night, because it was safe on the streets back then. At that time it was safe in Syria, nobody had weapons. I had never heard the sound of a gun in my life! During the conflict, extremist groups started to kill Christians in Aleppo. We were the first to leave our community.*
>
> *Salah, 25, Christian from Aleppo, left in November 2012*

> *My neighbourhood is a suburb of Damascus, where people of our community lived together. I am from a religious sect, called Druze. My family is originally from a Druze village in the South, but we moved to Damascus. My parents had a house in this neighbourhood. They are currently back in Syria. Everything they were used to is still there: their house, their friends and neighbours, their habits. Our neighbourhood was in favour of the regime, which made it a safe place to live during the conflict.*
>
> *Shaista, 25, from Damascus, left in September 2013*

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[6] Interview with Abdul-Hakeem, conducted by Jolinde Dermaux and Teun Smorenburg

The above quotes illustrate that neighbourhoods were an important part of the emplacement of Syrians in their homes. The inside of the homes in urban areas was most often an apartment in a multiple story building that was three to five floors high. In the two pictures below (figure 7) two pictures of the house of Abbas (25, left home in Oct. 2014). He and his mother and sister rented a house in Homs, where his home was.

FIGURE 7: TWO PICTURES OF ABBAS' HOME IN HOMS, SYRIA.

It was most common to live together with family members, close to each other. Aatif described how their family owned different apartments in the same building, where his father owned an apartment and his siblings had apartments with their families on the other floors. More participants talked about a house where different floors belonged to different people of the household, as Karim describes here:

> *I lived with my family in a two story house in Damascus. The top floor belonged to my father and the rest of my family (excluding the ones that were already married) were living on the other floors. My brothers and mother lived on one floor; my father with the other siblings lived on another floor.'*
>
> *Karim, 25, left home in November 2012*

The above illustrate the culture that housing is a family business. Families live close but also in different parts of the house, for example in Karim's case where his parents lived in the same house, but had different parts of the house that were 'theirs'. The homes of Syrians are typically located close to other family members and are often arranged by parents and shared among family members. This group of participants lived mostly in Syrian cities.

4.2   MATERIAL HOME

The material home consists of the financial and capital assets that were owned. House ownership is an important aspect of this but it can also refer to material or stuff that was of importance to a refugee and is now lost. House ownership is very common in Syria, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics of Syria, dating

from 2004, 87 percent was owner of a house and 5 percent of the population of Syria is a house renter. The residual 8 percent is not defined in the statistics (CBS Syria, 2004). In researched group of informants, 81% of the informants (17 out of the 22 who gave this information) lived in a family house that was owned, either by themselves of by their family. The other 19% (4 participants) did not own a house. Because the majority of this group of informants was not married (yet), they were living at their parents' house and could therefore live in the family property. Others were not able to buy property themselves, because the real-estate market in Syria was too expensive for them to buy[7]. Nawaz explains how he and his family lived together in their family house in Aleppo:

> *'My whole family lived in an apartment in Aleppo. My father bought it 25 years ago. It was a middle class neighbourhood and a bit conservative. We were quite a big family. We lived there with five brothers and sisters and my parents. I would say hi to people on the street, but my mom was good friends with the others in our neighbourhood! My family still lives in Aleppo in this house.'*
>
> *Nawaz, 25, Sunni from Aleppo, left January 2013*

Whether someone or someone's family owned a house reflects their social status in Syria. It is the capital they left behind, that they lost or the capital they want to keep despite the violence. Anwar's and Basimah's families lost their houses and therefore were forced to move, Nawaz' family did not lose their house and can therefore keep living in Aleppo, despite the harsher conditions than before. Anwar's family owned two houses in Damascus. When they lost their first house, they went to their other house. They also lost this house because it got burned and they moved in a house with five other families in their city, but this situation was not sustainable. Anwar dreams about his lost house and his stuff:

> *Our house (in Damascus) had everything, there were no complaints I could make. I remember being in my room and my friends would call from down my window and we would talk through the window sometimes for half an hour. I had my study books, my notebooks, my pillow it was my space and it was beautiful. Now there is nothing of that left. I left my stuff, we came with nothing and I have no idea how the house is now, if it is destroyed, if the stuff got stolen or not. I see many faces of people from my home now, they pass my mind and of many I do not know how or what they're doing at the moment.*
>
> *Anwar, 25, left in May 2012.*

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[7] Interview with Jamal, Pedro Pereira, 2-5-2015

This quote illustrates that the stuff that was left in Syria still has a meaning in the memory of a home. The fact that material was owned and that was of Anwar himself was important to him. It is a realization that he does not own things with that kind of value anymore, because the family had to leave everything behind. Basimah (14) and her family had to leave their house because ISIS came to their village and killed Christians, which is why their lives were threatened. Basimah is a teenager and left Syria when she was 12 years old. Her dog was very important to her, but they couldn't take the dog and he was killed. This is the first things Basimah told about her lost house and illustrates how she as child refers to this particular loss that was very important to her. It shows that the meanings of the material home are very personal. Losing a house is a very big loss, but the value of the material home can lie in very personal aspects of that home.

Most informants had parents who owned the house where they grew up and who lived economically stable lives. However, this was not the case for everybody. Nimerah (22) and her family lived in many different places in Syria, because her father was highly educated as a doctor and had many different jobs in different places in Syria. Their family lived the last 9 years in a rented house in Yarmouk camp, a Palestinian refugee suburb of Damascus, where they managed their lives without much money. The family was just surviving during the conflict, because they had no money, but there was fighting in Yarmouk camp. This is a different material picture of home, because Nimerah saw her neighbourhood being destroyed by bombs and was happy she was able to get out of Yarmouk finally. The above shows how the material home can be of varying value to different people, but it also shows that having a home (that is not destroyed) can be an important reason to stay in Syria and how not owning a house (anymore) can be an important reason to leave and move elsewhere.

4.3   RELATIONAL HOME

The relational home consists of social networks and social practices and habits that make people feel at home. This is a very broad dimension that is related to home; because it includes the interactions, negotiations and intimacies with people related to the location of a person's home and these interactions can therefore range from relations build up at a workplace up to relations with close kin like siblings or partner. These interactions show how Syrians in this research were used to interact with their surrounding contacts.

Because of the average young age of the group of informants that participated in this study, much of the social interactions described are from a context of study and from a context of living in the family house. It is culture in Syria to move out of the family house when someone gets married and it is a common practice that this is an arranged marriage[8], although not all participants see this as common practice, but rather as an incidental practice[9]. This also brings an important difference between male and female informants to the fore. Lives of female and male participants of this research were described differently especially in context of the social relationships that both groups could establish in their homes in Syria.

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[8] Interviews with Aziza and Jamila, Kafeel, Jasim, Shaista, Nimerah
[9] Interview Abdul-Hakeem

It is the man's duty to take care of the women who he married; this is the cultural code for married couples in Syria[10]. It means that father generally takes care of the finances and possessions of a family and that they are head of the household. Women are supposed to have a flawless reputation when they get married and are in some cases married off at young age. This happened to Aziza (30) and Jamila (27) when they were 17 and 18. They had children with their husbands, but the marriages did not go well. Both women decided they wanted to end their marriage and asked for a divorce. They have no legal right to divorce and are therefore not entitled to the belongings when the two partners separate. Aziza explains that women have a social life inside the house, people are invited to come over to have dinner and there is a strong culture of hospitality[11]. It is the women who take care of the household and the men who take care of the family income, these are the general roles. The above shows that women have no equal rights over men in Syria and this brings women in Syria in dependent positions, either on their parents or on their partners. This set of relations that is related to a gender debate is very influential in the image that the women in this study have on their homes. It is a topic that is strongly connected to their sense of belonging in Syria, but it is also something that is challenged and twisted by their current experiences. It brings a negative addition to their perception of home in Syria.

One of the most important fields of interaction for most informants used to be their families. Family networks in Syria are used for finding a job[12], they are used to find suitable partners to marry[13] and they are also used for financial support[14] if necessary. Some informants were supported by their family until they left Syria. Family relationships vary much among informants. Neighbourhood relations with the informant's family to other families in the neighbourhood defined the housing experience, although it seems that there was a different value of neighbourhood connections in different localities. Abu Majid, a father of three sons from Damascus explains this:

> *In Syria the neighbours were like a family, but if you would go further out of the city, the connections between people would get weaker. I believe this is the same in Istanbul as it used to be in Damascus.*
>
> *Abu Majid, 58, left Syria in May 2013*

Informants who lived in central areas of Syria's city would indeed say that their neighbours were like family[15], but informants who were from areas further out of the centre named not the physical circumstances, but their community as the most important reason for the close connections to other people in the area[16]

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[10] Interview Aziza
[11] Informal conversation with Kafeel
[12] Interview Anwar
[13] informal conversation with Kafeel and Aziza
[14] interview Kafeel
[15] Interview Aatif, Kafeel, Talhah, Abu Majid, Salah
[16] Nimerah, Shaista

4.4 TEMPORAL HOME

The temporal home can be described by the daily routines that exist at home in combination with rituals and habits throughout a year's cycle. This dimension of home relates strongly to cultural and religious celebrations. The memories of this part of home are discussed here. There were not many of these kind of habits described, except for the period of Ramadan. This time of fasting was a typical time for families to meet their friends more often and organize get-togethers with family. Azmina (28) refers to this time as her favourite part of the year. It is something that is related to tight family bonds, because fasting was something people celebrated together. It is therefore connected to this specific celebration and to particular traditions, that can not be continued in Istanbul.

Another important place in many memories of the participants in this study is the mosque and the time of prayer. The mosque is a place where your father takes you if you're a boy, the traditions of praying several times a day were part of many daily routines. Young people who left their parents when they left Syria described this as something that would only happen if their father was around and that is hard to keep doing outside their family context. The temporal dimension of home cannot return in the same manner and mainly reminds the participants of good times. These memories seemed to be nostalgic images of the home.

4.5 A HOME IN CONFLICT

For people from urban and sub-urban areas, it was very influential in which neighbourhood someone lived, because the violence reached very different levels in different areas. Protests and revolution started in Syria in particular neighbourhoods, which had the name of being against the regime[17]. When the conflict further evolved, some neighbourhoods were controlled by the regime and were relatively safe[18], but other neighbourhoods were known to be against the regime and therefore (violently) controlled by the Syrian army. These neighbourhoods were more often the scenes for fights and bombings[19]. Especially the areas in the countryside and suburbs of Damascus were very much affected by the conflict since the beginning in 2011[20]. In the case of Yarmouk camp, the neighbourhood where a large Palestinian refugee community lived, was - like other neighbourhoods- the scene of intense fighting during the revolution[21]. Ammar (50), a father of two daughters decided to live in a different neighbourhood in their city to ensure that they and/or their families could live a similar life as before and that his daughter could keep going to school[22], others had a second house or apartment in a different neighbourhood or city[23] or family members in a different place where they could

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[17] Talhah, a student at Istanbul University from Homs, interview with Teun Smorenburg on 12-3-2015, Abdul-Hakeem, interview on 17-4-2015
[18] like the neighbourhood where Shaista lives, called *Jaramana.* A mainly Druze and Christian suburb of Damascus, interview on 16-4-2015
[19] Ammar, interview with Pedro Pereira, 03-05-2015
[20] Interview with Falah, Pedro Pereira, 23-4-2015
[21] Nimerah, interview on 9-5-2015
[22] Interview Talhah & Ammar, by Pedro Pereira
[23] Anwar and his family, interview 21-4-2015

reside for a while[24]. Finally however even these neighbourhoods and houses could not ensure most families to be safe and some of these houses were lost[25] which caused the decision to move out of Syria. Abdul-Hakeem specifies during an interview how the segregation between neighbourhoods would form a problem in daily life:

> *The company where I worked and my home were in the opposition territory and the hospitals (where he had to do his job) were in areas that were controlled by the regime. On the Syrian ID card we all have, it is stated from which neighbourhood you are. This turned out to be a problem every day, because I had to travel through the areas controlled by the regime every day.*
>
> *Abdul-Hakeem, 26, from Damascus, left in April 2014*

Because the neighbourhood was of high influence to the local safety of people in that neighbourhood, it was most often the case that people moved around in Syria to other houses or other cities before they decided to move abroad. This means that a large part of the researched people already left their original neighbourhoods and homes at the moment that they decided to go abroad. The importance of these details for the current housing situation is that the period away from someone's home is much longer than the period they were abroad, showing that their home had changed before they decided to leave and this changes the image of home for the informants now.

The different position of men and women in Syria has lead to an unequal position for men and women in the war, because men have to do a military service when they turn 18 for two years. This service can be avoided when a man is the only son of his parents and can also be delayed when a man goes to study first. However, this fact influences the life of young men strongly and takes them away from their regular lives for two years. Their military duty is a very important reason for young men to live abroad or in the case of war to flee out of Syria[26].

During the conflict, the delivery of services and goods have become harder and harder, which meant that electricity, water and daily groceries are harder and harder to get by. Shaista (26) finished her university degree in civil engineering in Damascus, but the public transport that she normally used to go to her classes had stopped so she had to walk to school and study without electricity at night. Salah explains that his home city Aleppo always had clean water from the tap, but nowadays there are water cuts that sometimes last up to 20 days these days [27]. Regular groceries cost much more now than they used to be, because there is scarcity in

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[24] Interview Kafeel, Informal conversation Nimerah
[25] Interview Munsif by Teun Smorenburg
[26] All informants were able to avoid their military service by going abroad before the army found them, or they had no army duty because they were the only son of their parents.
[27] Nawaz family in Aleppo has water cuts of 20 days in a row

agricultural production and difficult transportation of goods. All these changed circumstances in living conditions of the Syrians who stay in Syria.

The changing circumstances of home during the conflict had a strong impact on the daily interactions of Syrians. Because there was a different experience in different neighbourhood, between gender and between cities in the country, each participant experienced their home in conflict on different aspects and different circumstances lead to their flight out of Syria. The reason for leaving Syria is of influence to people's option to return to their homes in Syria: Men who are supposed to do military service will be put in jail upon return, people from demolished neighbourhood would have to find a new place to live when they would return, while people who lived in relatively quiet neighbourhoods could return to their homes when the conflict ends.

4.6   CONCLUSION

The image of home that is taken by the refugees has become a memory that cannot be repeated in a different time. House ownership and living together with family members are important aspects of the Syrian homes of the participants in this research. The role of neighbourhoods is strong in people's social networks, because ethnicities are often concentrated in these neighbourhoods and form close communities. This chapter shows that what used to be normal about home has changed into something else due to the conflict. The following chapter will elaborate more on the trajectories that Syrians in this research took when they left Syria and started their trajectory that will lead them to Istanbul.

5. To Istanbul or not to Istanbul?

The trajectory to Istanbul and the sequence of housing within Istanbul's metropolitan borders are both part of the housing pathway of the Syrian refugees who stay and live in Istanbul. During this housing pathway, the composition, resources and preferences of the moving household can change. The context of Istanbul can be observed, while the housing context of the other places on the pathway of refugees can only be explored via the perception that the informants have had on their houses and homes. It is important to recognize that certain developments from the moment that a household left Syria are still of influence on the housing pathway that is pursued in Istanbul. That is why the pathway to Istanbul is part of this analysis. The dynamics and developments during the pathway between Syria and Istanbul are addressed in this chapter. First I analyze the routes that were taken and destinations that were visited on this trajectory. Second I will analyze the household dynamics in relation to the households composition, resources and preferences during the trajectory.

5.1   Pathway overview

Among the informants, it was not the start of the revolution in 2011, but one year after the revolution that people decided to leave Syria. After the violence increased from the beginning of 2012 in the whole of Syria, more people left the country. The moments that my informants left Syria is shown in a graph in figure 8. This graph shows two groups of people: The blue line represents a group of 14 informants who left Syria and went straight to Istanbul; The red line represents a group of 27 informants, who left Syria and went to various places in the Arabic world (but not Istanbul). This graph tells us that the majority of this group of informants left Syria between the beginning of 2012 and July 2013. It also shows that the largest part of this informants group arrived in Istanbul between April 2013 and August 2014 (green line and blue line). It also shows that the majority of this informants group preferred other places than Istanbul when they left Syria initially and started to arrive in Istanbul roughly one year later. The green line represents the moments that refugees in this study arrived in Istanbul (triangles represent the same persons as squares).

Of all participants in this research, eight participants arrived at the Turkish border region as their first place of refuge. Fourteen participants went directly from Syria to Istanbul in search for a new place to settle. These 22 people represent a little more than half of the people in this study, finding their initial shelter in Turkey. It means that these people chose Turkey as their first destination after Syria. The group of people that went to the border region of Turkey did not have an existing network in Istanbul, the group that directly went to Istanbul in most cases already had an existing network and was motivated to go to Istanbul because of economic opportunity. The group that went to the border region of Turkey initially tried to settle in this area, but eventually left with the main reason that they looked for economic opportunity as well.
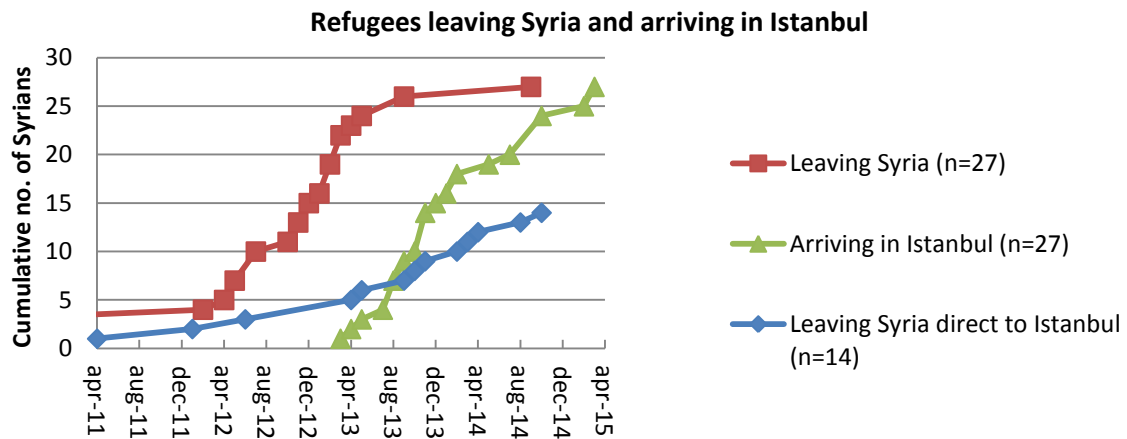
FIGURE 8: THE MOMENTS OF DEPARTURE FROM SYRIA AND OF ARRIVAL IN ISTANBUL

As figure X also showed, the trip to Istanbul was either undertaken directly or there were other locations in between. A little less than half of the participants went to Arab countries, which were chosen initially because of the lack of language barriers or because these locations were close with the option in mind to return home soon. Figure 9 shows an overview of the trajectory that the refugees in this study have undertaken before they arrived in Istanbul. Fifteen participants went to the Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan. Four participants went to Libya, Abu Dhabi and Brazil. Even though these locations were often culturally closer to the participants' cultures, the social and political tensions in the larger societies caused most participants to feel unsafe and unwanted in these societies, which is how they decided to look for a new place to live.
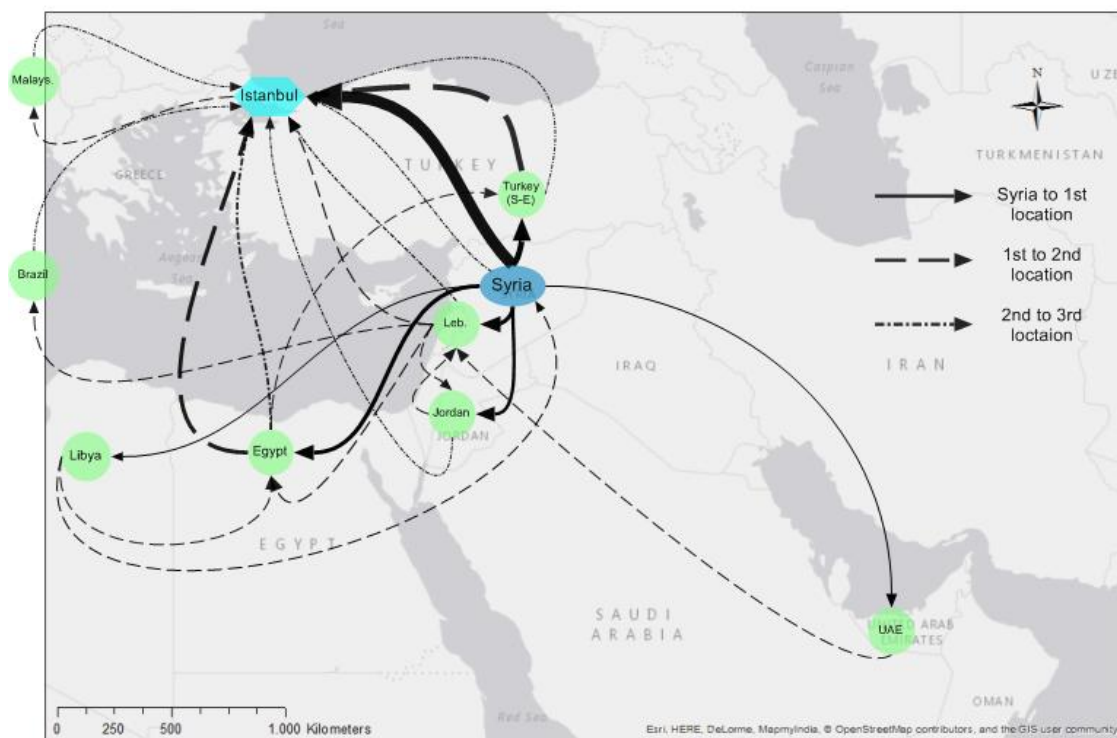
FIGURE 9: TRAJECTORIES OF PARTICIPANTS FROM SYRIA TO ISTANBUL

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A motive to go to a particular country was because relatives already were in these countries and were able to give some support on arrival. Another important motive was attitude of the government towards Syrians. The last motive was applicable to Turkey until this day and to Egypt until July 2013, when the government of the Muslim brotherhood was receiving Syrians and providing them opportunities[28]. Some people had numeral attempts to go to countries where they saw opportunities, but were unlucky with their timing. The story of Nadir (26) from Aleppo is an example of this:

> *'I moved from Aleppo to Latakya in March 2013, because the situation got worse. It was like real-life GTA! (a violent computer game). The first year in Latakya, I basically waited for visa application to come through. My brother could help me with an invitation in Saudi Arabia and I had all the right papers, but right before my application, Saudi Arabia changed the regulations and I could not get a visa anymore. Then my other brother invited me to come to Morocco, but when I had managed all the paperwork, Morocco also changed the regulations! I made an application to Algeria, and would later be smuggled to Morocco, but also there the rules changed. Finally, I decided to go to Turkey as soon as possible, before the rules would change again. I went to Lebanon and took a boat to Mersin from there. After a flight from Mersin to Istanbul I have arrived on my new location a little more than a month ago.*
>
> *Nadir, 26, In Istanbul since March 2015, left his home in March 2013*

Nadir story shows that he was wishing to re unite with his family members who already lived in a variety of places in the Arab world, but that the political situation hindered him to do so. The following paragraph will elaborate further on the next dynamic in household during their trajectory to Istanbul: the resources of a household.

For the majority of respondents in this study, their stay in these Arab countries has been shorter than their stay in Istanbul, but they said that especially the process of starting their lives in these Arab locations was easier than starting their lives in Istanbul, because they could communicate in their mother tongue and establish local relationships in Arab that helped them move on. Despite the ease of communication the social tensions in these countries lead people to experience difficulty in arranging housing and jobs. The lack of economic opportunities in combination with the availability of network connections in Istanbul, drove the Syrian participants in this study to come to Istanbul.

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[28] Interview Jamila, interview Aatif

5.2   HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

From the moment that an individual or household left their home, the household dynamics changed. Because family relations form an important factor in the perception of a home in Syria, these dynamics are important to address to be able to explore later how changes in the household dynamics influence the construction of a home in a new place. Many participants in this study left part of their household in Syria or separated from their family members in countries along their trajectory. Now their families are split up live in various places. Table 3 shows how the household composition of the participants in this study has changed since the participants moved out of Syria. The numbers in the table represent the number of participants in each kind of household composition. A household in this research is defined by the people that live in a house together and share their income to cover their expenses together. It means that:

- A family household consists of family members and/or their families who live together in a house and share their income to cover the expenses of the family members.
- A household composition with (romantic) partner is a couple that is married or engaged but has no children (yet).
- A household composition with friends means that friends share their income to cover their expenses together.
- An individual household represents a single person that can possibly live together with other people, but does not share his/her income to cover the regular expenses of anyone else than himself.

TABLE 3: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION BEFORE AND DURING TRAJECTORY TO AND IN ISTANBUL (CURRENT SITUATION).

Household composition	Household in Syria	Household in between	Current household Istanbul
With family	40	12	18
With partner	0	3	7
With friends	0	1	2
Individual	2	12	15
Total	42	28	42

The table shows that the majority of households in Syria lives in family context. Because the group of participants in this study is very young, a large part of the participants lived with their parents and siblings in a house. A smaller part of the participants that lived in family-household composition already established their own family, were married and had children. Two participants had individual household, because they used to live outside Syria and shortly returned to Syria before they left again to flee the war.

The 'household in between' column shows the participants (28 out of 42) who had a period of staying in a different location before they arrived in Istanbul. Participants in this column are categorized under the

household composition that they were part of for the longest time of their trajectory until they arrived in Istanbul. The household composition during some participants' stay in Istanbul has also changed in some of the cases, but these exceptions are not represented in this table. Most refugees left Syria with family members or individually. Many participants, especially male refugees went alone and their family's stayed behind. Leaving Syria often happened in different phases. First, one of the sons, or the father was send to arrange a house and later the family would arrive [29] or one of the sons would leave his family because he was trying to avoid doing military service for the government and from that moment took care of himself[30]. These data show that the war was reason for families to split up and for sons in particular to stand on their own feet to avoid military service. The composition of the household from the moment of leaving home onwards is very dynamic and continues to be dynamic in Istanbul as well, because many people keep looking for economic opportunities which makes them very mobile.

The last column in the table represented the household composition of the current households in Istanbul. This overview of different household compositions clearly show that many household have changed from a family composition in Syria to an individual composition in Istanbul. The study includes two couples and three young men that got married since they left Syria. This was for one of the couples and another participant one of the reasons to leave Syria in the first place: Amilah, Fidyan and Mansur could not marry who they wanted, because their families did not approve their marriages, which also explains their change of household situation from family to partner (see table 3).

5.2.1 CHANGING RESOURCES

Resources of a household consist of material and cognitive resources of an individual or household. The first settlement outside Syria was often paid by personal savings or the money that was gained by selling the land or capital that was owned by the families and individuals. This situation could not go on forever and lead to the urge to find a more suitable place to live. An example is Basimah's family who ran out of the money that they received when they sold their land in Syria. They stayed in a village named Midyat during the first year after they fled their homes, but realized that their lives could not continue the way it did there. Basimah (14) and her sister (15) were bored in Midyat, but taught themselves English in the meantime:

> *'Me and my sister do not have a Syrian passport, which is why we were kicked off the school in the Turkish village where we stayed. We were very bored and just watched American television series for the rest of the year; there was nothing there. My English is good now though, and I also learned Turkish there'*
>
> *Basimah, 14, in Istanbul since May 2014*

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[29] Interview Kafeel, Interview Basimah
[30] Interviews Nawaz, interview Salah, interview Karim

The family moved to Istanbul to find an opportunity to earn an income and followed their adopted son to Istanbul. The family did not have an income when they were in Midyat except for their savings, but because the two eldest daughters of the family learned English in that year, they became friends with an American NGO coordinator, who also helped them in Istanbul. Basimah's English and Turkish skills turned out to be a valuable asset in building up their live in Istanbul, because she and her sister were able to find a job and friends through their English-foreigner network and now even have an opportunity to be resettled to Canada. Their language skills have very much changed their households livelihood opportunities. The participants who chose to move from the location of their first settlement were mobile to go somewhere else. This was because they had the money to move on or because they did not have the money and opportunity to sustain themselves in the first place and were therefore forced to move on, as is the case with Basimah's family.

The source of income also changed during the trajectory. This was especially the case for young Syrians who used to live under the wings of their parents and suddenly were to take care of themselves. This also was a reason to choose the next location carefully. Life in Istanbul is for example expensive in comparison to other places. Kafeel was not encouraged by his parents to go to Istanbul, because they went there before and expected it was hard for Kafeel to cope with the language barrier and the expensive life in Istanbul. Especially the difference between the family situation in Syria and the situation in the new location was large for these young refugees. Kafeel initially had a hard time to arrange his life in Istanbul and also Aziza experienced difficulty when she left her family in Syria to find a job in Mersin. She came to Mersin by plane as a women on her own and found this very difficult. She came from a well-off, protective family and had never experienced the independence she got when arriving in Mersin. After some months, her sister arrived and they used Aziza's local network there to find a job, but it was not always successful:

> *'I did not know how to deal with it, but I could live in an apartment that a Syrian friend had temporary left. I looked for a job, I was trying to survive. I was naive and really needed a new opportunity. A crazy friend promised me a good job with a good salary, an apartment and everything. Me and my sister went with him. Let me tell you, the job was stupid and this house was just a street with a roof! I'm laughing about it now, but at the time it was very bad for us. From that moment we knew we should go somewhere else'*
>
> *Aziza, 30, in Istanbul since October 2013*

Aziza had a rough start and experienced new friendships in Mersin, but she was constantly in survival mode, as she calls it herself. It was the first time in her life that she took care of herself. In retrospect she is proud of what she did, but at the time it was very stressful for her to be by herself in Mersin. She gained work experience in Mersin and had three different jobs and three different houses and made friends who told her she should move on to Istanbul, because her chances there would be much better. Therefore not only her set

of skills and her employment changed in Mersin. When she arrived in Istanbul she could use this experience to settle again.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown that there is a group of people that comes directly from Syria to Istanbul and a group of people with a pathway to Istanbul that consisted of one to three destinations before Istanbul. The household compositions often changed when part of the household left their households in Syria. Some men left individually to go ahead of their families or to escape their military service. When families left Syria together, it often happened that these families split up on another moment during their trajectory. Changes in income and household composition also change the preferences of households and individuals. The countries that were visited before Istanbul were left because of unstable social and economic circumstances. Istanbul was chosen because it offered more economic opportunities. The arrival in Istanbul has been experienced as a very challenging time by most people. In the following chapters I will elaborate further on the Turkish context and on the housing pathways of the arriving refugees in Istanbul.

6. TURKEY'S CONTEXT

> *'We have a long tradition of receiving migrated groups going back to the times before the establishment of Turkey as it is today'*
>
> *Mr. Arslan, Ambassador of Turkey in the Netherlands*[31]

Turkey's long tradition of receiving migrated groups is as modern as it is old. Migrants and refugees have resided in the metropolitan city of Istanbul and in Turkey since long time. The group of 1,8 million Syrian refugees are currently the largest, but not the only group of refugees in Turkey. Since 2014, Turkey also witnessed an increase of applications for asylum from Afghans, Iraqi's and Iranians, because of deteriorating security in these countries (UNHCR, 2014). The total population of Turkey in December 2013 was 76,7 million refugees. Of this population, 14,2 million inhabitants lived in Istanbul, making it Turkey's largest city (TUIK, 2013). The Turkish government and International organizations are responsible for the reception of the Syrian refugees, as well as the other groups of refugees and migrants coming to Turkey.

There is very limited data on the concentrations of Syrians in Turkey. This has two main reasons: The first is that not all refugees are registered at the UNHCR or the Turkish government, which is the reason that nobody can know exactly how many Syrians are in Turkey or where they reside. Second is that the available information in the form of reports on the Syrian community in Turkey focuses almost completely on the border region with Syria and does not provide any detailed information on the distribution of Syrians in other parts of Turkey. No large scale researches have been executed on Syrians in the city of Istanbul or other cities in the west Turkey. Though similar problems and processes can be expected to happen in Istanbul and smaller Turkish cities as happen in the border region of Turkey with Syria, the diversity of the population in Istanbul and its long history of receiving migrants and refugees might also lead to a different range of problems and processes in the Syrian case.

This chapter aims to provide and explain the geographical context in which the arrival of the large group of Syrians takes place. It starts with a review of Turkey's refugee policies and legal options for Syrians who are staying in Turkey now. Then I discuss the concentrations of Syrians in Turkey, of which a substantial group is concentrated in Istanbul. Lastly Istanbul as the context for this research will be further explored, especially Istanbul's housing market and some neighbourhood characteristics.

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[31] 9-7-2015, The Hague

6.1 Turkey's Refugee Policies

Turkey's refugee policies are developed and executed by different actors. The Turkish Ministry of Interior (MOI) determines if the applicant for asylum has a legitimate need for temporary asylum in Turkey. A temporary asylum status gives a refugee the right to stay in one of Turkey's satellite cities. These satellite cities are mostly located in the interior provinces of Turkey and are assigned to be a new place to live for refugees. In general, the Turkish government does not undertake commitment to assist refugee applicants in need for shelter, healthcare and subsistence assistance other than assistance foundations under provincial governates. Refugee applicants in Turkey are almost always required to cover the cost of their accommodation and healthcare (Levitan, Kaytaz, & Durukan, 2009, pp. 10–12). The asylum status is normally temporary, because Turkey's national refugee policy is restricted by a geographical limitation that allows European refugees to receive a status of asylum, while non-European citizens can only apply for 'temporary asylum'.

The refugee policy of Turkey has been renewed by the 'Foreigners and International Protection Law' enforced in April 2014, but not implemented so far. The government is setting up a General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM), that will be responsible for implementing a new immigration law that addresses both individual as well as mass asylum influxes. The scale of the influx from Syria causes difficulties in the implementation of this law (Kirisci, 2014), although some rules that especially apply to Syrians and Iraqi's were developed. Under the circumstances of the increasing degree of violence in Syria, Turkey declared an open-door policy in October 2011. This gave all Syrians the opportunity to enter Turkey and extended a legal framework to this group known as 'temporary protection'. The government committed itself to keeping the borders open, though people without passport are now not allowed to cross. The temporary protection for Syrians gives them a status as 'guest' in Turkey. This declaration protects refugees from being returned or expelled to places where their lives or freedom could be threatened. In 2013, the Turkish government extended its assistance to Syrians by providing free healthcare to people who stay outside camps. This happened initially in the Syrian border provinces, but was later on extended to the whole of Turkey since the Syrian population has spread over the whole of Turkey (Kirisci, 2014).

Turkey does not use a specific policy on official integration. There is a lack of official reception mechanisms in Turkey, that obliges migrants to seek their own ways of survival and incorporation, and they thus realize 'de facto integration' or 'segmented incorporation' (Didem Daniş, 2006, p. 9). The importance of policy to enhance integration shows from the tensions that have developed in Turkish society. The big amount of Syrian refugees, next to the other groups of refugees and migrants who stay in Turkey, has brought an anti-Arab and anti-immigrant discourse into the public debate (Özden, 2013). And also has lead to discrimination and violence towards Syrian refugees (Semih, 2015). Içduygu summarizes a number of Turkish institutional researches:

'Though more than 50 percent of respondents to another recent survey (ORSAM) welcome Syrians as a historical and geographical obligation, More than 70 percent of them disagree with the proposition that Syrian refugees benefit Turkey' (HUGO, Nov. 2014 in Içduygu, 2015, p. 11). In the early days of the conflict, Syrian refugees'

ethnic and familial ties to traditional rural Turkish towns proved very beneficial, helping them to gain access to basic services in urban settings, for example (ORSAM, 2014 in (Içduygu, 2015, p. 11)

Because there are currently almost no means of formal integration, the ways to legalize important aspects like employment and education for children should be figured out to provide a sustainable situation for the Syrian community, as well as for the Turkish host society (Içduygu, 2015). The following paragraph will elaborate further on what legal options are available for Syrians who reside in Turkey.

6.2   LEGAL OPTIONS FOR SYRIANS

There are a couple of ways that give Syrians a legal status in Turkey and some other countries. These are registration in Turkey as a Syrian refugee, asking residency in Turkey, resettlement to western countries by UNHCR and receiving a new passport and lastly, asking for asylum in a European country after crossing Europe's borders. These four options are further elaborated in the coming paragraphs.

REGISTRATION FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Syrians who enter Turkey are supposed to register at the Turkish government, either by asking for residency in Turkey or by registration at the police office. The Turkish government and UNHCR have put their efforts in registering as many Syrians as they could in Turkey and they consider the fact that many Syrians live in Turkey unregistered as a problem . This prohibits the government to assess the scale of the population which would be the first step to fitting assistance, access to services and protection (Içduygu, 2015): When a Syrian is registered he/she has the right to be treated in hospitals for free. AFAD (2013) estimates that about 45% of the refugees outside of the camps have AFAD registration (which is the way to register as a Syrian) and close to 19% have a residence permit. Only 5% have a camp registration, which leave about one third of Syrians in cities unregistered. These estimates are problematic, because the scale of the population is not known (AFAD, 2013).

Every Syrian who is in Turkey falls under temporary protection, but only registration gives you access to free healthcare. Registration is free. The guest status of Syrian refugees does not provide them with a legal way to make a legislated contracts. This means that many landlords refuse to make a rental contract with people who do not have a Turkish residence. This protection status therefore pushes refugees on the informal housing where they have less security of tenure.

Table 4 gives an overview of the different legal statuses of the participants in this research. Among the participants of this research, seven people (17%) registered at the Turkish office that registers the Syrian refugees in Istanbul: The association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM). They did this because they had to register to receive assistance from an NGO in Istanbul or because they wanted to claim their right to free healthcare and education for their children. Eleven people (26%) did not register in any way at the Turkish government, often because they were planning to stay for a short time, because they did not see the benefit of registration or because they were afraid that their registration would have consequences for

their freedom to travel. some of these informants were forced to register at the police office, because they got arrested.

Legal status	No.	%
Not registered	11	26%
Registered for temporary protection	7	17%
Tourist residence	5	12%
Expired tourist residence	3	7%
Registered with work residence	3	7%
Registered with student residence	2	5%
No information	11	26%
Total	42	100%

TABLE 4: LEGAL STATUS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

APPLYING FOR A RESIDENCE

Getting a residency costs money and has to be renewed every six months to a year. Having a residency gives more options for travelling outside of Turkey and it gives a person legal rights to make contracts. There are different kinds of residency's available:

Tourist residence   When entering Turkey in an official way with a passport gives a person the chance to receive a tourist residency. The kind of residence that Syrians have easiest access to is the tourist residence. It requires a bank account with a value of $6000 and money needs to be paid for the residence itself. To receive a residence permit of any kind in Turkey, a foreigner needs a rental contract to show where he or she lives and has to apply for this residence for the first time at the central police station in Akşaray in Fatih district (see figure 2 and 10). After having the first residency, to renew the residency all persons have to leave Turkey and enter again, which makes the renewal of this second residency more problematic than the first tourist residency.

Student residence   When a Syrian is enrolled in a Turkish university, he or she can apply for a student residence, but first has to have a tourist residence before being able to receive a student residence. Student residence gives Syrians the legal power to make contracts and also allows to work.

Work residence   A work residence can be obtained by Syrians when their bosses are willing to employ them legally. The employer has to be prepared to go through some bureaucratic procedures and pay for the residency as well. Work residence gives the owner right to work, right to make legal contracts and can only be arranged when he/she has a legal contract with an employer.

Investors residence   This is a residence that gives rights like a work permit, but also permits to open a business in Turkey. The added value of, and differences between the investors residences and other residences have not become clear during research on the topic.

UNHCR is responsible for the selection and arrangements of resettlement to countries in Europe, the USA, Canada. UNHCR is in charge of the resettlement procedures and arranges intake interviews with refugees in Ankara. They aimed to resettle 10.000 Syrians in 2014 (UNHCR, 2014a). The cooperation between UNHCR and Turkey gives some bureaucratic problems and this gives delay in this process. The places for resettlement available point out that this option is only available for a small part of the total Syrian refugee population in Turkey.

ASKING ASYLUM IN EUROPE

Within the border of European countries, all refugees are allowed to ask for asylum in that country. This is a strategy for Syrians to gain an asylum status in Europe. Before entering Europe, there are few options to cross the borders legally and therefore lots of Syrians use smugglers to arrange a boat ride to the shores of Greece, from where they travel to cities in Greece or further into Europe via a variety of means (Pursey, 2015)

6.3 ISTANBUL CONTEXT

The recent influx of Syrian refugees is of such proportions that it has had a noticeable impact on Istanbul's society, which can be seen in smaller or bigger changes in the appearance of the city. Hannah (26), a student from the USA who volunteered to work with migrants for 12 months in 2012 notices these differences now that she has come back:

> *When I was in Turkey in 2012 I did not see Arabic signs in shops, housing agencies or on walls, but when I returned this year I found that signs in Arabic are suddenly everywhere!*[32]
>
> *Hannah, 26, Volunteer at a Christian migrant organization*

The city of Istanbul consists of 39 districts that each have a major and a government that lead the district. The metropolitan area of Istanbul is divided into a European and an Asian side (see map in figure 10). The Asian side houses about 5 million people. The other roughly ten million people live on the European side of the city. The Asian side is more spacious and less dense than the European side of the city. The majority of Syrian refugees reside on the European side in the South-Western districts of the city.

In 2011, a little more than 400 thousand migrants moved to Istanbul (TUIK, 2013). The impoverished neighbourhoods in the centre are home to refugee populations and so are the more outer parts of the city. In history, most migrants to the city arrived in Istanbul and came to stay in the so-called Gecekondu's, literally meaning 'built overnight'. These settlements were mainly developed by migrants who came from the countryside of Turkey and were located in the outskirts of the city (Pinarciðlu & Işik, 2009). Many of these area

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[32] Hannah, 26, research student and former volunteer at Christian refugee organization in Istanbul, informal conversation, 26-4-2015

are redeveloped into new apartment buildings, where some original residents of that area still live, but from where many were forces to move elsewhere (Zayim, 2014). The city is undergoing a process of gentrification with a number of developments, where old parts of the city are broken down and replaced by new buildings. Historic and impoverished areas are redeveloped and the inhabitants in these areas are moved to other neighbourhoods, not always successfully (Zayim, 2014).

According to Pinarciolu & Işik (2009), Istanbul is not a place with strong segregation based on ethnicity, but it is rather segregation based on socio-economic status. With some exceptions, especially in the historic parts of the city, better-off groups have settled in neighbourhoods along the sea coast, while low status groups occupy areas at the fringe of the city. The general pattern of socio-economic segregation that they see is that the well-off households are living along the coast, the poor at the periphery and a mixture of middle-class neighbourhoods between the two (Pinarciölu & Işik, 2009, p. 475). There is an exception to this division however in some areas in Fatih, the areas of Topkapı, Eminönü and Sultan Ahmet (Fatih district), which is the touristic part of the city centre. This is an area where lower-class households reside.

FIGURE 10: CITY MAP OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF ISTANBUL, INCLUDING SUBURBAN AREAS (BY MAXIMILIAN DÖRRBECKER - OWN WORK, USING THIS BASE MAP, THIS ORIENTATION MAP AND THIS COAT OF ARMS, WIKIMEDIA).

One of the most important factors to explain the housing market in Istanbul is migration and the mobility pattern of the population (Koramaz & Dokmeci, 2012). Speculations on the real estate market as well as the influx of more refugees to the city have influenced the tension on the housing market. There is no proof that the Syrian influx alone causes the tensed housing market conditions, but it could have contributed to the fact

that the need for rental housing has increased, because the demand has increased with 330.000 people. This particular process is said to create tension with the Turkish community in Istanbul. *'Host populations are particularly concerned by rising rents and housing costs; unemployment and economic competition'* (Içduygu, 2015, p. 10). The tensions that rise about the competition on the housing market do not fall within the scope of this research, but there is reason to believe that this tension is experienced by the Turkish and Syrian citizens. Further research could provide more insight in these dynamics.

6.4 HOUSING SEARCH PROCESS

The housing search process according to Murdie's housing career framework, consists of three phases: information sources & -strategies, vacancies and negotiations. Refugee households are, like other households, looking for opportunities to improve their lives, which causes them to keep looking for better alternatives than their first place of settlement. This housing career is largely influenced by the household- and individual preferences, combined with the opportunities and the constraints of the housing market. This sections points out some factors that are constraining and enabling the search for appropriate housing for Syrians in Istanbul. The filters affecting housing opportunities for Syrians are the inability of Syrians to buy property in Turkey, the informal housing markets, contracts and commission.

HOUSING STOCK: SALES AND PRICES

Mansur (33, from Aleppo, in Istanbul for 1,5 year) is from Damascus and is an employee at a Turkish real-estate agency for nine months now. He can serve the Arabic and international clients for his company with his fluent Arabic and English, but he cannot help Syrians in buying property, because Syrians are not allowed to buy any property in Turkey. This is based on the reciprocity rule that barred Turkish property purchases by citizens of countries where Turks can't buy real estate (propertyturkey.com, 2015). This rule has its roots in the common history of Syria and Turkey. Prices on the housing market vary based on a variety of factors. Structural characteristics of housing (location, size, quality), the neighbourhood characteristics and the accessibility of the location are determinants of house prices in Istanbul. Lower-income households prefer to live in locations where travel distances are low, in order to value their travel costs with their wage (Koramaz & Dokmeci, 2012).

INFORMAL HOUSING MARKET

There is a large informal housing market in Istanbul (Pinarciŏlu & Işik, 2009; Zayim, 2014). This market historically always existed, because Istanbul has a long history of migrants who built the neighbourhoods overnight, the Gecekundu's. The political system of Istanbul has closed an eye to this informal housing market, which is an important reason for the scale of the existence of this informal market. Syrians have a motive to use this market, because they can not make legalized contracts if they do not have a Turkish residence. This informal market is more prominent in some areas in comparison to other, which makes some areas in Istanbul better suited to the needs of migrants and refugees. The Kumkapı residential area in Fatih district for example has a big migrant population that uses the network of landlords and tenants who let and sublet their houses and rooms in a more informal way, which is an favourable circumstance for migrants who cannot enter the

formal market with their legal status. Flats, rooms in their own households, basements and roof spaces are used. These flexible ways of renting a house (in a dormitory, shared single rooms, using space in different moments during the day) are a big motive for migrants to settle in this area (Biehl, 2015). Kumkapı is an attractive space to live in for migrants, because there is proximity of people from the same ethnicity. There are networks and economies nearby, many people are foreign and many people are different, which is why migrants perceive this as an area of commons (Biehl, 2015).

The areas where more informal types of housing are available make a neighbourhood more attractive to refugees and migrants who have uncertain futures than other inhabitants of the city. Other areas where large migrant populations reside near the centre of the city are Tarlabaşi, Dalapdere, Elmadağ, Kurtuluş (all in Sisli district), Laleli, Akşaray (both in Fatih), Osmanbey district and Merter (Güngoren district) (Didem Daniş, 2006). Syrians are also concentrated in areas in Western Istanbul: Esenyurt and Avcılar[33] and a large concentration is found in Fatih district[34] (see figure 10). The concentrations of Syrians in Fatih and Avcılar cause more Syrians to arrive in these neighbourhoods, because newly arrived Syrians often use their Syrian network to build up their lived in the city. The concentration in Fatih follows the principal of an ethnic enclave as described by Gordon (1965) and Massey (1985) in (Zelinsky & Lee, 1998), who predict ethnic concentrations in less desirable areas near the centre. The diversity of ethnicities in Fatih and Avcılar do not provide for evidence that these areas are ethnic enclaves pur sang, because these areas are the place of settlement for a very diverse group of migrants and refugees (Biehl, 2015; Didem Daniş, 2006), and the areas enable a kind of informal housing that is flexible and suits refugees and migrants. The areas where mostly migrants live are generally areas with low social status

ACTORS AND INFORMATION

There are three main ways in which Syrians retrieve information on the housing market: through personal networks, via internet websites and local real estate agencies.

Entrance to housing is very often found through personal networks. People ask around in their network and share information about vacancies amongst each other (Dermaux, 2015) about families leaving their apartments and standing offers.

Sahabinden.com is a Turkish website that is used by Turkish landlords to bring their property to the market. Daily rentals are found but for long term rentals, landlords prefer contracts of at least twelve months. Turkish language is an important requirement to access the information on this website. The housing advertisements in sahabinden.com can describe specific requirements not to have foreigners, but there are also advertisements in some specific areas where the Arabic explanation is put right under the English or Turkish one.

Housing agencies can be found in all neighbourhoods. Housing agencies receive high commission for their work normally. Mansur, A Syrian from Aleppo who is working as at a real-estate agency, explains that regular

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[33] Interview Kafeel, Interview Mustafa (real estate developer and landlord)
[34] Observations, Interview Karim, Interview Al Nour organization

commission rates in other countries are usually between one and four percent for real estate sales, but in Istanbul, the commission is eight percent on average. Because of the lack of legislative power to make an official contract, these circumstances do not provide optimal conditions for refugees who are often not sure if they will stay in a certain place, because they are dependent on the location of their job for example or because they are not sure if they want to move on to a different place.

In the areas with large Syrian concentrations it is easier to overcome cultural barriers and to find a place to stay via housing agencies for Syrians. Munsif explains:

> *I live in Findikzade in Fatih district; there are many Arabic housing agents there and many Syrians who rent their houses. Because there is no need to speak Turkish to these agencies and owners, my brother found our house this way.*
>
> *Munsif, 19, In Istanbul since July 2014*

This ethnically related housing search process is a good way to use and access housing in a more flexible way than is usual on the Turkish housing market. During their stay in Istanbul, finding a house becomes less dependent on the ethnic and Syrian social network of the refugees (Dermaux, 2015)

NEGOTIATIONS: PLEDGES AND RESIDENCES

Syrians who rent a house from Turkish landowners experience some obstacles before they can live somewhere. There is often a Turkish middlemen needed, before a landlord trusts his house to foreign renters. Many Syrians who found a an adequate house, had to bring Turkish friend who would pledge for them before they could rent their house.

Negotiations are even more difficult when the Syrian has no legislative power because of the temporary protection status and is not allowed to make an official contract. This problem of contracts is avoided by making unregistered housing contracts, but can also be avoided by using someone else's residence. This is the case with Nimerah (22) and her family. She was very lucky to receive her student residence for two years[35]. which gave her the opportunity to make legal contracts with landlords for her family and her cousins. This made life in Turkey for her and her family a little easier. Her cousins now use her residence to rent their own homes. Aamil (28) explains a different way for going about the lack of legal power to make a contract.

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[35] Nimerah is supported by 'Small projects Istanbul', an NGO that pays for her student fees at university, which gave her the opportunity to apply for a student residence. She needed a tourist residence, before she could get a student residence. Because Nimerah (22) is Palestinian, application for a tourist residence is very difficult: It normally requires a person to go out of the country and come in again to receive an entrance stamp in the passport. This is impossible for Nimerah, because no country would receive her officially as a Palestinian Syrian. Nimerah could not find a way with the Turkish officials to make her a Turkish student residence. Finally she handed her passport in with a big group of 20 other students and as a surprise, she suddenly got it back with a student residence for two years in it. Nimerah was over the moon and could from that moment help her family and relatives with their contracts.

> *I rent five houses from Turkish landlords and I made a personal contract with the landlords. This could provide the landlord the advantage of avoiding tax payments Three contracts are 'unregistered' on my name, but on two other contracts that I made I used the name of friends who lived there to avoid too many unregistered contracts on my name and to reduce the risk that this would be found out*
>
> *Aamil, 28, in Istanbul since Feb 2014*

For Aamil his inability to formally rent a house is a disadvantage, but because he found a way to rent several houses informally, he was able to make these houses a source of income for his family by subletting the place to other Syrians. In that sense, the informal negotiations form a blessing as well as a curse.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown the legal options for Syrians in Turkey and the implications of these legal options for the housing search process of Syrians. next to the option of a protection status are different types of residency's that give them more legislative power than the protection status does. Because most refugees are not able to apply for Turkish residences, they cannot make legal housing contracts and have to rely on housing in the informal market of Istanbul. They use different strategies to access this housing market and to be able to make contracts anyway. Some areas have a larger informal market than other areas and this is an explaining factor in the concentrations of refugees and migrants in certain parts of the city. The next chapter will explore what the housing outcome after the search process for housing is for Syrian refugees and how the housing careers of the refugees have developed during their stay.

7. HOUSING IN ISTANBUL

In this chapter the housing circumstances of Syrian refugees are explored. At first an overview is given on the housing choices for different types of households and thereafter each type of housing is addressed by looking at the process of negotiations and household needs that lead to these housing outcomes. Then, the factor time in relation to these households is explored: How have the households moved from house to house within Istanbul's borders and what factors were most influential in these decisions? This chapter provides the basics on the developments that took place for the participants in the domain of housing time and shows how the different moves, house features and dynamics with society and within the household have changed during the stay of the refugees in Istanbul.

7.1 HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR HOUSING

The participants currently live in four types of household compositions: with family members (18), with their partner (7), with friends (2), or individual households (15) (see paragraph 5.2). In table 6 I show where the people from each type of household currently live; how the households are composed and what kind of entity they are renting. Because Syrians are not allowed to buy property in Turkey, everybody in this study is renting a place to live; or living in a house that somebody else bought. The five forms of dwelling are either rented for the whole household, but can also be rented while sharing it with other households.

TABLE 5: TYPE OF HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR TYPE OF DWELLING: THE NUMBERS SHOW HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS IN THIS RESEARCH LIVE IN EACH TYPE OF DWELLING PER HOUSEHOLD TYPE.

Rented entity / Household	House	Apartment	Room	Bed	Work-space	Total (n)
With family members	1	13	1	2		18
With partner		4	2			7
With friends		2				2
Individual household		3	6	3	3	15
Total (n)	**1**	**22**	**9**	**5**	**3**	**42**
Average price per month (TL)	**0**	**1400**	**450**	**300**	**0**	
Average no. of people per dwelling	**3**	**3,9**	**3,8**	**8**	**1**	

The most common type of dwelling where the participants live is in an apartment: 36 participants live in apartments, but rent different entities of these apartments. Most households rent a whole apartment by themselves, but as can be found in the table there are also households who rent a room within an apartment or even just rent a bed in an apartment. In case of renting a bed, it does not mean that the household shares one bed, but it means that the household members rent a bed in the same house and share their room with

others outside their household. Four participants did not live in an apartment, but were living in alternative forms of housing: a multi-story house, in their office, or behind their shop. In the following sections, I will further specify how each type of dwelling is used by the different household and under what conditions the participants in this study live. The goal of exploring this is to better understand how these dwellings and the ways of living in it contribute to the interactions and meanings that participants experience related to their housing.

7.1.1 APARTMENTS

Living in an apartment is a very common way to live in Istanbul. 35 of the participants in this study live in an apartment in multiple story buildings, that can be found in various districts and neighbourhoods (see figure 11). As already mentioned in chapter 4 on homes in Syria, living in apartment buildings is also a common way to live in Syrian cities[36].

FIGURE 11: FOUR DIFFERENT STREETVIEWS FROM SYRIAN HOMES IN THIS STUDY: UPPERLEFT: AVCILAR, LOWERLEFT: TARLABASI (BEYOGLU DISTRICT), UPPERRIGHT: KASIMPASA (BEYOGLU), LOWERRIGHT: NEWLY BUILT APARTMENTS, AVCILAR.

There are twenty participants in this study that rent an apartment with their household together. The average price of renting an apartment is 1400 TL per month (€460), but the range of prices is very high. Kalila's family who lives in Tarlabaşi pays the lowest price, 500 TL (€165) for their 3 + 1 apartment (meaning 3 rooms and a

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[36] Interview Aziza, Jamila, Aamil, Aatif

saloon), while Kafeel pays the highest price, 2600 TL/month for his 3 + 1 apartment in Avcılar. Explaining factors of this difference in price are the social status of the neighbourhood, the size of the apartment, the fact that Kafeel's apartment is furnished and Kalila's apartment was not, the age of the apartment and the quality of the dwelling. The two households have a very different background: Kalila is from a Kurdish farmer family and Kafeel is the son of a former high official in the Syrian government. Kalila's (14) family is registered as refugees at the government and UNHCR and they cannot make a registered contract and Kafeel could enrol in and pay for Istanbul University after he fled the country and can make a legal contract. The differences between these two Syrian households are large. Irrespective of the differences in household composition and resources, both households arranged their housing through Syrian network connections, just like many other participants. Networks are an influential factor on the housing search of Syrian households.

Kalila's family rents their apartment from a Kurdish landlord who was found via their uncle who fled the war a little before they did and they can communicate with their landlord in Kurdish. The three eldest children (Kalila aged 14 and her two brothers aged 18 and 20) are working in clothing workshops in the surrounding streets and neighbourhoods and therewith are able to pay for the house and the family's monthly expenses. Kafeel (22) was looking for an apartment together with his good friend Talhah and his uncle was about to leave his apartment, while he did not finish his 12-month contract yet. Kafeel could take over the contract of this luxurious furnished apartment and had to pay an amount of $4000 dollars before he could enter the house. Kafeel was happy that he could live in this apartment, because it was hard for him to find a place that would rent out to students like him and Talhah:

> *'The place was expensive and it is difficult to talk money with Turkish people, but our landlady is good person. She allowed us to stay, which is great because it is difficult to rent a house if you are not a family, but a young guy like me'*
>
> *Kafeel, 22, in Istanbul since August 2013*

Kalila's family could use their ethnic Kurdish network to find their house. Istanbul is a city with a large Kurdish community and this community has been giving assistance to Syrian Kurds who fled the war and came to Istanbul (Göcder, 6-3-2015)[37]. Kafeel could make use of his family network and therewith could create a win-win situation for him and his uncle. The comparison of both examples demonstrates that there is a large range of possible backgrounds and that the possibilities of a household to rent an apartment are related to these economic and ethnic background.

Renting a complete apartment normally requires quite some capital investment and a residence with legal value to make a contract. As mentioned in paragraph 6.4, Turkish landlords generally make contracts of 12 months, which hinders apartment-hopping in a short timeframe, but at the same time also gives security of

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[37] Interview with Göcder, Research organization on Kurdish migration in Turkey, 6-3-2015

tenure to the tenants. Renting an apartment is therefore something that mostly happens with households who decide that they are planning to stay in Istanbul. This is the case with Anwar's (24) family:

> *As soon as my family and I found a place in Fatih, we moved there. The place was crappy: there were holes in the floors and the bathroom was a bad smelly place, there were rats and it was bad. We had to pay for the commission and a couple of months of rent ahead, so we decided to make the best out of it. Later my family realized that the price we paid, 550 Turkish Lira was too high for the quality of the house, because the Turks themselves would not take the apartment for more than 300 Turkish Lira. We moved to our current apartment after the first contract ended. 'Me, my parents and two sisters are currently living in a 2+1 apartment in Fatih. We have lived in this house for almost a year now. We are looking for a nicer and bigger apartment for my family, but most apartments are too expensive for us. In Istanbul I became the breadwinner for my family and my parents ask me if I could ask my boss for a raise in salary, because this would be good timing to switch houses and our house is small.'*
>
> *Anwar, in Istanbul since May 2013*

Financially it is attractive to change apartments when the 1-year contract ends, because the renter does not lose money in that way, because of the advance payments. These advance payments were also a reason for Anwar's family to rent their first house for a whole year, even though the housing conditions were not good at all. Because Anwar and his family were not aware of the normal prices on Istanbul's housing market, they paid more money than necessary for their first house and did not want to waste their investment. This inflexibility is a reason for some people to choose more flexible forms of housing as their first place of residence or to use their personal network of people who are in Istanbul for a somewhat longer time to help them if these people are available.

Living together with a larger group of household members or subletting parts of an apartment can be a strategy to reduce the costs of living, which is important for many households because Syrians are willing to work for low wages due to the necessity of an income (Smorenburg, 2015). The average number of people who share a rented apartment is 3.9 (see table 6), ranging from a single person in an apartment[38] to eight people who live in a 1+1 apartment and share a very small space and their facilities with all household members[39]. This strategy is used by friends, but also happens among siblings[40]. The commission investments and long term contracts also explain the fact that many Syrians use sharing and subletting housing as a commercial activity to

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[38] Interview Adib
[39] Interview Barad
[40] Interview with Mansur by Teun Smorenburg, 2-5-2015

produce some income for their families. Kafeel forms a household with Talhah, a good friend of him; Kafeel explains they are like brothers. There are four others who live with Kafeel and Talhah in their house: two friends of Kafeel who are not paying for the house, because Kafeel is taking care of them and two more friends who are each paying 830 TL (€275) to Kafeel and Talhah. Kafeel and Talhah share the last part of the rent, which is 915 TL (€300). Kafeel and Talhah are in this advantageous financial position in comparison with their housemates, because they could use the financial support of their families to invest in the rent of their apartment. The financial capital of refugee households in Istanbul (or their family members outside Istanbul) can give them a greater advantage to arrange their housing.

Reducing costs can be a motive to live together, but also a lack of having a legal residency can be a reason that an household cannot rent their own apartment (see chapter 6). Families who do not have access to residences, do not have this option and they have to stay as a guest at their hosting families[41], or they have to find more flexible ways of renting. In these cases, a Syrian with the right social, economic or legal opportunity arranges the contact and contract with a Turkish landlord and then provides a more flexible place to stay for other Syrians who cannot afford a complete apartment or who are planning to leave to a different place in a few months. One of these 'real-estate middlemen' is Abu Majid[42]. He currently covers his family's expenditures with subletting a house in Avcılar:

> *'I was looking for a house for me and my son Majid. After being kicked out of two other houses with a group of eight Syrians, we found a house in Avcılar. I could use my savings to invest in the commission, 3 months advanced payments and furniture, which cost me $5000 in total. Because I took the contract, my housemates paid me for the house. Later, when my wife and two other sons arrived, I realised I would not go back to Syria soon and I decided to rent a new place for my family and use the old house as a way to generate income for my family. I pay 800 Turkish Lira as rent and my ten sub renter each pay 250 Turkish Lira for a bed in this house. I found all tenants through personal connections, I trust them to pay and if they come in without a job for example, they only have to pay after they found a job. This house is not a business for me; it is to cover my expenses and to help others. I do it to cover the costs of my sons education, our own rent and the medical costs of me and my wife'*
>
> *Abu Majid, 58, In Istanbul since May 2013*

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[41] Interview Nimerah

[42] *Abu Majid*, literally means 'father of Majid'. It is a common habit in Syria to call fathers and mothers after their first born son. Mother is *'Um'*, which is the usual name in combination with her eldest sons name to call any Syrian mother.

Abu Majid's example shows that his savings provided him an opportunity to invest and cover his family's cost of living. Others took a more commercial approach to the sub letting. Aatif (29) rents five houses, of which he uses three houses for commercial use. It shows that sub renting an apartment can become a source of income, because renting an apartment requires a certain level of social capital with network and Turkish house owner as well as economical capital that is required to comply to the common rental advancements.

This sections has shown that the network of the Syrian refugees play a large role in their opportunities to find housing and that renting an apartment requires a certain degree of financial and social capital. Sharing and subletting housing has become a strategy to reduce the costs of living and has also become a business strategy for the 'real-estate middleman'. The high advance payments and 12 month contracts fit the household needs of refugees who are planning to stay and able to invest. Others who do not have the economic or legislative power have to find more flexible and cheaper ways to arrange their housing. Solutions that are found for this problem are renting smaller entities *within* apartments, like renting a bed or a room, which is further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

7.1.2 RENTING A BED

As mentioned in the above section, renting a bed is more flexible way of housing. It is often used by people who arrived individually or in couples and are not sure yet how long they will stay in Istanbul. As an individual, it is the cheapest way to arrange a place to stay and sleep. Through the personal network and through Facebook pages[43], these rooms are offered and found. Because Istanbul is a generally expensive place in comparison to other cities in Turkey and in comparison to Syria, sharing a room is a common way to live for young people with individual household. The average amount of money that the participants in this study pay for the rent of a bed is 300 TL per month (€99), ranging from 250 TL (€83) to 400 TL (€142). The differences in price depend on the amount of people that the room and the house is shared with among other factors, but also on the intensions of the real-estate middleman who rents out the place, as Alman (25) explains:

> *I know people who rent beds. I call these people if friends are coming to Istanbul to check if they have a place available. In faith I know a house shared by 31 people. Beds in single rooms are usually more expensive than beds in shared rooms. At first, everybody (Syrian refugees) helped each other out informally upon arrival in Turkey. Now it became a business. The downside of this development is that many Syrians ask and gain big amounts of money.*
>
> *Alman, 25, in Istanbul since January 2014*

Houses are shared with friends, but especially in the case of big houses (with 10 to 15 people), not all housemates know each other beforehand. Turkish students also very often share their room with other

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[43] Interview Aatif, with Teun Smorenburg and Pedro Valarini, 9-3-2015

students if they do not live with their families in Istanbul [44]. The average number of people that live in this kind of housing is eight people, among the participants in this study. Some participants used to live in houses with 15 beds[45]. The interactions with the Syrians who live in this kind of housing is inter-ethnic and the language spoken is Arabic in most cases. Because there is a Syrian who functions as a middle-man between the Turkish landlord and the sub renters, the sub renters are Syrians, and they do not need to speak Turkish to arrange this type of housing. This type of housing is a form of ethnic housing that requires almost no interactions with the Turkish society.

FIGURE 12: TWO PICTURES FROM MUJAB (21) AND HASSAN'S (21) HOUSE IN AVCILAR. THEY RENT THEIR BEDS FROM ABU MAJID (59). RIGHT: THE SHOES OF EVERYBODY IN THE HOUSE. LEFT: A ROOM WITH THREE BUNKBEDS. A TOTAL OF 10 YOUNG MEN LIVE HERE

Figure 12 shows what a house can look like where you can rent a bed. Mujab (21) and Hassan (21) live in this house and chose this type of housing, because they did not have the economic or social resources to find a different kind of place to stay. Mujab is a student at Istanbul University which is near his house now and he does not have a job, which makes him dependent on the 600 TL (€215) that he receives from his uncle in Saudi Arabia

> *'It is a crowded place and when everybody is home, it is very difficult to study here, but Abu Majid put some desks for the students in our house. My housemates are all right, most of them are working six days a week, which makes the Sundays most crowded, because then most people have a day off'. I need to watch my money carefully, because this bed costs 250 TL per month. I pay all other things with the 350 TL that is left. It is very little'*
>
> *Mujab, 21, in Istanbul since October 2013.*

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[44] Interview with Mustafa, Turkish landlord, 10-3-2015
[45] Interview Munsif, with Teun Smorenburg, 23-4-2015

Mujab lives in Avcılar because his university is in the same neighbourhood and this saves him costs for transportation. This kind of housing provides the flexibility that Syrians with a small budget need, because their first period of staying in Syria is often characterized by doing different jobs with relatively low salary (Smorenburg, 2015). Because of their small budget, they prefer to live close to their jobs to avoid high transportation costs. When they decide to make an attempt to travel to Europe or when they find a better job, they can easily give up the rent for their bed and find a bed somewhere else. Abu Majid, the Syrian real-estate middleman for Mujab and Hassan, knows this too:

> *'I never advertised. people come via my network. I am happy to help them, it is based on trust. Some people in the house stay only for one week, when they find a job in a different part of the city, they leave again and then they pay for the time they were here. Everybody who initially lived in this house when I rented it 1,5 years ago has left by now, because they went to Europe or because they found a job far away'.*
>
> *Abu Majid, 59*

The above quote of Abu Majid demonstrates that this type of housing is intended to be of temporary nature for most Syrians. Because the participants who live this way are young, they have expectations to improve their skills and economic status and look for better housing opportunities or different locations when they have the opportunity. Many of the housemates in Mujab's and Hassan's house are staying in Istanbul alone and are working to support themselves, sometimes their families, but also their future plans that often include a crossing to Greece via a smuggling boat[46]. Hassan's story is a good example of this state of mind:

> *I came to Istanbul in March 2014 to apply for a Japanese visa, because I got accepted in a Japanese institution to study Japanese language and culture. My visa got denied by the embassy and there were not many options to go. I got stuck in Istanbul and came to live in Abu Majids house: If I go back to Syria, they will kill me. I am an online graphic designer, so I could continue my work here and pay for my life, but I definitely want to leave. I already was in Malaysia, but got some problems with my visa there as well. I returned to Abu Majids house and realized I ran out of legal options to leave, so now I am planning to go to Europe via Greece.*
>
> *Hassan, 21, first time in Istanbul in March 2014[47]*

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[46] Informal conversation Mujab, 10-5-201, interview Abu Majid, 10-5-2015
[47] Interview by Teun Smorenburg and Pedro Valarini, 29-4-2015

In contrast with the inflexible requirements for renting an apartment, the risks and investments when renting a bed are reduced. The degree of comfort and privacy in these houses is not high and is therefore perceived as a temporary solution to save money or to wait for other job opportunities with higher salary that allows the refugees to live close to this job. Because this housing stays within the Syrian social network, it is a form of ethnic housing and limits interaction with the Turkish society.

7.1.3 RENTING A ROOM

The third type of housing entities, rented by the Syrian households in this study is renting a room. The rooms that are rented by the participants in this study were all rented directly from Turkish house owners. Renting a room is more flexible and cheaper than renting an apartment and gives more privacy than renting a bed. The analytical difference in this chapter is that the participant is only responsible to pay the rent of one room and is not responsible somehow for the rent of the whole apartment (as is the case with participants who rent an apartment and share it with, or sublet it to others). These are advantageous conditions for the participants that need flexibility, but also are able to afford to rent a whole room instead of a bed in a shared room. The average amount paid by participants for a room is 450 TL (€148) per month, which is 150 TL (€50) higher than the average amount that is paid for a bed. The average amount of people living in the houses of the participants is 3,8 people in one house (see table 6). The range of the number of people that live in the shared houses is between 2 and 11 people. In this paragraph I will give examples of two different types of household who rent a room: families who rent a room and share their house with other families; and individual households who are in this case all young men, who share their house with other young men, because the circumstances of these two types of households are different. I will show the dynamics that can occur in both cases.

The households that rent a room are one family, a couple and six individual households. The family is Basimah's family. They rent a room in a house which they share with a total of eleven people. Basimah's family, consisting of six persons lives in one room and the two other families also each have a room. The kitchen and the living room are shared by the three families. Basimah's family shares this house to save money and because they are expecting an opportunity to get resettled to Canada. It is their third house in Istanbul and Basimah is very happy with the location of this house, because there is bus right in front of her door that gives her the opportunity to go to her work in the city centre by herself. The relations with the other families in the house are tensed however. All families are Christians from Syria, but the different families speak different languages: English, Kurdish, Suriany, Arabic, Armenian and they speak about each other in languages that the other family does not understand. The situation in the family is very tensed at the moment when I interview them, as Basimah explains:

> *Me, my parents, and my three siblings share one room in this house. There is couple with a baby next door and lately her aunt has also come to live with them. The baby cries the whole time. The other family is a couple. Last week, the tensions increased a lot, because the other family [points secretly at one of the people in the living room] made a complaint about us. Because the landlord likes us, she gave us all an ultimatum that one of the families is supposed to move out to reduce the tensions and complaints. If nobody left the place before the end of this week, we all have to leave! We do not want to leave, because this is our first good house with a bus so close to my work, The bus is my favourite part of this house and we got used to this place, but we're afraid that nobody is leaving (...) They do not understand English, but they are talking about us now in Suryani[48]. They don't know that I understand that and they talk about us!*
>
> *Basimah, 14, In Istanbul since May 2014, in this house for 5 months*

The above quote is an example of tensions that arise among household who share their living space. The number of people, the different lifestyles of the families and the different ethnicities and languages were reason that there was no trust amongst each other, which lead to this tensed situation[49]. It is an example on how ethnicity and languages from Syria can still play a role in the Syrian interactions in Istanbul today and how housing can be the scene of these kind of tensions.

Five young men who have an individual household rent a room from a Turkish house owner. Nawaz (25) and Aftaab (29) rent a room from a Turk who lives there as well. They became friends with the owner and they can speak Turkish with each other. They are happy with the roommates that they live with, because they became friends. Aftaab found this room because he heard about two Germans leaving a room via a colleague that he knows via his translation work. This information gave Aftaab and his friend the opportunity to rent these rooms:

> *'The Turkish guy who rents the rooms to us is a young guy like us and he does not rent his house in a commercial way. We became friends during my time here',*
>
> *Aftaab (29), in Istanbul since November 2013*

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[48] Suryani is one of the languages that is spoken by some Christian community's in Syria.
[49] The tensed situation finally came to an end when the other two families both got resettled and left the house. Basimah's family could stay.

Nawaz found his room (see figure 13) through a Turkish connection. Nawaz and Aftaab felt good in their houses, because they liked the people that they lived with and they like the location of their houses: Nawaz lives in a neighbourhood in Beyoğlu, which is near to his work and close to Istanbul's centre. Aftaab lives in Üsküdar which is popular neighbourhood among Turks on the Asian side of the city. Both guys speak a high level of English and tried to engage in the international and Turkish community during their time in Istanbul. These efforts paid off and lead them to find housing outside their ethnic networks. It can be seen as an example of the influence of preferences and agency in the field of housing. They both experience an advantage of speaking Turkish and English with their roommates, because they are able to be in contact with different networks through their housemates. These examples show that the context of housing can function as a network medium in Istanbul.
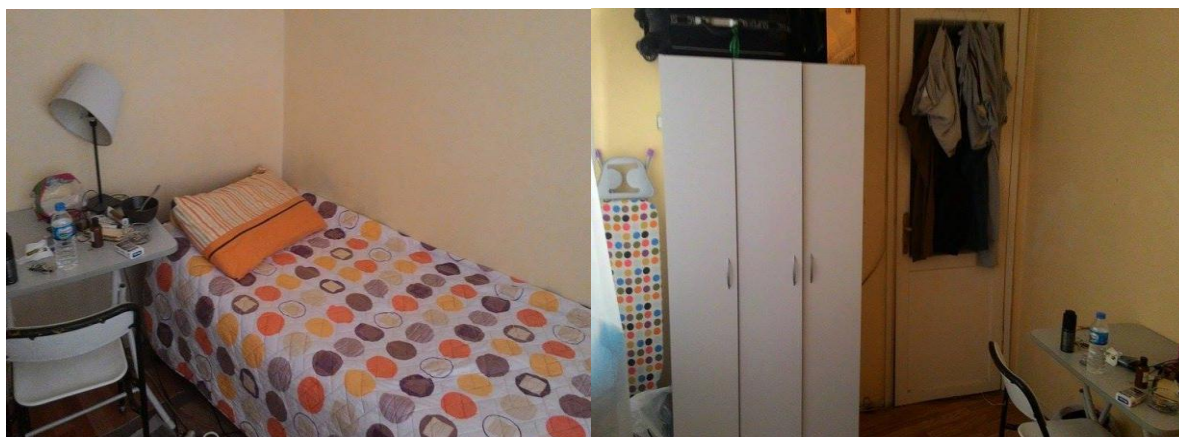
FIGURE 13: RIGHT AND LEFT: PICTURES OF NAWAZ' ROOM IN KASIMPASA, BEYOGLU DISTRICT

Karim and Abdul-Hakeem also rent a room, but attach less meaning to their rooms and roommates. Karim works 80 hours per week[50] and is just home to sleep while Abdul-Kareem always works at home and does not come out of his house so much. Both guys found their room via connections who were Turkmen from Syria. Because they were Turkmen, they could speak Turkish and helped them to get a good price for their rooms. The interactions with their Turkish house owners often started with distrust towards the Syrian tenants. The owner of Karim's house even asked for a Turk to pledge for Karim that he would be a good renter, because even though Karim speaks Turkish, the landlord did not trust him until his friend pledged for him. A Turkish landlord I spoke to sais this distrust comes forth out of experiences with Syrians who cannot keep their promises in paying rent or leaving before the contract ends[51].

Abu Majid also experienced an initial distrust between him and his Turkish landlord. He explains how he dealt with this interaction:

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[50] Interview Karim by Tamara van der Sar & Teun Smorenburg, 14-4-2015
[51] Informal conversation Mustafa

> *Life in Istanbul got much better as soon as my son learned to speak Turkish. I found my last house through a real estate agency. At first the house owner did not want to give the house to me. Before I could rent my current house, I had so many meetings with the house owner together with my son as a translator. We needed to build up trust and what worked for me is that I work as a medical specialist in Syria and that I did humanitarian aid. When I told this to the owner, he gave me the benefit of the doubt.*
>
> *Abu Majid, 58, in Istanbul since May 2013*

The above examples show that renting an independent housing entity like a room or an apartment requires a certain degree of social capital. This social capital is expressed by the participants in three forms: being in contact with Turks who know about vacancies outside the Syrian network; being able to build up trust with Turkish house owners via the Turkish language; or a pledge of a Turkish friend. It results in a pattern that is less dependent on ethnic connections than the ethnic housing that occurs when Syrians rent a bed from Syrian middle men.

7.1.4 WORK SPACE

The last type of house-setting discussed is living at the place where a person works. The advantage of this is that this housing is for free for the participants in this research. Ammar (50) , Jalal (29) and Tahir (27) live at their work. Respectively in the attic of a mobile shop where Ammar opens the shop and closes at night; in a room at the office where Jalal works as a journalist; and in the back of the shop where Tahir sells second hand furniture. All three participants have an individual household and use the opportunity that the space at their job offered to save themselves the costs and efforts to arrange a different house. These housing solutions are perceived as temporary solutions: Ammar's family is coming, which is why he is looking for an apartment to live, Jalal is not certain that his job will keep providing him this informal house and Tahir is expecting to earn more income and tries to earn more money to afford a house one day. Their housing environment does not match the plans of these men in the future, but fits their current needs and preferences. It shows that employment can facilitate housing and that the household preferences are adjusted accordingly for the time being.

7.1.5 HOUSE

Shaista currently lives in a renovated Ottoman house in the Suleymaniye neighbourhood (Fatih district). She lives there with her parents and her brother. The house that she lives in is renovated by Shaista's brother-in-law, who bought this house with the motivation to keep the Ottoman wooden-house architecture alive (shahnish.com). Shaista's family could live in this house, because her sister and brother-in-law went back to Norway and the house was empty.

FIGURE 14: THREE PICTURES OF THE HOUSE IN SULEYMANIYE, FATIH DISTRICT, WHERE SHAISTA LIVES (SOURCE: SHAHNISH.COM). UPPERLEFT: KITCHEN, LOWERLEFT: LIVING ROOM, RIGHT: THE FACADE OF THE HOUSE

The house is very modern and provides a comfortable place for Shaista and her family to stay (see figure 14). They can live in this house without worries about rent, which makes their situation comfortable. Shaista is happy to live here, especially because she compares it to the first eight months of her stay in Istanbul, when she lived in a house on the princess islands. This house had the same degree of comfort and was also provided by her brother-in-law, but the location on the princess island is pretty isolated and Shaista felt miserable there, because she did not meet any friends there and was not able to work or socialize with others, she was depressed and could not get her mind to learn Turkish. Shaista's example gives a very clear clue that the location of a house, no matter how comfortable, is a very important factor to the well-being of the house-users. This will be further elaborated on in paragraph 7.2. The house where Shaista and her family currently live is very central in the city in a crowded and touristic area of Fatih. The location of this house, but also the fact that Shaista started doing volunteer work for 'Small projects Istanbul' both made an important difference in her well-being in Istanbul.

This sections showed that the degree of privacy, flexibility and pricing differs between the different housing entities. The different refugee households in this study have different household composition, needs and resources, that are reflected in their housing outcomes. The flexibility that a household needs, their financial resources and their degree of social capital are also influential in the outcome of their housing. Renting a bed is a more ethnic form of housing than renting an apartment or a room, because it needs less interaction with Turkish citizens than the other two options. The interactions with Turkish landlords and house owners show

similarities in all types of housing and the majority of participants in these household live together with people within their family or within their ethnic network. The exceptions were the room-renters who put effort in finding a place outside their Syrian network and use their housing as a means to integrate. In the next chapter I will elaborate on the process that preceded the current housing outcome of the participants.

7.2 HOUSING CAREERS

In this paragraph an important link within the housing career framework is addressed: What does the housing outcome have to do with the household dynamics and to what new houses does this lead? In this paragraph I choose to give an overview of the housing career of the participants by quantifying the number of houses they have had in relation to the time they spent in Istanbul and I graphically show the routes that the participants took to arrive in their current house. After giving this overview I will address the influential factors in this housing career in a thematic way: the influence of household dynamics, the housing features and society interactions are addressed.

In table 7 an overview is given of the number of houses that the participants in this research have had since they arrived in Istanbul. There is information available on forty participants. This includes their residence when they were a guest at the house of somebody else and the places of residence in houses or house entity's (bed or room) that they rented during the time they were in Istanbul. What this graph shows is that there does not seem to be a positive relation between the amount of months that somebody has stayed in Istanbul and the amount of houses this household had. The majority of the participants had two places of residence (13) and there were three participants who switched their residence five times.

TABLE 6: THE TIME THAT PARTICIPANTS STAYED IN ISTANBUL IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF HOUSES THEY HAD

Months in Ist. / Houses since arrival (no.)	<6 m	7-12 m	13-18 m	19-24 m	> 24 m	Total
1	1	4	4	2		11
2	2	2	4	4	1	13
3		2	2	3	1	8
4			3	2		5
5	1	1	1			3
No information					2	2
Total	4	9	14	11	4	42

The housing types of the participants in this research are shown at two times in figure 15. The difference in housing type used by the participants is shown on arrival and at the time of research. What becomes clear is that there is advancement on the housing market among the participants. A much larger group of people currently lives in an apartment in relation to the number of people that live in an apartment on arrival. As also became clear, renting an apartment requires a certain degree of economic investment and social capital. According to the data, a larger share of the Syrian refugees in this study were able to use their economic and social capital to make arrangements for renting an apartment.

Housing entity on arrival and now

FIGURE 15: HOUSING ENTITY OF THE REFUGEE HOUSEHOLDS ON ARRIVAL AND HOUSING ENTITY NOW

FIGURE 16: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER DISTRICT IN ISTANBUL

The geographical locations of these participants are shown in figure 16. The districts of Avcılar and Fatih are known as areas where many Syrians live[52] and this is where many participants in this study live. It does not mean however that other areas would be areas where there are less concentrations of Syrians. Unfortunately there is no available data on the concentrations of the Syrian community in Istanbul, but what the geographical pattern of the participants does tell us is that there are a great amount of districts where Syrians found a place to live and are incorporated in Istanbul's population in geographical terms.

Paragraph 7.1 already showed the current housing conditions of the participants in this study and the following paragraphs will explore how different factors of the housing career have influenced the search for housing. The following paragraphs will thematically address the factors of influence: household dynamics (composition, resources and preferences), housing features (quality, size, price and location), interactions with society (neighbourhood interaction, house owner interactions) that form explanatory factors to the differences in housing careers amongst the participants.

7.2.1 HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS

Household dynamics in this study mean development in composition, resources and preferences of the household. Before I go into these topics I want to address the role of hospitality and hosting in the household dynamics. Hospitality is an important part of Syrian culture. This hospitality is extended to family members, friends and friends of friends and family members. In some traditional villages in Syria, it still is a habit to receive all visitors in your home for at least three days before asking why they came to your house[53]. Even though this tradition is not kept alive as in these villages in all places, it is still an important value of Syrian culture which is taken to Istanbul as well. It influences peoples housing pathways because their first place of residence is often the house of a family member or friend. A third of the participants in this research was hosted by their family and friends at first. For some participants this meant the end of their housing search, especially for individual households, because once they arrived at their friends and family, they could often stay somewhere in a bed or a room of their family-members house in Istanbul. Alman experienced this

> *I lived as a fugitive for a while before I arrived in Turkey and this is why I could not access my medicin at that time. My friends had to carry me to our house. I was lucky to be able to stay with my friends from the beginning. We share our two bedroom apartment with the four of us. It made my life in Istanbul easier to start'.*
>
> *Alman, 26, in Istanbul since January 2014, 2nd house*

In contradiction with Alman's experience, the majority of households were staying at their friends as a temporary solution until they found their own place to stay. Relatives of close kin were much more likely to

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[52] Informal conversation Kafeel, Informal conversation Mustafa
[53] Interview Kafeel, 12-3-2015

stick together in their housing search. Brothers for example would help each other with a place to stay as long as needed. It shows that a house can be a place where people can provide service to each other. When someone manages to rent a house, this house is shared by the connections and friends through lines that already existed in Syria as well as new connections formed in Istanbul.

Falah, Jamal and Nadir came to Istanbul, but had no personal relations who could host them in the beginning. They stayed in hotels and motels for two weeks up to a month, while searching for a new house to stay. Falah and Jamal came with their families and got more familiar with the city during this time. Nadir came to Istanbul alone and stayed in a hotel for a few weeks, which did not contribute to building up his life:

> *'I stayed in a motel at first and moved to a hotel later on, but it did not help. I really did not feel good. I ate less, I lost weight and none of the food tasted nice. My friends who stayed in Istanbul lived in homes that were already very full. I stayed at one friend one night and another night at my other friend. I know this last friend from Syria and he speaks Russian. He helped me find a room in Laleli (Fatih), where many Russians live and there I finally found my own stable place to stay, which I am very happy with. The feeling that I have to start building up my life all over again is very difficult however'*
>
> *Nadir, 26, In Istanbul since March 2015[54], 5th house*

Nadir's story describes the situation when the social network that exists in Istanbul is not able to provide the hospitality to you, because they are in crowded and/or difficult situations themselves. This influenced his well-being in the beginning of his stay. Though participants who were hosted by their connections also experienced a similar feeling of instability, this was overcome quicker when they were received. The hospitality and ability to provide service to other Syrians is not only a matter of culture, but as Nadirs example shows, it is also an important way to take care of and support new comers on arrival in Istanbul.

I will now address the household composition. There are two main changes in household composition that have a direct effect on the housing preferences of household. The first aspect is the situation when an individual (often fathers and eldest sons) has come to Istanbul to pave the way for his family and these family members follow them. Abu Majid (50) explains how the arrival of his wife marked the moment for him that he and his family would have to build up his life in Istanbul:

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[54] Interview with Teun Smorenburg and Pedro Valarini & personal informal conversation, 30-4-2015

> *'After one year in Istanbul, my wife and my two youngest sons came to Istanbul. I realized I would for sure not go back to Syria, because I got confirmation that I was wanted by the government. Since my family came, I decided to make a living in Istanbul. I turned my first rented house into a small business and I looked for a new place via a housing agency.'*
>
> *Abu Majid, 58, In Istanbul since May 2013, 4th house*

Gender plays an important role in these family dynamics: it is the man or the son who is normally responsible to arrange an income for the family and pave the way in Istanbul before the rest of the family arrives. When the man was successful in building up some connections and income in Istanbul, the rest of the family can follow. The same process happens when a marriage is prepared. Despite the conflict, marriages keep being arranged among Syrians, but they get a more international character. Some men ask their relatives back in Syria if they know available and suitable marriage partners, or they ask their family members in Syria to explore if a girl that they met before would be available for marriage. When the marriage is arranged, this is a reason for the man to move to an apartment and receive the Syrian wife in Istanbul. It is not unusual that the future wife and husband have never met each other. Azmina (27) came to Istanbul in August 2014 because of this reason and now lives together with her husband Aatif (29) in an apartment in Istanbul. Azmina lived a stable life in Istanbul[55] and was not forced to move out of the country, but because Aatif could not come and live in Syria, she had to move to Istanbul. This example illustrates how common things like marriages are changed by the conflict, but also shows how common household changes like marriage are a normal part of Syrian housing careers in Istanbul as well.

The second aspect shaping household preferences is the development of income and the sources of income. Mansur (31) explains how he could rent an apartment for him and his wife, because his income changed:

> *I lived in an apartment together with my brother and my wife. We could support each other when one of us did not have a job. Since I found a job at a real-estate agency, my boss needs me instead of me just needing him for an income. I earn good money through the commission of housing sales and created my own job security. From then I could rent an apartment for me and my wife together!*
>
> *Mansur, 31, In Istanbul since September 2013[56], 2nd house*

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[55] The reason that Azmina's life was safe in Syria was not further discussed, because she avoided questions on this topic.

[56] Interview by Teun Smorenburg, 2-5-2015

Mansur started to get a more secure income and this lead him to decide that he could make an independent investment in a house. In other cases it was not the amount of income, but the source of income that caused a housing change. Aziza was fired at the employer that also arranged her housing, which is why she had to leave her house. She was looking for a new housing opportunity and job and when she found a new employer and told him about her problem in finding a place, her new boss asked his wife to arrange an apartment for Aziza and put the apartment on his name. He arrange furniture for her and has deducted it from her salary in parts. Because of this, Aziza is legally and financially able to rent an apartment via her boss. The example of Aziza shows that a Turkish employer can ease the process of finding housing and can have large influence on the well-being of Syrians in Istanbul.

In this paragraph I argued that the reception mechanisms of social relations and the household's composition and income are of influence to the housing career of refugees between the arrival of Istanbul and the current housing situation of these participants. The two factors of household composition and income changes of a household shape a housing career in an almost regular non-refugee way. Even though the personal history of these refugees still shape their opportunities, their moves are related to factors that change for non-refugee households as well as refugee households. In the following paragraph I will assess how the physical features of a house have contributed to the housing career.

7.2.2 HOUSE FEATURES

When a house does physically not provide for the needs of a household this is influential reason to move (Alkay, 2011). In this case factors like the quality of housing, the size of the house, the price or the location of the house can be physical factors that lead to a search for a new residence, when they are not fitting to the livelihood and size of the household.

In earlier sections, I already described how location matters in the experience and opportunities related to a house by using the example of Shaista (27) in paragraph 7.1.5 and the flexible use of the rent of a bed at the place where work is for young Syrians in paragraph 7.1.2. These examples have shown the importance of location of the house in relation to the opportunities that this location generates for other aspects in life. In these examples the location of the house was prioritized over the physical aspects of the house. A good location can therefore be a good reason to stay in a house that is not exactly what someone needs, as Nawaz explains:

> *I am happy with my house because it is cheap and on a good location in the city, near the centre. I would very much like to advance on the housing market however: There are many mosquito's here, and the road to my house is very steep. It is killing me in the heat of the summer!'*
>
> *Nawaz, 26, room in Beyoglu*

Nawaz has a good job currently and makes good money in his job as real estate agent. He expects more from a house than most students did who were sharing a room, because with his higher income he can potentially meet more housing preferences when he advances on the market. This contributes to the argument that housing strongly connected to other aspects of life, like work and social contacts.

I also addressed in paragraph 7.1.3 how sharing a small space with a large amount of people can lead to tensions by using the example of Basimah's family situation with eleven people in a 3 + 1 apartment. When participants in this research shared their house with a large amount of people, they always mentioned this as a negative aspect of their housing. Because the houses were overcrowded, students could not study and tensions occurred about noise, cleaning duties, snoring and sleep deprivation. Though these complaints were real, the ability to move was not available for everyone. As explained in the former paragraph, voluntarily moving places have to be preceded with a fitting change in income or legal status to be able to come closer to the household's preferences. The search for more available space per person is therefore preceded by the search for a better job. If this is not the case, you can get stuck in a place where you do not want to live, as Munsif's story explains:

> *In my first house I did not like the tensions that existed between the Syrians and the Turks in the same building. Me and my brother went to our current house. We rent two beds and shared our house with 15 others, but 8 of them went Europe by now. The rest of us stayed, so we have some more space, but I would really like to have my own room, apartment or studio. The problem is, I really can't afford it. I take a shower once a week to reduce our water bill, because even together with the income of my brother we are just able to cover our costs. My boss obliges me to work every day, so even if I had the money, I wouldn't have the time to change places.*
>
> *Munsif, 19, In Istanbul since July 2014[57], a bed in Fatih*

Munsif's story is an example of how a livelihood and lifestyle is reflected in the housing that is available to him. It also relates to the next factor of analysis, the price of housing. There is a trend visible of people who rent a first housing entity for a certain price and their second housing entity for a lower price. Especially because in the initial stages of staying in Istanbul, the currency and housing market are not yet familiar with the refugees and they can therefore not know what the right proportion is between price and quality. Because a stable place to stay is a very important part of starting up a life, concessions are made in price in order to stay somewhere. Staying in a hotel in the beginning is a very flexible, but expensive way to reside, but is used in order to find a right place to live and to orientate on the housing market. This problem can be avoided when people are received by their connections who already are familiar with the market.

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[57] Interview by Teun Smorenburg, 23-4-2015

The last feature of housing is the quality of the house. Some participants mentioned that they believed the quality of construction in Istanbul is much worse than the quality of construction in Syria[58]. Some participants described houses of very bad quality, there were rats and it was dirty[59] and because they had a contract of 12 months, they decided to stay despite the quality. Houses in bad quality are also perceived as an opportunity by some Syrians however, especially real-estate middleman. Because the quality of the apartment is low, they can rent these for a low price, but after they clean it and furnish it, they can use this space to rent out per bed to other Syrians who have a housing need in Istanbul. This is what Aamil (28) did with two of his houses, that now provide his family and him with an income.

I argued that physical features of housing are of influence to the housing careers of refugee households in Istanbul, like other non-refugee household (Alkay, 2011; Murdie, 2002), but the information retrieved on this topic also shows that household's income and composition are of higher influence than the physical features of the house, because these physical features influence voluntary changes to move, which are only possible when they are preceded by adequate and fitting resources and legislative power.

7.2.3 INTERACTIONS WITH SOCIETY

The interactions with society in Istanbul are in important aspect of Clapham's housing pathway (2002), as one of the important factors influencing the meaning given to a house. In paragraphs 6.3.1 on the housing search in Istanbul and in paragraph 7.1, some of these interactions are already pointed out. These interactions include interactions with the Turkish house owners directly and indirectly via Syrian real-estate middle men, like Abu Majid.

Some participants have experienced negative reactions from the neighbours or the landlord about their presence in a certain house. Munsif describes how the first apartment where he rented a bed was in a building with many Turkish people who did not like the presence of a house with large numbers of Syrians and it came to some conflicts in the building. This is why Munsif and his brother decided to look for a different place to rent a bed.

In some other cases, the Syrian middle man did not communicate with their landlords that they were renting out their apartment to other individual Syrians. This was not always appreciated and caused the landlord to push the sub-letters out. Because subletting is only possible in an informal way. The fact that formal renting is challenge for most Syrians without residence is the reason that renting out beds is lucrative.

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[58] Interview Alman, by Tamara van der Sar and Jolinde Dermaux, 19-3-2015, Interview Kafeel, Interview Anwar
[59] Idem

> *Where I live now in Avcilar, it is difficult to be in contact with the neighbours, because it is not the culture of this neighbourhood to be in contact. When I lived in Kirazli (Bagcilar district in Istanbul), this was very different. The neighbours would come for food and the other way around. We had fine contacts with each other.*
>
> *Abu Majid, 58, an apartment in Avcilar*

Other participants have pointed out that they had very good experiences with their neighbours. Even though this is appreciated, it is not a main concern for most people.

7.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored how the searching process to a house has lead to a housing outcome and what the characteristics of these dwellings and their surroundings are. By exploring these topics, I show how these Syrians live in Istanbul and what dynamics are of influence to their housing career. All these factors already give hints on how the Syrians reflect on their housing situation, which is strongly connected to other aspects of their life. The reflection of the satisfaction of the housing outcome is very much influenced by the interactions and dynamics in the household, but also on the dynamics and interactions with the society. The next chapter will further explore how these relations within the household and with society relate to the process of constructing a home in Istanbul.

8. FROM HOUSE TO HOME

In the former chapters I addressed the housing and home situation, the influential dynamics on the housing pathway towards Istanbul, the housing pathway to Istanbul, consisting of the search process and housing outcomes in the housing pathway. All of this has lead us to know how the housing situation of the Syrian refugees in this study has been and what this meant for some of the developments in their lives that came forth from their housing. In this chapter I will put a clear emphasis on the meaning this housing has had on the process of home -development. The question 'Do you feel at home', is not a yes-or-no question in particular. There can be good circumstances on the one hand, but very tensed and stressful situations on the other. A feeling of home is constructed in a fragmented manner and most likely develops slowly.

I argue in this chapter that there is certain point in the lives of the urban refugees in this study on which they feel a change of intension and a change in their opportunities in the city. This 'turning point' develops on different times for different people, can come forth from a great variety of backgrounds and can be felt through a range of motivations, but a common factor is that this point can be noticed as a moment from which refugees more consciously start constructing a new home. This does not mean that the process of home-construction only start from that moment onwards; it has been a developing process that started on their arrival. Many refugees described this changing point and others did not, sometimes because they did not experience this point (yet) or because they were determined *not* to settle down in Istanbul.

Housing is a *means* for the development of the home construction process, because it provides a platform of interaction inside and outside the house. At the same time, housing can be a *marker*, as it can mark the decision to settle in Istanbul, for example when a household decides to rent an apartment of their own (chapter 7.2). The dynamics of the construction of a home and the processes that precede or cause a turning point in home construction are further described in this chapter, by using the indicator framework of Ager and Strang (2004a) for integration (see figure 4).

This framework is developed in Britain to improve policy and practice on refugee integration, by pointing out the domains in which integration takes place and by showing how these domains can be interrelated. In this dissertation I stretch the link between housing and home, but the process of constructing a home is much more complex and varied than this link only. The indicator framework of Ager and Strang shows this complexity. It shall function, with some small changes, as the framework for analysis of the interrelated factors that contribute to a feeling of home.

This framework divides its domains in four categories of influence: the legal foundation of home, the domains facilitating the process of home construction, the social connections that form an important element in a feeling of home and lastly, the means and markers, of which I have chosen housing as the topic of interest. In this framework, I focus on the experience of the Syrian refugees themselves and on their perception of the interactions that take place in each of the domains.

The framework provides a very broad picture in which especially the types of social connections play an important role. I will connect these domains to the process of home-construction and housing, but I also want to show that all these interactions together form the integral and conscious feeling of a person whether he or she is constructing a home. In the following paragraphs I will address the roles of the described domains in the home construction process of Syrians in Istanbul.

8.1   THE LEGAL POSSIBILITY TO STAY

Refugees who stay in Istanbul were able to come to Turkey, because they could receive a temporary protection status from the Turkish government and did not have to live in Turkey illegally, where other countries did not provide them this opportunity (Chapter 5). However, this temporary protection does not provide a full range of legal possibilities as I explained in the former chapter on legislative power to make contracts.

The foundation of integration according to the integration framework (Ager & Strang, 2004a) is legal rights and citizenship. This legal domain forms the foundation, meaning the ideas about rights and citizenship that refugees have (Ager & Strang, 2004a). As well as their perception on how non-refugees relate to these legal procedures. The legal status of the refugees is a prerequisite for them to feel at home in Turkey, because their stay is allowed and they do not have to hide in the city as can be the case with urban refugees in different countries (Sommers, 2001). The temporary protection status does not feel comfortable for many refugees though. When a refugee from Syria does not have a Syrian passport, they are not allowed to cross the border to Turkey officially. This was the case for Amilah and she feels it prevents her from settling in Turkey:

> *'I have no Syrian passport[60], so I had to enter Turkey in an illegal way. I am protected in Turkey, but it does not feel like I am legal here. I will be resettled and the Turkish government is giving trouble for us, because we have no entrance stamp, which complicates the procedure to get an exit permission from the Turkish government. I am so happy that living in Sweden will be totally different in this sense. I told them my whole story and they still accepted me. Even though I have no passport, I can be in Sweden in a legal way!'*
>
> *Amilah, 24, In Istanbul since October 2014*

The words of Amilah show how a legal status can make a difference in self-confidence to be legal in Turkey and indeed provide for a basis to build a life on. Because people do not feel recognized by a temporary protection status, as it gives them very little legislative power. People feel insecure about their status and look for a more extensive form of residence, that also provides them a greater degree of freedom.

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[60] Amilah has not Syrian passport, because she is from an Ismaeli minority. She was not able to get a passport in Syria, which is why she could not go anywhere else than Turkey.

Legal options to travel are limited to Syrians, because not many countries grant Visa's to Syrians and also many Syrians have to go through quite some hassle before they can renew their Syrian passport. During the fieldwork for this study, the procedure to renew a Syrian passport has become easier, but also more expensive. Travelling outside Turkey as a Syrian is therefore limited and this restricts the students who have a wish to study abroad or for young professionals to find a job with their current skills abroad. Because their legal status does not allow them to travel, Turkey feels like a prison. Not being able to travel is a big annoyance for young and ambitious Syrians in Istanbul, like Aftaab:

> *I have the feeling I did not belong in Syrian society. I rather belong to the culture where I grew up in Ukraine, I studied in Kiev and lived in Saoudi Arabia with my parents. Syria does not form a strong part of my identity. In Istanbul I belong though. After 6 months here, I got the feeling that I fit in the society, much more than I fitten in the Syrian society. Once I learned Turkish, it made a big difference for me. The feeling that I belong here comes from the people I meet. But even though Istanbul has been a good place for me, I want to have some document to be able to travel. That's why I saved for a boat to Greece and travel around in Europe. I just want this freedom and I might just return to Istanbul with my documents later.*
>
> *Aftaab, 28, In Istanbul since November 2013*

Some people are determined to live on a residency despite the hassle, because it provides them more opportunity to receive a work residency or to travel in the future. The procedures in the police office and at the residency registration cause frustration however, because of the delay in procedures and because of the costly residence procedures. This is reason for most people to leave the residency and register as a refugee for a protection status. Baber applied for his tourist residence a year ago year, but had to wait for it for eight months, only to discover that it would expire four months later:

> *'Everything I improved in my life here in Turkey was because I was pushed to do so. The government does not provide any help in my life, but I want to live a legal life here. Due to the crisis in Syria, there is no legal way for me to travel to Europe and I try to have a residence in Turkey, but they do not provide it on time[61] - Baber, 26*

Baber struggles to make ends meet, because his family in Syria is dependent on his and his brothers' money to survive. The cost of the residencies are fairly high for his income, but he is determent to be registered properly.

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[61] When Baber wanted to renew his tourist residence in Turkey, he had to go through many procedures and pay around 500 TL before he could get it. When he finally received his residence card after 8 months, the expiry date was already in 4 months.

The difficulties in the Turkish bureaucracy form a motivation for him and other Syrian refugees to leave the country when they can. Even though they are accepted now, they don't see how they will be able to have a more extensive residence in the future. There seems to be no development and this is discouraging them to really settle down. Baber is trying to save money to be able to make a crossing to Greece and apply for asylum somewhere in Europe.

8.2 THE INTENTION TO SETTLE

Many refugees who arrive in Istanbul are not sure for how long they want to stay in Istanbul. The decision to settle down in Istanbul, at least for a while, is not something that is just relying on intensions, but also something that comes forth from the interactions and social and economic developments of their life in Istanbul.

Many refugees are awaiting their resettlement applications or are saving money for the moment that they can buy a smugglers ticket to Greece. These tickets cost between €1200 and €2000 [62], so often it takes people a while before they have collected this kind of money. In the meanwhile, they create habits and routines and get to know they city better, but it is not enough for them to give up their intensions to go to Europe. This state of mind retains some refugees to engage in Istanbul or to learn the local language for example. Hassan (21) is a refugee who was determined to leave Istanbul, and to find an legal way out to Asia or illegal way to Europe. He did not go out of his house in Istanbul and studied Japanese instead of Turkish, like others did. Other refugees can create a state of mind of flexibility. Aftaab (28) is such an example. He came to Istanbul 1,5 years ago and learned Turkish in the first six months. He needed time to settle, but says he has learned a lot and changed a lot during his time in Istanbul. After six months, he felt like he belonged to Istanbul and that Syria was not a place where he ever belonged. He build up his life and managed an income, house and friends. However, now he wants to travel and this is one of the things lacking. He feels good in Istanbul, but just wants to have the freedom to leave. Hassan did not make an effort to feel at home in Istanbul, while Aftaab did make an effort to learn about the city and integrate, while both men had the intention to leave Istanbul from the start of their stay. Hassan and Aftaab finally moved out of Istanbul together, but had a very different experience and belonging during their time in Istanbul. The result of their stay was the same, though their dealings in the city and processes of constructing a home were almost opposite.

Other refugees who do not intend to leave, but decide to settle often experience their first period in Istanbul as very challenging and stressful. In retrospect, when they describe their lives in the beginning of their stay, they come to a point where there was a crucial change in their circumstances. After this change their life started to mean more than survival in the city. This point was experienced by different types of crucial changes: It could be marked by renting a different (better) house, finding a different (better) job, or experiencing better connections to others. Anwar describes his 'turning point' when he started working at the Bazaar:

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[62] Interview Salah, interview Alman

> *'Even though I was already in Istanbul for three months, my life started here only when I found my job at the grand bazaar. I met an Erasmus student on that market and he introduced me to his friends. My family had just left to go back to Syria for a while. I was alone in the city and I lived a life as an Erasmus student. They became my family for those months, it was an amazing experience'*
>
> *Anwar, 26, In Istanbul since May 2013*

Anwar's 'start in Istanbul' was marked by his job, but was initiated when he met his international group of friends. He started to enjoy city life in Istanbul from that moment, despite the other challenges (He rented an apartment in very bad condition at the time for example).

Other refugees experienced a changing point when they received a different legal status. This in combination with meeting a good friend formed the turning point for Nimerah:

> *I used to live in a house with 21 other people. I was enrolled in university at the time, but it was impossible to study in that house. It was way too crowded. Then, because of some luck, I finally got my student residence. My family could rent our own apartment.*
>
> *In that same period, I got connected to Shaista and we became very good friends. My life was still not worry-free, but it suddenly got so much better!*
>
> *Amilah, 22, In Istanbul since July 2013*

Eight participants in this study mentioned a period or moment during their stay in Istanbul that caused a significant improvement in their well-being. These moments were dependent on changes of economic, relational, spatial or personal nature and were experienced under different circumstances. I will show in the following sections how these different factors have contributed to the lives of the participants in this research. Not everybody has experienced a turning point as described earlier in this paragraph, but these factors did contribute or obstruct to the process of home construction and therefore are further elaborated below.

8.3   MEANS AND MARKERS OF HOUSING

Because the house in Istanbul can be so much different than the house that people used to have in Syria, it is hard to adjust to the new standards. Houses found are often smaller, more expensive and shared with more people than the houses that the participants lived in Syria. The degree of privacy in the house, the lack of heating in winter or damp on the walls create an uncomfortable atmosphere and this influences their well-being (UN Habitat & Ohchr, 2014). As is already pointed out in chapter 7, there is variety in types and

conditions of houses. It is not the space of the house alone that provides a feeling of home, but it gives meaning to people's houses.

Kalila and her mother for example described how their house in Tarlabaşı, on the fourth floor of an old apartment building provides them with just a small balcony. The street is far down and it does not feel good to sit there. People sit on the street and talk to each other, mostly in Kurdish which they can understand, but it is not something they feel comfortable with, because the other women in the street are not their type, as they say it. When they were in Syria, they would hang out with everyone in their village, especially their family. They would be outside the whole time, but in their neighbourhood now, they don't feel they can do this. The fact that their usual space to hang out has changed gives the family less opportunity to socialize. Their family members live in a different neighbourhood, which means that their local social relations have become much more limited than before.

Amilah described how the space where she and her fiancé live is so dark, wet, small and unhealthy for her that she can never feel good there:

> *Our house is a basement, it is very humid and there is no sun. We have a small window, but we cannot open it. It is cheap, but it is in such bad condition. We were planning to stay there for one month, because we thought we would be resettled soon. Now we have stayed there six months. We have no internet, no refrigerator, no washing machine and we are always worried when it rains, because the water sometimes comes in our room. Our landlord tried to make us pay for things we did not use. We need stability and security to feel home. It is impossible in this house.*
>
> *Amilah, 24, In Istanbul since October 2014*

There are other refugees like Amilah and her fiancé Fidyan who found themselves shelter, but do not have a place where they can comfortably stay. Amilah's quote also makes clear that again, it is the physical space, as well as the relationships that relate to that space that contribute to her bad feeling about her house.

Some of the participants pointed out that as soon as they decided to stay, they started looking for a different house. It could be of better quality, but also cheaper to make sure they could pay for it long-term. Some chose more privacy when they decided to stay, especially when their families came over. Abu Majid described this moment when his family followed him to Istanbul after his first year's stay. He decided he would not be able to go back to Syria soon and start to build a future for his sons. He arranged a family apartment for them. A decision like this gives the settlement in Istanbul a more permanent character, because their housing situation and income stabilized. It changed the future perspective of the household, his sons are sent to school and he earns money from his real-estate investment. Abu Majid's decision changed not only their housing, but also their education, and their income. These other markers besides housing will be discussed next.

8.4   OTHER MEANS AND MARKERS: EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, EMPLOYMENT

Housing, together with employment, education and health represent major areas of attainment that are widely recognized as critical factors in the integration process (Ager & Strang, 2004a). They also show to be of importance in the home-construction process, they demonstrate progress and also support achievements in other areas. The link with the other means and markers in the feeling of home is strong, because the dynamics and opportunity's in these domains can cause an upward or downward loop of development.

When participants did not like their housing situation, they were often also having jobs for six or even seven days a week. The house became just a place to sleep and keep their stuff, the rest of the time was spent doing work. The interaction between housing, employment and health can bring some refugees in a vicious downward circle. Munsif (19) is one of the refugees who is in such a situation:

> *I came here 9 months ago and I have tried to go to Europe two times already. I am planning to try again. I have a job at a tourist shop seven days a week now and my boss does not want to give me a day off. My brother works the same hours in a different place, but he starts two hours before me. We only speak via whatsapp, because we're sleeping when we're home. My house is not nice and it's expensive for a just a bed, my arms are hurting a lot because I had an accident before, but I cannot go to the doctor. I cannot ask my boss for a day off. We have just enough money to cover our costs and I wish I had the time to look for a new job, but I can't risk losing my income. I feel very depressed.*
>
> *Munsif, 19, In Istanbul since July 2014*

Several refugees in this study experience this type of loop-mechanism, in which it seems there is no way out, while they hate their situation. Some refugees describe how they were in a loophole, but got out of it, because they met people who arranged a job for them[63] , or who arranged a better or cheaper house for them [64]. This support from others gave them a chance to improve their situation. Not all refugees entered a vicious circle like Munsif, but many refugees did start with jobs that did not provide them with enough income to create a stable situation. Many participants took the first job they could find, but during their time in Istanbul, became more able to find jobs that were fitting to their expertise and household needs (Smorenburg, 2015). The point where a more stable job is found is described as an essential turning point from which on, participants were able to start building up their lives and experienced some stability. The survival-mode of the first period can slowly switch off and there is more room for development and establishment of a feeling of home. Aziza described this like this:

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[63] Interview Anwar
[64] Interview Aziza

> *'I started to relax here in Istanbul after I worked at my current company for three months. My sister Jamila and I felt more safe in Istanbul and Jamila could start thinking about her dream to study again. I started to dream about a career that I can build in this company. In my company I feel respected and people like me. In Syria, I did not have this confidence and now I know that in ten years, I want to have a company together with my sister Jamila.'*
>
> *Aziza, 30, In Istanbul since October 2013*

Aziza's current job also provided her with a place to live, so when she found this job, she started to feel better. It gave her the opportunity to start thinking about her future plans and gave her a drive to improve herself, instead of surviving in Istanbul. Even though a home is constructed in every day practices, it seems that this process becomes more conscious when a person is more relaxed and self-confident.

So far, I described mainly the prerequisites before a refugee is able to start constructing a feeling of home and belonging. This also demonstrated that there are quite some refugees who are not yet able to think about settling, because their economic stability is too insecure. The 'survival-mode' shows to be depressing and leads to a search for ways out. At the same time, a mindset that is not ready to settle in Istanbul, does not bring the language skills and cultural knowledge which are necessary to make an opening in the loophole of their lives. The following paragraphs will explore how the social relations can make a difference in the refugees' lives, both in a positive and negative sense and also how these relations have often lead to a change in opportunity and home -construction in the lives of refugees

8.5 SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND A HOME

Social connections stress the importance of social relationships in constructing a home: 'It is the quality of your relationships with the people around you that determines whether or not you feel at home' (Ager & Strang, 2004b, p. 7). It relates stronger to the experience of home-construction of people themselves, while the means and markers rather form an outcome of this process. In Antonsich's conceptualization of belonging, he points out the relational aspect as a very influential part of belonging(Antonsich, 2010). I use the distinction between three types of social connections in the context of constructing a home: social bonds, social bridges and social links. The distinction into three aspects of these social relations is build up from the theory of social capital: Bonds are the connections within a community defined by for example ethnic, religious or national identity. Bridges are formed with members of other communities. Links are formed with institutions, including local and central government services (Ager & Strang, 2004b). The three types of connections that refugees in this study established during their stay will be analyzed to see how these have contributed to their process of constructing a feeling of home.

The social bonds within the Syrian community are of importance to the refugees who stay in Syria. Firstly they have proven to be important on first arrival in the city, when a large part of the refugees were received and hosted by their family and friends. Later the bonds within the ethnic community also provide important opportunities to find housing, (information on) employment opportunities, healthcare and education (Dermaux, 2015). As I argued earlier, these marks and means play an important role in providing the elements that lead for refugees to decide to settle in Istanbul and be able to construct a feeling of home.

The most important bond in Syrian culture is the family. The meaning of the relationships in the families who moved to Istanbul often changed. The family culture means that most children stay close to their parents until they get married. Also when married, most people stay close to their families and live in the same building for example. Anwar and Nimerah came with their parents to Istanbul and were oldest child of the family. Because they had a good education in Syria, their English was good and this gave them opportunity to find a job where their English was of good use. If the whole family decides to move to Istanbul, it is mostly the children that are able to find a job the quickest and not the parents as used to be the case in Syria. Anwar now is the only one in his family who has a job. He is providing for his whole family, in contradiction to his household situation before. He explains this feeling:

> *I have a job at the grand bazaar. I speak to tourists in English, Arabic and I learned Turkish too. When I was in Syria, my parents did not always appreciate my behaviour, because I really liked to be free. Now I am providing my parents with an income with my job and every time I give my salary to my mother, she prays for me and really appreciates that I provide this money for us. This is a very magical feeling.*
>
> *On the other hand, I also find it difficult that my family is now dependent on me. My job on the bazaar is good for me and provided me with a work permit, but it also drives me crazy. My boss never makes a compliment that I do something good. This makes my work very hard, I wish I had the freedom to quit and take some time to find something else.'*
>
> *Anwar, 24, in Istanbul since May 2013*

The changes in this role patterns are experienced by all people in my sample who form a household together with their family members. Nimerah also explains that her life in Syria was much more worry-free than her life in Istanbul had ever been. She and her sister provide an income for her family in Istanbul, but also for her father who asked for asylum in Sweden. Basimah and Kalila both are 14 years old, but could not enter a school in Turkey because they have no passports. Both girls are earning an income for their family and try to work on their homework when they are off from work. Before they lived in Turkey, the girls went to school. Now their role in the family has changed and they became bread-winners. The participants who became bread winners

have experienced a dramatic change in their responsibility. Even though it is a normal part of Syrian culture to support your parents when they grow older, these young refugees were pushed in this position by their move to Istanbul and have to adapt to this change quickly, which also challenges their opportunities for the future and their challenges to regain their feelings of 'worry-free' life as they experienced in Syria more often than in Istanbul.

In a later stage of the stay in Istanbul, the social bonds within the Syrian community keep playing an important role in cultural and family practices, but do not often provide opportunities to 'escape the loophole' in which many Syrians stay. Because the segregation of ethnicities was very strong in Syria, Syrians from certain ethnicities still rely on their own ethnicity, but the relations have changed. An example where I found this is in the family of Aamil. His parents, grandmother, brother and sister live in a house in Avcılar. They tell me that there are many Syrian people in their street and in the houses in their building, but that the women in the house do not know these people. Especially Aamil's mother feels lonely in her house, but she is afraid to meet these other families. She used to have people come over to her house all the time, but now she has not much to do. Aziza, who visited Aamil's house with me said:

> *That is how it is. I have been friends with Aamil for quite some time now and I did not even know he has a sister! People from Syria are very careful with their women. It is the first time I meet his family. I was happy that I could have the opportunity to come with you. It's been so long that I've been guest in a real Syrian family!*
>
> *Aziza, 30, in Istanbul since October 2013*

It is an example on how the bonds within the own community are preferred over making new bonds, but at the same time this leads to many missed opportunities to increase the well-being of families, especially female housewives, who often feel lonely. The differences in gender also become evident in this quote. People like Aamil's mother cannot trust on their old ethnic and family networks anymore, but at the same time are afraid or unable to connect to other Syrian or Turkish women. It affects their social relationships and causes loneliness.

Ethnicity is a sensitive topic within Syrian communities. It is considered rude to ask each other to what etnicity they belong. This is mainly because it could disrupt the relationship between people before it started, because the conflict relates to it[65]. In Syria, people used to know to what community somebody belonged by knowing from which neighbourhood they were. This was also something that was registered on the Syrian ID. Some participants in the study did not feel at home in Syria because of this segregated culture:

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[65] Informal conversation Jamila, Informal conversation Abdul-Hakeem

> *If feeling home relates to the society, I do not know what it is to feel home. I hated the Syrian society. I could never feel like home there and I do not want to go back".*

Ethnicity does not seem to be an open problem in relationships among Syrians in Turkey, but it is something that plays a role in social interactions with other Syrians and can even limit the opportunities for people to make connections to others, as I showed in Aamil's family. Even though bonds within the Syrian community are sometimes difficult to form, the common language and the old Syrian network provides many people with a sense of community that makes them feel safe, though disconnected from Turkish society.

> *All this time we were here, we did not make Turkish friends, they are so closed. Our best friends here are men from Syria. We also have friends from Tunisia and from the U.S.A. connecting to them is easier because we can speak Arabic and English.*
>
> *We cannot make Syrian female friends, because they do not like us. We are divorced women and they cannot be friends with us. We know that! It would be nice if we could have Turkish friends though. It would be a reason to learn the language.*
>
> *Aziza and Jamila, 30 and 27, In Istanbul since October 2013*

The social bonds with Syrians or other migrants in Istanbul are often stronger than the relationships with Turks, because people describe a difference in quality of the relationship (Dermaux, 2015). As the next section will show, these relations or 'social bridges' with Turks and other internationals can be very valuable though.

Social bridges

Social bridges are formed with people from a different community than your own. In the paragraph on bonds I already explained that bridges between Syrian ethnicities are being established in Istanbul. Social bridges can be connections that strengthen the facilitators for feeling at home (Language and cultural knowledge & safety and stability, see figure 4), but also obstruct these facilitators.

Some refugees in this study try to disconnect from other Syrians on purpose. They do not disconnect from connections with their family members and friends that already existed before their stay in Istanbul, but they deliberately make new connections to people from other ethnicities to give themselves the opportunity to take a distance from the conflict and to not be involved with the other persons trauma's. This is their way to deal with their new circumstances and immerse in Istanbul's international culture, rather than dwelling on the culture that was typical for their homes in Syria. The social bridges that the Syrians form provide them with new opportunities.

Social bridges with Turks encourage refugees to learn Turkish, which makes their range of opportunities larger on the labour market and in the interactions with landlords, neighbours and even new friends. The Turkish society is experienced by the refugees as closed and hard to connect to. Because most Turkish do not speak English or Arabic, the connection with most Turks can be established only if the refugees learn Turkish. An additional factor is that many Turks are not pleased with the arrival of a large group of Syrians in their country. Karim experienced his contact with the Turks as very difficult in the beginning:

> *'Arriving in Turkey was very difficult. The Turkish people were not very friendly in the beginning. I believe that this had something to do with the history between Turkish and Arabic people. Turkish people are fascists and are not friendly at first, but as soon as I got to know the Turkish people better, the Turkish people are nice. During my time in Kahramanmaraş (city in South-Eastern Turkey), I made Turkish friends and learned Turkish quite fast!*
>
> *Karim, 25, in Istanbul since April 2013*

Most Syrians in this study perceived the Turkish people as being closed and very focussed on their own. It was hard for many of the respondents to make friends who were Turks. Language barriers played a role in this. Abdul-Hakeem made some observations about his relations to the Turks and how Turks were different from Syrians.

> *The Turkish community gave me a hard time to settle down, because they did not speak English and were not open to communicate with me. I do not want to stay, but I am staying.*
>
> *Respect is the most important thing for me. In Turkey, they treat people differently when you speak German. I notice this when I speak German. When I speak Arabic, I am treated with less respect.*
>
> *"People in Syria are afraid of death, here they are afraid of life. When you have seen death, you see life differently. People are so busy with leading their lives here, that they forget to live".*
>
> *Abdul-Hakeem, 26, in Istanbul since April 2014*

As he explains in his quote, the Turkish society has not given him many opportunities to smoothly integrate and this is an important factor for Abdul-Hakeem to search for a different place to live in the future. It is an example of how the lack of the right language (Turkish in this case) can be an obstructing factor to the process of constructing a home.

Abdul-Hakeem also touches upon the topic of respect. Especially Syrians who worked in public shops experienced discrimination from Turks towards them. Discrimination is part of the safety and stability domain in Ager and Strangs framework (2004). Baber (26) and Nimerah (22) both work in a tourist shop on the biggest shopping street of Istanbul 'Istiklal'. Both of them sometimes lie about their nationality, because their costumers will otherwise drop their purchases on the desk and walk out the shop. The discrimination happens despite their efforts to learn Turkish. Baber tries to learn Turkish online and receives different reactions:

> *I learned Turkish from a Kurdish family where I worked for a while, they are nice and they are asking me how I am doing to this day. I also practice Turkish online on a website where I chat with other. I experience discrimination from the Turkish people there. Half of the times when the other chatter finds out that I am Syrian, they stop the conversation right away. I feel that the majority of Turkish people judges me and does not want to give me an opportunity. This discrimination and the fact that the government does not help Syrians, makes me angry!*
>
> *Baber, 26, in Istanbul since February 2014*

Baber does not experience this kind of discrimination in his neighbourhood. He lives in Akşaray, a neighbourhood in Fatih district where many Syrians reside. In his neighbourhood he feels like he is in 'little Syria'. Most of his friends have come from Aleppo to Istanbul, so his network of friends has moved to Istanbul. Even though his friends are here, he cannot feel good here:

> *'My salary is too low to support myself and my family and I am confronted with people who do not accept me, every day!*
>
> *Baber, 26, in Istanbul since February 2014*

The feeling that the Turkish society does not accept him or give him the opportunity to show his skills (because he is an engineer) are important reasons for him to *not* settle down. Because his family in Syria needs his salary however, it is hard to escape this situation for him.

NGO's - INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

NGO's who work with migrants in Istanbul are keen on connecting migrants to other migrants to create a platform where they can develop themselves and share their experiences. They also often provide Turkish and English class to migrants. These NGO's sometimes speed up the process of developing social bridges, like they did in Shaista's life:

> *I felt so lonely for the first 8 months. I knew nobody. Especially during winter. I felt so miserable that I didn't even learn the language (Turkish).*

Both girls marked their meeting as the changing point in their lives in Istanbul. From the moment they met each other, they started living again, meeting new people and feeling a purpose in their lives. Even though their situation and their problems did not change so much, the fact that they could share their lives stories was if great impact to both girls. The social bridge that they made between both their ethnicities (Shaista is from a Druze sect and Nimerah was a Palestinian refugee in Syria and now became a Syrian-Palestinian refugee in Turkey) was not likely to exist in Syria, but it changed their perspective on their life in Syria strongly.

This section has shown that social bridges have a dual impact on the process of constructing a home. On the one hand it provides the opportunities that can lead Syrians to turn to a phase in which they consciously create a new home, while on the other hand it can lead to the feeling that their efforts to build up a life in Syria are obstructed by the narrow attitude of Turkish society and therewith limits the facilitating role of language and cultural exchange.

SOCIAL LINKS

The last type of social connections are the social links. These links are made with institutions, both local institutions and central government. The interactions in this domain that have most effect on the lives of the Syrians in Istanbul are the interactions with the police and with the foreigners offices. In general these interactions have had negative effect on the feelings of home of the participants.

An example is Jamila (27), who got arrested for one night during my research period, because she was accused of having a fake passport when she went to the police office to extent her tourist residence. The police only spoke and understood Turkish and Jamila could not explain her story in Turkish. She was put into jail for one night and became registered for the temporary protection status, while she wanted to have a tourist residence. During that moment of registration, she was registered in the system as being a man and her date of birth was put on 2013, instead of 1987. Jamila did not speak Turkish well enough to communicate with the officers and they did not speak English or Arabic. She went home after one night with an ID card for refugees that was completely misrepresenting her official details. Later on, when she tried to apply for a touristic residence again, she was denied because her passport did not match her Turkish ID and the Turkish ID was given priority over het Syrian passport. Jamila was not the only one who got registered with the wrong age. Basimah was also

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[66] Karyn is the founder of an NGO called 'Small projects Istanbul'. She used to work with the Palestinian community in Yarmouk camp in Damascus, Syria and moved to Istanbul to continue her project when the violence increased too much.

registered as if she was born in 2010, while she was born in 2000. When she tried to explain, they thought Basimah was lying.

Positive interactions in the domain of social links were found in terms of access to education and healthcare. Even though there is a lot of frustration about the procedures of receiving these services, the fact that education and healthcare are offered stems many Syrians positive and grateful about the social links with governmental management (Dermaux, 2015).

8.6 PAST MEETS PRESENT - CULTURAL FACILITATORS

Istanbul's city culture is different from the Syrian culture. This is sometimes appreciated and influences a change in opinion about topics like music, alcohol, social relations and romance, but sometimes also leads to a identity crisis. Who do I want to be in Istanbul and where do I fit? Alman expresses this dilemma:

> *There are 2 lifestyles combined in Istanbul, namely the Western lifestyle and the religious lifestyle. The two groups are very close to each other. They however don't really mix in my opinion. For me personally I hang out with people from both groups. I however stick to my own principles.*
>
> *I try to stick to my culture, but try to be open in the same time. Most people who become open are mixing their own culture with the culture of the host. I try to stick to my own. An example is that in Damascus there were not many bars. Now in turkey, many events happen in Bars. I go to these bars, but I never drink here. Other people get affected by this differently and suddenly start drinking. I want to stick to my principles.*
>
> *Istanbul has some cultural and religious background that is similar to my own. I try to combine the positive points of the Western lifestyle; meeting new people, from different backgrounds and different cultures with my own religious background.*
>
> *Alman, 26, in Istanbul since January 2014*

Alman puts the differences in culture in Syria as something you can copy or accept as a refugee. The attitude towards the changes in values in Istanbul's society relates to the identity of the person.

The dual identity of the city can also be found in different neighbourhoods. Generally, the northern part of the European side of Istanbul attracts more liberal inhabitants, while the Southern part of the city attracts more conservative Muslim communities. Fatih is a central district that is known as a conservative Islamic area which also explains why many Syrians feel more at home in this area than in the more modern parts of the city.

8.7 IDENTITY AND HOME

The reflection on what used to be home in relation to what is supposed to be home now is a very personal value. What a home means to different people is dependent on their personal experiences on where and how they experienced a home before. This topic of identity is not addressed in the framework by Ager and Strang, but is addressed as one of the five factors that influence belonging by Antonsich (2010). The comparison with former experiences in this study shows that identity is an important part of the attitude towards Istanbul's city life and can influence the construction of a home in this way.

There were some participants who explained that being in Istanbul changed their personality's. They described their character as being introvert and silent, but since they were forced to start a life in Istanbul, they feel like they changed. Anwar and Aftaab both describe how the international society in Istanbul inspired them to meet much more people than they were used to and to be much more pro-active in arranging their lives the way they liked it. This change was very positive for them, because they felt confident about their ability to start over. Their home in Syria represents their old 'silent' lifestyle.

A similar process of gaining confidence happened to female participants in this study. Aziza and Jamila, two sisters had an arranged marriage on a young age (17 and 18) and lived together with their husbands in Damascus. Both sisters decided that that was not the life they wanted to lead and divorced their husbands. The conflict provided an opportunity for them to leave by themselves. Now Aziza reflects on her decision:

> *'Daughters in Syria are told not to bring shame on their families, from childhood on. It is a very deep sentiment and it makes us small. The war gave me and my sister an opportunity to move out of the country and be independent. My father was not supportive all the time, but now he is also proud that we managed to build our lives here. My parents take care of my oldest daughter and my youngest daughter is with her father. I can talk to my oldest daughter via Skype, but I did not speak to my youngest for a long time. Their father does not want to arrange a passport for them. I don't know what he will tell her about me. It is impossible to accept this, but this is life, it is not fair.*
>
> *This is a completely new life and different from what I had before, but I have learned to manage it and I can take care of my sister Jamila with my salary. I feel safe and proud because of this.*
>
> *Aziza, 30, left home since April 2013*

Aziza found a job in Istanbul and therewith moved beyond her expectations and opportunities in Syria and she is proud of that. Shaista describes how her ideas about equal position of men and women became stronger in Istanbul. Her parents missed their neighbourhood in Syria very much and decided to go back for three months.

Meanwhile Shaista was alone in Istanbul, which was the first time of her life that she ran her own household. It was a different experience for her. During this period she also described how her ideas have changed since she was in Istanbul:

> ' When I was in Damascus I already thought about the fact that women can only be with the man they marry. I never expected to have an arranged marriage, but now that I am 26, my parents receive questions about me being 26 and being not married. Now that I am here and my parents are away for a while, I feel I have more space to think about these ideas. In Syria I would be afraid to talk about the role of women with my friends, because it is a sensitive topic. In here, I developed a stronger opinion about the fact that women are supposed to have more freedom to do what they want.'
>
> *Shaista*

Most of the participants who described these changes in opinion and identity were young. There seems to be a difference in this ability to adjust to the new culture between generations. Older participants mainly mentioned their children as the ones who would make Istanbul their new home, but for them it was too late: everything that was home for them was how their life was in Syria and this can never come back. Essential things that gave meaning to their lives, friends, their house, their job was so important and meaningful to them, that it cannot be replaced, therefore obstructing the process to feel home somewhere else. Abu Majid describes this feeling:

> 'It does not matter how long I will stay in Istanbul, it will always be temporary, because I cannot do what I want to do and what I am good in. Assad took this from me, he took my happiness. The Turkish government provides my children with opportunities for education. They will see Istanbul as a new home, but i will return as soon as Assad has left Syria. I want to practice my profession and I want to be in my own country.
>
> *Abu Majid, 58, In Istanbul since May 2013*

This last section has shown that the dynamics of constructing a home can depend on a variety of backgrounds and that the values and attitudes of people towards their lives in Istanbul can be described in terms of personal opportunities, but also in terms of opportunities for other household members.

8.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how there are numerous influential factors to the process of creating a home in Istanbul. Istanbul is a place to work and to leave quickly for a part of the refugees, , but becomes a place to

settle for many other refugees when time moves on. I argued in this chapter that Syrian refugees create their feelings of being home from the moment they arrive, but that they experience this process more conscious from the experience of a turning point onwards. When they were able to create some form of economic and social stability, they were able to start a more conscious process of home creation and became more aware of their personal values in relation to Istanbul's culture. This turning point is recognized in retrospect and can include crucial changes in the refugees' lives when their families arrived, when they found a new job, when they were able to rent a better apartment or when they found better connections to other people. It seems that the adjustment to the situation in Istanbul also comes with more reflection on their experience of home when they were in Syria. This reflection sometimes also is a realization of the negative aspects of the culture in their homes in Syria.

9. CONCLUSION

In this study I searched for the answer to my research question: **What is the meaning of housing for Syrian refugees in their process of constructing a home in Istanbul?** I researched this question by conducting desk research and qualitative interviews with 42 informants. These interviews were held about the refugees' housing pathway towards their current house in Istanbul and about the way they experienced building up a home in Istanbul.

The meaning of housing for Syrian refugees has two functions which influence the process of constructing a home. As a space of interaction where social connections within communities can be made and maintained, housing is a *means* to a stronger sense of home. By doing so, it also serves as a relational hub in a location where social networks can bring more opportunities and social security. Moreover, housing can also be a *marker* of a stronger or weaker sense of home, depending on various conditions including the type of housing, the number of house-/roommates and the physical conditions of the house. Especially renting an apartment seems to be a marker for a conscious choice to settle down in Istanbul, because it requires a longer term commitment and a certain degree of economic and social capital that is often within reach after people found a relatively stable source of income. In this way housing can mark the moment that refugees consciously develop their ideas for their future in Istanbul.

Housing is one of the factors that can mark a turning when there is a certain degree of stability or social connection that lead to a status in which the refugee feels he or she is not surviving, but rather making progress in his or her life. It is a moment that is often recognized in retrospect, when a refugee consciously marks a point in time when they felt that their situation had made a change for the better since they left their homes in Syria. Enabling factors for this progress were more job security in the economic domain, acquiring a residence permit in the legal domain, or creating social bonds, social bridges and the arrival of close kin in Istanbul which provided a sort of social security.

Though I have observed that for most refugees there is process of positive progress going on during the time that they stay in Istanbul, the factors that can provide a stronger sense of home, can also obstruct or even destruct this sense of home. In the social domain, processes of discrimination cause a feeling of non-belonging; in the legal domain, interactions and bureaucratic annoyances about residence permits result in the feeling that there are very few opportunities to ever establish a legal life in Istanbul; in the economic domain, exploitation in a job can initiate a negative loophole that is difficult to escape within Istanbul's borders. These feelings and experiences of not being home without hope that this situation will improve in the future lead refugees to decide to escape Istanbul and search for different opportunities in Europe.

Most respondents did not feel that they already created a home in Istanbul, but they did experience fragmented processes of home construction in Istanbul. These processes have lead them to reflect on their

former homes in Syria, which slowly combines with their reflections on their process of constructing a home in Istanbul now.

10. DISCUSSION

In this research, I used the housing pathway of Clapham (2002) as the inspiration for the analysis. However, I used the concept of housing career and the framework of Ager and Strang (2004a) to complement the analysis of housing and feeling of home among the Syrian refugees. I used these theories to be able to give a comprehensive overview of the complexity of the housing and home situation of Syrian urban refugees. Existing literature mostly focuses on the aspects influencing the sense of home/belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Taylor, 2013) but does not address the process towards this feeling. Integration theory addresses the interactions that lead to integration, but do not emphasize how refugees relate to these interactions personally. Both theories can provide insight in how a feeling of home develops over time from the refugee's perspective. I described the nexus between the process and the outcome of constructing a home. Earlier research on housing pathways was conducted among refugees in the USA. Poppe pointed out that the current socioeconomic characteristics and resources, the current housing market conditions and the pre-migration experiences were main reasons for the differences in housing outcome. This research has shown that these factors are also of importance to understand the differences in housing outcome, but also for the differences in the process of constructing a home in Istanbul.

I emphasized on the process that leads Syrians to feel at home in Istanbul and therewith I tried to give a longer term perspective on refugees' intensions and future perspectives in Istanbul. The process of settling down is not something that relies on intensions only, but the development of a combination of factors. Schapendonk (2012) also shows how mobilities of goods, information and people can influence and change the intensions of migrants to settle or to leave(Schapendonk, 2012). In this study I focussed on the process of settling down. In this process I found refugees' identification of a turning point in their lives which made them decide to settle for the time being. It is important however, to acknowledge the dynamic nature of that decision, because a change in their mobilities can change their intensions. A suggestion for further research would be to analyse the experience and feelings of refugees about this turning point.

Refugees' international patterns of migration are researched, but refugees' patterns of residential mobility and the meanings for their livelihoods attached to these patterns are only researched in urban areas in industrialized countries. This research took place in Turkey, a developing country, where the informal housing market is very large. Because the lack of access to the formal market for most refugees, the informal market gains importance. Because of the lack of assistance, people's agency plays an important role in advancement on the housing market. The informal market in this study also stimulated forms of ethnic housing. Further research could evaluate the role of the informal housing market on refugees' residential patterns within the city, how the existence of this market relates to forms of ethnic housing and how both these processes reflect refugees feelings of belonging in the city.

Further research could emphasize the role of local factors in the housing market to the patterns of international mobility. On an urban scale, the meaning and experience within the space of a neighbourhood and a house; the refugees household composition; information on neighbourhoods and vacancies; and social and economic developments within the city are influential factors to changes from one house to a different house in the same city. On an international scale, intensions for a next destination (outside Istanbul) are under influence of available networks (mobility of people) and legal and financial constraints (mobility of goods), as well as the socio-economic status within the urban space. Further research on the link between these scales can point out how process of incorporation in the urban life and housing market contribute or obstruct migration developments on an international scale.

Lastly, there is little knowledge on the demographic characteristics of the Syrian ethnic group in Syria and there is also little knowledge about the dynamics of the informal housing market. An increase in the amount of data on both these topics would provide a broader view of the population and would increase the quality of further research on housing and home research of refugees.

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12. APPENDICES

Detailed explanation of factors in the housing career, based of Murdie's framework (2002), additional with figure 3

	Concepts in framework	Specification and explanation
Household characteristics	Household characteristics	*Socio-economic status:* education, employment, income, source of income *Family status and lifestyle:* household type, household size *Refugee status:* place of birth, ethnicity, length of residence
	Household- and community resources	*Material:* income *Cognitive:* language and skills.
	Household preferences	Location and size
Filters in housing search process	**Available housing stock**	Dwelling type, tenure, Size, Quality, Location, Vacancies, Cost, Neighbourhood characteristics
	Actors in housing market	Private landlords, public housing agencies, real estate agencies, Mortgage lenders
	Discriminatory practices in housing market	Real or perceived discriminatory practices on the housing market, based on ethnicity, gender, class and/or socially constructed variables.
Housing search process	**Information sources/strategies**	Important persons in the search, sources of information via mediums (internet, local agents) and access to these mediums.
	Vacancies	Available, influenced by 'filters' in the housing search process.
	Negotiations	With landlords or sellers
Housing outcome	**Nature of dwelling and surroundings: These factors are likely to affect satisfaction with residence**	The physical shelter component of housing: the household has found a place to live: dwelling type, tenure, size, cost, quality Surrounding neighbourhood: Ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood

Interview list

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS on HOME						
	Name	M/F	Age	Left home since	In Istanbul since	Lives in…
1	Anwar	M	24	mei-13	mei-13	Fatih
2	Abu Majid	M	50	mei-13	mei-13	Avcilar
3	Alman	M	24	jul-12	jan-14	Zeytinburnu
4	Abdul-Hakeem	M	25	apr-14	apr-14	Bomonti
5	Amilah	F	24	sep-13	okt-14	Kartal
6	Aftaab	M	28	nov-13	nov-13	Usjudar
7	Baber	M	25	feb-14	feb-14	Aksaray
8	Basimah	F	14	mrt-13	mei-14	Yedikulè
9	Aziza	F	30	apr-13	okt-13	Bahcelievler
10	Fidyan	M	29	sep-13	okt-14	Kartal
11	Kafeel	M	22	feb-12	aug-13	Avcilar
12	Karim	M	25	nov-12	apr-13	Fatih
13	Kalila	F	14	apr-13	apr-13	Tarlabasi
14	Jamila	F	27	mei-13	sep-13	Bahcelievler
15	Nawaz	M	25	jan-13	dec-13	Kasimpasa
16	Nimerah	F	22	mrt-13	jul-13	Fatih
17	Shaista	F	26	sep-13	sep-13	Suleymaniye
18	Salah	M	25	nov-12	mrt-15	Selimpasa

INTERVIEWS on HOUSING						
19	Name	M/F	Age	Last Home in Syria	Left home since	In Istanbul since	Interviews with
20	Badir	M	26	Homs	Feb-12	Apr-15	Teun, Pedro
21	Adib	M	25	Damascus	aug-08	okt-14	Teun
22	Aamil	M	28	Damascus	Feb-13	Feb-14	Pedro, Teun, Tamara
23	Aatif	M	29	Homs	jul-12	aug-13	all
24	Azmina	F	27	Homs	aug-14	aug-14	all
25	Areeb	M	28	Homs	dec-12	nov-13	Teun, Jolinde
26	Ammar	M	50	Aleppo	sep-14	feb-15	Pedro
27	Barad	M	22	Damascus	Dec-12	Feb-14	Pedro
28	Falah	M	31	Damascus	feb-12	feb-13	Pedro
29	Farid	M	45	Damascus	jan-12	jan-12	Pedro
30	Hassan	M	21	Damascus	mrt-14	mrt-14	Teun, Pedro
31	Jasim	M	29	Homs	jul-12	nov-13	Pedro, Teun
32	Jamal	M	36	Damascus	jun-12	jun-12	Pedro
33	Mansur	M	33	Homs	feb-13	sep-13	Teun
34	Munsif	M	19	Damascus	apr-12	jul-14	Teun

35	Mujab	M	21	Aleppo	okt-13	okt-13	Pedro, Tamara
36	Mohammed	M	23	Damascus	okt-12	sep-13	Pedro
37	Nizar	M	49	Damascus	apr-11	apr-11	Pedro
38	Mr. Ahmad	M	29	Damascus suburbs	apr-13	apr-13	Pedro, Tamara
39	Mr. Bulus	M	43	Aleppo	jan-97	okt-14	Pedro, Tamara
40	Nadir	M	26	Aleppo	mrt-13	mrt-15	Teun, Pedro, Tamara
41	Abbas	M	25	Homs	okt-14	okt-14	Pedro
42	Talhah	M	27	Homs	feb-13	nov-13	Teun, Pedro

Indicative scheme that is used to structure the topics of the interviews. Though this scheme was used during the development of the interview structure, it was not used during the interviews, because those were of an informal and open nature.

Topic	Specified subjects
Personal story	Time since leaving home
	Household, family composition
Housing in Istanbul	Location
	Size
	No. of people in your house (co-housing?)
	(Shared) facilities?
	Benefits of this housing situation
	Challenges of this housing situation
Concept of home	Meaning of home
	Feelings about a home
	What does your ideal home look like?
Home in Syria	What did it look like
	What did it feel like
	Perception on the home now
	Perception on the home back then
Home in Istanbul	Is your house in Istanbul a home to you?
	What does having a home in Istanbul (possibly) mean?
Housing pathway	Pathway to Istanbul
	Different houses before current house
	----> benefits and challenges of those houses
	Different locations before the location of your current house
	Map of the route to here: what route did you take, via what places did you go?
	Refugee camp stay?
	Motivation to move on, motivation to arrive somewhere
Interactions in the household	Lifecycle changes: birth, death, marriage, adoption, new relationsships
Interactions of the household with society	Inclusion, exclusion, discrimination, Safety
	Communication with Turkish government: Legal status, registration
Future prospects	Aspirations and wishes