CMI REPORT

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with

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Urban Displacement in Lebanon: Syrians in Tripoli

TRAF°G
Transnational Figurations of Displacement

CMI CHR. MICHELSEN INSTITUTE

About TRAFIG

TRAFIG, Transnational Figurations of Displacement, is an EU-funded Horizon 2020 research and innovation project. From 2019 to 2022, 12 partner organisations are investigating protracted displacement situations at multiple sites in Asia, Africa and Europe and analysing options to improve displaced people's lives.

Displacement is normally regarded as a temporary phenomenon. Yet, about 16 million people have been in exile for long periods of time without prospects of return, resettlement or local integration. TRAFIG aims at generating new knowledge to help develop solutions for protracted displacement that are tailored to the needs and capacities of persons affected by displacement. The project looks at how transnational and local networks as well as mobility are used as resources by displaced people to manage their everyday lives.

About URBAN3DP

Urban Displacement, Development, and Donor Policies (URBAN3DP) is funded by the Research Council of Norway. The project is hosted by the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Bergen, Norway in conjunction with 5 partners including the Institut français du Proche-Orient (Ifpo) in Beirut. The project aims to shed light on the livelihoods and urban integration of displaced Syrians who have self-settled in cities across Lebanon (Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre), Iraq (Mosul, Erbil), Jordan (Mafraq), and Turkey (Gaziantep, Istanbul). The project places particular emphasis on the use and design of area-based solutions in response to displacement crises.

Cover photo:
Man walks in the unrenovated section of Tripoli's covered market in the Old City. February 2020. All images by author.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Living conditions among Syrians in Tripoli, Lebanon, have deteriorated since 2011. Syrian refugee households that achieved some degree of stability after self-settlement reported an upheaval in livelihoods amidst declining economic conditions that intensified after October 2019. The 2020 Global COVID-19 Pandemic and associated measures attempting to limit the spread placed additional stress on an increasingly growing number of vulnerable households (SEED and PIN-SK 2020).

Navigating governance regimes:

- Cost of residency and opaque bureaucratic processes has led to a gradual increase in the rate of expiry of residency permits. Syrian households that found a degree of stability after settlement in Tripoli saw livelihoods erode further after financial inflation began in early 2020.
- Most Syrian households reported freedom of movement in Tripoli. Moving beyond the city was limited by checkpoints on the highways to the north and south. Men with expired residency permits from the most vulnerable households limited movement to familiar neighbourhoods to minimize the risk of arrest, but this is not always the case. Interviewees noted that some practices minimize their chance of being stopped, including travelling with women and children.
- Syrians overwhelmingly acknowledged 'man-made hazards' in Tripoli including armed clashes as well as issues related to poor infrastructure, harassment, and traffic. Violent incidents continue to occur in the city despite the institution of the 2014 Tripoli Security Plan.[1] 'Everyday' hazards include pollution, dampness, noise, food insecurity, theft, robbery, eviction, non-payment, threats, and verbal harassment.
- Negative interactions with the Lebanese community would motivate the settlement of Syrian refugees in particular neighborhoods (if cost allows) or facilitated their movement between neighbourhoods. In Tripoli, everyday incidents of harassment are noted to be less prevalent in Abu Samra.
- Syrians note that there is little means of recourse in the event of crime, accident, or health-related issues. In the event of a crime, Syrians reported that options for recourse were minimal or that they "sort it among themselves".

Living in Limbo:

- Syrians report a hierarchy of shifting concerns as they try to cover rent, healthcare, food, residency permits, and household necessities. The inability to cover all expenses results in a poverty trap, whereby residency permits would lapse first, exposing households to more vulnerability and insecurity, and eroding resilience to unexpected illness or accidents.
- The lack of residency permit and access to regular employment left households vulnerable to exploitative working arrangements and abuse.
- Nine in ten households reported being registered with UNHCR. Initially unregistered Syrians often registered after they were joined in Tripoli by family members or got married due to the need to secure additional sources of income/goods.

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1   The 2014 Security Plan included a campaign of mass arrests of about 3,000 people claimed to be suspected militants.

Following the Networks:

- The presence of family members was an overwhelming factor when choosing to settle in Tripoli. Blood relatives and in-laws often facilitated arrivals: providing places to stay, employment, familiarity, and other benefits. This extended to households that had no previous experience of Tripoli but were persuaded to settle there by relatives.
- Syrian refugee households rarely made the decision to leave Syria independently, and many cited the approach of armed conflict as the catalyst that drove multiple generations and extended family members to flee the country together. Younger men left to avoid being drafted or re-enlistment into the Syrian Army. Journeys were often direct, although some households stayed with family in Syria for some weeks or months before settlement in Tripoli. One fifth of households spent time in internal displacement camps in Syria.
- While residing in Tripoli, relationships within the family suffered due to physical distance from family and friends in Syria, the stress of navigating poverty and bureaucratic regulations, and the isolation of long working hours. Many also noted the need for boundaries and a degree of privacy within households and among family members.

Building Alliances

- Family members are often the source of loans, but a less recognized form of exchange manifested through the diffusion of favors, information, recommendations, and referrals, which informed or facilitated displacement journeys, shelter choices, employment opportunities, and other factors that improved quality of life. Referrals by known individuals are a key means of facilitating trust among a shifting and unestablished community, and on many occasions, referrals led to more stable options in shelter and employment.
- In the case of Syrians in Tripoli, having relatives nearby or a social network is, however, not a guarantee of wellbeing. Relationships are difficult to sustain amid high levels of stress and isolation caused by the need to earn sufficient income. Many individuals do not wish to be a burden to their relatives, and many do not ask for help because "their situation is the same situation".
- Syrian refugee households rarely received remittances from family members abroad, regardless of whether they migrated to countries with better employment opportunities including Europe, North America, and Australasia. The strongest connections with relatives tended to be with family members located in Syria and with close family members near or in Tripoli.
- Mobile phones are essential to remain in contact with those locally and abroad. Instability caused by the need to change one's phone number, the theft of one's phone, or the inability to pay telephone fees eroded networks. Many relationships deteriorated because numbers were lost when phones went missing.
- Host-refugee relations in Tripoli are complex but the city has a high-level of inter-communal mistrust. Historical interactions between Tripoli and cities such as Homs have been historically strong, including cultural and political exchanges as well as intermarriage. Recent relations are defined in part by how the Lebanese civil war unfolded in Tripoli, which resulted in Syrian occupation from 1976 to 2005 as well as repression by Syrian-aligned forces shaping contemporary conflict dynamics. Anti-Syrian regime sentiment initially produced sympathies for Syrian refugees among the March 14-aligned factions in Tripoli, but this evaporated amidst the perception of increased competition over employment and housing around 2014.
- Options for resettlement and onward migration among Syrians in Tripoli are limited. Although many households announced their pursuit of resettlement abroad, several interviewed families noted a preference for remaining with relatives and support networks in Tripoli and Lebanon.

INTRODUCTION

This fieldwork report documents key findings for the Horizon 2020-TRAFIG project related to the case study of Tripoli, Lebanon. The research in Lebanon took place in the context of TRAFIG's comprehensive research on displaced Syrians in Jordan, the results of which can be found in Tobin, S. A. et al. 2021. The key findings explored in this report relate to: *Theme 3: Following the networks*, and engages with *Theme 1: Navigating through governance regimes* and *Theme 2: Living in Limbo* to a more limited degree. Overall, findings highlight the local manifestations of precarity institutionalised through Lebanese refugee governance (Theme 1 and 2). In relation to the development of social relationships during the displacement period (Theme 3), Syrians are generally limited to smaller social networks. Some household networks are limited to relatives, but many also include other Syrian nationals particularly neighbours. Although positive relationships can and do emerge, cross-community linkages between Syrians and Lebanese persons were less frequent. When personal Syrian-Lebanese schisms manifested, discourse often returned to discriminatory community-level narratives and mutual suspicion between communities. Another finding highlights issues of isolation among Syrian men, particularly married men with children, who spend long periods working in an attempt to secure sufficient income, often to the detriment of household and community relationships.

The majority of data was collected in the three weeks before the COVID-19 lockdowns were instituted in Lebanon beginning March 14, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable impact on the micro and macro-level politics of Tripoli, and these impacts need to be taken into account when interpretating interviews. In Tripoli, conditions of widespread poverty combined with a lack of employment opportunities (including for Syrians) led residents to engage in a series of protests in 2020 and 2021 that overran the capacity for local government and police to enforce the COVID-19 lockdowns (Houssari 2021). During fieldwork, Lebanon was also undergoing a banking crisis that began in October 2019, consisting of two facets. First, the Lebanese banks began regulating cash withdrawals limiting them to 200USD a day after October 2019 (although ATM machines would often not be re-stocked) impacting cash liquidity, particularly among the social classes that rely the most on Lebanese banks. Second, the Lebanese Lira (LL) was unofficially de-pegged from the United States Dollar (USD), and the exchange rate deteriorated rapidly beginning in February 2020. By July 2021, the exchange rate plummeted to a low of LL20,000 to the US Dollar, decimating savings held in banks, eroding the stability of the Lebanese middle classes, and severely impacting the livelihoods of lower-income families. Issues of liquidity and exchange rates led to the inability of companies to import fuel that limited electricity generation beginning in the summer of 2021. Ongoing economic, political, and COVID-19-related crises led to an increase in immigration from Lebanon (Perry 2020).

The successive destabilisation meant a drastic decrease in international aid budgets due to the discrepancy in official and 'black' market exchange rates (Vohra 2021). In real terms, this has meant a drop in value in the cash amounts to Syrian families that cash cards, rent assistance, and other disbursements provide. In an interview with *New Humanitarian*, one refugee explained that the 400,000LL he received in April 2020 was worth 126USD, but the same amount in March 2021 was worth only 35USD (Newsom 2021). Commodities in Lebanon are mostly imported from abroad using the USD. As a result, prices skyrocketed. In Tripoli, established trade linkages and smuggling from Syria has meant that prices for vegetables and some specialised services have not risen as much as elsewhere in the country (author's interview, Lebanese researchers, 22 April 2021).

Mapping displacement in Lebanon and choosing research locations

By May 2021, there were about 851,717 Syrians registered in Lebanon (UNHCR 2021). Despite attempts by the UNHCR to institute camps in response to the influx of displaced persons in 2012 (Fawaz 2017), no refugee camps were built for Syrians in Lebanon. Instead, some 4,000 informal

settlements were established in rural areas, in particular near the Syrian border in the Beqaa Valley and Akkar (Sanyal 2017). The distribution of Syrians in Lebanon's urban areas is thought to match the distribution of the Lebanese urban population: most of the Lebanese population (87%) lives in urban areas (Boustani et al. 2016). Although refugee recording with UNHCR provides an indication of scale, the real number of Syrians in Lebanon is unknown and the lack of data was exacerbated by three factors: the Lebanese government requested the UNHCR stop registering Syrians in 2015 (the UNHCR now "records" Syrians); the porous borders that allow irregular border crossings; and the presence of between 450,000 and 1 million Syrians (often as part of seasonal labour) in Lebanon *before* 2011 (Chalcraft 2008, 148; Seeberg 2012, 6). As the conversations below highlight, some refugees are hesitant to register with or be recorded by the UNHCR. Consensus among experts posits that several thousand Syrians remain unrecorded and that the population of Syrians living at the research site in Tripoli is much higher than official figures (see for instance, Kortam 2017).

For the TRAFIG and URBAN3DP projects, project leaders selected the urban field site of Tripoli. Tripoli is Lebanon's second largest city and has seen a deterioration of its urban core due to the compounding processes of internal migration, government neglect, lack of funding, widespread poverty, speculation in the housing market, and intercommunal conflict (Maguire et al. 2017; author's interview, senior member of Lebanese Order of Architects and Engineers, 12 April 2021). Tripoli has longstanding connections with Syria's Sunni-majority interior cities (Rougier 2015; Chahal 2015; Lefèvre 2021, 41–52), including transnational-marriages and familial relationships (UN-Habitat and UNHCR 2018). The city is also very close to the Syrian border (38 km), and for many of the households, displacement journeys could take as little as two to three hours. According to interviews as well as the URBAN3DP survey conducted in the same neighbourhoods (see Forster 2021), the presence of relatives in Tripoli was a central factor in the settlement of many Syrian households there. Other reasons for settling in Tripoli related to the perceived opportunity to find work or to previous knowledge of the city. One individual moved his family to Tripoli for the warmer climate because scar tissue from a war injury was more painful in the cold when living near the Syrian border.

Compounding the difficulties associated with studying refugee populations in Lebanon, there is a lack of census data. The last official survey took place in 1932. In 2013, Tripoli's population was recorded at 320,300 (Gade 2015, 20). UN-Habitat's updated (yet still conservative) population estimate from 2017 places the current population at 508,000 people, 20% of whom are Syrians (Maguire et al. 2017). Before COVID-19 and the current hyperinflation of the Lira, 51% of Tripolitans lived on less than 3.8 USD a day (LL 5700) (Nameh 2012). Extreme poverty among Syrians in Lebanon had risen to 89% by December 2020 (Sewell 2020), and in February 2021, a Tripoli municipal council member reported that 70% of residents in Tripoli (regardless of nationality) lived under the poverty line (Geldi 2021).

Data collection

This report is based on four methods of data collection (see Table 1). The main method was 15 semi-structured interviews with Syrian refugees who were recruited based on whether they (1) had arrived in Lebanon after 2011, and (2) had family members in the country of Jordan. The second criterion was designed to inform transnational linkages among Syrian refugees, as per the mandate of the TRAFIG project. Interviews were conducted on-site in Arabic with simultaneous English translation. The majority of the households interviewed were living in the neighbourhoods of Abu Samra and al-Qubbeh in Tripoli (one lived in Zehriyyeh – a neighbourhood nearby). Participants were found through door-knocking, snowballing, and inquiries on the street.

Secondary methods included a survey of 150 households in Abu Samra, Haddadeen, and al-Qubbeh.[2] During surveying, participants regularly expanded on the survey questions and provided

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2   Simultaneous surveys were undertaken in six other neighbourhoods in South Beirut and Tyre. See Forster 2021 for a summary of
     results from Tripoli, Tyre, and Beirut.

additional written responses. Responses and explanations from 43 survey participants were recorded as field notes. Additional information was provided in interviews with technical experts, researchers, academics, activists, and others working in or on Tripoli undertaken beginning in July 2019 and ending July 2021. Findings are supported by background literature provided by United Nations agencies (UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNICEF & UNHCR) and grey literature provided by local and international NGOs.

Table 1: Fieldwork data collection overview

Type	Target group	Location	Number	Collection dates
Semi-structured interviews	Syrian refugees	Abu Samra, al-Qubbeh	15	February–March 2020
Semi-structured interviews	Technical specialists (Tripoli-based/national)	Tripoli, Beirut, online	30	July 2019–July 2021
Unstructured interviews/ fieldnotes	Syrian refugees	Abu Samra, al-Qubbeh	43	February–March 2020
Survey	Syrian refugees	Abu Samra, al-Qubbeh, Haddadeen	150	February–June 2020.

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Limitations to the research

Although many refugee households had security concerns, particularly related to limitations on employment and mobility, many of the households we spoke with were candid on these issues and in their critiques of the Lebanese government and the international response to the Syrian crisis. However, stigmatization of Syrian refugees in mixed Syrian Lebanese residential and "popular" (sha'abi) areas meant that we did not ask about host-refugee relations in public places. Participants' unwillingness to speak of local tensions was reflected in URBAN3DP survey responses across Lebanon.

Both the field researcher and the research assistant were men in the age range of 25-35 and therefore, in observance with cultural norms in Tripoli, had limited access to interview women. The four women interviewed were all married and had been introduced to us by men in the household during informal visits a few days before. The field researcher did not ask about the religious affiliation of participants, but planning interviews around prayer times, the mention of specific mosques, as well as conversation about social networks indicated that most households were Sunni.

Buildings in al-Tell neighbourhood with informal construction on top floor. March 2020.

THEME 1: NAVIGATING THROUGH GOVERNANCE REGIMES

Navigating residency permits

In 2020, 80% of Syrians over 15 years of age did not hold legal residency in Lebanon (up from 78% in 2019, and 73% in 2018) (VASyR, 2020). Legal frameworks governing the entrance, residency, and employment of Syrians in Lebanon before January 2015 were outlined in a 1994 bilateral agreement between Syria and Lebanon that provided minimal administrative requirements for the mobility for either nationality thereby facilitating the arrival of a large number of Syrians in Lebanon between the mid-1990s and 2011. This unregulated environment changed following the implementation of the Policy on Syrians in Lebanon, issued in October 2014 but implemented in January and February 2015. The Policy placed limitations on criteria for entering Lebanon in addition to limiting opportunities for employment and regularizing residency (Janmyr 2017; Knudsen 2017b).

The process for residency costs 200USD per year for renewal for each family member over 15 years of age.[3] Residency requirements place restrictions on employment limited to specific sectors, as well as a complicating legal status among households by dividing families members into multiple bureaucratic categories (Janmyr 2017; Janmyr and Mourad 2018). The result has been an increase in the number of Syrians who face a lapse in residency permits due to the difficulties in meeting the requirements. The sponsorship, or *kafala* system, is used by some Syrians over 15 years of age, to regularize their stay and among the age group of 17-39 some Syrians used student visas to regularise their residency.

Refugee governance in Lebanon is opaque and irregularly implemented with local policies implemented by municipalities (Mourad 2017). Unofficial curfews put in place by non-state actors are tacitly accepted by municipalities that may otherwise state their openness to Syrian households including Tripoli (author's interview, Lebanese academic, 20 April 2021; Nachabe 2019). The response to Syrians is fragmented and often contradictory, and state practices and polices opt for ambiguity, indifference, and informality. Contradictory policies combine "'open-borders' with 'local closures'" (Fakhoury 2020, 3; also Nassar and Stel 2019; Stel 2021). Local offices and individual officials from General Security may decide to enforce the payment of fees, despite national-level directives waiving the need for payment (Mhaissen and Hodges 2019). Uncertainty produces enormous stress on individuals and households, as well as creative means of adapting to the uncertain circumstances. One technique mentioned was speaking to different security officials on different days to ensure all variations of necessary paperwork are met (author's interview, Lebanese academic, April 2021).

Sponsorship system

Some Syrian households receive residency through the sponsorship (*kafala*) system. However, making the legal status of workers dependent upon individual employers has left some workers without adequate rights protections and in some cases has led to employers exploiting them (HRW 2020). In 2015, the new restrictions on residency for Syrians meant that there was a huge increase in employers' requesting payment from Syrians to secure residency over and above the official costs (SSINT-CMI-RF-012-LBN). Abu Mustapha (60s), a head of household living in a three-bedroom apartment in al-Qubbeh, explained how a conflict developed between himself and his sponsor of several years. He attempted to change the sponsor (*kafil*) legally, but speaking with authorities led nowhere and he was told the only means through which he could change his sponsor was to return

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3   Mhaissen and Hodges (2019) note that these fees were officially waived in 2017. Regulations pertaining to the residency of Syrians has been subject to multiple changes since 2015 that are not uniformly implemented or well documented. During fieldwork, the most recent regulation involved the Ministry of Labour pushing businesses to enforce regular work status, including spot-checks and fines targeting employers who employed Syrians illegally.

to Syria and follow procedure on re-entry into Lebanon. The result is a lapse of residency for him and his eldest son (20s) who both relied on the same Lebanese employer. Abu Mustapha, thus, faced a dilemma – to renew his visa he'd have to return to Syria but doing so requires passing the Deir Ammar checkpoint and risking arrest. If he is arrested, he said he could not renew his residency – and therefore he was not willing to risk it.

Circumstances can also change in line with changes to the business or livelihood of a sponsor. Abu Nasr (30s) first encountered issues with his residency when Lebanon underwent its sharp economic downturn in 2019. Previously, he had always maintained employment as a skilled worker and had his residency paid for by his sponsor and employer, with whom he had a positive relationship. However, with the economic downturn his employer was no longer able to cover residency costs. When his working hours were significantly cut, the long-term stability he had achieved in Lebanon deteriorated (SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN).

Student visas

Younger individuals occasionally used student visas as a means of maintaining legal residency with the added benefit of access to education and training. A 2017 study by the Issam Fares Institute noted that only 6% of Syrians eligible for tertiary education were enrolled in Lebanon, indicating a large drop compared to pre-war numbers and hinting at the expense of this path to residency (El-Ghali, Berjaoui, and DeKnight 2017, 16). A student visa requires proof of enrolment, payment of tuition, and evidence of sufficient income. In the case of one student interviewed – and in a rare case of support from family members abroad – he received tuition money from a close family member in Jordan. To prove income, he "recycled" the funds by sending it back to Syria via a trusted third party who would then wire the money back to him. Although he would lose a few dollars on transaction fees every time, he was able to collect sufficient receipts to ensure his visa.

Mobility and detention

Lapses in residency status for individuals meant that they became more vulnerable to detention by Lebanese authorities. Within Tripoli, roaming checkpoints are occasionally set up, although very few Syrians said their movement within Tripoli was restricted (for instance, SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). A few interviewees noted that they would live in Tripoli and commute to employment elsewhere where the economies were better (such as Mount Lebanon), thereby benefitting from the cheap housing in Tripoli and commuting two to five hours daily (SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN).

Restrictions on freedom of movement was most prevalent among the most vulnerable. Abu Hammad (50s) is the sole provider for his household, which includes two widowed daughters who had their own children. He limited his movement considerably for fear of detention, which would severely impact his family as well as his ability to send money to his daughters in Syria (SSINT-CMI-RF-006-LBN). One taxi-driver noted that he had a limited circuit within Tripoli, driving around a few well-known neighbourhoods in case of checkpoints or other issues. When going further afield, the man noted that he preferred to be with his family, since vehicles with families were rarely stopped (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN).

Other interviewees approached detention as a fact of life. After the loss of sponsorship and a cut in his salary in the wake of the economic downturn in 2019, Abu Wasim moved his wife and children from their long-term apartment in al-Qubbeh to live with his wife's relatives in a village near the Syrian border while he remained near his place of employment in Tripoli. Once every few weeks, he visited his family, passing through a checkpoint that led to his arrest on multiple occasions. Speaking about the experience, Abu Wasim approached his detention as a matter of fact while deriding the irony that his detention periods decreased by a day or two following cuts a few months earlier in UNHCR funding to Lebanese authorities to pay for the upkeep of Syrian detainees.

Rights, protection, and safety

The neighbourhood of settlement in Tripoli was often chosen due to its perception as a 'safe' area (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-004-LBN). Nonetheless, Syrian residents perceived Tripoli to be generally less secure than other cities in Lebanon. This perception is partly due to periodic armed clashes in 2008 and 2011-2014 between militias affiliated with the pro-Syrian Arab Democratic Party (ADP) and its allies in the March 8 movement, on the one hand, and militias supporting the Future Movement and its allies in the March 14 movement, on the other (Knudsen 2017a).[4] After 2011, further politicisation took place when movements announced their support (March 8) or objection (March 14) to the Syrian government involvement in Lebanon. March 14 support for the Syrian armed resistance led to the initial receptive response to Syrian refugees as 'brothers' in much of Tripoli.[5]

Conflict dynamics in Tripoli are complex with political, social, sectarian, economic and territorial facets that are beyond the scope of this report (for nuanced analyses, see Chabrier 2013 and Gade 2013). Multiple houses bore the scars of conflict near interviewees homes in al-Qubbeh – a frontline neighbourhood. Abu Samra headquarters the Islamic Unification Movement – a civil war-era militia with contemporary ties to Syria and Iran, and occasionally sees armed incidents (although these are primarily linked to inter-familial disputes). Major armed clashes ended in October 2014, but security incidents continue to occur despite the implementation of the Tripoli Security Plan (author's interview, Tripoli Municipality official, 3 March 2020). In Tripoli, 94% of survey respondents noted that there were "man-made hazards" in Tripoli, compared to 69% in Tyre, and 37% in Beirut.

Beyond concerns that Lebanese authorities might detain or arrest them, several Syrians detailed experiences of harassment or other concerns for their safety. Two of the women, who self-reported that their movement was generally unrestricted, noted harassment from men in the neighbourhood. One woman said the household had recently moved after a café opened near their previous home, and men there harassed her and her teenage daughters (SSINT-CMI-RF-002-LBN). Another woman stated that a neighbour had waited on multiple occasions for her or her children at the location where they dispose of household garbage to yell at and insult them (SSINT-CMI-RF-007-LBN).[6] Another man (30s) expressed the desire to move from his contemporary location since some neighbours were a poor influence on his children (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN).

Syrian men recounted stories of assault and physical threats.[7] One Syrian (40s) in al-Qubbeh recalled how a handyman threatened and robbed a friend of his at home. Another recounted how youths threatened him at gun point after accusing him of stealing a motorcycle (SSINT-CMI-RF-0012-LBN). Certain areas of Tripoli were more prone to security concerns: Syrians living in Abu Samra for instance noted that the area was among the least stressful and that people there would generally mind their own (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN). Interviewed households also lamented the need to navigate employers and landlords affiliated with criminal networks (SSINT-CMI-RF-006-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-007-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN).[8]

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4   The conflict in Tripoli began in May 2008 in parallel to fighting in Beirut between the March 8 and March 14 movements which had coalesced in the events surrounding the 2005 Cedar Revolution which saw the end of Syrian occupation of Lebanon in April 2005. The March 8 movement was primarily in support of Syria and received backing from Syria and Iran, whereas March 14 was generally perceived as pro-Western in political orientation and received backing from Saudi Arabia.
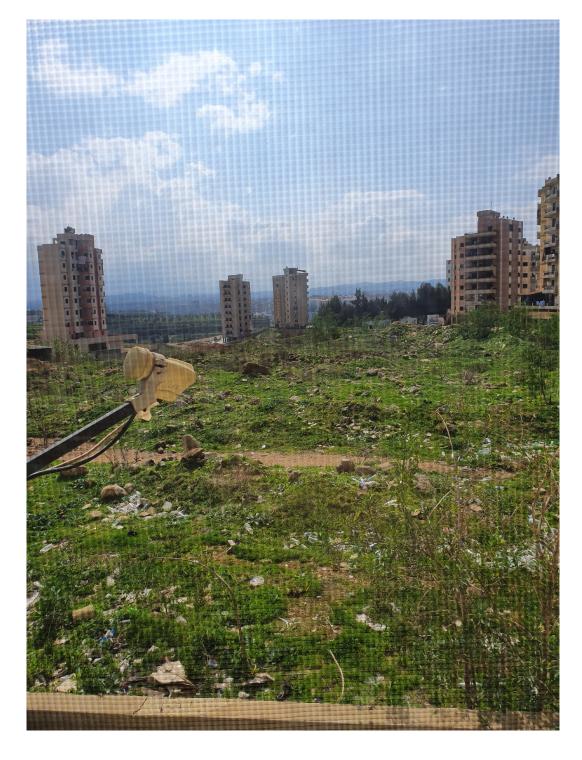
5   There is a different dynamic in the neighbourhood of Jabal Muhsen, the stronghold of the APD, where around 70% of Syrians in the neighbourhood arrived before 2011 (UN-Habitat 2018)

6   A camera was being installed outside the apartment during the interview.

7   Although such stories were often about acquaintances and third parties and could not be confirmed by the author.

8   When discussing landlords, employers, or non-state governance actors, multiple interviews referenced "families" and "houses" (bayut) connected with particular neighbourhoods that they must contend with, especially in informal neighbourhoods. Such 'houses' have legitimate and illegitimate business interests and may manifest in neighbourhood strongmen (author's interviews, Syrian households, March 2020; Lebanese professionals and academics, April 2021).

Few Syrians felt there was much recourse through the authorities when transgressions occurred. As noted by an individual in al-Shawq, when problems arise "we handle it among ourselves." Some Syrians had connections in General Security that would help follow up on complaints. However, the issue was that even if they reported incidents, some Syrians said they were encouraged to seek accommodation with the people about whom they had originally filed the report. In some cases, such advice would be against the best interests of their household's safety and leave them open to blackmail, extortion, or violence.

Wasteland areas in between apartment buildings in al-Qubbeh (al-Zeitoun cadastre) are used to graze livestock or as informal garbage dumps. March 2020.

THEME 2: LIVING IN LIMBO

The consensus among Syrians in Tripoli (most of whom arrived between 2012-2014), was that living conditions had deteriorated considerably since their arrival.

> Each year is worse than the previous year. When I first arrived, there was more freedom, [it was] more comfortable. Now, day by day, it is getting worse and worse than before (SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN).

> When we came in 2011, the situation was comfortable and now it is bad. It is so bad. […] at first [the assistance from UNHCR] was enough with the salary of my husband – it was enough. But now, he has a problem finding a job, he cannot work well, and at the same time, the aid from the UNHCR [has] stopped (SSINT-CMI-RF-002-LBN).

This is a compounding issue exacerbated by increased regulation of residency, limited opportunities, reduced savings, a collapse in the Lebanese economy, and the devaluation of the Lira. Syrians who built a life and integrated into Lebanese society saw their gains fall away in 2019, increasing the mounting hopelessness of their circumstance. Others fell further into poverty.

Prioritizing expenses

The need to cover fees for residency is one of the main livelihood issues in Tripoli and highlights the ways in which Syrians prioritise some expenses over others. Most often, the cost of residency renewal was deprioritised relative to other, more immediate concerns including healthcare, food, and rent. Decisions on where to cut costs depend on circumstance and available options. Some families admitted to sifting through spoiled food discarded at marketplaces to cut costs on food. One Syrian woman in al-Qubbeh had not eaten cooked food for three days, as they could not afford the 6USD (LL9000) to refill their propane tank.

To cover rent, Syrians often noted relying on the good graces of their Lebanese landlords, who would allow delays in covering rent up to a few months (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Most rental agreements were verbal, informal, and unenforceable,[9] which in some cases allowed for exploitation. The inability to pay rent was one of the main reasons for eviction among Syrians interviewed. Housing vulnerability is high in Tripoli – and URBAN3DP survey results showed that 46% of surveyed households had moved or sought to move to a new accommodation in the 6-months previous. This rate was much higher compared to low-income neighbourhoods in Tyre and Beirut. One individual, currently living with nine other family members (the family of his uncle), had changed residency every six months for the past nine years (SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). The main reason for moving was the inability to pay rent. Rent around al-Qubbeh and Abu Samra (and Tripoli generally) is often cheaper than in other areas in Lebanon (around 100-200USD a month), but the lack of employment meant that households struggle to afford it: "I want to move, but I cannot find a cheaper place. At the same time, I cannot afford rent here" (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN).

Unexpected illness and accidents

Restrictions on employment meant that interviewed households are particularly vulnerable when unexpected events occur. There is no national health insurance scheme in Lebanon, and health costs are only partly covered by the UNHCR (70% of costs related to childbirth are covered, for instance). In Syria, healthcare is covered by universal coverage, but many cannot return to access it. This meant that if an accident occurred or a family member's health condition deteriorated, the household often

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9   Nonetheless, 96% of Syrians surveyed in Tripoli said that they were registered with the local notary, an elected public administrator known as a mukhtar, who keeps records for their assigned areas, in addition to other duties.

experienced additional financial fallout. When a motorcycle struck Umm Mahmoud's (20s) son (>10) while he was playing in the street, the incident led not only to his injury and emotional turmoil in the household, but also to added financial pressure. Her husband was unemployed and unable to work due to severe side effects of diabetes (a few years earlier his untreated illness caused him to slip into a delirium before being hospitalised and falling into a diabetic coma for several months) (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN).

Multiple interviews noted the financial stress that resulted from accidents (beyond caring about loved ones). Households reported that they generally prioritised healthcare costs over rent. One elderly Syrian noted how he stopped paying rent when his wife fell ill. When they were subsequently evicted, the landlord kept their furniture. His wife is now deceased, but he still owes 1,500USD for her treatment. In sum, competing costs have generally led to a lapse in residency and once that occurs, it becomes difficult to reattain legal status, thereby heightening vulnerability.

Vulnerability

High under- and unemployment, the need for income, dominance of the informal sector, a lack of regulatory enforcement, and a lack of accountability of injustices towards Syrians provided multiple opportunities for unscrupulous employers (and landlords, see Section 5.1.) to take advantage of Syrian refugees.

Labour Exploitation

Exploitation in labour takes many forms in Lebanon, with some more insidious than others. A common arrangement reported was for building caretakers to live rent-free in return for cleaning and maintaining the building (SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). Abu Najib (50s), a caretaker in al-Qubbeh, explained the lack of income from being a *bawab* meant that he must work additional hours at other jobs to earn an income. In his case, he collected hard plastics and metal from garbage sites around the city to earn a meagre income to cover expenses. Such arrangements of work-for-rent can function if there are a larger number of adults in the household that can earn additional income (which can also lead to overcrowding).

Another issue reported was non-payment for labour (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). One student noted how he had taken a short-term job picking fruit outside of Tripoli only to be denied payment afterwards. The employer in this case was affiliated with one of the "houses" (pl. *bayut*) in Tripoli,[10] and he did not pursue the matter (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN). Another interviewee described how non-payment caused him to change employers every few weeks or months, depending on the frequency with which he was paid or not (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN).

The most serious case of exploitation was a matter in which an employer was forcing the interviewee to take responsibility for a construction project. The dispute led to his abduction and beating, yet he continued to reject taking the job. A few days later, the employer abducted the man's son when he was out panhandling. In an attempt to leave his former employer, he changed his mobile number repeatedly and moved his wife and children out of the city to the house of a relative for safety.

Humanitarian support

Almost all interviewees noted that the amount of humanitarian support decreased in the 18 months before interviews took place (for instance, SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). Those that received aid usually got LL40,500 a month (27USD before 2020) per family member in cash support for food.

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10   See footnote 6.

Rental support would amount to LL260,000 a month (173USD before 2020) per household. A few interviewees reported receiving other forms of aid, such as additional income for heating.

Most interviewed Syrians were registered with UNHCR; however, several of the younger Syrians did not register until they were convinced by their families to do so (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN). This often occurred when they got married or began to share the household with relatives rather than flatmates (SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). One interviewee described registering with the UNHCR as admitting to refugee status, thereby positioning him among "Syrians" as a group apart from Lebanese society. It also provided ammunition for disgruntled Lebanese hosts, many of whom lived in equal degrees of poverty to their Syrian counter-parts (Abi Samra 2011; Nameh 2012), to accuse Syrians of not contributing to Lebanese society, of being "lazy", of driving up rental prices, and of not needing to take wages that were as high as their own (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN).

Another livelihood issue related to the interactions between Syrians as beneficiaries, and national and international NGOs as service providers. The imbalance of power between organisations and individuals/families appeared in multiple interviews and was expressed by Syrians in complex emotions. There were expressions of embarrassment, shame, anger, and outrage at having to make a case for more aid at UNHCR and other NGOs.[11] These emotions were exacerbated by the increasing hardship among Syrians as the amount of aid dispensed from UNHCR did not cover the necessary costs of the household when prices rose amid inflation.

Children's welfare

Among the three cities surveyed for UBRAN3DP, Tripoli had the highest incidence of children contributing to income in Lebanon at 30% of surveyed households (followed by 25% in Tyre and 15% in Beirut). A few accounts of children contributing to household income appeared among the 15 households interviewed for this report. Interviewees also noted that they would take their children out of school due to the expenses involved, including the cost of transportation, even if tuition itself was free. One woman (30s) withdrew her daughter from school after the daughter was struck by the teacher (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN). She said discrimination, poor treatment, and corporeal punishment of Syrian children was commonplace. The presence of children playing outside or together often facilitated relationships with neighbours, although these were not always positive (SSINT-CMI-RF-004-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN).

Recreation

Few households had much available time for recreation. Unemployed men often spent their time thinking about or looking for work. Women were regularly pre-occupied with housework and the children as well as part-time employment. When taken, recreational time was predominantly spent with family members outside of the home doing low cost or free activities. One woman (30s), who was particularly isolated, went walking with her children around the neighbourhood. Another man described how he would take his family to the seaside by al-Mina and maybe get ice cream. The coastal area of al-Mina appeared in multiple interviews and conversations with Lebanese residents and Syrians alike as a recreational area of choice in Tripoli, regardless of social class (although different classes engaged in different activities there). Other activities included visiting family members living nearby (all but one interviewee had at least one family member in a nearby neighbourhood). Men would sit in cafés or elsewhere to drink coffee and smoke (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). Younger men showed a preference to socialise with peers rather than family. Only one interviewee made friends through volunteering, whereas another mentioned football as a of making friends (in his case, they were all Syrian) (SSINT-CMI-RF-001-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN).

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11   Several Syrians expressed frustration and anger when UNHCR interviewers cut them off while they were attempting to plead their case or ask additional questions after the formal interview.

THEME 3: FOLLOWING THE NETWORKS

The main finding of theme 3 is how Syrians in Tripoli navigate and utilise family and kinship ties. Additional factors assisting the settlement process include shared language (Arabic), similar culture and religion (Sunni Muslim), previous knowledge of the city, and previous employment in or near Tripoli. However, URBAN3DP survey findings highlighted that in talking about their settlement in Tripoli, interviewees rarely cited the following factors: the presence of co-villagers/former neighbours, the proximity of Tripoli to Syria, and the ease of accessing Tripoli from former homes in Syria.

Relatives as a draw factor for self-settlement

The URBAN3DP survey demonstrated that 77% of respondents chose to settle in Tripoli due to the presence of family members (either core family members or extended relatives). Tripoli, like the rest of Lebanon, has established migration linkages with Syria (Chalcraft 2008). Linkages are particularly well established between Tripoli and the city of Homs, Syria, and it is not uncommon to find cases of transnational Lebanese-Syrian intermarriage there (UN-Habitat and UNHCR 2018). Lebanese in-laws facilitated the arrival of several interviewees (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Connections with Tripoli often cascaded down multiple kinship linkages, meaning that households *without* previous connection to the city were nonetheless persuaded to settle there by pre-settled relatives. In the case of Umm Amr, she settled in Tripoli at the urging of her parents, who had settled there a year earlier in 2012. Her parents had themselves come to Tripoli because their nephew had run a shop in one of the poorer neighbourhoods of the city since the early 2000s (SSINT-CMI-RF-002-LBN).

Collective decision-making and collective displacement

The decision to leave for Lebanon was often made in conjunction with others, either parents[12] or among the adults in a household. Violent conflict regularly catalysed departure to areas where other family members lived, resulting in the simultaneous departure of multiple generations at one time, including siblings, in-laws, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Some households saw their journey take place in several stages, staying for a few weeks or months with a relative elsewhere in Syria before crossing the border (SSINT-CMI-RF-007-LBN), or stopping in Damascus to receive an exit visa for tourism before leaving. Others took the trip directly from their hometown in Syria, rarely taking more than a few hours. According to the URBAN3DP survey, one fifth of Tripoli-based Syrian households spent time in internal displacement camps in Syria.

With younger men, departure was regularly motivated by the decision to avoid enlistment or re-enlistment in the Syrian military (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Abu Amru (20s), Abu Khalid (20s) and Abu Nasr (30s), all left in groups of younger men – cousins or acquaintances from the neighbourhood – and travelled directly to Tripoli (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN). Each of them indicated different pathways after their settlement in Tripoli: Abu Amru and Abu Khalid encouraged their mothers and siblings to join them, organising for their arrival and thereby taking on the role of a "pioneer". Abu Khalid's family came to Tripoli but returned to Syria when they were unable to afford the living costs in the city. Abu Nasr's family, on the other hand, remained in Syria and he would see them rarely when they came to visit – his support network instead relied on his brothers and cousins who also emigrated to Lebanon, in addition to in-laws who supported his wife and children.

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12   Young men often made the decision with parents (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN).

Familial relationships after displacement

Family relationships were impacted by:

Distance. The result of moving placed strain on social networks and although most interviewees highlighted that family relationships were generally the same before and after displacement, the key difference was the distance involved. Physical distance was dealt with differently between individuals, depending on their state of mind, motivation, financial resources (to pay for internet and mobile phone data), and stability (changing numbers would curtail communication considerably). According to Abu Abdallah, "everything changed when I arrived in Lebanon. In Syria I was close to my family and my friends – they were close to me. On arrival to Lebanon, there is no strong communication between me and my family, me and my friends" (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). Others echoed a similar sentiment but minimized the difference that distance made. Reflecting on his relationship to his family, Abu Walid stated that the main change is "only the distance. There is no direct contact" (SsInt-CMI-RF-001-LBN). In further elaboration, Abu Walid noted that he had gotten used to the distance now but that it was still difficult for his family who missed him.

Stress. The persistent grind of having to meet the needs of the household was evident in multiple interviews. Stress was and is compounded by the difficulties of a poor economic situation, a shrinking informal market, and legal restrictions on residency. Stress was rarely mentioned directly during interviews, but the anguish was evident. One interviewee recalled how the family's circumstance led to the mental breakdown of his wife, who fell into a depression for several years. During this time, his isolation increased when her parents who lived nearby stopped visiting as often. Another Syrian man in his 20s spoke of the difficulty of balancing his work, studies, and other duties, and expressed resentment at friends and relatives that would ask for favours thereby encroaching on his already limited schedule.

Isolation. Many men who would spend long days working (such as taxi drivers), effectively self-isolating from their households to try to make ends meet. This led to sleep deprivation and less time for self-care and for recreation. Reminiscent of the findings from Jordan (see Stevens 2016), a few individuals mentioned their withdrawal from social contact to avoid having to deal with circumstances in which people wanted something from them (such as the landlord asking for rent). Isolation from households also occurred in circumstances when wives and children were sent to stay with parents or in-laws, due to the difficulties of remaining in Tripoli (SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-005-LBN).

Privacy. A certain level of privacy was also lacking within many households. One individual reported that gossiping relatives had damaged the relationships within the family after their arrival to Tripoli (SSINT-CMI-RF-007-LBN). Privacy was also linked to a certain level of anonymity when residing in a neighbourhood. As Abu Amru (20s) explained, on his arrival in Tripoli, he looked for a flat where people would mind their own business and where he could avoid being questioned about who he was and where he was going (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN). When staying with relatives, interviewees highlighted respect for privacy. When asked about the flat that he shared with his in-laws, Abu Abdallah stated that "everything is ok. No one is entering the lives of others" (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). Young men in their 20s living with in-laws and relatives tended to express a desire for privacy, and their social lives seemed to be predominantly spent with peers (SSINT-CMI-RF-008-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN).

THEME 4: BUILDING ALLIANCES

Interviews and survey results indicate that it is common for relatives to settle near one another in the same or adjacent neighbourhoods. For some households, social contact was limited to relatives, occasionally extending out to friends or acquaintances known before displacement, and only after that, to Syrians met in Tripoli. Single men (often students) were the exception to this paradigm, as they were more open to alliance-building, particularly with co-nationals, but also because they more commonly found themselves socialising with Lebanese hosts, including through studies, volunteering, training, and work. One individual who emigrated when he was seventeen noted that people were surprised when he said he was Syrian (SSINT-CMI-RF-009-LBN).

Relatives and co-nationals as social infrastructure

Studies on urban refugees regularly conceive of social networks as a form of "social capital", helping to facilitate integration and provide opportunities (for a summary of benefits urban self-settlement including social networks, see Forster 2021. See also, Johnston et al. 2019; Uzelac, Meester, and Göransson 2018). The presence of social networks as a means of accessing loans and credit is also a reason for the clustering of Syrians in specific municipalities (Montero Kusevic and Radmard 2020). Among those Syrians in Tripoli who borrowed money, the primary lenders were family members, followed by shop keepers. But monetary exchange appears to be only a small part of the benefit of remaining close to relatives. As was noted, in many circumstances, "there is nothing to give". Instead, interviews brought up examples regarding the exchange of less tangible items including information, recommendations, referrals, and favours.

In addition to relatives, it was not unusual for Syrians to meet former friends and neighbours they had known back home and although they welcomed the opportunity to reconnect, doing so took up valuable time (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). Where interviewees made new friends and acquaintances in Tripoli after displacement, they tended to be with other Syrian neighbours or co-workers (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-007-LBN). Households noted that they predominantly socialised with family members and relatives. "Friends" in many cases were often related in some way (second cousins, etc.).

Shaping journey trajectory: For multiple interviewees, limited financial resources and the presence of relatives in Tripoli meant that families of multiple generations would often move in together (parents with their children, or vice versa). For instance, the household of Umm Mahmoud stayed with her sister-in-law in a town not far from Homs for several months before the war encroached on their temporary home and they all made the journey to Lebanon.

Finding accommodation and improved accommodation: Umm Mara and her family first found their way to a shelter thanks to a nephew who had lived and worked in Tripoli for several years before the war; then they took over the accommodation her parents had lived in the previous year (SSINT-CMI-RF-002-LBN). Abu Ahmed stayed with his Lebanese parents-in-law for three months on arrival until he could find accommodation. His mother-in-law was instrumental in finding his current accommodation, asking on his behalf among acquaintances and thereby broadening the number of opportunities afforded to him (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Another interviewee, by contrast, found his apartment and job as a *bawab* through someone from his village in Deir Ezzour also living in Tripoli. Since it was a comfortable apartment located near central Abu Samra and the city, he was happy to stay. Similarly, a former neighbour from Syria recommended Abu Amru's family to the landlord of their current apartment in which they have lived now for over five years.

Finding employment: Recommendations and referrals are important in finding employment and involve trust between individuals. For Abu Abdallah, his longest period of employment (3 years) stemmed from a friend from Syria recommending him for a job (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). With a small number of employment opportunities in Tripoli, few individuals were able to find employment for others. Nonetheless, there were those who would help to the best of their abilities. One Syrian

who had worked in multiple sectors in Lebanon (manufacturing, retail, tourism) said he would direct people who asked to opportunities if they came up and had helped several people find employment (SsInt-CMI-RF-001-LBN).

Exchanging information: Information sharing practices had material consequences for the people in those networks, and they cited most often obtaining shelter and employment as benefits, but mentioned other opportunities or favours as well. Other information related to healthcare programmes, sources of aid, and opportunities for training by local NGOs. While this practice reinforced relationships, its primary material impact was redistributive, shifting resources (mostly via opportunities) to those who could utilise them most effectively.

Limitations to the benefits of social networks

An important aspect to note is that the existence of social networks is not a guarantee for improving livelihoods. Although work, accommodation, and other useful information can filter through networks, not everyone is able to capitalise on such information, and the ability to do so is highly dependent on the individual. When asked, Abu Ahmed stated that he had never received work through anyone he knows (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Similarly, few individuals expressed a desire to ask anything of their family, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances – and no one said they were willing ask anything of the community. Most interviewees said the reason was simply that "their [others'] situation is the same situation", there was "no money, no work" and "they have nothing to give" (same words stated in multiple interviews with displaced Syrians, February-March 2021; SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN).

Transnational relationships

All the interviews were conducted with households that had relatives in Jordan. In some cases, relatives had returned to Syria or onwards to other countries in the Gulf or Europe. Most households had relatives in multiple countries in Europe, Australasia, and North America, as well as in the Middle East. Abu Muhammad, a man in his 80s living in Abu Samra, listed relatives living all across Lebanon (Baalbek, Afrin, Arsal, Tripoli, Syria and Turkey), whereas his nieces and nephews were often further afield, including Ireland. Certain trends emerged when speaking about family abroad:

Mobile phones and internet: As corroborated by studies elsewhere (Göransson, Hultin, and Mähring 2020), households relied heavily on their mobile phone or phones. Instability, the inability to pay for phone top-ups, the loss of a mobile phone, or the sale of a mobile phone all created a dilemma in remaining in contact with networks (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN). Mobile phones produce opportunities; but as highlighted by the case in Section 5.2.1. above, phones can also provide a means for unwanted persons to contact you. One individual stated that he lost the numbers of his uncles in Jordan and friends and family in Syria after having to change his own number (SSINT-CMI-RF-005-LBN). Other interviewees also mentioned the complication that took place when some of their contacts would change their numbers often (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). All households interviewed had access to the internet either through personal subscriptions or through shared Wi-Fi passwords with others in the street. The preferred means of communication was the messaging service WhatsApp because it allowed illiterate households to communicate via voice message, which was the most common means of communication. One household struggled to remain in touch with family in Syria in the early years of displacement because those in Syria did not have access to internet services.

Remittances: Remittances were rare among interviewed households. Survey results highlighted that only 13% of households reported receiving remittances. In the interviews, only one individual reported receiving money "recently". Abu Ahmed, who has relatives living in Australia, Germany, Turkey, and Canada, reported that he had not received any form of support – financial or material – from relatives abroad during the nine years since he left Syria (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). The ability to send remittances from Tripoli was also limited. Abu Walid noted that he was not responsible for

his mother at this time, and that the responsibility lay with his brother in Jordan who currently had a better income (SsInt-CMI-RF-001-LBN). One man, however, did report sending money back to his widowed daughters living in Syria.

Seeking information on migration: The topics of conversation and what people spoke about varied tremendously when speaking to family or friends abroad, but a theme emerged in dealing with the topic of migration. Many would ask relatives or friends (mostly in North America or Europe) for means of assisting their migration, whether opportunities (education, training), reunification visas, or seeking more information about immigration processes through those that had undergone them. In this latter way, individuals were seeking to replicate others' pathways, a fact that underscored the importance of information flow among refugee networks.

Bridges to the community

Although in many ways (self-)segregated from the host community, Syrians would branch beyond regular social circles on semi-regular bases. This was particularly the case with respect to finding employment, but also occurred when searching for other services such as accommodation (SSINT-CMI-RF-005-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN). Some interviewees noted that they "only ask Syrians", even though the Syrians they asked were often unknown to them at the time (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN; SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Others were open to asking anybody (SSINT-CMI-RF-005-LBN).

Literature on host-refugee relations in Lebanon notes the presence of tensions between the communities escalating in late 2013, brought on by political rhetoric, the perceived scarcity of resources, and increased competition over employment and accommodation that deflated wages and inflated rent. Tensions are class-based. Most acknowledge that wealthy Syrians are rarely included in this paradigm, as they are perceived to contribute to Lebanon's economy. Discrimination and prejudice towards Syrians in Tripoli are coloured by close relations between Syria and the city, ranging from a popular political desire to reunite with Syria following the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 to the experience of Syrian occupation after 1976, which culminated in the brutal 1986 Bab al-Tabbaneh massacre perpetrated by Syrian troops and local Syrian-aligned militias. Memory of the event continues to shape contemporary conflict dynamics and perceptions, and as a result of the massacre, many families grew up without fathers (Abi Samra 2011). Syrian intelligence held sway over Tripoli until the military withdrawal in 2005. Currently, Tripoli contains neighbourhoods that remain pro- and anti-Syrian regime strongholds, although outward tensions have diminished. On the arrival of Syrians in 2012-2013, anti-Syrian government strongholds held sympathies with the Syrian resistance as well as with the refugees fleeing the country. But as economic decline continued amid a rising number of refugees, solidarity waned (Knudsen 2017b). Thus, views on and relations with Syria in the city vary by neighbourhood that represent strong elements of both support and animosity (Nachabe 2019).

URBAN3DP survey results from Beirut, Tripoli, and Tyre highlight that host-refugee relations were the least positive (friendly, cordial) in the neighbourhoods of Tripoli (see Forster 2021). Perceptions, however, varied between individuals. As one of the students stated,

> It depends on your relations, and [the way in which you are] dealing with people […] in general [relations are] very good – [I am] a diplomatic person and good at dealing with people – but you don't know what is in their heart.

Statements on host-refugee relations were described along a spectrum from "everything is good" to "a little bit difficult" to one Syrian man exclaiming: "this is the worst country in the world" and that Syrians are treated "as less" (Fieldnotes, February 2020). Even Syrians who were generally positive towards the local community noted how personal conflicts would escalate to encompass community

prejudices enshrined in unequal power relations and the vulnerabilities that they produce. Nonetheless, there were also examples of positive relations and stories of solidarity and charity:

> When my husband talked to the sheikh at the mosque about one of our children, there was a man sitting nearby who heard the problem and helped facilitate the medical treatment needed […] For three years, the family has been asking him for various things – he really helped us (SSINT-CMI-RF-004-LBN).

Integration appeared to be less of an issue among the younger Syrians or those travelling independently, who found themselves needing to build alliances and branch out. Students were placed in an environment that included multiple nationalities. One student described how he would help others and build friendships through his studies (SSINT-CMI-RF-001-LBN). Moreover, students perceived themselves as having a purpose beyond just seeking refuge that differentiated their circumstances from that of other Syrians. Moving to Lebanon when younger also appears to have helped with integration to some extent, granting one more flexibility to move between social circles and allowing one to be less responsible for supporting the family. Unmarried Syrian men, usually in their 20s, who came to Lebanon as teenagers, appear to have greater ease building friendships with members of the host community. Abu Khalid, for example, noted that he had gotten work through a Lebanese friend with whom he had worked (SSINT-CMI-RF-013-LBN).

Isolation and challenges to integration

The issues raised in Section 6.3. also appeared as barriers when building bridges with the community. A major challenge among several of the family men interviewed was the isolation that resulted from the pressure to secure sufficient income. Isolation took different forms: among the self-employed (taxi drivers for instance), fares were dependent on being in the right place at the right time, which necessitated long days. The duty to see family and secure income meant that they deprioritised other relationships: Abu Ahmed stated that he "is not in touch with Lebanese people [and] never got in touch with any of them", instead he focuses on his work (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). "Everything is work". As the research assistant explained during the interview:

> …he is not feeling time here. From 2012 until now, he has been working to feed his family. All the time has been work, work, work. If we did not contact him and tell him to meet us here, he would not return home all day.

Socialisation among men who worked long hours was generally ad hoc and would mostly be with the men with whom they worked (mostly Syrian), along with occasional coffees with people they knew from Syria (cousins, friends, acquaintances) (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN, SSINT-CMI-RF-005-LBN). All but one interviewee had relatives (usually multiple) in neighbourhoods nearby, social contact with those relatives was limited to an hour or two a week. Abu Ahmed explained that he did not have time to visit family, as he needed to eat and sleep if he was not working.

Networks and resettlement

The importance of remaining close to known persons highlights a dilemma: many families simultaneously desire resettlement in another country while also prioritising the cohesion of relational networks. This is not a simple matter and varies among families. For some, they would leave immediately if granted the opportunity: "even if I go to China, it is not a problem. The most important thing is to find a good life for the children" (SSINT-CMI-RF-014-LBN). Others chose to remain in Tripoli so that their family members had some degree of support mechanism: one man whose wife had fallen

ill during their stay in Tripoli refused to leave the city because his wife had family and support there (SSINT-CMI-RF-011-LBN).

Some families simply do not wish to emigrate. Many older individuals do not want to travel to a new country, where they must learn new customs, languages, and administrative systems. One older individual in his 80s said that he wished to die in a place he knew and not in Turkey, Europe, or elsewhere (SSINT-CMI-RF-010-LBN). Indeed, the concern relating to the difference of other cultures and challenges of integration was an undercurrent in some households' lack of desire or hesitation to migrate.

- A Syrian man (40s) received the opportunity to migrate from a foreign embassy in 2014 but declined when his wife expressed concern about raising their sons in a foreign culture. In retrospect, he expressed regret over the decision.

- A Syrian woman (30s) said she did not wish to travel because she was afraid the government in the new country would take her children away when it was discovered that her husband would beat the children.

- A Syrian household that expressed a desire to resettle had declined an offer extended by a Western government a few years prior because their son expressed fears both of flying over the ocean and of the indigenous population there after searching for videos on YouTube (SSINT-CMI-RF-002-LBN).

- Another family declined their resettlement offer when it was not extended to the two single men in the family: "it is not logical to leave them here. Why then travel to Europe?" (SSINT-CMI-RF-003-LBN).

Improvised chicken coop next to an informal area in al-Qubbeh. February 2020.

CONCLUSION

Syrian households in Tripoli note the decline in living standards since their arrival in the city ten years ago. A series of political, economic and health crises that impacted the wellbeing of all groups in Lebanon accelerated that decline. Many Syrian households in Tripoli face protection issues, including the lack of legal status (due to the high cost of residency), housing insecurity, a lack of employment or underemployment, discrimination, few avenues of legal recourse, and man-made hazards (including poor sanitation, moisture, garbage, noise, and traffic). Interactions between host-refugee communities could often be positive or at least neutral on a personal level, but disagreements could escalate to encompass communal prejudices and mutual suspicion. Among Syrian households, socialisation tended to be with co-nationals, particularly relatives, although this varied by the individual, their disposition, and their live style/employment situation. Younger men noted a preference for spending time with Syrian and Lebanese peers. The presence of pre-established relatives heavily influenced households to settle, and in many cases, relatives were able to persuade those with no previous experience of the city to settle there. Relatives, including in-laws, often facilitated the journey and settlement process, often providing initial support for arriving families particularly with respect to finding accommodation (less in the case of employment). Maintaining relationships presents a challenge, particularly in the case of long working hours.

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