| QRP

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Supporting Decision-making Processes of Syrian Refugees: Empirical Research on Expectations and Prospects 'on the Move'[1]

Florian Blauth[2]

Abstract

In recent years, forced migration[3] has increased significantly and become an important topic in migration research and policy making. Despite this influx and policy changes, refugees' voices are rarely heard at any stage of flight. In social work, either humanitarian aid in transit countries or challenges at the destination are considered. This study bridges the gap and analyses refugees' decision-making from a retrospective view. The project focused on the following research question: Which factors influence decision-making of Syrian refugees in the context of forced migration and flight? The question was approached by applying a constructivist approach in which deductive-inductive qualitative research methods were used. A literature review was conducted on migration models that explain individuals' reasoning and on factors that explain Syrian refugees' decision-making. In addition, qualitative data was gathered in six problem-centred interviews. Four Syrian refugees who have reached Germany and two experts in social work from Jordan and Lebanon were interviewed. A qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2000) was used to develop categories that describe influencing factors. The analysis generated two categories of factors that influence Syrian refugees' decision-making: 1) structural factors and 2) individual factors. The first category comprised of four sub-categories: situation in Syria, situation in transit countries, situation in Germany, and obstacles and dynamics. Individual factors were divided into six influencing factors: expectations, prioritisation of needs, received support, agency of refugees, information, and trustworthiness. Furthermore, the decision-making process of Syrian refugees has been visualised. In addition to these two categories that influenced decision-making, the actual decision taking of Syrian refugees was analysed. The findings emphasise the dynamic and

---

[1] This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License and was accepted for publication on 20/05/2023. It is based on the Master thesis with the same titled, accepted by today's Technical University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt, on 13/12/2021, and supervised by Prof. Dr. Ralf Roßkopf.

[2] Florian Blauth is working as a social worker at an asylum reception center close to Schweinfurt, Germany. He holds a Master's Degree in International Social Work with Refugees and Migrants from the Technical University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt.

[3] A clear distinction between voluntary migration and forced migration is often difficult. Instead of applying a binary approach, it seems to be more appropriate to understand migration decisions on a continuum. Hugo et al. describe the following persons being subject to forced migration: "refugees, those internally displaced for reasons given in refugee law, people displaced by development projects, environmental migrants, and victims of natural disasters and man-made accidents" (2018: 25).

processual character of decision-making. Additional factors that are considered by individuals were able to be determined, and social work specific themes were considered. The findings of this study suggest that social workers may offer valuable support to Syrian refugees and help them to make informed choices.

Key words:

Decision-making process, informed decision, Syrian refugee, structural and individual factors, social work

1   Introduction

Recent migration research has expanded significantly and developed an advanced understanding of wider social, economic, and political relationships. New research methods are being implemented and a diverse understanding of sending and receiving countries as well as structural considerations and individual agency is emerging (Napierała et al., 2022; Vargas-Silva, 2012; Williams & Graham, 2014). This article describes a retrospective research project on decision-making processes of Syrian refugees who fled Syria and came to Germany. The research aims to gain insight into refugees' reasoning 'on the move' and to emphasise individual perspectives at different stages of flight. The research is conducted from a social work perspective and elaborates on refugees' reasoning as legal pathways to humanitarian access in Europe as the 'safe haven' are pending. Even before the influx of refugees from Syria increased, Crawley (2010) pointed out that policy making should be based on evidence rather than on assumptions about the reasons why refugees 'choose' to reach a certain destination country. As a profession and discipline, social work focuses on empowerment and liberation of people. Therefore, it promotes decision-making capacity and "engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing" (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). A sound understanding of refugees' perspectives and individual decision-making processes is required to develop customised interventions and to be able to advocate for human rights and frame legal considerations.

2   Forced Migration and Decision-making Processes of Syrian Refugees

Refugee and forced migration studies have grown to become a global research field and are considered in humanities, social, and political sciences (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014: 2-3; Hugo et al., 2018: 24). In this research project, individual decision-making processes are investigated. Therefore, primarily theories that analyse migration on the micro-level or meso-level are considered. Despite some prejudices that most asylum seekers "are actually 'economic migrants', there is clear evidence that conflict is the single most significant factor associated with most flows of asylum seekers to the countries of Europe" (Crawley, 2010: 20). Choices of refugees relate to economic, political, social, and structural factors. On the one hand, decisions are characterised by possibilities to choose, the will of the person and time for preparation. On the other hand, life threatening pressures force people to migrate instantly, for example for political reasons (Bartram et al., 2014; Hugo et al., 2018; Schuster, 2016).

Lee's push and pull model (1966) is one of the commonly used models to explain migration processes, and it is the first to explain movements of people within the push and pull framework on the micro-level (Hagen-Zanker, 2008: 9). This model has been developed in response to Ravenstein's "The Laws of Migration" (1885). The functionalist push and pull model is often consulted in research on decision-making processes in asylum-related migration (Alhanaee & Csala, 2015; Crawley, 2010; European Asylum Support Office et al., 2017). These factors are not only considered in research but also in asylum-related discourse and policy making processes (Crawley, 2010: 4). The influencing factors may help to understand decision-making processes and highlight aspects for possible interventions by social workers. On the other hand, the Kinetic Model, developed by Kunz (1973), pledges to analyse the decision-making of refugees based on the individual's reasoning.

In current research, static models are extended by further variables. Robinson and Segrott (2002) use a more differentiated model of asylum seekers' decision-making that includes different stages of flight, influences on decisions, and decisions themselves. Haug (2008) developed a multilevel model that links decisions on the macro-, meso- and micro-level and acknowledges the complexity of decision-making processes and the impact of migration networks. Brekke and Aarset (2009) criticise the multilevel model as it neglects the factor of time and interprets asylum-related migration within linear stages. Decision-making is rather described as a process that includes multiple decisions and the evaluation of information. Furthermore, their research highlights the importance of networks of asylum seekers, counterflows of information, the sequential character of flight movements, as well as possible changes in dynamics during migration and over time. Koser and Kuschminder (2016) introduce a decision-making model that focuses on the situation in transit countries and distinguishes influencing factors on three levels. Structural factors, individual factors, and policy interventions are described. Furthermore, the study questions the traditional interpretation of forced migration: "As more and more migrants are moving through transit countries, the traditional origin-destination country dichotomy in migration needs to be expanded to include transit countries" (p. 22). Finally, Hugo et al. (2018) describe that forced migration tends to result in wavelike settlement movements which are caused by certain events or groups of people. Corridors, routes, or networks can be established and allow other people to migrate as well.

Research conducted before the start of the war in Syria already considers decision-making processes of asylum seekers to a certain extent (Crawley, 2010). The review of research studies suggests that research on Syrian refugees' decision-making processes has developed quickly after the war had started (Alhanaee & Csala, 2015; Danish Refugee Council [DRC], 2016; European Asylum Support Office et al., 2017; The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2016). Research studies are characterised by high diversity and vary in their reliability, their sample size, and their findings. It is important to highlight that migration routes to Europe are difficult to predict as they are constantly changing and unfolding in various ways. Migration takes place in different stages and "migrants may not always know their next step and may assess their options based on information and resources that are continually being received and weighed" (Kuschminder et al., 2015: 66). Asylum seekers flee at short notice from direct persecution and have little chance to plan routes and possible destinations. Resources, such as identity documents and financial means, may be limited and, thus, influence the ability to overcome distance and choose routes. Some countries may be accessible whilst

others remain unreachable because of entry regulations and transport routes (Robinson & Segrott, 2002: 2-5). Despite these possible restrictions, a certain amount of agency and control on one's life is given even in difficult situations of flight and persecution (Robinson & Segrott, 2002: 5; Triandafyllidou, 2015: 18). Finally, it should be noted that refugees are not a homogeneous group in several regards (DRC, 2016: 10). In the literature review, eight factors that influence decision-making could be derived, namely 'Expectations', 'Prospects, risks, and decisions on locality', 'Prioritisation and influence of factors', 'Resources', Information channels', 'Trustworthiness', 'Situation in transit country', and 'Prolonged refugee situation'.

Expectations towards life in the destination country, such as anticipated level of freedom and possibilities for individual development, have a high impact on decisions (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017: 184-185). Respect and dignity, peace and safety, and lower housing and health care costs are widely expected when living in Europe. Further aspects concern "Language classes; More job opportunities, if not guaranteed employment; Access to health care and medical treatment; Government provided accommodation; Educational opportunities; Human rights and dignity; Large sums of cash on a weekly basis" (DRC, 2016: 3). These expectations might be idealised, but fears and doubts regarding life in Europe exist as well. Syrians express reservation about the influence of culture in Europe, their ability to cope with cultural differences or their ability to acquire language skills (DRC, 2016: 3, 32; UNHCR, 2017: 12).

The findings of the DRC (2016) suggest that prospects in the destination country, as well as tragedies on the move, have a direct impact on decision-making in favour of, or against, onward movement. Participants in transit countries who receive information about the success of peers in the destination country desire to follow them directly whereas participants who are informed about deaths or disappearances of community members are deterred.

The following patterns in priorities of Syrian refugees who fled to Turkey have been detected: "1. Safety, family unification; 2. Survival and meeting basic needs; 3. Better employment, and schooling for children; 4. Building respect or engagement with the community; and 5. Support to other refugees" (Bellamy et al., 2017: 9). Kuschminder et al. (2015) suggest that three main factors determine the destination of so-called irregular migrants. First, available resources are an influencing factor. Second, traffickers' and smugglers' abilities and skills have a determining influence. Finally, experiences made in transit countries have an influence on the choice of destination. In the case of Syrian refugees, the impact of smugglers on the decision-making process has been questioned by other findings (DRC, 2016: 10; UNHCR, 2017: 27).

Resources prove to be another important factor within decision-making. Class, education-level, and socio-economic status influence migration duration that may be prolonged if resources that facilitate onward movement are missing (Kuschminder et al., 2015: 67). "Contact with family and friends has a significant additional impact on the migrants' ability to continue towards the preferred destination" (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017: 185). Financial support at certain stages of flight is especially important. Refugees having no access to such resources may be caught in transit (185-186). Coping mechanisms to finance onward movement include selling personal items or properties in Syria (DRC, 2016: 6). Nowadays, smartphones have become an important resource as they enable

refugees to access information that is necessary to develop migration strategies (Gillespie et al., 2016: 9).

Transmission of information about migration routes and prospects in the destination country by relatives or friends is a crucial channel for refugees in transit countries to gain information and to develop future plans (DRC, 2016: 4; Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017: 185). The digital infrastructure which provides access to information and usage of smart phones has become as vital as other infrastructures for refugees on the move (Dekker et al., 2018: 2). Searching for information is rather described as being a group effort. Once gained, the information is shared directly with others (4-5). Online media provides sources that enable migrants to retain social ties and to share information and has become increasingly important (DRC, 2016; Dekker et al., 2018; Dekker et al., 2015; UNHCR, 2017; Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017). Despite this support, Syrian refugees are confronted with ambiguous advice and often have varying levels of knowledge (Kuschminder et al., 2015: 69). UNHCR documents that trusted and reliable information from official bodies in Arabic is not accessible for Syrian refugees on the move and the intricacies of asylum-procedures in Europe is unclear (UNHCR 2017: 10, 31).

> "Stemming from a tradition of oral communication and a culture of trusting "one's own", Arabic speakers usually do not seek information from institutional websites, media or smugglers. Instead they tend to rely on fellow countrymen, who have already made the journey and shared their experiences" (UNHCR, 2017: 27).

Family members and friends are mostly seen as trustworthy, as they become part of the migration network. Therefore, the evaluation on the reliability of the content of the information depends on the recipient's relation to the information source. In current refugee movements, the validation of social media information becomes predominant (Dekker et al., 2018: 9). Media becomes important as well but is selected more carefully. Official sources often provide information that is too complex, requires previous knowledge or support from others and is not mobile friendly (UNHCR, 2017; Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017: 176). People attempt to compensate lack of knowledge by asking others or sharing information. Unfortunately, it seems that this information is mostly fragmentary, false or based on assumptions. After arriving in the destination country, the adjustment to life in Europe was perceived as more difficult than anticipated and the challenges were greater than expected (UNHCR, 2017: 11, 31, 45).

Research shows that factors in transit countries influence the decision-making of Syrian refugees. The deterioration in quality of asylum is one reason for secondary flight movement towards Europe (DRC, 2016: 7). Furthermore, hopelessness, high costs of living, ongoing poverty, and limited access to employment and education are factors forcing refugees from Syria to leave neighbouring countries (European Commission, 2016: 2). Discrimination in transit countries and competition for housing, education, and labour are named as other factors that may cause onwards movement (Schuster, 2016: 297). Whilst local health care access is perceived to be declining and is often not trusted, untreated health conditions sometimes push individuals to take on the journey to Europe (DRC, 2016: 6; UNHCR, 2015).

Seven reasons for onward movement to Europe that are resulting from the prolonged refugee situation can be named: loss of hope, high costs of living and deepening poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, shortfall of aid, hurdles to renew legal residency, scant education opportunities, and feeling unsafe in the transit country (UNHCR, 2015). After

several years of ongoing war in Syria, the situation has become more serious for refugees who are living in transit countries in the Middle East. Most refugees in these countries hope for a safe return to Syria. "However, the overall intention to return in the short term remained extremely low despite some 90 per cent of Syrian refugees interviewed said they and their families were unable to meet their basic needs in host countries" (UNHCR, 2022: 10).

3   Research Objective

The main objective of this research project is to understand decision-making of Syrian refugees during different flight stages and to gain insight into their perspectives. It aims to contribute to a more holistic understanding of flight experiences from a social work perspective. Research on expectations and prospects of Syrian refugees in Germany may help social workers to respond to refugees' needs and to choose appropriate methods of support. The empiric research focuses on the following research question: Which factors influence decision-making of Syrian refugees in the context of forced migration and flight?

Decision-making is a process that includes multiple decisions at different locations and points in time. Therefore, decision-making will be considered in its processual character. This research study pledges for an approach that acknowledges individuals' previous experiences during flight and links these experiences with present expectations and prospects in the destination country. The retrospective views of refugees and the additional considerations of the experts may help to provide new insights into the decision-making process, to reveal decision-making capacity, and to highlight possibilities for refugees to make informed choices. These individual perspectives from persons who were forced to leave their origin countries may add to other models that focus solely on rational choices.

4   Method

In this article, experiences and individual explanations, as well as construction of realities of Syrian refugees who already fled to Germany, are analysed. The retrospective research project follows a social constructivist approach in accordance with Robson (2011: 24-25). Refugees' experiences are in the focus as the research tries to examine how individuals explain and construct their realities. This approach allows freedom regarding the order of questions and gives flexibility regarding the attention and amount of time spent on each topic. In circumstances where interviewees might have experienced trauma or severe threats in the context of flight and forced migration, non-directive or unstructured interviews might be less favourable. Some research studies concerning the decision-making process of Syrian refugees have already been conducted. Therefore, a semi-structured approach to combine existing knowledge and ascertainable knowledge in a discursive and dialogical procedure is used as suggested by Gahleitner (2005c). The research question is approached by conducting a literature review (Part I) and a qualitative research study (Part II). Results of the literature review were used for formulating guiding questions and developing categories for data analysis. A flow-chart illustrating the research design is provided in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Research Design
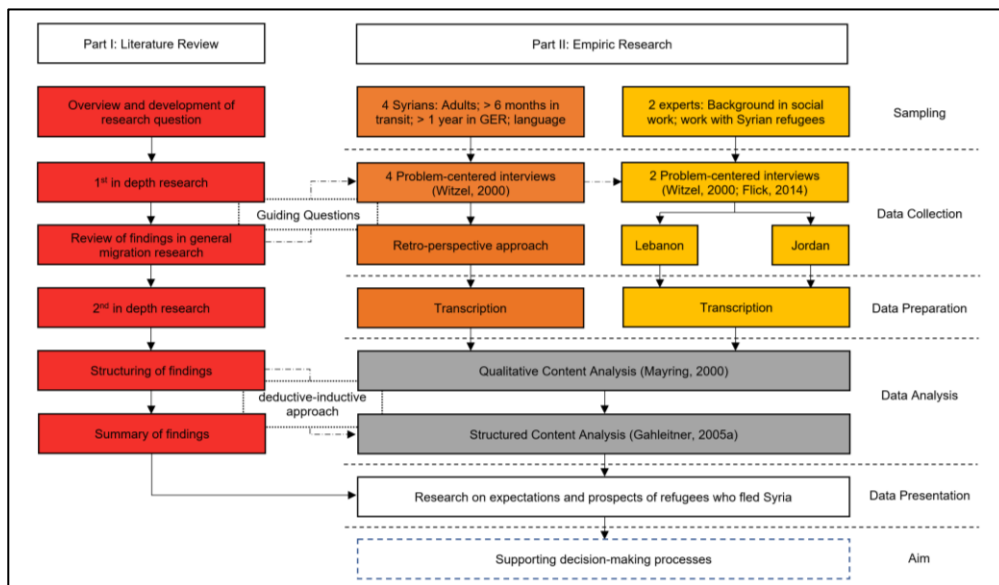
Data for this research project was gathered in July and August 2018. Two expert interviews (Flick, 2014) were held with experts from Jordan and Lebanon. The interviews with four Syrian refugees constitute the main data source for this research project. Interviewing refugees about their flight experience is difficult because sensitive topics may be addressed. In circumstances where interviewees might have experienced trauma or severe threats in the context of flight and forced migration, non-directive or unstructured interviews might be less favourable. Therefore, problem-centred interviews [PCIs] were chosen for data gathering. In contrast to narrative interviews that may comprise of a higher risk for triggering stressful emotions (Gahleitner, 2005b: 113), this structured approach allows the interviewer to intervene directly. Additional time for an evaluation of and a reflection on the interview was assigned. All interviewees gave informed written consent, were given contact details of the interviewer and an additional meeting if there was any need for further reflections. No remuneration was given to any interviewee in this research project.

4.1   Problem-centred Interviews

Data for the empirical research is gathered in six PCIs and aims to generate theories (Witzel, 2000). One of the main contributions of this method is that it overcomes the suspected reciprocity of theory driven approaches and open-minded approaches. This flexible approach has two main possible pitfalls. On one hand, the researcher may simply adapt the interviewee's perspective of the problem. On the other hand, the theory may be imposed on the collected data. The three basic principles to prevent these pitfalls, namely problem-centred orientation, object-orientation, and process-orientation (Witzel, 2000, paras. 3-4), have been implemented.

Interview guidelines were used to structure the interviews. They allow the interviewer to keep some control whilst the interviewee can express subjective views and feelings

(Gahleitner, 2005c: 45-48). The questions were derived from the findings of the literature review and allowed the interviewees to express their individual thoughts and experiences. Additional questions that helped interviewees to introduce new aspects were integrated. The interview guideline was peer-reviewed by a social science PhD student and checked by the first examiner of the master's thesis. Afterwards, the interview guideline was tested in an interview with a fellow master's social work student and changed slightly once more. Finally, the interview guideline was adapted for the expert interviews. Below, the interview guideline for the refugees in English is presented in table 1:

Table 1: Interview Guideline

I. **Introduction**	
As you know, I am looking for people who fled Syria and are willing to share their experiences. Experiences about their expectations towards Europe. Experiences of making decisions on the flight. You are the expert, you made your way to Germany and had to make decisions on your way. Your experiences may help others who are thinking to go to Europe or who are on the way to make informed decisions. You can help other people, families, or supporters to find and to give information. I will need to record the interview so that I can write it down and use it for my master's thesis. Only I will have access to the recording itself. Once written down, it will be printed at the end of the thesis. All your personal data will be handled confidentially. I will change your name and any other names of people as well as places that may allow conclusions regarding your identity. (Handing out "I. Consent Form"). In the beginning, I would like to highlight something important: First, don't worry about the language or any language-mistakes you or I make. Second, in this interview I am interested in your personal view, so whatever you think or say is right. I am really interested in your individual experiences, how you made decisions, and how you experienced things. I will not ask a set of questions. Rather, I ask you to talk about the different topics as much as you want, and think is important. I will take some notes during the interview and will only ask questions if I did not understand something or if I am interested in something in more depth. Only at the end of the interview I will ask some more specific questions. Overall, the interview may take about 45 to 60 minutes. If you agree to do the interview this way, I would like to start.	
II. **Starting question**	
I am interested in your personal expectations about Europe and Germany and the decisions you made in the last years: What decisions have you made on your way from Syria to Germany and how did it come that you made these decisions? You can start with whatever comes to your mind first.	
1. **Life situation**	
Life situation in country of origin:	Can you tell me more about your life in Syria before the war, please? What do you think was good and what was not so good?
Life situation in transit country:	What country were you living or travelling in, before you came to Germany? Tell me about your life there. How was it to live in country X?
Life situation in Germany:	How do you see your life today in Germany? What aspects of living in Germany do you like the most? What are your greatest challenges living in Germany? Please, can you tell me about any positive surprises or disappointments? What would you tell others from Syria about your life in Germany?
2. **Expectations**	
Expectations Syria/area of origin:	Please, tell me something about the picture of Europe you had, when you lived in Syria. If you look back in your life: How did you think life in Germany would be?
Expectations transit country:	Have you ever considered to spend time in country X before? What did you hear about Germany/Europe when you were there?
Expectations about Europe/Germany:	What were your expectations of living in Germany before you came here? How did you expect life to be in Europe/Germany?

Development of expectations:	What expectations about Europe were not fulfilled? How were your expectations met? How did your expectations develop? Which expectations changed, and which stayed the same?
3. Prospects	
Prospects in Syria/area of origin:	What were your plans before the war in Syria started? What did you want to work?
Prospects in transit country:	Please, what did you perceive as positive in country X? What did you hope for? Tell me a bit more about the financial situation. How was it about work or education?
Prospects in Germany:	What did you expect to do when you arrived in Germany? What are your current goals? Where do you see yourself in 5 years? And where do you see yourself in 15 years? What do you want to achieve by then?
Development of prospects:	To what extend have your plans changed in the last years? What caused this change?
Duration of stay:	What comes to your mind when you think about going back to Syria? Was it always like this? Please, tell me about the development of your plans concerning the length of the stay.
4. Information channels	
Information in country of origin:	What information did you receive about the way to Europe? How did you receive this information? Where did you receive information from? What did you know about the person you got the information from?
Information on the move:	How did you get information whilst being on the flight? Which channels, websites or media did you use? How could you be sure that you could trust the person? How could you communicate in this situation?
Information in Germany:	How would you let others know if you want to share your opinion of Germany? What would you tell other Syrians? Would it vary in contrast to what you tell me?
5. Decision-making	
Priorities:	What was the most important thing for you, you wanted to reach? Which role played your family and your friends? On the flight, what was most important for you? When did you start thinking about your future and your work/education? Please, tell me more about your contact with the local community in country X and in Germany. Were you able to support others who fled Syria?
Reliability of information:	What information helped you most? How could you make sure that the information was right? Why did you trust this information?
Time and place of decision:	When did you know that you would end up living in Germany? Where have you been at that time? Please, can you tell me about the main "turning points", situations in which things changed for you? Did you start to feel safe or relieved after reaching a certain point or place?
Locality:	Can you tell me more about the reasons why you went to Germany/Europe? Did you have any previous links or connections to Germany? Do you have any links to other European countries? Where did other people, who you know, go? Where is your family living? Did you have any language knowledge?
Others involved:	On the flight or before, have you been discussing next steps with others? Who was this and how did it look like? Who was involved and who have you been in contact with? How could you help others?
Transparency of migration procedure:	When did you get to know, how the asylum application system works? When did you receive information about the asylum procedures? Where did you get information from?
Knowledge about alternatives:	What other options instead of going to Germany have you considered? Where could you have ended up? Were there any other routes possible? Would there have been a legal option/ Was this important to you?

6.	Capability approach
Ability:	If you had a chance, what would you change in your life? Are there situations where you cannot reach what you would like to achieve? What are the reasons for this?
Well-being:	How do you find life here in Germany? How did you feel in Syria and in country x? How was your financial situation? Please tell me more about any work or education.
External expectations:	How is it for you if you are seen by others as a "refugee"? How do you perceive yourself? How would you describe your role in society? What does your family/friends/partner expect from you?
Policies:	Which influence do policies have on your life? How is your daily life influenced by governmental decisions? What influence does the BAMF have? How were the policies in country X? How about crossing the EU-Border, what difference did it make to you?
Power structures:	In how far do you feel dependent and where are you independent? In which situations do you feel powerless? What would help you to change this?
Loss:	In which areas, do you think, you could reach more? Are there any things that you cannot do here but that you could do in Syria? Is there anything that you are currently missing?
7.	Risks and protecting factors:
Resources of refugees:	What helped you during the flight and here in Germany? Can you rely on support from your family and friends? What helped you to manage to come to Germany? In which situations do you need support, currently? How were you able to pay for expenses on the flight?
Support received:	What support did you get at various stages of your flight? How did it come that you received this support? How could you get support during the flight? Who did you get help from? Could you trust the people who supported you? Could you rely on the support? How did media support you during the flight?
Obstacles on the way:	What unexpected obstacles and problems did you face before coming to Germany? What was the major difficulty you had to face? Did you know about these problems beforehand?
Challenges:	What was difficult for you on the flight? What problems do you face currently? How do you cope with these problems?
8.	Additional support:
What could have helped you to make a decision in this situation? What would you have expected in addition? In your opinion, how can you contribute to society in Germany the best?	
III.	Ending note
Is there anything else that you would like to share?	

This interview guideline was adapted from Gahleitner, 2005c: 45-48.

Before conducting the interviews, every interviewee received a consent form in the language the interview was held. The whole form was explained and perused face-to-face. All interviewees received contact details of the interviewer so that they could withdraw consent at any point. No interviewee withdrew consent during the research process. Interviews were conducted by the author of this article and were recorded by using a voice recorder for precise documentation. This enables concentration on the communication process and the observation of the surroundings and non-verbal expressions (Witzel, 2000, para. 8). Disruptions or non-verbal expressions were documented on the sheet of the interview guideline. At a later point, the notes were transferred to the transcriptions. The interviews took place in separate but public places.

Witzel (2000) and Flick (2014) propose to use a short questionnaire for gathering basic data. It is separated from the interview as it follows a question-answer scheme that would undermine the intention of open questions in the main interview. Furthermore, postscripts

were used. Ideas for the interpretation of data can be recorded as well as criteria for further interviewees or required changes for following interviews (Witzel, 2000, para. 9). The post-interview notes were developed in accordance with the template presented by Gahleitner (2005c).

4.2   Sampling

In the beginning of the research process, a theoretical sampling was conducted. Further secondary conditions were introduced successively. This step-by-step approach facilitated diversity among interviewees and reflected the process-orientation within the research (Witzel, 2000, para. 4).

The first reason for using expert interviews in this research project was to obtain information on the current situation of Syrian refugees in transit countries. The second aim was to collect data for possible recommendations for social work. Finally, the integration of perspectives from experts in transit countries was important for interpreting phenomena from a different point of view. The inclusion of professionals' expertise may help to counterweigh a solely Western or European interpretation of decision-making processes. Three criterions were developed for the sampling of the experts. First, the expert should have a professional background in social work. In addition, this expert should work directly with Syrian refugees or take part in research projects that focus on this group. Finally, the expert needs to have experiences with social work practice or theory in one of the transit countries.

Different requirements were developed for the sampling of refugees. First, the recruited person had to be an adult Syrian refugee. Second, the person should have spent at least 6 months in a transit country and at least one year in Germany. This criterion is important because the decision-making process in transit countries is analysed from a retrospective view. Furthermore, the time frame concerning residency in Germany ensured that the refugee was confronted with experiences that might have challenged his or her expectations. Third, the person should have an advanced language level so that he or she would be able to express himself or herself in English or German. The interviews relied heavily on building a trusting relationship. Since critical political and potentially traumatic experiences were shared, it seemed inappropriate to include an additional person in the interview. A purposive sampling as recommended by Flick (2014: 175-176) was applied. The suggestion to recruit typical cases was dismissed. The main common feature is that people were forced to leave their home country but otherwise, the group of Syrian refugees is characterised by a high level of diversity (DRC, 2016: 3; UNHCR, 2017: 7). Therefore, the aim was to recruit differing cases with a maximal variation. This included searching for Syrian refugees who came to Germany by different routes. As the political situation in Syria is highly polarising, critical or sensitive cases were searched for in which interviewees were either involved with the Syrian government or actively opposing it. An overview of the recruited experts and refugees is proved in table 2:

Table 1: Interviewees

Expert	Expert 1	Expert 2	Refugee	Adnan	Maya	Khaled	Hakim
Date of interview	08/2018	07/2018	Date of interview	08/2018	08/2018	08/2018	08/2018
Place of interview	Primary school (Jordan)	Restaurant in a hotel in Amman (Jordan)	Place of interview	Café in a town centre (Germany)	Café in a town centre (Germany)	Café in a town centre (Germany)	Café in a town centre (Germany)
Gender	Female	Female	Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	Middle aged	Approx. 30 years old	Age	29 years old	38	31	19
Education and work	Professor at a University	Senior Capacity Building Case Manager and PSS officer (Master of Social Work)	Education and work	Bachelor in archaeology, master's course in archaeology suspended in third semester	Bachelor's degree in information, unemployed	High school education, before working as IT-technician, part-time employment	Secondary school
Work in this area	Lecturer in social work, participation in international projects that are concerned with forced migration	Child protection in Syrian and host community and other nationalities. Building capacity of the juridical system concerning juvenile justice	Marital status	Single	Married	Single	Single
			Religion	Muslim	None	Muslim	Muslim
			Origin in Syria	Aleppo	Rural area outside of Aleppo	Homs	Aleppo

Criteria for being an expert	Professional background in social work, working with Syrian students and in a research project on Syrian refugees living abroad	Social work master's student and working as CP-officer, working with Syrian children, studying and working in Lebanon	Financial Situation	Scholarship that covers language course and living expenses	Job seeker's allowance	Job seeker's allowance and zero tax part-time employment	Job seeker's allowance
			Residence status	Three years residence permit	One-year residence permit	Three years residence permit	Three years residence permit
			Time spent in Germany	Two years and six months	One year	Three years	Three years

4.3   Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed. Transcription rules were developed in accordance with the transcription conventions by Flick (2014) and the transcription rules by Dresing et al. (2015). Interviews held in English were transcribed in English and the one interview in German was transcribed in German. The computer programme MAXQDA[4] was used to analyse the data in accordance with the qualitative content analysis by Mayring (2015, 2000). The categories were developed pursuant to the structured content analysis by Gahleitner (2005a). Gathered data was dissected and processed step-by-step. In the beginning, a deductive approach prevailed. This ensured that the research process links into previous research findings. At a later stage, inductive processes were implemented (57-58).

A code system in accordance with Lee's push and pull model (1966) was used for a first data screening. Furthermore, categories derived from the interview guideline were used. By applying the code system, a first structure was imposed on two interviews. First, sub-categories were developed. In a second step, the code system was reviewed and adapted (Gahleitner, 2005a: 58-59). A specific code description that relates to the research question was developed and all excerpts within the interview that referred to a specific category were coded accordingly. All categories and sub-categories received a meaningful heading that should be interpreted in relation to the main categories. In addition, the category was described with a short summary and instructions that needed to be followed if categories overlapped. Finally, an example for the category was given. During the review of the categories, it became apparent that the general allocation of push and pull factors did not allow for an adequate coding. Also, the high differentiation of categories at the beginning did not reflect the research question. Finally, four main categories remained and the second main category of 'Decision-making Processes' was sub-divided further. The final category system is presented in table 3:

---

[4] MAXQDA, Software for Qualitative Data Analysis. (1989-2018). Berlin: VERBI Software-Consult-Sozialforschung GmbH.

Table 2: Final Category System

1. Background Data
2. Decision-making Processes
2.1 Structural Factors
2.1.1 Situation in Syria
2.1.2 Situation in Transit Country
2.1.3 Situation in Germany
2.1.4 Migration Dynamics
2.2 Personal Factors
2.2.1 Expectations
2.2.2 Prioritising of Needs
2.2.3 Received Support
2.2.4 Agency of Refugees
2.2.5 Information
2.2.6 Trustworthiness
2.3 Decision Taking
2.3.1 Decision Takers
2.3.2 Time and Form of Decision
2.3.3 Decision on Locality
2.3.4 Interpretation of Decisions
3. Social Work Implications
4. Reflection on Interviews

After the final review of the structured content analysis, MAXQDA-tools were used for data output.

5 Research Results

5.1 Recruitment of Interviewees and Experts

Interviewees in Germany were recruited by using a snowball system. Overall contact to eight Syrian refugees was established. Two of them had no time during the period for interviews. Two more were excluded after a pre-screening. One of them had insufficient language proficiency, the other one was excluded because of ethical concerns as he was in an emotional crisis. The aim to interview an employed person or someone who had children remained unaccomplished. However, diversity among interviewees regarding gender, traveling routes, religious beliefs, educational backgrounds, occupational experiences, and political involvement was achieved. The experts were recruited during the mobilities of a DAAD funded Higher Education Dialogue programme. It became apparent that the chosen topic may cause tensions due to the political sensitivity about issues related to refugees in neighbouring countries. Interviewed experts may face individual or professional consequences if they speak openly or if they are politically biased. Therefore, it was important to build up a trusting relationship that was built up in personal meetings and to preserve confidentiality.

5.2 Case Presentations

In the following section, the four Syrian interviewees are introduced.

5.2.1   Adnan[5]

Adnan is a Muslim who used to live in Aleppo. He left Syria after having finished his bachelor's degree in archaeology in 2012. He is single and speaks Kurdish, English, and German besides his mother tongue, Arabic. In Lebanon, he started studying a master's degree in archaeology but had to discontinue it before graduating. He chose Lebanon for his studies because it was difficult for him to study in Syria and the short distance to Syria allowed him to visit his family. His plan was to return to Syria once the master's course would have been completed. His passport expired in August 2015 and Adnan was not able to renew it. He had not done his military service yet and could not go to the embassy. For him, it was not an option to stay in Lebanon without legal status. Adnan had a Syrian friend in Turkey and they started gathering information about possible routes to Europe via social media. In July 2015, Adnan arrived in Germany and soon moved into a rented flat. The rent is paid by a scholarship that covers daily expenses and a language course. Learning the language is perceived as the greatest challenge. Adnan is volunteering as a translator with the Red Cross and plans to (re)start his master's course in archaeology.

5.2.2   Maya

Maya is 38 years old, married, and describes herself as non-religious. She grew up in a rural area outside of Aleppo. Maya has a bachelor's degree in informatics and speaks, besides her mother tongue of Arabic, English, German, and French. In Syria, she was a lecturer at a private university and worked for the Syrian government as head of the institute for languages in a cultural centre. In 2013, she moved with her husband to Lebanon and found a job as an educational field officer with the Norwegian Refugee Council. Her husband did not find employment. The couple decided that Maya's husband should flee to Europe alone as no financial means for travelling together were available. In May 2015, he was granted refugee status in Germany and applied for family reunification. Maya had to wait another year and a half until she could get an appointment at the embassy and another five months until she finally flew to Germany. She considered destinations in other Arabic countries because her family is living there, but she did not see employment opportunities and a future for her planned child in these countries. Maya has lived in Germany since August 2017 and struggles with learning the language. She resides in a women's shelter and is searching for employment.

5.2.3   Khaled

Khaled grew up in Homs, is single, and arrived in Germany in 2015. He finished his high school education in Syria and worked afterwards as an IT-technician in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Besides his mother tongue (Arabic), he speaks English and German. After having worked in Saudi Arabia for a year, the war in Syria started. Khaled returned to Syria to join the revolution. When the situation became life-threatening for him, he used his contacts in Saudi Arabia and got a visa. Later he went to Turkey, where he saw no perspective for himself and felt that he could either return to Syria or go to Europe. He met two Syrians who offered to arrange the sea-crossing to Greece. However, he distrusted these persons and refused their offer. He met another Syrian man and slowly

---

[5] For confidentiality reasons, all names have been changed and assumed names are used for publishing.

they built up trust and continued their journey together. By chance, they got in contact with a smuggler and deposited money that would be disbursed after their arrival in Greece. On the journey, the motor of the rubber boat broke and Khaled describes that he had to swim.

5.2.4   Hakim

Hakim is 19 years old, Muslim, and grew up in Aleppo. He speaks Arabic, German, and has basic English knowledge. When Hakim was about 13 years old, he and his family fled from Syria to Turkey. From there, they continued to Egypt where they live with a cousin. In the beginning, the life situation in Egypt was experienced as pleasant and calm. In particular, having the same language, similarities in cultures, and the proximity to Syria were perceived positively. When the political situation in Egypt changed, Hakim's family had to flee once more to Istanbul. One of his uncles was already in town and had a job, Hakim attended school for half a year, and his brother found employment. The generated income was insufficient to sustain the family for a long period because the costs of living were too high. Therefore, the whole family moved to Mersin which is located further east and closer to the Syrian border. Despite his age, Hakim had to work in several places. One employer told Hakim to go to Germany as his educational and personal prospects would be far better there. In 2015, he paid for the sea crossing by boat to Greece, left his family, and arrived two weeks later in Germany.

5.3   Factors in the Decision-making Process

The following research results are divided between structural and individual factors; this allows a distinction between factors that are applicable to most or all Syrian refugees and factors that are distinct for each individual. These two categories are not applied exclusively, therefore overlapping is possible. Afterwards, aspects of decision taking are presented.

5.3.1   Structural Factors

Structural factors in countries of destination, transit, and arrival are organised in categories adapted from Lee's push and pull model (1966). Obstacles, such as border regimes and migration dynamics are considered within this category of structural factors as they are beyond individual control.

The situation in Syria affected the four interviewees differently. Maya reports that the war situation caused missing freedom, an infringement of basic needs, and was the main reason to leave Syria. Further problems such as power cuts for several days, general lack of support, problems to fulfil daily tasks, or intermissions in schooling effected daily life. Maya describes the situation as follows:

> "I found myself like I am dying so slowly. […] The easy thing that you got used to have, it was that time, very difficult. Very difficult to achieve. Everything. Everything, from bread to whatever you like. When you find that, in the war you are not able, you cannot be part of this world."

Besides differences in gender aspects, age seems to influence the pressure for flight. Young men are especially at risk for becoming a conscript. Interviewees describe having only three options: support the Syrian regime, the opposition, or flee from Syria. Other

negative factors such as a lack of women's rights, corruption, and insufficient possibilities for education or occupation are not directly linked to war. Some other factors are appreciated about life in Syria. Political involvement and change of the circumstances in their country of origin is considered one reason for staying in or returning to Syria as well as proximity to family. Especially cultural aspects such as socialising and building up friendships are positive aspects about Syria, as highlighted by Khaled:

> "We are social people, like we make friends for nothing. Sitting, waiting for a bus in Syria and the guy next to me, we start talking and we are friends."

Narratives about the situation in transit countries vary highly regarding the level of details. To be able to understand the situation of Syrian refugees in transit countries, the political situation and historical migration movements in each country must be considered separately. The high number of Syrian refugees, in combination with pre-existing refugee communities, puts immense pressure on neighbouring countries: Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Expert 2 highlights that in Lebanon, refugees often live in scattered tents, face precarious living conditions, face prejudices, and are affected by the governmental non-interference approach and its inability to support even Lebanese citizens. The access to residency status is an important factor that influences possibilities to settle. Beside these exemplary challenging factors, positive social factors of living in neighbouring countries exist. The proximity to the area of origin makes travelling easier and may allow one to visit relatives who are in Syria. Support may be received from family members, and speaking the same language allows them to communicate easily with the host community. Hakim's interpretation of Islam allows him to obey its religious rules only in Muslim countries. Turkey is a bottle neck as the Eastern Mediterranean route starts in this country. At the time when the three male interviewees entered Turkey, there were no specific entry conditions for Syrians. Although safety is secured in a certain country, poverty and a rise in living costs may force Syrian refugees to move to another place. Decision-making processes in transit countries are partially based on a rational weighing of holding or attracting factors and repelling factors. Contradictory statements in the interviews disclose that Syrian refugees often face situations in transit countries in which no loophole can be found, the consequences of decisions are unforeseeable, and the possibilities for informed choices are very limited.

The prospect of living in safety is one of the main attractive factors named by interviewees regarding Germany. Another attracting factor is the individual freedom. Furthermore, the distinctiveness of rules, the general structured organisation of things, as well as the low level of arbitrariness from governmental institutions is mentioned by interviewees. Whilst Maya emphasises that she never faced harassment from the host society in Germany and that she feels respected, Khaled reports about discrimination. All interviewees want to stay in Germany for at least the next five years and probably permanently. Current goals of interviewees are described clearly and mainly focus on education, work, and German language acquisition. The prospects and goals of the four interviewees reflect changing life realities of Syrian refugees who are living in Europe. These changes are predicted in the elaborations of expert 1 from Jordan. Moving to another country often means making some sacrifices and is a hard and far-reaching decision. The loss of social and family contacts was expressed by all four interviewees as well as other similar repelling factors. Learning the German language is considered the greatest challenge by three interviewees. The other main challenge is to get used to the culture and to arrange with daily living tasks whilst residing in a foreign country.

Limited access to financial means is described as one of the main obstacles to reach further flight stages. Furthermore, border crossings are described as hazardous. Adnan and Hakim were afraid of being beaten or imprisoned if caught by the Hungarian police. Further risks include intentional harm, such as deception by smugglers and exploitation by people, or severe weather conditions during sea crossings. After arrival in Europe, Hakim experienced the situation in Greece as the main challenge during flight and even considered returning to Syria:

> "When I reached Greece, I said to myself: 'If I had stayed in Syria, I would be better off than in Greece.' In Syria the government was against us, they rant and rave at us, and they make everything against us. However, it was better than the government in Greece or the people who are there. They treated us badly."

Further obstacles on the move that relate to daily living needs are described; these include inappropriate sleeping conditions, missing hygiene facilities, restrictions on movement by police, as well as limited food intake. In Maya's case, the main obstacle was to get an appointment at the German Embassy in Beirut. New obstacles arise or known obstacles may decrease as time passes and the situation changes. In 2015, it was possible for Syrians to enter Turkey without a visa; this changed in the beginning of 2016 and impedes entry. The situation in Europe is always changing as well, and moving into and within Europe has become even more difficult. Hakim describes the connection between international media presence in Hungary and eased conditions for the journey through the country. When he arrived at the border, Hakim was fortunate that it was open; this changed shortly after he passed. These dynamics are hardly predictable and are considered as being a structural factor because driving forces arise that lay beyond individual control. The observation of others who are moving to Europe was mentioned by all four interviewees. Hakim describes that the main aim in this flight movement is to be on the move and therefore, to save time, retain resources, and reduce risks. Khaled describes his experiences of being in this flight movement as follows:

> "We do not know what next. We just do it. And this kind of/ this adventure, it is dangerous, and it is funny at the same time. [...] You do not know if the Greece people, they accept you? The government, they will give you shelter or money, or food or anything? Or you just will be in the streets or police or anything. We just crossed the sea and we are planning each step alone, because you cannot plan the whole journey. Yeah, and we just went there, and the thing was a little bit easy. It was a little bit dangerous crossing the sea, of course, and we swim."

5.3.2 Individual Factors

Individual factors relate to situations at all stages of flight and focus on the interviewees' explanation of interrelations. The qualitative content analysis revealed six main individual factors (Expectations; Prioritising of needs; Received Support; Agency of refugees; Information; Trustworthiness) that are presented in the following paragraphs. The retrospective approach of this research project allows an analysis of the consequences of these factors on the whole decision-making process.

The expectations towards Germany are similarly positive among the interviewees and a familiarity with the life situation is anticipated. Life in Europe is often perceived by interviewees as being a dream or a life in paradise, but differences between European Member States are recognised. The perception that leads to the general assumption that

Europe is a dreamland can be divided into several aspects. First, Europe is perceived as being a safe and free place. In addition, the labour situation is anticipated to be prosperous. Furthermore, the general life situation is seen as positive and the interviewees expect better (financial) opportunities. The retrospective approach in this research project allows one to scrutinise these assumptions.

The previously named problems in Germany indicate that purely positive expectations will most likely be challenged to some extent. When analysing the excerpts, it becomes apparent that the expectations of all interviewees changed in some way after arrival in Germany as they were validated by individual experiences. When faced with life realities at the destination, interviewees describe overly idealised expectations. Some of them were exceeded whilst others proved to be untrue. Khaled describes his disappointment and critical view on his own expectations as follows:

> "That is what we know and one big fault of me or other people, what we thought about Germany, it was like, those here would be like, too much work and very easy to earn money and would be very easy, rich life. Like, one or two years, you will have a house, you have a car, you have a very good job, and very big, decent money. This I cannot support."

The analysis of the interviews showed that the prioritisation of different needs had an influence on the decision-making process, and that the decision for onward movement had consequences for the fulfilment of individual needs. Interviewees differentiate between basic needs, such as nutrition, livelihood, or safety, and additional needs like freedom, education, or proximity to family. Adnan describes his situation as follows:

> "First step, food, safe place, and like some of the most important things. Electricity, just a comfortable bed, sleep. This is the basic. [...] But as a normal person, when you got it, you have to think about your life as a person."

The interviewees prioritised individual needs in very different ways. When living in Lebanon, Adnan had to decide whether he wanted to stay close to his relatives, and therefore be exposed to danger, or move onward and live far away from his family but with increased security and more possibilities for individual development. Maya describes two main unfulfilled needs that caused migration. First, her husband could not find employment. Second, she wanted to have a baby and saw no possibility for family planning in Lebanon. When Khaled stayed in Turkey, he considered going back to Syria. He decided against this option because he envisioned his life at risk. Similarly, staying in Turkey was not an option, as he would have been forced to live on the street. Despite Hakims preference towards Turkey, he moved onwards as he could not continue his education in Turkey.

Support from others is required to finance or organise life in transit countries and to finance and plan onward movement. The main resources for all interviewees at different stages of flight are friends and family. The ability to cope with strains in transit countries depends on support from others. Adnan, for example, needed financial support from friends to be able to provide a bank deposit that would have allowed him to stay in Lebanon. Maya describes that she received support from her landlord, who stood surety for her stay in Lebanon. A friend of Khaled helped him to acquire the visa for Saudi Arabia, and Hakim was supported by family members and friends. The prevalence of supporting structures among Syrian refugees in transit countries is confirmed in the expert interviews. Cases in which Syrians share rent or send remittances to relatives are described. Often,

financial means for onward movement cannot be generated by the individual on her or his own. Therefore, funding from friends or family members was of high importance. In addition, mutual support from friends 'on the move' was named as the main resource to manage onward movement. Support was provided in the form of shared knowledge, shared efforts to organise onward movement, mutual reassurance and safeguarding, and company in general. Throughout the interviews it became apparent that interviewees distrusted governmental and non-governmental support. Information provided in leaflets or by non-governmental organisations [NGOs] is seen critically.

Coping strategies of interviewees can be detected on several levels, at different stages of flight, and even during the interview. The variety ranges from Adnan's considerations to secure his social protection in Syria by having more children to Khaled's handling of the difficult sea crossing to Greece. During flight, different coping strategies became apparent. The previously named support by and for others is important as it reduces risks. Furthermore, Khaled describes the usage of services of an office in Turkey where he deposited the payment for the smuggler until he reached Greece. Besides this, Hakim describes support from Syrian Samaritans in Turkey who advocate for fellow Syrians, provide employment opportunities, or help to organise onward movement. In addition, excerpts of the interviews indicate coping strategies in Germany. All four interviewees approach challenges in their own individual way. Adnan is very interested in social contacts with the host society, but his main ambition is becoming an archaeologist. He interprets challenges in relation to meeting this goal. Maya is mainly challenged by her current life situation and, therefore, searched for support in a women's shelter. Khaled feels that he has to constantly fight and struggle with the political and societal system and change it by this means. Finally, Hakim describes life as having always been difficult. If something is to be achieved, he needs to work hard towards his goals.

Word-of-mouth information from fellow Syrians is the main source of information, as described by Maya: "You know, because the information that we got from people, usually we trust more. Yeah, because it depends on Syrians." During flight, information from friends or acquaintances who are also traveling, or who travelled before, were of especially high importance for the interviewees. Telephones or mobile devices are used to communicate with families or other persons and to receive information. The interviewees mentioned that the content of information has regard to four main topics. First, information on possible routes to Europe is passed on. Second, information on the situation in Germany is received before arrival and shared with relatives and friends after arrival at the destination. Despite this, the knowledge of interviewees about the asylum procedure before entering Europe remained scarce. Third, the progress of flight is shared with relatives in Syria or in transit. Finally, circumstances in Syria and possible return prospects are discussed. Official web pages are not commonly used by the interviewees. Media coverage plays an ambiguous, but important, role for the interviewees. First, media in the form of movies as well as news shape the individual image of Europe. Second, information about the situation in Syria is gathered via media reports. Third, media coverage is described to influence the public opinion towards refugees in transit countries.

At different stages of the decision-making process, the establishment of trust or distrust has an importance. Khaled, who travelled in the beginning on his own, finds the establishment of trust difficult and hazardous: "Trust everyone and do not trust anyone. It is complicated, because you should trust someone." The individual interpretation about

the validity of information has an influence as well as trust in other migrating Syrians or distrust in smugglers and governments. The interviewees mostly had a clear opinion about whether they could trust persons, sources of information, private institutions, or public bodies. Individuals who are known personally, and to whom a relationship exists, are trusted most by the interviewees. Furthermore, excerpts indicate that other Syrians in general, and Syrians who are in the flight movement, receive trust, and their information is perceived to be true. Because of their experiences, the Syrian regime is distrusted in general by the interviewees. This mistrust is transferred to other governments and their institutions.

5.3.3 Decision taking

Overall, four categories (actors, form of decision, time, and locality) that influence decision taking were derived in the content analysis. During the interviews, all participants presented themselves, to a certain extent, as decision takers in the decision to move onwards. Although pressure was put on Adnan because of his expiring passport, he states clearly that he was the person who decided to move onwards. Maya expressed reservation towards the decision to leave Lebanon but decided, together with her husband, that he should move first and that she would follow. When Khaled was in Turkey, he had the option to either return to Syria, to stay in Turkey, or to travel to Europe. His family stopped him from going to Syria as they feared for his life, so he decided for the other option. The decision to move to Europe enabled Hakim to detach from his family: "They let me so that I could decide. That was a great moment for me. I want to live MYSELF, with my [own] family, and then I can gather more experiences." The involvement of other persons or actors in the decision-making process, as well as in the decision taking, is manifold. The previous elaboration on received support highlights that the possibility to take a decision may depend on others. Furthermore, it is described that decisions are taken in agreement with other persons that are not relatives. States influence possibilities for decision taking through border policies and media coverage which may change the host society's perception of refugees and either force them to leave or to open previously closed borders. Even though each interviewee took the decision to move onward for himself or herself, in every case, other persons or actors were involved.

The evaluation of the decision to leave the transit country and to flee to Germany varies between the four Syrian interviewees. Although Khaled opposes the Syrian regime and is aware of security issues, he sees the situation in Syria as slightly better than in the transit country, Saudi Arabia. Adnan describes quality of life in Germany as being good, as he neither experienced the same level of safety in Syria nor in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the flight to Germany left him on his own and with a feeling of being detached from family and friends. Maya rates the quality of life in Germany and in Lebanon as similar. The ambiguity and the frustration about her current situation in Germany is reflected in the excerpts. Khaled describes an initial disappointment about Germany and asserts that it is not the ideal destination for all Syrian refugees. However, in Germany he found the freedom and democracy that he wanted to fight for in Syria. Hakim describes that the most desired place of living for him would be Istanbul, if he had the educational possibilities. In Germany, the main problem for Hakim is his inability to practice Islam in accordance with his standards.

The time and place of decision-making cannot be reduced to a single moment or incident. The case presentations illustrate that decision taking often depends on having reached certain requirements, such as physical safety, in neighbouring countries. All participants describe that in the early stages of the war in Syria, and at the beginning of their flight, they did not consider fleeing to Europe. This tendency is clearly visible in Adnan's comment: "The decision from Syria to Germany it was not in the plan. Like to come to Germany it was NEVER EVER in the plan. The first decision was to go to Lebanon after my studies." As indicated before, the decision-making process is not a linear process; therefore, the choice of a destination country is not always predictable. This process includes decisions that are not taken autonomously by individuals. This makes it necessary to consider structural factors that influence the outcome. Nevertheless, an individual weighing of possible prospects and expectations leads interviewees to favour a specific place or country. Especially in the retrospective considerations of interviewees, positive, as well as negative, aspects of Germany are weighed. Regarding the decision about the locality, not only European States were considered by interviewees. Return prospects to Syria are described; however, this alternative has been discarded due to security reasons.

6   Discussion

6.1   Decision-making of Syrian Refugees 'on the Move'

The constructive approach of this research study helped to reveal the processual character of decision-making and to understand expectations and prospects of Syrian refugees 'on the move'. The importance of analysing refugee movements as multi-step movements is highlighted in different migration models (Brekke & Aarset, 2009; Kunz, 1973; Robinson & Segrott, 2002). Decision-making is described as a process that includes multiple decisions and the evaluation of information (Brekke & Aarset, 2009). In the determination of factors that influence decision-making, it proved to be useful to consider this processual character. It allows the revelation of influences at different locations and points in time. The processual character limits predictions about outcomes but allows the acknowledgement of constantly changing routes, general conditions, and individual reasoning. The research findings on factors that influence the decision-making processes are discussed in the following sections. To make the results more accessible, the process is visualised in figure 2:

Figure 2: Decision-making Process of Syrian Refugees
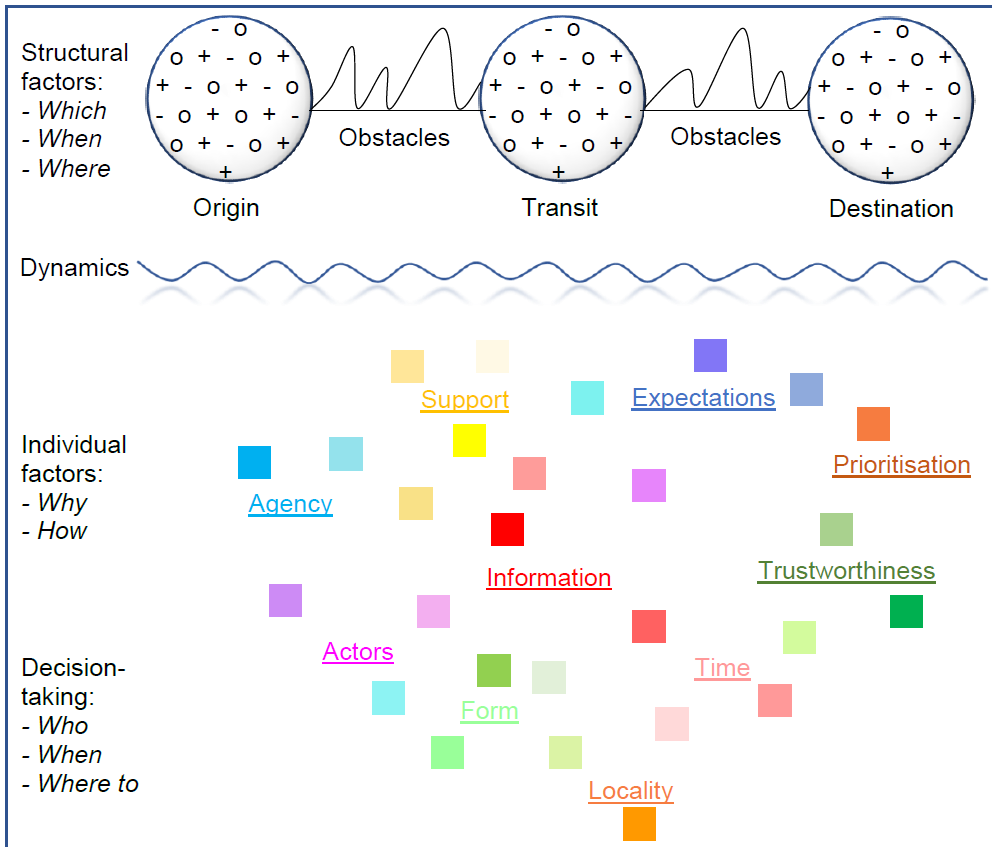
The first level represents structural factors. On this level, the question of which circumstances influence decisions in Syria, transit countries, and in Germany is considered. Many factors that can be put in accordance with Lee's push and pull model (1966) were named by the interviewees. Furthermore, the research reveals when and where barriers and structural factors are important for the individual. The retrospective approach enables a consideration of structural factors from different points of time and localities. Depending on the stage of flight, the interpretation and influence of structural factors and obstacles may change. The second level is titled dynamics. It acknowledges flight dynamics as well as changes in migration policies. On the third level, the six individual factors are displayed. The main question on this level is why and how decisions have been taken. The colour-coding illustrates the overlapping and interconnectedness of different factors. The final, and fourth, level considers the actual decisions-taking and includes the four categories 'Actors', 'Form', 'Time', and 'Locality'. The question of who is taking the decision is elaborated. Furthermore, the temporal aspect of when, and the decision on the locality (described by 'where to'), is discussed.

The precarious situations of Syrian refugees in transit countries is one main factor that influences the decision-making process as well as pull factors in Europe (Brekke & Aarset,

2009). Factors such as infringement of personal safety in Syria and aspiration for safety, freedom, education, distinctive rules, or low level of arbitrariness are confirmed in this study. Lee's push and pull model (1966) was one of the most useful models to describe holding or attracting, as well as repelling, factors at different stages of flight. The inductive coding process revealed factors that were favourable whilst living in Syria. These factors include the desire to influence the outcome of the Syrian war, to help people in Syria, to sustain proximity to family members, and to maintain traditional family structures. Likewise, factors in destination countries are not exclusively appealing but can be repelling as well. Two factors that are named by Khaled and Hakim should be highlighted as they mostly remain unmentioned in current research about decision-making processes. Cultural and religious challenges at the destination are seen as being repelling factors, to the extent that they would not recommend coming to Germany to all people, especially not to religious or traditional Syrians. Further research will need to consider the situation in transit countries in more depth, as many decisions of refugees depend on the situation in these countries. The cases of Adnan and Khaled highlight that emigrants might become refugees whilst being in a foreign country. Despite all challenges, interviewees worked in transit countries and planned to build a life there until they were forced by strains to move onwards. The main push factors in transit countries named in current research are confirmed by the statements of the interviewees. These include the absence of perspectives, inadequate support, precarious residency status, limited and low standard educational offers, insufficient and insecure working conditions, a lack of livelihood opportunities, and discrimination or exploitation. Besides these push factors, appealing factors in transit countries persist. The same language, similar cultural and religious background, proximity to Syria, and reciprocal support from family members is named. In addition, changing family structures and roles of women may occur when fleeing to neighbouring countries. Although the consideration of push and pull factors is important, a simplified analysis of push factors at the origin and pull factors at the destination has clear limitations and should not be used as the sole interpretation of decision making. In previous research on Syrian refugees, financial strains were named as the main obstacle for onward movement (DRC, 2016: 4). This finding was confirmed in the interviews. It is indicated that refugees do not "trivialize information about risks. Instead, they attempt to estimate risks by weighing encouraging and discouraging information" (Dekker et al., 2018: 10). Risks remain an obstacle for Syrian refugees. They include intended harm by smugglers, fraudsters, and governmental bodies and unintentional harm during the sea crossing or because of adverse weather conditions.

In addition to considerations about the push and pull model, additional dynamics that influence decision-making process are discussed in current research studies as well as by the interviewees. Brekke and Aarset (2009), for example, name changes in border policies and information flows. Furthermore, interpersonal migration dynamics and the prolonged refugee situations in transit countries have an influence. Syrian refugees may be forced to move onwards when resources are exhausted, hope for the future decreases, and return prospects vanish. It must be stressed that border policies have changed in recent years. When the research was conducted, hostile policies and the enforcement of border controls nearly completely stopped onward movement of Syrian refugees on the Eastern Mediterranean route (European Commission, 2018). In this research, no clear distinction between factors that forced Syrians to move onwards and factors that only promote onwards movement was made. The understanding of migration decisions within a

continuum (Bartram et al., 2014; Hugo et al., 2018; Schuster, 2016) seemed more appropriate.

The qualitative content analysis revealed six main individual factors that influence decision making: expectations, prioritisation of needs, received support, agency of the refugee, information, and trustworthiness. These factors cannot be interpreted in isolation as they may overlap at certain stages and influence each other. The gradual character of migration and decision-making processes that include forcing factors, as well as rational individual factors, (Schuster, 2016: 297) became apparent in the interviews. Hakim names educational opportunities as the main reason for onward movement to Europe. Maya and Adnan left Syria for educational and occupational reasons and only at a later point received a protection status. The division between structural and individual factors (Koser & Kuschminder, 2016) helped to distinguish between influencing factors. Despite this advantage, the general distinction between structural and individual factors has its limitations. A clear coding and classification of factors such as expectations can be problematic. In the qualitative content analysis, it was revealed that to a certain extent interviewees do not or cannot distinguish between expectations and actual prospects. Resulting from this inability, individual perceptions change and the interviewees are positively surprised or disillusioned after arrival in Germany.

Expectations of the interviewees mainly conform with expectations that were named in previous research studies. Nevertheless, the retrospective approach made it possible to analyse the change of expectations in greater detail and showed that influence of expectations, either mistaken or justified should not be underestimated. The consideration and weighing of needs becomes important in transit countries. Often, the need for freedom, education, and social security is infringed in transit countries. It can be expected that this sample group, which is aged between 19 and 38 years, has different needs than other groups of Syrian refugees and, therefore, Khaled and Hakim would advise elderly and traditional Syrians to stay in neighbouring countries. This tendency is also depicted in the research study by the DRC (2016). Financial support from family members and friends is the main factor that enables Syrian refugees to move onwards (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017). This finding is confirmed by the interviewees. At the same time, support in transit countries increases the ability to cope with adverse living conditions and may encourage a longer stay. 'On the move'-support from fellow Syrians is the main source of assistance. Smugglers are only used for a specific and limited timeframe. Even though Khaled described that he moved to a place where he could cross the sea more easily, no direct or long-lasting influence of smugglers on the decision-making process could be detected.

Agency of interviewees and attempts to increase capacity are detectable on different levels. Excerpts suggest that interviewees were actively involved in changing their own and others' situation at all stages of flight. An additional and important coping strategy is the ability to adapt to new circumstances. Brekke and Aarset (2009) highlight the importance of counter flows of information that evolve after first refugees arrive at the destination. Results of the qualitative content analysis and of the literature review assert that these flows support subsequent Syrian refugees and provide useful insight. The availability and content of information influences the decision-making process directly and indirectly. The importance of mobile devices is stressed in current research and by research findings of this project. Word-of-mouth communication with fellow Syrians is the main source of

information. 'On the move'-advice from friends or acquaintances who are in the same situation is especially important. Previous research by the DRC (2016) and the results from the content analysis highlight that direct and in-depth knowledge of Syrian refugees about the asylum system in Europe does not persist. If knowledge is available, it concerns procedures for family reunification. Findings of this research project on the perceived trustworthiness towards other persons confirm findings of research by Dekker et al. (2018) and the DRC (2016). Family members and direct contacts with strong social bonds are trusted most by Syrian refugees. The general suspicion towards official sources and the inadequate provision of information by these sources is a re-emerging theme.

Rational choices were made by all interviewees. Hakim names educational opportunities as the main reason for onward movement to Europe. Maya and Adnan left Syria for educational and occupational reasons and only at a later point received a protection status. The actual decision taking regarding onwards migration of Syrian refugees has received limited attention in previous research. Research on forced migration and Syrian refugees' decision-making either arranges influencing factors in a hierarchy (DRC, 2016; UNHCR, 2017) or focuses on the influence of smugglers or agents (Brekke & Aarset, 2009; Robinson & Segrott, 2002). The role of the individual refugee and his or her reasoning may be neglected in such attempts. All interviewees expressed an exertion of influence on the decision-making process. At the same time, other persons, such as family members or friends, clearly influenced the outcome of the decision. The decision-making process cannot be reduced to a single moment or incident. Some decisions can only be taken after having reached a certain stage. For all interviewees, moving to Europe became an option after having spent time in transit countries and having considered other possible destinations. Once they had arrived in Europe, Germany was clearly favoured because the situation was perceived as being the best for refugees. The scope of this research project does not allow for further elaborations on the decision-making process. Future research could analyse individual factors to reveal mechanisms that explain decision-making processes further and allow predictions.

6.2   Social Work Perspective

Supporting decision-making processes remains highly difficult in practice-oriented social work and in the context of flight. First, Syrians experience arbitrariness and deception at different stages and, thus, have a high distrust in institutions such as NGOs. Second, social work engages with different actors and the role of social work might remain unclear. Third, during acute flight movements, the circumstances may change quickly and first-hand information is needed. Therefore, it is difficult for social workers to provide appropriate information. Fourth, cross-border movements affect social work that is embedded in national structures. The named challenges make it necessary to consider the social work profession and discipline critically.

Four recommendations for social work are developed in this research. First, social work practitioners and researchers should be aware that they might be distrusted. Syrian refugees cannot be expected to build trust quickly, to have knowledge about the national support and welfare structure, and to demand the services they are entitled to. Time is needed to establish a trusting relationship and to explain structures in the new environment. This approach may prevent false transfer of information, but it could also be used to deter refugees from entering Europe and claiming humanitarian rights. In light of

this discrepancy, social work must take on responsibility for its actions (Scherr, 2018) in order to build and preserve trust. Second, professionals must acknowledge individual perspectives in the decision-making process. A unidirectional interpretation of push and pull factors neglects life realities of Syrian refugees. Life in Syria is not only repelling and life in Germany not solely appealing. Holistic counselling needs to acknowledge differing individual interpretation and reasoning. Third, it became apparent that professional social work interventions should address the difference between prospects, expectations, and challenges. If Syrian refugees become aware of the difference, disappointments after arrival at the destination might be reduced and informed choices might be promoted. Fourth, it is crucial to gain basic knowledge about the situation at different stages of flight. For social workers in transit countries, this knowledge is essential to be able to promote informed decisions. Evidence-based counselling may question idealised expectations, provide information about possible challenges, and allow for preparation. At the destination, it might be beneficial to include the flight history in the social anamnesis. Social work interventions that promote integration must acknowledge refugees' perspectives to prevent alienation and loss of identity.

7   Limitations

Qualitative content analysis has the advantage that implicit messages can be revealed by putting comments in the wider context of the statement. The advanced understanding of contents, that is not limited to the close meaning of a sentence or words, helps to compensate for possible language barriers. Qualitative content analysis can be applied to this research study as the research question is not completely open-ended and the step-by-step approach rather helps to structure the extensive data and does not necessarily lead to loss of information (Mayring, 2000, para. 27). After the development of the category description, an inter-coder reliability test is suggested (para. 7). In this research project, this verification was not possible due to time restrictions. Nevertheless, the category system was revised by a social science PhD student and the category description was checked for comprehensibility. The interview guideline could not be tested in a rehearsing interview with the target group. The recommended rehearsal (Gahleitner, 2005c: 48) was conducted with a fellow master's social work student instead.

Limitations in the theoretical sampling and in the later recruitment processes emerged. All Syrian interviewees were young adults between 19 and 38 years old. The decision to exclude translators and to conduct interviews only with persons who can express themselves in German or English proved to be helpful and beneficial. The direct contact gave space to establish trust and to address possible misunderstandings directly. Nevertheless, this decision excluded Syrian refugees who do not speak either of these two languages and who possibly face grater challenges at the destination. Further research may focus on Syrian refugees who are working, have limited German or English language skills, or on elderly Syrian refugees. The involvement of an expert from Jordan proved to be less important because none of the Syrian interviewees resided in Jordan before coming to Germany. Instead, it might have been more beneficial to recruit an expert from Turkey who could have given insight into the social work situation in this frequently mentioned transit country.

8   Conclusion

In this research project, the following question was answered by conducting a literature review and a qualitative content analysis: Which factors influence decision-making of Syrian refugees in the context of forced migration and flight? Six PCIs have been conducted with four Syrian refugees who reside in Germany and two social work experts from Jordan and Lebanon. The qualitative content analysis revealed factors on four levels that influence the decision-making process of Syrian refugees. The first level includes structural factors and represents appealing and repelling factors at origin, transit, and destination, as well as obstacles. The second level is characterised by flight dynamics and acknowledges policy impacts and changes over time. On the third level, six individual factors that influence decision-making have been presented. These are: expectations, prioritisation of needs, received support, agency of refugees, information, and trustworthiness. These factors may overlap and influence each other. The fourth level displays the actual decision taking of Syrian refugees as well as decision makers and locality. This research revealed new findings about the decision-making process of Syrian refugees. Expectations towards Germany change after arrival at the destination. Appealing factors exist in transit countries and in Syria. Religious and cultural differences can become repelling factors at the destination and may outweigh security needs of Syrian refugees.

A unified international social work response to the refugee crisis is hardly feasible because social work is implemented within national structures, has different resources, and has varying historical backgrounds. Difficulties such as a lack of trust in social work, unclear responsibilities, missing information, or different usage of terms can arise. Despite these problems, recommendations for social work have been developed. In this research study, it was not possible to quantify dynamics or structural and individual factors. As a result, only a low predictive value can be derived for these factors. Mechanisms behind decision-making processes, such as the interdependence between access to information and the prioritisation of desired destination countries, have not been analysed in this research project. Future research may be able to validate different factors and to derive underlying mechanisms.

References

Alhanaee, A., & Csala, D. (2015, December). *Motives to flee. Modeling Syrian refugee crisis [Working Paper].* https://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.2986.1524

Bartram, D., Poros M. V., & Monforte, P. (2014). *Key concepts in migration*. SAGE Publications. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473921061

Bellamy, C., Haysom, S., Wake, C., & Barbelet, V. (2017). *The lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees. A study of refugee perspectives and their institutional environment in Turkey and Jordan*. Overseas Development Institute. http://www.refworld.org/docid/58bd75394.html

Brekke, J.-P., & Aarset, M. F. (2009). *Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations.* Institute for Social Research. https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/beskyttelse/why-norway.pdf

Crawley, H. (2010). *Chance or choice? Understanding why asylum seekers come to the UK*. Refugee Council. https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0001/5702/rcchance.pdf

Danish Refugee Council (2016). *Middle East and North Africa regional report 2016. Going to Europe. A Syrian Perspective*. https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/syrian-refugees-going-to-europe-report-pdf.pdf

Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., Klaver, J., & Vonk, H. (2018). Smart refugees. How Syrian asylum migrants use social media information in migration decision-making. *Social Media + Society, 4*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118764439

Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., & Faber, M. (2015). The use of online media in migration networks. *Population, Space and Place*, *22*(6), 539-551. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1938

Dresing, T., Pehl, T., & Schmieder, C. (2015). *Manual (on) transcription. Transcription conventions, software guides and practical hints for qualitative researchers* (3rd English ed.). Marburg. https://www.audiotranskription.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/manual-on-transcription.pdf

European Asylum Support Office, Bijak, J., Hilton, J., & Forster, J. (2017). *Quantitative assessment of asylum-related migration. A survey of methodology*, Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2847/642161

European Commission. (2016). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Lives in dignity. From aid-dependence to self-reliance*. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf

European Commission. (2018). *EU-Turkey Statement. Two years on*. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/20180314_eu-turkey-two-years-on_en.pdf

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Loescher, G., Long, K., & Sigona, N. (2014). Introduction. Refugee and forced migration studies in transition. In E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, G. Loescher, K. Long, & N. Sigona (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of refugee & forced migration studies* (pp. 1-19). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199652433.013.0001

Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research*. (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Gahleitner, S. (2005a). Die Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse als flexible Auswertungsmethode in der Sozialforschung. In S. Gahleitner, S. Gerull, B. P. Ituarte, L. Schambach-Hardtke, & C. Streblow (Eds.), *Einführung in das Methodenspektrum sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung* (pp. 53-63). Schibri-Verlag.

Gahleitner, S. (2005b). Ethik in der sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung. In S. Gahleitner, S. Gerull, B. P. Ituarte, L. Schambach-Hardtke, & C. Streblow (Eds.), *Einführung in das Methodenspektrum sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung* (pp. 109-116). Schibri-Verlag.

Gahleitner, S. (2005c). Halbstrukturierte Erhebungsmethoden am Beispiel Problemzentrierter Interviews im Bereich Klinischer Sozialarbeit. In S. Gahleitner, S. Gerull, B. P. Ituarte, L. Schambach-Hardtke, & C. Streblow (Eds.), *Einführung in das Methodenspektrum sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung* (pp. 42-52). Schibri-Verlag.

Gillespie, M., Ampofo, L., Cheesman, M., Faith, B., Iliadou, E., Issa, A., Osseiran, S., & Skleparis, D. (2016). *Mapping refugee media journeys. Smartphones and social media networks*. The Open University/France Médias Monde. https://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15633.22888

Hagen-Zanker, J. (2008, January). *Why do people migrate? A review of the theoretical literature* (Working Paper No. MGSoG/2008/WP002). https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/28197/1/MPRA_paper_28197.pdf

Haug, S. (2008). Migration networks and migration decision-making. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 34*(4), 585-605. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830801961605

Hugo, G., Abbasi-Shavazi, M. J., & Kraly, E. P. (Eds.). (2018). *Demography of refugee and forced migration*. Springer International Publishing AG. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67147-5

International Federation of Social Workers. (2014, July). *Global Definition of Social Work*. http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work

Koser, K., & Kuschminder, K. (2016, September). *Understanding irregular migrants' decision making factors in transit* (Occasional Paper Series No. 21|2016). Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Research Programme Occasional Paper. http://hdl.handle.net/1814/45464

Kunz, E. F. (1973). The refugee in flight. Kinetic models and forms of displacement. *The International Migration Review, 7*(2), 125-146. https://doi.org/10.2307/3002424

Kuschminder, K., de Bresser, J., & Siegel, M. (2015). *Irregular migration routes to Europe and factors influencing migrants' destination choices.* Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum. https://www.merit.unu.edu/publications/uploads/1436958842.pdf

Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography, 3*(1), 47-57. https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *1*(2), 28 paragraphs. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.2.1089

Mayring, P. (2015). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* (12th ed., 1st ed. 1983). Beltz Verlag.

Napierała, J., Hilton, J., Forster, J. J., Carammia, M., & Bijak, J. (2022). Toward an early warning system for monitoring asylum-related migration flows in Europe. *International Migration Review*, *56*(1), 33–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183211035736

Ravenstein, E. G. (1885). The laws of migration. *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, *48*(2), 167-235. https://doi.org/10.2307/2979181

Robinson, V., & Segrott, J. (2002). *Understanding the decision-making of asylum seekers* (Home Office Research Study 243). https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.473.3461&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research. A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings* (3rd ed.). John Wiley and Sons.

Scherr, A. (2018). Flüchtlinge, nationaler Wohlfahrtsstaat und die Aufgaben Sozialer Arbeit [Refugees, national welfare state and tasks of social work]. In J. Broese, S. Faas, & B, Stauber (Eds.), *Flucht. Herausforderungen für Soziale Arbeit* (pp. 37-59). Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-17092-9_3

Schuster, L. (2016). Unmixing migrants and refugees. In A. Triandafyllidou (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of immigration and refugee studies* (pp. 279-303). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759302

Triandafyllidou, A. (2015. Migration and asylum in the twenty-first century. In A. Triandafyllidou (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of immigration and refugee studies* (pp. 1-22). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759302

UNHCR. (2015). *Seven factors behind movement of Syrian refugees to Europe.* http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2015/9/560523f26/seven-factors-behind-movement-syrian-refugees-europe.html

UNHCR. (2016). *Questionnaire findings for Syrians in Greece.* https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/questionnaire-findings-syrians-greece-may-2016

UNHCR. (2017). *From a refugee perspective. Discourse of Arabic speaking and Afghan refugees and migrants on social media from March to December 2016.* http://www.unhcr.org/5909af4d4.pdf

UNHCR. (2022). *Seventh regional survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria.* https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93760

Vargas-Silva, C. (Ed.). (2012). *Handbook of research methods in migration*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Williams, C., & Graham, M. (2014). 'A world on the move': Migration, mobilities and social work. *The British Journal of Social Work, 44*(1), i1-i17. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcu058

Witzel, A. (2000). The problem-centered interview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. *1*(1), 26 paragraphs. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.1.1132

Zijlstra, J., & Van Liempt, I. (2017). Smart (phone) travelling. Understanding the use and impact of mobile technology on irregular migration journeys. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*, *3*, 174-191. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMBS.2017.083245