

Where are the Syrian war refugees?

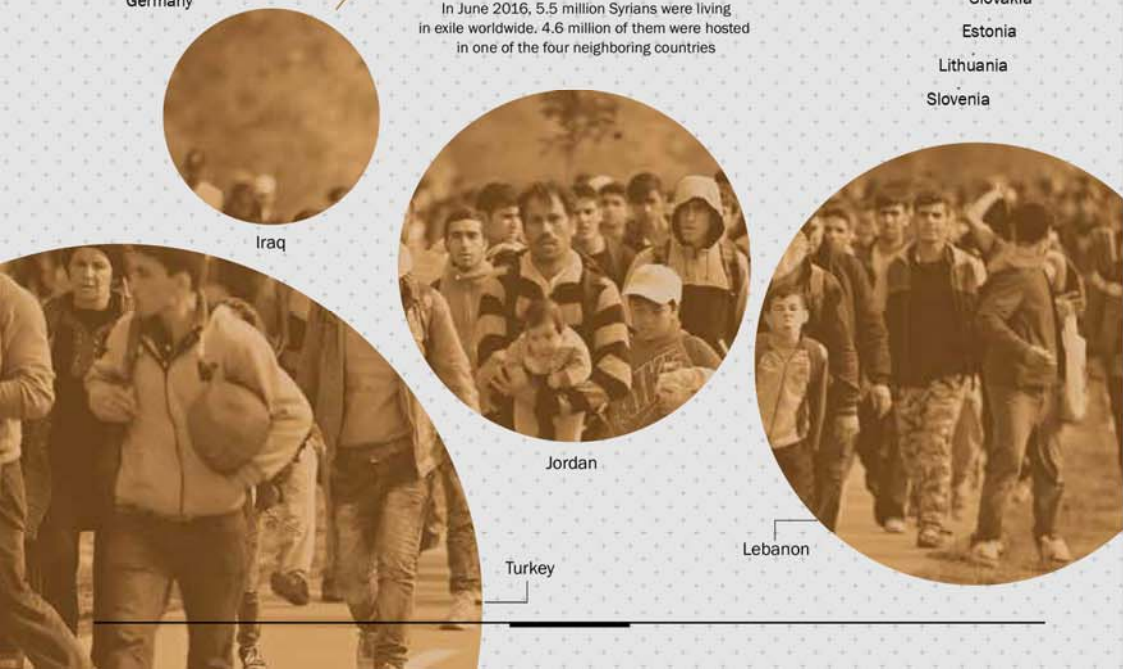
IN THE 28 MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Germany and Sweden alone are home to 70% of Syrian refugees residing in Europe.



IN THE FOUR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

In June 2016, 5.5 million Syrians were living in exile worldwide. 4.6 million of them were hosted in one of the four neighboring countries



Lines in the sand

• DAVID LAGARDE •
MAPPING MIGRATION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

From open doors to barbed wire, the impact of national responses to refugee crises remains poorly understood. How do such diverse policies influence migrants' access to resources, coping strategies and itineraries? Drawing on his previous work as a cartographer, David Lagarde is analyzing the role of social networks in Syrian refugees' journeys to and from Jordan. As well as offering powerful visualizations of the conditions of movement at different spatial scales, his research shows how today's migratory paths are shaped by cross-border trade going back as far as the Ottoman era.



"Refugee movements are often influenced by previous migration flows and networks that are re-mobilized during a humanitarian crisis"

While a growing literature focuses on the role of social networks in migrants' decision-making and settlement in host societies, few studies have questioned their influence on itineraries. And even though most refugees stay in their region of origin, scant research has been devoted to forced migration in regions beyond Europe and North America.

CLOSED GATES

At the start of the summer of 2014, the UN estimated that around three million people had fled the Syrian conflict, mainly to Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. Faced with this population influx and fear of the jihadist threat, in June 2014 Jordan decided to close and increase surveillance of its border with Syria. Since then, only a few dozen Syrians a day have been allowed to enter the country.

Lebanon and Jordan. Fighting in Syria disrupted this trade, so from 2012 onwards a growing number of traders moved to northern Jordan on a more permanent basis. Their wives and children soon joined them as the Syrian regime increased its bombing of the Deir Mqaren area.

David's fieldwork shows that the social networks that Syrian asylum seekers relied on to access resources (such as transportation, border crossing, information about employment, housing, and healthcare), were directly affected by the progressive closure of Jordanian borders, together ...

Based on cross-interviews conducted from 2014 to 2015 in northern Jordan, David has reconstructed life migration histories for 24 people from the Syrian village of Deir Mqaren. His case studies illustrate the impact of the closure of the Jordanian borders and the changing characteristics of social ties migrants relied on to circumvent the new border regulations.

FLEEING VIOLENCE

Before the Syrian conflict, the main source of income for Deir Mqaren villagers was from dried fruits, nuts and 'traditional' sweet products, bought in Damascus and sold in



Premises of the international organizations involved in the Zaatar camp are surrounded by fences topped with barbed wire; the humanitarian area clearly stands out from the refugee one.

with the government's encampment policy. Increasingly, migrants were forced to rely on weaker ties.

These security measures also ultimately modified migrants' itineraries into the Hashemite kingdom. They became more dependent on migration management professionals (such as the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR, Jordanian border guards, and NGOs) as well as on smugglers, with profound impacts on migratory itineraries and coping strategies.

LONG-TERM MOBILITY

While most studies on Syrian migration focus only on the post-2011 refugee crisis, David argues that a continuum exists between what is considered voluntary migration, before 2011, and the current forced migration. "Refugee movements resulting from conflicts are often influenced by previous migration flows and correlated networks that

are re-mobilized during a humanitarian crisis. Mapping long-term mobility can help better understand the current forced migration processes and their connections with commercial and family strategies and other forms of social organization built over time."

"Information circulates rapidly within networks, with telephone numbers of 'reliable' people smugglers exchanged between relations and friends"

As Jordan's attitude toward Syrian refugees began to harden in 2014, and following a significant reduction in refugee aid from foreign governments, an increasing number of Syrians chose to continue their journey to more distant destinations, particularly Germany.

The overwhelming majority of refugees were forced to turn to 'illegal' channels. Migratory channels to Europe from Jordan soon ran alongside routes operated by networks of seasoned 'people smugglers'. "Information circulates rapidly within the networks, with the telephone numbers of 'reliable' people smugglers being exchanged between relations and friends," says David. "In the space of just a few months, as demand increased so the price of the journey from Turkey to Greece dropped considerably."

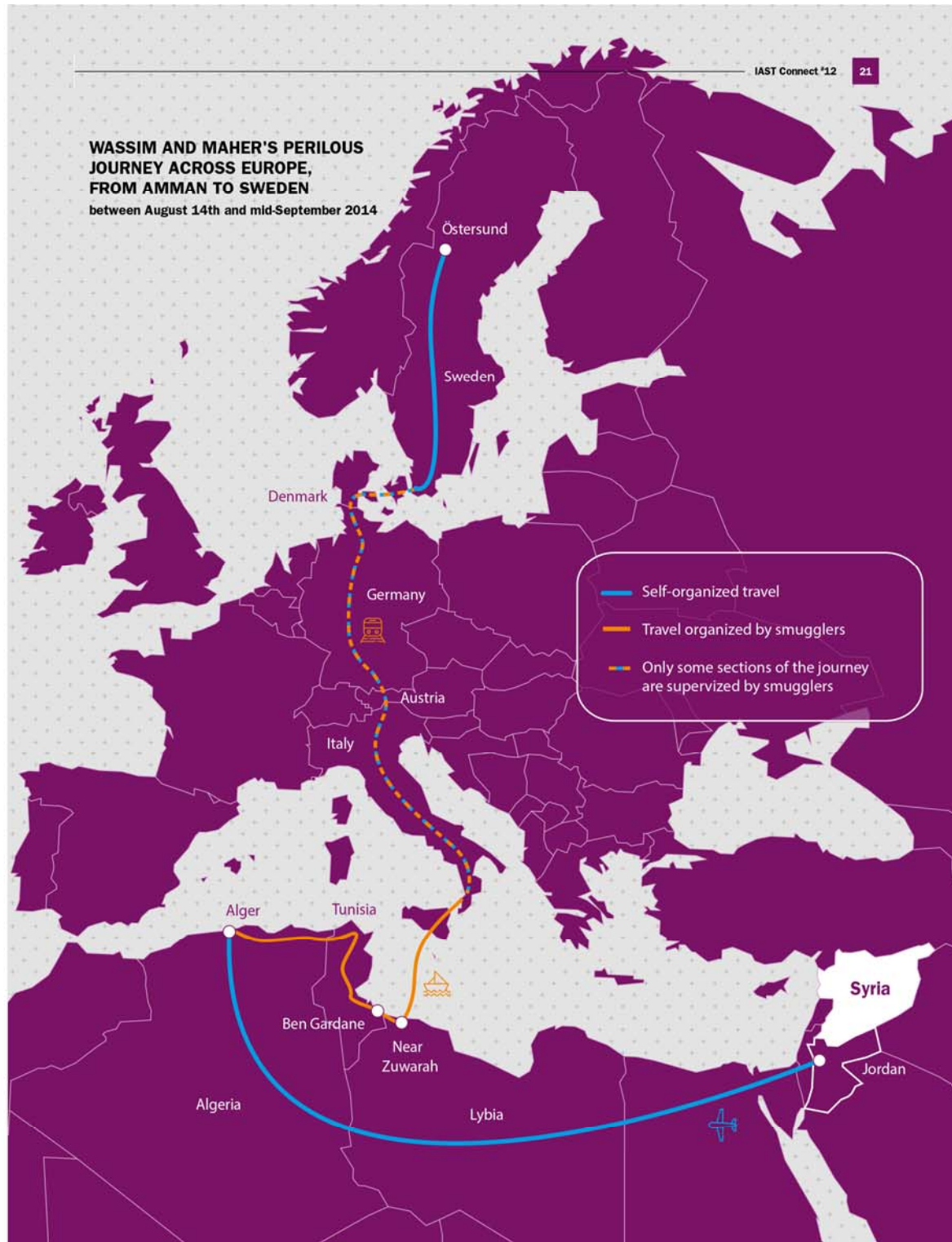
WELCOME TO GERMANY

Thanks to remote communication tools like Whatsapp and Facebook, David has kept in contact with some of the refugees he interviewed in Jordan. In July 2016, he travelled to Dortmund in Germany, to find out more about the new lives of a family from Deir Mqaren, using participant observation methods. The idea is to shed new light on the settling of a population from a rural area in an urban environment.

FIND OUT MORE

Nell is a visitor to IAST from Iowa State University. A significant part of her ethnographic research, including her book *The Politics of Suffering* (2016), is focused on the tensions surrounding urban planning in Palestinian refugee camps. She is currently conducting research on Palestinians who have been displaced by the war in Syria and have sought refuge in other parts of the Middle East and in Europe.

David is a Phd candidate in geography at Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire Solidarités, Sociétés, territoires, UT2. Co-authored with Kamel Dorai, his paper 'Host state policies and the changing role of social networks for Syrian refugees in Jordan' (2016) is published in *Espace, Populations, Sociétés*.



Amena's journey
from Damascus to Amman, with a failed attempt to legally reach Europe from Lebanon

Houman's journey
from Deir Mqaren to Irbid. First signs of blockages at the official border crossing points

