



HUMAN ROUTERS: How Syrian Refugee Brokers Build the Infrastructure of Displacement

ANN-CHRISTIN ZUNTZ

University of Edinburgh

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2904-8839>

Farhan,¹ a Syrian broker organizing money transfers for Syrian refugees in the United Kingdom,² goes by the nickname of “father of happiness,” a wordplay on the Arab custom to refer to adults by the name of their oldest child. Indeed, after Farhan fled to the United Kingdom to escape the Syrian conflict, his understanding of the affective (and economic) needs of fellow Syrians made him successful. In November 2019, he chose a meeting spot at a sophisticated gallery; he was keen for me to see him as a man equally at ease in the local Arabic-speaking community and at the heart of British and international culture. I had come to ask Farhan about his business. Sadly, well aware that money agents like himself were suspected of illegal transactions, he only spoke of his role in the broadest terms. Our polite but shallow chitchat was punctuated by frequent calls on Farhan’s phone. He occasionally picked up and gave brief instructions in Arabic. “I have a movement in Istanbul,” he explained to one caller. From the context, it became clear that remittances from Europe had arrived in Turkey, waiting for the right exchange rate to be converted into Turkish lira and transported to Syria. As I was listening in on Farhan’s conversation, UK-based refugees’ money traveled to their loved ones through material and virtual infrastructures such as banking and

roads, but just as much through human connections: a network of Syrian money brokers in different countries.

With 6.6 million Syrians displaced outside their home country, policymakers and media in the Global North have focused on refugees' dangerous south-north border crossings, and the people smugglers who enable them. The reality of displacement proves more complex: mobility remains an important feature of many refugees' lives, including after they have settled down more permanently (Fabos, Kahn, and Sarkis 2021). In everyday life, they resort to a rich ecosystem of brokers who facilitate the circulation of remittances, jobs, knowledge, spouses, and more. Anthropologists of the Middle East have extensively documented how people access resources through kinship structures (Joseph 1994, 2004). In prewar Syria, extended families often functioned as economic units, with different household members taking on paid or unpaid tasks (Chatty 2013; Rabo 2008; Rugh 1996). Today, resources shared through kinship networks remain the foundation of Syrian livelihoods in the Middle East (Lokot 2020; Zuntz 2021). Yet this tells us little about the ethnographic "black box" (Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012, 7) of displacement: how are Syrian refugees' circulations made possible, and by whom?

Proposing an analytical pivot from displaced people to their brokers, I put forward the novel concepts of a Syrian *infrastructure of displacement* and of refugee brokers as a particular infrastructural component: *human routers*. To make my point, I put into conversation the case studies of two Syrian brokers: Um Faisal, a street-smart entrepreneur in Turkey, and Farhan, the suave lawyer-turned-money agent in the United Kingdom. Farhan helps Syrians transfer remittances to those left behind in Syria, as well as to refugee diasporas in the Middle East and in Europe. Such monetary transactions are known among his customers as *hawalat*. From her living room in Gaziantep, Um Faisal runs cleaning and catering businesses that employ Syrian widows and divorcées. The wife of a former labor broker, a so-called *shaweesh*, she has set up her own group of workers. She also uses her contacts with private donors to channel aid and marriage proposals to the same women, in this regard operating as an occasional matchmaker, or *khataba*. A vast gulf of educational, social, and financial capital as well as geographic distance separate Um Faisal and Farhan, but their dissimilar services contribute to a broader Syrian "infrastructure of displacement."

In the widest sense, anthropologists understand material infrastructure as "matter that enable[s] the movement of other matter" (Larkin 2013, 329). However, infrastructures are not merely technical, but rather socio-technical: they bring together diverse things and people, often in unexpected, unstable, and contradictory

ways (Ash 2014; Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; Larkin 2013). As AbdouMalik Simone (2021) puts it, “the distinction between infrastructure and sociality is fluid and pragmatic rather than definitive.” Building on this insight, I start with an apparent contradiction: unlike in the Global North, where most people experience access to infrastructural services as reliable (Star 1999), for city-dwellers in Kinshasa, Cairo, and Rio de Janeiro, the disruption of water, electricity, and the like often constitutes the norm. As material infrastructures collapse in the mega-cities of the Global South, their inhabitants experiment with support systems of “social infrastructure” (Anand 2017; Graham and McFarlane 2015; Simone 2004), bringing together an ever-shifting patchwork of technologies, actors, and relations (Lawhon et al. 2018). Anthropologists studying infrastructure as “peopled” describe it as processual, contingent, and improvisational—but they also find that it proves surprisingly stable. Where does this stability come from? In her fieldwork with working-class people in Cairo, Julia Elyachar (2010, 460) notes that her interlocutors form part of the same “semiotic community”: they share signs, bodily practices, and modes of sociability that make them immediately recognizable to each other. For example, Elyachar (2011) observed that passengers on two trucks in Cairo’s busy traffic passed a lighter back and forth to light a cigarette, while the drivers adjusted their speed to each other’s vehicles. No words were exchanged, as the smokers communicated their intention through simple gestures. These communal, embodied experiences and skills form lasting “communicative channels” (Elyachar 2010, 452) that make up the community’s social infrastructure. They are maintained through what Elyachar (2010, 452) calls “phatic labour”: disinterested everyday gossip and mutual visits. “Hanging out” contributes to maintaining this social infrastructure, which its members can capitalize on in times of need.

To understand how refugee brokers balance stability and improvisation, I first build on recent studies of brokers’ different roles in “migration infrastructures” (Xiang and Lindquist 2014, S122). Anthropologists have long been fascinated with the morally ambiguous figure of the broker as someone who helps marginalized people access resources but also exploits them (Boissevain 1974; Geertz 1960; Wolf 1956). Since the 2000s, brokers have made a comeback in the study of the development and migration industries (James 2011; Lindquist 2015a; Mosse and Lewis 2006): their most valuable asset is not muscle power or speedy vehicles, but knowledge of the development and migration bureaucracy. A new focus on brokers, not migrants, is part of a broader effort to expand our view of the diverse actors and flows involved in migration. Biao Xiang and Johan Lindquist (2014, S122) give a seminal definition of “migration infrastructures [as] the

systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility”; it draws attention to migration as a deeply mediated process. At the point of departure, brokers organize visas and passports, health checks, and job opportunities for prospective migrants (Alpes 2017; Piot with Batema 2019; Lindquist 2017). In transit, people smugglers operate as part of long-standing kinship networks and traditions of solidarity and reciprocity (Sanchez 2017). Syrian smugglers in the Mediterranean, for example, frame their activities in terms of aid and kinship rather than “business” (Achilli 2018). After arrival, brokers with a migration background help new migrants access resources, for example through religious sites, language classes, and migrant-led businesses (Hall, King, and Finlay 2017; Meeus, Arnaut, and van Heur 2018; Wessendorf 2022). Together, these studies highlight brokers’ use of material and virtual technologies of circulation (Lindquist 2015b), as well as the role of (former) migrants as intermediaries, challenging simplistic distinctions between brokers as violent predators and migrants as their hapless victims.

Second, to shed light on the practices, forms, and technologies that enable brokers to take on infrastructural roles, I develop the metaphor of refugee brokers as a specific infrastructural component, that is, as human routers. These days, an essential element of digital infrastructures is the router, “an item of hardware used to link two networks. It takes packets of data, determines their destination, and passes them on to the next network in the path which could be the final destination” (Ince 2019). You are probably familiar with your home broadband router, but this is just one in a web of devices tying together your phone and laptop to huge servers that power worldwide logistics and commerce. Refugee brokers function in similar ways: they manage, direct, and control flows of communications and resources along preexisting channels, and they dynamically adapt around blockages. Revisiting Elyachar’s (2010) concept of “communicative channels,” I contend that refugee brokers and their clients rely on such preexisting connections, ones built on shared experiences of migration, brokerage, hospitality, and gender and generational roles. Because these stable channels exist, it makes sense to think of acts of brokerage as more than on-off, disconnected actions, although, as I will show, they also involve improvisation. In this article, I ask: First, how do refugee brokers become a part of such channels? Second, how do refugee brokers reactivate and maintain such channels in exile? Older users of the internet may recall the screeching noise of modems, the precursors to domestic routers, when they used the telephone line. This initial moment during which routers establish how to communicate is called a “handshake protocol.” In a similar vein, refugee brokers

perform cultural codes, gestures, and practices of supposed Syrianness to connect with fellow displaced Syrians. Third, how do refugee brokers use these channels to circulate different resources and diversify their destinations? Familiar with the communicative channels of their community, they manage to realize their economic value, in the process rewiring them. Like routers sending different types of data—be it webpage requests, emails, video streaming, or the like—through the same channels, the multi-usage of extant connections allows refugee brokers to weather wavering demand from Syrian customers.

The study of infrastructure helps anthropologists demystify power, helping us trace how abstract systems affect people's everyday lives (Wilson 2016). Exploring the Syrian infrastructure of displacement cannot fail to evoke another, immensely powerful infrastructure: European border controls and the criminalization of movements from the Global South (Sanchez 2017). Turkey and the United Kingdom, where Um Faisal and Farhan live, are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, although Turkey maintains the original geographic restrictions of the Convention and does not recognize Syrians as refugees, confining displaced people to a state of “permanent temporariness” (Osseiran 2020, 94). Home to around 3.6 million Syrians, Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees worldwide (UNHCR 2023). The mundane reality of many Syrians' lives in Turkey includes limited access to public services and precarious labor in the informal economy (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel 2017). As a signatory of the 2016 EU-Turkey deal, which gave the country access to €6 billion (around USD 6.7 billion) in exchange for stopping migratory flows, Turkey became a cornerstone of Europe's architecture of border control (Crisp 2021). Despite its international commitments and domestic asylum framework, Turkey also deported hundreds of refugees to Syria in 2022 alone (Human Rights Watch 2022). Compared to Turkey, the United Kingdom has welcomed very small numbers of Syrians. It has sought to limit the numbers of new arrivals through its 2020 departure from the European Union and its 2022 Nationality and Borders Act, which criminalizes all refugees who enter the country illegally and includes plans to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda (Refugee Council 2023). Despite its push for legal and safe pathways for refugees, the U.K. government accepted only 20,000 Syrians through its resettlement scheme between 2014 and 2021 (UNHCR 2021), and the total number of Syrians stands at around 38,000 people (ONS 2021). Together, the United Kingdom and Turkey exemplify the increasingly hostile European refugee response, characterized by intensified border controls, deals with third countries to restrain refugee flows, and the criminalization of rescue efforts (Crawley et al. 2018). Research on refugee brokers highlights

the paradox that provides the backdrop for this article. On the one hand, people's need for brokers results from restrictive asylum policies. On the other hand, brokers' activities cut across the divide between states, markets, and the international humanitarian system (Faist 2014). Brokers often take on the infrastructural role of the state, for example, when procuring travel documents and visas, and they might even behave like NGOs (Alpes 2017; Lindquist 2017). This article shows how refugee brokers become an important component of the bottom-up "infrastructure of displacement" that flourishes in the cracks of other global infrastructures, be it borders, finance, or the humanitarian system.

In sum, the infrastructural lens brings to light what refugee brokers do: connect displaced people and things, with all the tensions, fractures, and possibilities that this implies. In section 2, I discuss how ethnographic data for this article were collected, and how one negotiates a transactional approach to ethics with a broker. Sections 3 and 4 show how the channels of communication that make up the infrastructure of displacement are built through refugee brokers' and their clients' prewar experiences of migration and brokerage (section 3), and reactivated and maintained through relational work and material moorings that set the stage for brokers' performances of shared Syrianness (section 4). Section 5 demonstrates the multi-usage of stable channels through which brokers circulate diverse resources and expand their network of clients. In the conclusion, I sketch out implications for the anthropological study of refugee agency beyond abstract ideas of solidarity.

DOING RESEARCH WITH BROKERS

This article draws on ethnographic insights from participant observation and interviews at refugee brokers' homes and workplaces. Interviews with Farhan were initially conducted in the United Kingdom as part of my doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh. During fifteen months of fieldwork in northern Jordan between 2015 and 2017, I had learned that refugees in Jordan were sending money to Syria while receiving financial assistance from Syrian diasporas in Europe and the Gulf (Zuntz 2021). On my return to the United Kingdom, I tried to understand how Syrians' remittance-sending networks had been extended to new sites of refuge. Through a friend, I met Farhan in 2017, and we hung out occasionally over two years. After the end of my PhD, he agreed to sit down with me for a structured conversation in November 2019. Years later, in spring 2023, we reconnected and met up informally several times. I spoke with Um Faisal in November 2022 in her apartment in Gaziantep, as part of fieldwork for my British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship on "brokers of displacement." Having conducted

collaborative fieldwork with Syrian academics and refugees in Gaziantep since 2019, I was introduced to Um Faisal by my Syrian-Jordanian research assistant, a cultural practitioner working with Syrian NGOs in town. This research assistant happened to share a flat with a Syrian medical broker who specializes in providing Arabic-Turkish translation to Syrian patients at pharmacies and hospitals, while also cultivating his own huge network of brokers. Most existing scholarship focuses on male brokers (Meehan and Plonski 2017); knowing that I was hoping to speak with female intermediaries, the medical broker approached Um Faisal, and she agreed to receive us at home. By juxtaposing the case studies of a male and a female broker, I draw attention to refugees' demand for gendered forms of brokerage, to the career paths that brokerage may offer to women, and to how brokers reconcile their activities with gendered norms of employment and mobility. Female brokers may be less visible to outsiders because their interactions often take place in women-only localities. But as section 4 shows, this offers new opportunities for female researchers able to enter these spaces. It also should come as no surprise that I found Um Faisal through another broker. On the internet, routers pass on data to other routers until their message reaches its destination. Similarly, Syrians' communicative channels are made up not of individual brokers, but rather networks of brokers collaborating with each other to fulfill clients' requests.

Fieldwork with refugee brokers raises a methodological challenge: as they conduct most of their interactions with customers on WhatsApp, what remains for the anthropologist to observe (Güran 2020)? My interviewees did not grant me access to their phones because their WhatsApp exchanges were confidential. Therefore, this article prioritizes the (observable) perspectives, interactions, and spaces of the brokers; still, their customers do not remain fully absent. In the United Kingdom, I was present during multiple phone conversations between Farhan and his assistants and clients. During interviews with members of the local Syrian community, Farhan's name also frequently came up. When asking about remittance-sending to Syria, I got used to hearing respondents exclaim: "Father of happiness? Of course I know him!" Clearly, Farhan had become the go-to person for money transfers for newly arrived refugees and even older Syrian migrants in this tight-knit social circle. As for Um Faisal, the fact that another broker recommended her speaks to her trusted standing in the brokers' network in Gaziantep. Section 5 discusses how she used a young Syrian widow as a "prop" during our interview to prove her humanitarian credentials. Here, I discuss this woman's silence as constitutive of the display of largesse that Um Faisal wanted me to see. Sadly, the 2023 earthquake delayed follow-up fieldwork with Um Faisal's clients

and employees. Hence, I focus on Um Faisal's perspective, but for now lack information on how her relationship with the young woman was perceived from the beneficiary's side. Focusing on brokers, not refugees, constitutes a different approach to that of [Hilal Alkan \(2021\)](#), for example, who scrutinized Syrian clients' dealings with smugglers and housing brokers in Germany and Turkey. Alkan's finding that refugees are highly critical of (housing) brokers do not necessarily contradict my own, as brokers' business strategies of relational work and positive word-of-mouth in Syrian communities may coexist alongside individual refugees' experiences of exploitation.

On the condition of anonymity, all participants in this research consented to interviews, and no one received payment for their participation. But the absence of financial incentives does not preclude other forms of transaction. As [Marina de Regt \(2019\)](#) phrases it in the title of her article, "In Friendship One Does Not Count Such Things," but oftentimes, anthropologists and their interlocutors establish complicated reciprocal relationships. The brokers in this story wanted to be perceived as people in high demand; their personal stories became currency for the recognition of a foreign researcher. Farhan also indulged my repeated questioning because he wanted to humor our shared friend and, as a former university researcher, he understood the struggles of academic work. Um Faisal was keen to use me to extend her circle of customers among foreign NGO workers. She also inquired about educational offers for her teenage son who had dropped out of school, and questioned my assistant about aid for a Syrian family she was hosting. This highlights that research on the infrastructure of displacement never remains neutral. It involves a complex exchange of material and virtual resources and emotions, as well as balancing brokers' and one's own expectations about short- and long-term gains.

ESTABLISHING CHANNELS

Routers only work if they connect to existing lines, made of copper wires, fiber optic, radio waves, and the like; refugee brokers can only operate because they capitalize on established channels of communication. The communal experiences and knowledge that make up Syrians' channels are threefold: pre-2011 Syria as a transnational space for migrants and traders; the importance of brokerage in everyday life; and widely shared gender and generational roles, especially when it comes to powerful matriarchs and patriarchs.

Farhan's story illustrates the expert handling of different types of mobility that many Syrians grew accustomed to long before they became refugees.

Originally from a town in northern Syria, he used to live in Damascus, where he worked as a lawyer and taught at the university. Until he fled, he had run a profitable side hustle importing goods from China to Syria. In 2015, Farhan received a phone call from a friend in London who told him he had only thirty minutes to take a life-changing decision: “After fifteen minutes, I decided to go to the UK.” Farhan phoned a business contact in Beirut who arranged for him to be driven to the Beirut airport. The next morning, he was on a flight to Istanbul. From there, he took another plane to Izmir, where he met a smuggler at a hotel. Together with five other people, he hired a yacht; the trip to Italy took five days and cost him €5,000 (around USD 5,620). Farhan’s recollections of his trip from Damascus to the United Kingdom differ markedly from the traumatic flight stories of many other refugees: “[The trip across the Mediterranean] were the best five days of my life! One [fellow Syrian] was very depressed because we had to leave our home country. But there was no one, just the sea and the sky. I hope that one day, when I return, I will make the same trip by boat.” In Italy, he bought a fake Italian identity document for €2,500 (around USD 2,810) and boarded a train to Nice. The first time, he was refused at the French border because he did not have a passport. The second time, he pretended to read a French newspaper and sat next to a French woman; his papers were not checked. From Nice, he traveled to Paris, later Calais, then Dublin, and took the ferry from Belfast to Liverpool, where he claimed asylum. Five days later, the authorities assigned him to a smaller British town. Unlike refugees who took the arduous Balkan route, Farhan had enough money, knowledge of European geography and means of transport, contacts in several countries, and the necessary sangfroid, to turn the adventure into a comfortable journey. Some years later, equipped with his British residence permit, he made good on this promise to retrace his trip: as a tourist, he traveled from the United Kingdom to Italy by train and ferry.

In the United Kingdom, Farhan had initially planned to get another law degree, but he soon realized that studying would take too much time and that his language skills were not sufficient for working with British clients. He did not consider becoming a money agent a radical change, but rather a natural extension of his life so far—including his ability to spot an opportunity. What makes Farhan an efficient refugee broker is his previous life as a businessman with specific skills and networks, which he then brought to a displacement context. His “qualifications” have to be understood in the wider context of Syrian migrations and the bottom-up globalization of the Mediterranean. Historically, the Middle East has been shaped by circular migrations. Between 1880 and 1920, for example,

more than 300,000 people left Greater Syria (what is now Syria and Lebanon) for the Americas, establishing a vibrant transit economy in port cities around the world and sharing travel experiences, money, and new lifestyles with those left at home (Regnard 2022). Since the 1980s, Syrian petty traders, such as Farhan in his prewar life, built transnational businesses, linking the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, (post-)Soviet spaces, and even destinations as distant as China through back-and-forth mobilities of people and merchandise (Anderson 2018; Tarrus 2008). Prior to 2011, working-class Syrian men, and sometimes families, also repeatedly migrated, mostly for jobs in agriculture and construction in Lebanon (Mehchy and Doko 2011), Jordan (De Bel-Air 2013), and the Gulf (MPC 2013). As a livelihoods strategy, remittances are thus hardly new: money sent home served as migrants' old-age provision, protected rural households from economic shocks, and contributed to rural development (Imady 2014). After 2011, men like Farhan recognized that informal remittances had become a lifeline for displaced Syrians inside Syria and in neighboring countries. As Farhan explained: "In Syria these days, nobody wants to build a house, they need the money for everyday things." International financial sanctions on Syria, the collapse of the formal banking system inside the country, and the Syrian regime's tight controls on money-sending complicate bank transfers to Syria (Al-Attar 2021). Therefore, many Syrians resort to an alternative, informal mode of money transfer: senders, recipients, brokers, and various middlemen often come from the same extended family, their interactions based on trust (Dean 2015; Güran 2020; Zuntz 2021). In most cases, the money agent contacts his local representative in the destination area, who then hands out the money to the payee, minus a transfer fee usually paid for by the sender. In Syria's neighboring countries, money also sometimes physically travels with cross-border smugglers (Syria Direct 2020). By 2018, Farhan transferred money to all areas in Syria, "excluding [then occupied] ISIS territory." Syrian men working badly paid jobs as delivery drivers or in restaurants in the United Kingdom used Farhan's services to send meager monthly sums (£50-100, ca. USD 65-131) to their parents and siblings; during the Islamic holidays, they doubled the amounts. Farhan only took a small commission for his informal transactions, roughly 2 percent. (By comparison, Western Union charged £9.90 for sending £100 to Syria in 2021.) According to Farhan, in 2018, only one other Syrian in his city offered remittance-sending services to Syria, and his own business was flourishing: "I have people in three British cities who are collecting money for me." Farhan's success came from the fact that Syrian clients, familiar with informal remittance-sending, immediately understood the kind of services he could

provide. By way of illustration, I once brought Farhan along to an interview with a wealthy Syrian. While explaining the long-standing history of his ancestors in this part of the United Kingdom, this man listed the names of famous Damascene and Aleppine families—barely acknowledging the presence of Farhan, whom he knew hailed from a provincial town. Yet he began to show Farhan greater courtesy as soon as he learned about his profession: “You are the money agent? I’ve been looking for you!” Clearly, the modalities of informal money-sending needed no explanation. As I discussed earlier, shared signs, practices, and modes of sociability enable those who partake in a semiotic commons or community to identify and know what to expect of each other. In the case of Cairene smokers during rush hour (cf. [Elyachar 2011](#)), a mere gesture may suffice for truck drivers to align their vehicles. Similarly, in Farhan’s case, a quick mention of his business turned the wealthy Syrian, a complete stranger, into a potential and trusting client.

Um Faisal, by contrast, was never a migrant before the Syrian conflict, when she led a comfortable existence as a housewife and mother of five in rural Aleppo. Instead, as a refugee, she capitalized on her husband’s prewar experience as a labor broker in a Syrian factory. The (usually male) *shaweesh* liaises with employers on workers’ behalf, for example in agriculture and construction; he enlists temporary workforces and oversees their activities and payment. Laborers often come from his own extended kinship networks, and the *shaweesh* may take on a quasi-patriarchal role vis-à-vis his workforce, brokering not only employment but also accommodation, food, and even marriages among workers. Since before the Syrian conflict, this practice has been well documented for Syrian migrants inside Syria ([Abdelali-Martini and Dey de Pryck 2015](#)) and in Lebanon ([Chalcraft 2009](#)). Since 2011, it has also emerged among Syrian refugees in Turkey ([Pelek 2019](#)) and Jordan ([Zuntz 2021](#)). Um Faisal’s husband nodded approvingly when I called him a *shaweesh* during our interview, and, as became clear, his wife was well familiar with his work before the war. As I interviewed the couple in their living room, both fondly remembered how he would take her on trips to his factory. During these visits, they would go for a ride in the family car and eat kebab sandwiches. The economic, but also affective, roles that men like her husband took on in their workers’ lives in Syria served as a model for how Um Faisal later treated her own employees in Turkey. These working-class street smarts that [Elyachar \(2010\)](#) also describes for low-income female circles in Cairo served Um Faisal well when she built her own brokerage business. She summed it up: “Life has been my school.”

In 2012, Um Faisal’s family lost their house in an air raid, and they moved to Gaziantep, a Turkish city an hour’s drive away from Aleppo. A year later, her

husband suffered a stroke, and, like many older Syrian women, Um Faisal had to step up when the family's original breadwinner became incapacitated (Sidhva et al. 2021). As an illiterate woman with no professional qualifications or Turkish skills, she had limited options. She initially refused to clean other people's houses "because in Syria, I used to bring a woman who would clean for me." Still, her self-image as a Syrian housewife came with a strong work ethos: "Syrian women will do anything to find work!" She carved out for herself a professional niche in line with her community's gendered values about what counts as appropriate work for women, and her duties to her family. Following her passion for Syrian cuisine, she set up a catering business, first from her own kitchen, and later inside a shared space with other Syrian women. Soon, her team delivered Syrian delicacies to NGOs, restaurants, and student accommodations. Syrian customers learned about her through her Facebook page, "Um Faisal, a woman from Aleppo, this is well known!" After seven years, she had to give up her rental space, cooking again from her own apartment. Her income dwindled, as Turkey's economic crisis took its toll. Still, the catering business—a reduced version of which she continues to run until today—helped her build a network with Syrian widows and divorcees, most of them, like herself, illiterate and with no previous experience of paid labor. These women made up the core staff of Um Faisal's next, much more successful business venture: a cleaning agency. By late 2022, she employed seventy cleaning ladies; on average, each was deployed one day a week. Specializing in Syrian customers with huge properties, she received around 2,000 Turkish lira (around USD 76) per house. A typical cleaning mission involved a team of six or seven women, each of whom received around 200 Turkish lira for a day's work. The remainder of the money was spent on cleaning materials, transport, and, of course, Um Faisal's salary: around 500 Turkish lira (around USD 19) per day. Unable to read WhatsApp messages, Um Faisal exclusively communicated with clients and employees through voice messages. The combined income from her cleaning and catering businesses covered her monthly living expenses of 15,000 Turkish lira (around USD 570), including the rent for the spacious family apartment, her husband's medication and physiotherapy, as well as personal acts of charity. Like a true *shaweesh*, she acted as a moral authority in her younger employees' lives: before agreeing to hire a cleaning lady, she visited them at home to assess their family's respectability and check whether their children wore clean clothes. Having turned into a well-known female authority in the Syrian community, she was sought out by her workers for marital counsel and when they fell on hard times. Like Farhan, who built his business on Syrians' prewar remittance-sending habits as well as his

own transnational trade ties, Um Faisal's cleaning agency thrived because she presented herself in roles familiar to Syrians: a powerful but benevolent labor broker and matriarch. Because refugee brokers build on a shared repertoire of knowledge and experiences, brokers and their clients instantly recognize each other.

MAINTAINING CHANNELS

Remember the handshake protocol that connects routers? To uphold that link, routers may subsequently send each other regular “keep-alive” messages. Equally, Syrians' communicative channels need maintaining, especially for populations dispersed around the globe. Refugee brokers use relational work, material moorings, and performances of Syrianness to reactivate shared cultural codes and, in turn, generate economic profit from Syrians' existing social infrastructure. Borrowing Viviana Zelizer's (2012) notion of “relational work,” Gözde Güran (2020) shows how money agents in Turkey and Syria ensure the profitability of their businesses through active relationship management. They revive old ties with customers from their kinship communities, now dispersed across the Middle East, while also building new networks with fellow brokers, which allows them to extend their operations to areas where they have no personal contacts. Brokerage, then, involves not only economic transactions, but also intense social activities, including hanging out with business partners, extending favors to loyal customers, and demonstrating trustworthiness to new clients. Much of this relational work occurs via WhatsApp, and in my experience, one can easily recognize refugee brokers—they are always on the phone, or even multiple phones. Indeed, phone numbers make for an important “micro-infrastructure” (Korsby 2017, 120) that allows potential clients to reach brokers. Yet it would prove a mistake to overlook the material components of brokers' activities: actual phones and computers, offices and (semi) private reception spaces, passports and ledgers, together with airports and roads. In this section, I explore how the infrastructure of displacement combines brokers' mobilities, immobile moorings, and mobile communication technologies across different scales: acts of brokerage link local, national, and transnational elements such as international humanitarian practices, financial flows, WhatsApp messages, living rooms and kitchens in Gaziantep, and cafés in British cities (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; Harvey, Jensen, and Morita 2017; Lindquist 2017).

For a successful businessman, Farhan kept a surprisingly empty office. In 2023, I made my way to the first floor of a two-story building, where I was greeted by a counter, shielded from customers by a glass panel and huge posters, announcing Farhan's affiliation with a global money-sending agency. However, the

counter remained unstaffed on this and my subsequent visits, and a side door was locked. The actual office hid behind the mysterious door, sparsely equipped with two desks and chairs, one computer, a copier, and a money-counting machine. In a corner, a surveillance camera allowed those inside to keep an eye on the entrance area close to the counter. Bare walls were decorated with certificates of training qualifications for one of the regular employees and plants in plastic pots. In truth, there was a rather small amount of visible office work going on in this place, which seemed rather like an extension of Farhan's home life: he had traded his shoes against comfortable slippers, joking around with two of his Arab employees, while visitors lounged on a comfortable leather sofa. When we left for lunch, Farhan took a couple of bills out of the register, treating the day's earnings like his personal wallet. At second glance, however, this apparent harbor of male conviviality *was* a workspace. Only all the work was happening on Farhan's phone, used to negotiate with assistants, track transactions, and provide receipts to customers. A distant employee—maybe in Turkey?—was reassured in a WhatsApp voice message that USD 150 did not correspond to £150, but rather £140. Farhan's phone did not stop ringing, even when we were in the car and at his home.

Just like Farhan, Um Faisal answered multiple phone calls during our interview, but her living room also displayed visible markers of her Syrianness, including glass cabinets and side tables full of Syrian memorabilia, such as copper plates, glassware, and Quranic calligraphy. Ever the accomplished hostess, she served me tea and Arab coffee in tiny cups, as well as biscuits and fruits. The welcome she gave me, together with the formal reception room, reminded me of Syrians' well-known traditions of hospitality. Cooking smells wafting from the kitchen also indicated that her catering business still continued from her home. Besides lending testimony to her virtues as a Syrian housewife, Um Faisal's living room also served as a workplace, frequently visited by Syrian customers of the cleaning agency, employees, as well as her charity contacts. As Abu Faisal, her husband, exclaimed: "These poor Syrian women [whom his wife helps and employs] keep knocking on our door!" Um Faisal's living room formed the stage for her display of Syrianness: she enacted codes of hospitality to the benefit of her Syrian networks. Performances of Syrian values extended even to other people's living rooms: Um Faisal proudly told me that she had acquired a number of foreign clients from international NGOs, "a man called Francisco from the UK . . . I also worked for someone called Steven, and someone called Brian. I used to cook [and later clean] for them." Dropping English names proved the mainstream success of her enterprise, beyond her local Syrian networks. Foreigners would entrust her with their house keys;

“they even left their laptops and thousands of dollars in cash lying around in their living rooms!” As a proud Syrian, Um Faisal made it clear that neither she nor her staff would ever steal from customers.

As for Farhan, it would be wrong to deduce that material places and performances of Syrianness did not matter to him. On the contrary, his empty office was located on the same block as two well-known Syrian food stores, in a multiethnic neighborhood home to several Syrian restaurants and shops. He met Syrian clients in person through socializing at cafés and other meeting points of the Syrian refugee community, including mosques. “I am a lawyer after all,” he laughingly explained to me; “I like talking a lot.” During a charity dinner during the COVID-19 pandemic, organized by a Syrian-run NGO and attended by hundreds of Syrian refugees in his city, he donated £2000 (around USD 2,620) to an educational initiative. Just like Um Faisal, who practiced charity in person at home, Farhan strove to be seen by his community as a successful entrepreneur—and thus as a trusted business contact. In living rooms, community spaces, and at Syrian events, considerable relational work takes place, meant to reactivate and maintain the channels of communication that bind refugee brokers to their clients (Wessendorf 2022). It occurs in gendered meeting spaces, such as women’s homes or men’s cafés, informed by the broker’s own gender and that of their targets, be it cleaning ladies in Turkey or male workers in the United Kingdom. By blurring the boundaries between workspaces and home, business, charity, and hospitality, Farhan’s and Um Faisal’s relational work restores a sense of belonging—the basis for their transactions.

MULTI-USAGE OF CHANNELS

Once stable channels of communication are established and well maintained, they can be used to circulate different kinds of resources and diversify routes—just like a router may send different types of data to different destinations. This speaks to the simultaneously stable and dynamic nature of the infrastructure of displacement. Having first learned about Farhan’s remittance-sending from the United Kingdom to war-torn areas in Syria, I was surprised to hear about his efforts to also reach new Syrian diasporas elsewhere. Soon, Farhan facilitated money transfers from the United Kingdom to Germany and Sweden, though his customers were not Europeans, but rather Syrians circulating money in Europe. “When somebody in Germany needs €40,000 (around USD 44,930), they don’t want to ask a bank.” To Syrians inside Syria, Farhan served as an emergency contact, circulating remittances that paid for life-saving food and medication. To Syrians in

Europe, he provided start-up capital. But Farhan did not stop there, making the best of his location in a place with an existing migration history. The role of South Asian (and other) migrations to the United Kingdom since the nineteenth century, and the cosmopolitan spaces that these have produced within many cities' confines, have been extensively documented (McLoughlin et al. 2014). But this complex history only held relevance to Farhan to the extent to which it provided the backdrop for expanding his business. While Farhan was a registered money agent, his money-sending business was "half legal, half illegal." In addition, the Syrian part of his operations did not always come out profitable; at times, he made it sound like an act of charity, an informal form of aid to compatriots in need. To sustain himself, Farhan began to arrange lucrative money transfers targeted at other, better-off, Arab communities, especially the Sudanese. "Sudanese trust Syrians; they have seen what Syrians have built up in Syria." Farhan thus offered money transfers to Sudan, Pakistan, Dubai, Jordan, Egypt, and other Arabic-speaking countries. His strategy in expanding his customer circle shows his keen understanding of the importance of social capital: he even hired a Sudanese employee to deal with Sudanese customers, known to be stubborn hagglers. Diversifying his business helped Farhan overcome lean periods, such as during Ramadan 2023, when the rising costs of living in the United Kingdom meant that fewer refugees sent money to relatives in Syria. The infrastructure of displacement functions much like other global infrastructures: as I listened to the snippets of Farhan's repeated short conversations and evolving business plans over the years, I began to see him not merely as an informal money agent but as a currency trader, not unlike investment bankers in the world's financial capitals. In fact, just like the traders in Caitlin Zaloom's (2003) famous study in the outcry pits of Chicago, Farhan sought to maximize profit through intensely social activities; he relied on family and friends working in the same trade to gain an advantage and to take decisions in volatile markets. It would thus be a mistake to locate Farhan and, say, professional derivative traders, at opposite ends of a spectrum of economic rationality.

Um Faisal used her networks to channel not only one resource—job opportunities—but also private humanitarian assistance and even fiancés to the women in her social circle. During our interview, she repeatedly redirected the conversation to her charity work. To her, it was a continuation of her prewar life in Syria: "Even in Syria, I always helped people." One of her beneficiaries, a youthful widow and her daughter, were in her living room as we spoke: "This young girl [referring to a shy eight-year-old waiting in a corner] is an orphan, her father died in the war." Using her guests as living proof of her generosity, she told us about

her occasional acts of charity, such as buying bread and coal for her employees, as well as organized forms of assistance. Throughout the conversation, the widow and her child remained unspeaking in a corner of the room. In a traditional hospitality setting, they were simply good guests, letting the owner of the house lead the conversation. As a younger woman, the widow also behaved like a respectful daughter toward the older matriarch who had symbolically “adopted” her and her fatherless child. However, in light of her dependence on Um Faisal, we could also read her silence differently: as an attempt to stay in the broker’s good favors, and even fear of being cut off from assistance and job opportunities. I cannot speculate on her thoughts. In the living room of the overbearing Um Faisal, the subject of our interview, it did not feel appropriate to address the young woman directly. Sadly, I had no opportunity to follow up with her after the 2023 earthquake. Nevertheless, these multiple possible facets of her connection with Um Faisal hint at the easy slippage between charity, domination, and even exploitation in the broker’s dealings with her clients. Far from being a merely economic relationship, the bond between Um Faisal and her wards was loaded with gendered and age-based expectations about what counts as appropriate behavior toward each other.

Through her affluent Syrian clients, Um Faisal had recently met a private donor from the Gulf; from her living room, he gave out financial assistance to dozens of Syrian families. Aid delivery thus blended with the traditional tasks of a matriarch: during *iddah*, the four-month mourning period during which Muslim widows retreat from the world, Um Faisal brought food to one of her female acquaintances. She also arranged weddings: “I had a girl here whose family traveled to Europe. I arranged a marriage for her [with a respectable young man from the Syrian community]. How many daughters do I have? I have fifty daughters!” Like Farhan, Um Faisal benefited from being perceived as charitable, as donors and spouses were recruited from her network of Syrian customers—and vice versa. She also considered using her connections with Syrians in Western Europe to acquire customers for a new, third business. Her newest business idea, yet unfunded, included exporting Middle Eastern goods to Western Europe. Through one of her daughters, who lived in the Netherlands, Um Faisal had learned about the needs of Syrian diasporas outside the Middle East. “Imagine Syrian women in Germany whose children live in Istanbul, and the children would like to send them presents—maybe a blouse, or a water pipe?”

On a final note, many brokers are not only motivated by short-term financial gain but also by personal dreams of mobility, even when these projects are temporarily put on hold (Alpes 2017; Lucht 2015; Piot with Batema 2019). The

aspirational nature of the infrastructure of displacement becomes clear when we look at its adaptability: refugee brokers use their knowledge and channels to circulate resources not only for others but also for themselves. In 2019, as we finished our coffee at the gallery, Farhan told me about his newest project, procuring what was still missing from the picture of an accomplished Syrian businessman: a Syrian wife. Through family connections and with the help of proxies, he had married a young Syrian woman from his hometown. Farhan had paid for his bride to be smuggled into Turkey, where he set her up with her brother. While Farhan was applying for family reunification in the United Kingdom, he took advantage of his refugee status to travel, combining business and visits to his bride in Turkey. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the last I heard of him through our shared friend was that he, his wife, and a newborn child now lived in the United Kingdom. When I met him again in 2023, he was waiting for his wife's British visa to be renewed, so the family could travel together. Farhan was already planning holidays in Europe, as well as a visit to Syria. The man who was moving money for others was once again thinking of moving himself.

CONCLUSION

Like routers in digital infrastructures, brokers connect refugees to the world. In this article, I provided an ethnography of two Syrian brokers who help Syrian refugees in the United Kingdom and Turkey transfer money and access jobs, aid, and fiancés. I argued that despite my protagonists' different geographic and socio-economic positioning, their acts of brokerage make up the broader "infrastructure of Syrian displacement." Like routers, brokers facilitate refugees' circulations because they can capitalize on stable communicative channels. In the Syrian case, these channels are built on refugees' and brokers' prewar experiences of transnational migration and trade, brokerage, and gender roles, and they become reactivated in exile through performances of Syrianness meant to establish a shared sense of belonging and trustworthiness needed for business transactions. Like all good brokers, my interlocutors possess considerable sociocultural capital, but they also have a talent for making new friends and identifying relevant infrastructures, such as Syrian meeting spots in new locations. Refugee brokers, like routers, interconnect different networks and creatively adapt to changing geographies of refuge. Such an infrastructure of displacement is thus both a relatively stable set of resources and the outcome of brokers' experimentation. Studying Syrian brokerage as infrastructure allows anthropologists to tell stories in which displacement is not a one-way street, but embedded in older migrations and generative of new mobilities

of money, things, and people. Uncovering the stable channels through which the economic, affective, and gendered circulations within dispossessed communities flow helps explain how refugees get by with little humanitarian aid and limited access to labor markets in host countries. With his transnational business, Farhan may fit more easily the stereotype of a broker, but as Um Faisal's example shows, brokerage also takes place at the local level, and even those with limited mobility and assets contribute to building the wider infrastructure of displacement.

Scrutinizing the “social” in refugees’ social infrastructure reveals a complex picture of refugee agency. Studies on Syrian diaspora-led organizations aiding refugees have complicated binary distinctions between passive “beneficiaries” and their “aid providers” (Sweis 2019). But what about private-sector refugee brokers who not only assist but also exploit the displaced? As Farhan recently told our mutual friend, he had hired two accountants in Syria and Turkey; neither had signed a work contract. “What good would this do?,” he asked, arguing that neither of his employees worked in a legal context that would allow them to claim labor rights. Still, he considered himself a fair employer: he had continued paying his accountant in Syria while she went on maternity leave, just as he had carried on sending a salary to his Sudanese employee in the United Kingdom when the latter traveled to Sudan to find a bride. To Farhan, his business interests and charitable work overlapped, and he scoffed at the idea that he was taking advantage of inequalities in the global economy to outsource work to vulnerable accountants in war-torn areas. As Filippo Osella (2014, 387) points out, “one can never identify [brokers] clearly as either ‘social workers’ or ‘exploitative hustlers’: the same people play both roles at different times.” In different interpersonal contexts, brokers combine a contradictory vocabulary and gestures of gifts, hospitality, kinship, and business. In return, refugees’ own moral criteria may not meet lofty ideals of morality. To many, a “good” broker is not someone who avoids illegal activities, but someone who makes circulations happen and does not cheat their customers. How refugee brokers and clients navigate their relationships on shifting moral ground challenges the abstract ideas of disinterested solidarity that underpin mainstream humanitarianism.

ABSTRACT

Syrian refugees resort to a rich ecosystem of brokers who not only facilitate border crossings but also move remittances, jobs, knowledge, wives, and more. How are refugees’ circulations made possible, and by whom? Drawing on fieldwork with Syrian brokers in Turkey and the United Kingdom, I put forward the novel concepts of a Syrian

infrastructure of displacement and of refugee brokers as a particular infrastructural component, namely, as human routers. Like routers, brokers manage, direct, and control resource flows. Revisiting Julia Elyachar's concept of communicative channels, I contend that refugee brokers and their clients rely on such pre-existing connections, built on shared experiences of migration, brokerage, and hospitality. Reactivated in exile through brokers' performances of "Syrianness," these channels facilitate a shared sense of belonging needed for their business transactions. The ways in which refugee brokers slip seamlessly between business, charitable deeds, and exploitation challenge the abstract ideas of disinterested solidarity that underpin mainstream humanitarianism. [infrastructure; displacement; human routers; refugee brokers; Syrian; borders; circulations]

NOTES

Acknowledgments The author thanks her research assistant Mr. Muhammad Amireh, as well as Dr. Alessandro Columbu and Dr. Joe Zuntz for their feedback, as well as Pam Zuntz for proposing the metaphor of "human routers." Research in Turkey was funded by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship.

1. All names used in this article are pseudonyms.
2. To preserve Farhan's anonymity, I shall not disclose his exact location.

REFERENCES

- Abdelali-Martini, Malika, and Jennie Dey de Pryck
 2015 "Does the Feminisation of Agricultural Labour Empower Women? Insights from Female Labour Contractors and Workers in Northwest Syria." *Journal of International Development* 27, no. 7: 898–916. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3007>
- Achilli, Luigi
 2018 "The "Good" Smuggler: The Ethics and Morals of Human Smuggling among Syrians." *ANNALS* 676, no 1: 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716217746641>
- Al-Attar, Wahid
 2021 "Remittance Markets in Syria's Damascus, from Blackmail to Imprisonment." *North Press Agency*, March 25.
- Alkan, Hilal
 2021 "Temporal Intersections of Mobility and Informality: Simsars as (Im)moral Agents in the Trajectories of Syrian Refugees in Turkey and Germany." *Migration Letters* 18, no. 2: 201–13. <https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v18i2.1181>
- Alpes, Jill
 2017 "Papers That Work: Migration Brokers, State/Market Boundaries, and the Place of Law." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 40, no. 2: 262–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12219>
- Anand, Nikhil
 2017 *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Anand, Nikhil, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel
 2018 "Introduction: Temporality, Politics, and the Promise of Infrastructure." In *The Promise of Infrastructure*, edited by Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel, 1–38. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Anderson, Paul
 2018 "Aleppo in Asia: Mercantile Networks between Syria, China, and (Post-) Soviet Eurasia since 1970." *History and Anthropology* 29, no. 1: 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2018.1513930>

- Ash, Amin
 2014 "Lively Infrastructure." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 31, no. 7–8: 137–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276414548490>
- Baban, Feyzi, Suzan Ilcan, and Kim Rygiel
 2017 "Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Pathways to Precarity, Differential Inclusion, and Negotiated Citizenship Rights." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 1: 41–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1192996>
- Boissevain, Jeremy
 1974 *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators, and Coalitions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Chalcraft, John
 2009 *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Chatty, Dawn
 2013 *From Camel to Truck: The Bedouin in the Modern World*. Revised second edition. Cambridge, U.K.: White Horse Press.
- Crawley, Heaven, Franck Düvell, Katharine Jones, Simon McMahon, and Nando Sigona
 2018 *Unravelling Europe's "Migration Crisis": Journeys over Land and Sea*. Bristol, U.K.: Policy Press.
- Crisp, Jeff
 2021 "The Syrian Emergency: A Catalyst for Change in the International Refugee Regime." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 2: 1441–53. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab009>
- Dean, Roger
 2015 *Remittances to Syria: What Works, Where, and How*. Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council.
- De Bel-Air, Françoise
 2013 "Composition of the Population." In *Atlas of Jordan: History, Territories, and Society*, edited by Myriam Ababsa, 246–52. Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo.
- De Regt, Marina
 2019 "'In Friendship One Does Not Count Such Things': Friendship and Money in War-Torn Yemen." *Etnofoor* 31, no. 1: 99–112. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26727102>
- Elyachar, Julia
 2010 "Phatic Labor, Infrastructure, and the Question of Empowerment in Cairo." *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 3: 452–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01265.x>
 2011 "The Political Economy of Movement and Gesture in Cairo." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 1: 82–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01670.x>
- Fabos, Anita H., Leora Kahn, and Marianne Sarkis
 2021 "Moving Stories: Methodological Challenges to Mapping Narratives and Networks of People in Diasporas." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 3: 2554–2567. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab072>
- Faist, Thomas
 2014 "Brokerage in Cross-Border Mobility: Social Mechanisms and the Reproduction of Social Inequalities." *Social Inclusions* 2, no. 4: 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v2i4.29>
- Geertz, Clifford
 1960 "The Javanese *Kijaji*: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2: 228–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500000670>
- Graham, Stephen, and Colin McFarlane, eds.
 2015 *Infrastructural Lives: Urban Infrastructure in Context*. London: Routledge.
- Güran, Gözde
 2020 "Brokers of Order: How Money Moves in Wartime Syria." PhD dissertation, Princeton University.

- Hall, Suzanne, Julia King, and Robin Finlay
 2017 "Migrant Infrastructure: Transaction Economies in Birmingham and Leicester, UK." *Urban Studies* 54, no. 6: 1311–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016634586>
- Harvey, Penelope, Casper Bruun Jensen, and Atsuro Morita
 2017 "Introduction: Infrastructural Complications." In *Infrastructures and Social Complexity: A Companion*, edited by Penelope Harvey, Casper Bruun Jensen, and Atsuro Morita, 1–22. London: Routledge.
- Human Rights Watch
 2022 "Turkey: Hundreds of Refugees Deported to Syria." Human Rights Watch, October 24.
- Imady, Omar
 2014 "How a Microfinance Network Could Have Preempted the Syrian Uprising." *Syria Studies* 6, no. 1: 81–122.
- Ince, Darrel, ed.
 2019 *A Dictionary of the Internet*. Fourth Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- James, Deborah
 2011 "The Return of the Broker: Consensus, Hierarchy, and Choice in South African Land Reform." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 2: 318–38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2011.01682.x>
- Joseph, Suad
 1994 "Problematising Gender and Relational Rights: Experiences from Lebanon." *Social Politics* 1, no. 3: 271–85. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/1.3.271>
 2004 "Conceiving Family Relationships in Post-War Lebanon." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35, no. 2: 271–93. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.35.2.271>
- Korsby, Trine Mygind
 2017 "The Brothel Phone Number: Infrastructures of Transnational Pimping in Eastern Romania." *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 35, no. 2: 111–24. <https://doi.org/10.3167/cja.2017.350209>
- Larkin, Brian
 2013 "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42: 327–43. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-092412-155522>
- Lawhon, Mary, David Nilsson, Jonathan Silver, Henrik Ernstson, and Shuaib Lwasa
 2018 "Thinking through Heterogeneous Infrastructure Configurations." *Urban Studies* 55, no. 4: 720–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017720149>
- Lindquist, Johan
 2015a "Brokers and Brokerage, Anthropology of." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 2, second edition, edited by James D. Wright, 870–74. Oxford: Elsevier.
 2015b "Of Figures and Types: Brokering Knowledge and Migration in Indonesia and Beyond." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21, no. S1: 162–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12172>
 2017 "Brokers, Channels, Infrastructure: Moving Migrant Labor in the Indonesian-Malaysian Oil Palm Complex." *Mobilities* 12, no. 2: 213–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1292778>
- Lindquist, Johan, Biao Xiang, and Brenda Yeoh
 2012 "Opening the Black Box of Migration: Brokers, the Organization of Transnational Mobility, and the Changing Political Economy in Asia." *Pacific Affairs* 85, no. 1: 7–19. <https://doi.org/10.5509/20128517>
- Lokot, Michelle
 2020 "'Blood Doesn't Become Water'? Syrian Social Relations during Displacement." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 33, no. 3: 555–76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey059>
- Lucht, Hans
 2015 "The Station Hustle: Ghanaian Migration Brokerage in a Disjointed World." In *What Is Existential Anthropology?*, edited by Michael Jackson and Albert Piette, 104–24. New York: Berghahn Books.

- McLoughlin, Seán, William Gould, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, and Emma Tomalin, eds.
 2014 *Writing the City in British Asian Diasporas*. London: Routledge.
- Meehan, Patrick, and Sharri Plonski
 2017 "Brokering the Margins: A Review of Concepts and Methods." Working Paper no. 1. London: SOAS and the University of Bath.
- Meeus, Bruno, Karel Arnaut, and Bas van Heur, eds.
 2018 *Arrival Infrastructures: Migration and Urban Social Mobilities*. London: Routledge.
- Mehchy, Zaki, and Amer Mahdi Doko
 2011 "General Overview of Migration into, through, and from Syria." CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2011/41. San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute.
- Migration Policy Centre (MPC)
 2013 "Syria." MPC Migration Profile. San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute.
- Mosse, David, and David Lewis
 2006 "Theoretical Approaches to Brokerage and Translation in Development." In *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies*, edited by David Lewis and David Mosse, 1–26. Bloomfield, Conn.: Kumarian.
- Office for National Statistics (ONS)
 2021 "Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: July 2020 to June 2021 edition." London: Office for National Statistics, Government of the United Kingdom.
- Osella, Filippo
 2014 "The (Im)morality of Mediation and Patronage in South India and the Gulf." In *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*, edited by Anastasia Piliavsky, 367–95. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Osseiran, Souad
 2020 "The Intersection of Labour and Refugee Policies in the Middle East and Turkey: Exploring the Dynamics of 'Permanent Temporariness.'" *Civil Society Review* 4, no. 2: 94–112.
- Pelek, Deniz
 2019 "Syrian Refugees as Seasonal Migrant Workers: Re-construction of Unequal Power Relations in Turkish Agriculture." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32, no. 4: 605–29. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey050>
- Piot, Charles, with Kodjo Nicolas Batema
 2019 *The Fixer: Visa Lottery Chronicles*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Rabo, Annika
 2008 "'Doing Family': Two Cases in Contemporary Syria." *Hawwa* 6, no. 2: 129–53. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920808X347232>
- Refugee Council
 2023 "What Is the Nationality and Borders Act?" London: Refugee Council.
- Regnard, Céline
 2022 *En transit: Les Syriens à Beyrouth, Marseille, Le Havre, New York (1880-1914) [In Transit: The Syrians in Beirut, Marseille, Le Havre, New York (1990–1914)]*. Paris: Editions Anamosa.
- Rugh, Andrea
 1996 *Within the Circle: Parents and Children in an Arab Village*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sanchez, Gabriella
 2017 "Critical Perspectives on Clandestine Migration Facilitation: An Overview of Migrant Smuggling Research." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5, no. 1: 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500102>

- Sidhva, Dina, Ann-Christin Zuntz, Ruba Al Akash, Ayat Nashwan, and Areej Al-Majali
 2021 "In Exile, the Woman Became Everything': Middle-Aged Syrian Women's Contributions to Family Livelihoods during Protracted Displacement in Jordan." *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs* 3, no. 1: 41–15. <https://doi.org/10.7227/JHA.054>
- Simone, AbdouMaliq
 2004 "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg." *Public Culture* 16, no. 3: 407–29. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-16-3-407>
 2021 "Infrastructure: Commentary by AbdouMaliq Simone." *Cultural Anthropology* online. <https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/infrastructure-abdoumaliq-simone>
- Star, Susan Leigh
 1999 "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 3: 377–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027649921955326>
- Sweis, Rania Kassab
 2019 "Doctors with Borders: Hierarchies of Humanitarians and the Syrian Civil War." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51, no. 4: 587–601. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743819000643>
- Syria Direct
 2020 "Economic Disaster Looms as Coronavirus Lockdowns Reduce Remittances to Syria." *Syria Direct*, April 12.
- Tarrius, Alain
 2008 "Migrations en réseaux et cohabitations urbaines aux bordures de l'Europe" [Networked Migrations and Urban Clustering on the Margins of Europe]. *L'Année Sociologique* 58, no. 1: 71–93. <https://doi.org/10.3917/anso.081.0071>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 2021 "The UK's Syria Resettlement Programme: Looking Back, and Ahead." *UNHCR*, March 23.
 2023 "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey." *UNHCR*.
- Wessendorf, Susanne
 2022 "'The Library Is Like a Mother': Arrival Infrastructures and Migrant Newcomers in East London." *Migration Studies* 10, no. 2: 172–89. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnab051>
- Wilson, Ara
 2016 "The Infrastructure of Intimacy." *Signs* 41, no. 2: 247–80. <https://doi.org/10.1086/682919>
- Wolf, Eric R.
 1956 "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society: Mexico." *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 6: 1065–78. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.6.02a00070>
- Xiang, Biao, and Johan Lindquist
 2014 "Migration Infrastructure." *International Migration Review* 48, no. S1: S122–S148. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12141>
- Zaloom, Caitlin
 2003 "Ambiguous Numbers: Trading Technologies and Interpretation in Financial Markets." *American Ethnologist* 30, no. 2: 258–72. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2003.30.2.258>
- Zelizer, Viviana A.
 2012 "How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist and What Does That Mean?" *Politics and Society* 40, no. 2: 145–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329212441591>
- Zuntz, Ann-Christin
 2021 "Refugees' Transnational Livelihoods and Remittances: Syrian Mobilities in the Middle East before and after 2011." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 2: 1400–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab016>