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Aspiration Migration and Mobility

Majida is a young teacher in a state-run children's center in Gaziantep who arrived in Turkey with her family when she was an adolescent. Now engaged, she and her fiancé are making plans for their future in Turkey.

My fiancé wanted to go to Holland, but I don't want to change—Belgium, France, yet another language. I want to start university; I will be faced with different ideas. We are integrated now here.

Her fiancé studied law in Syria but today works in an optician's shop cutting lenses. Both have received calls to apply for citizenship. When we ask if she would consider returning to Syria, only 100 kilometers across the border, she remarks, "Maybe for a visit in the future, to show my children. But not more than that."

This chapter examines youth aspirations almost a decade from the start of the Syrian war. While the young people in our study arrived in Turkey at differing moments and underwent varying degrees of difficulty in adjusting to life in a new country, what many shared by the time of our study was a sense that life had become normalized—in other words, that the passage of time had made their situation resistant to change. Within the context of a lack of hope for return to Syria and their own gradual adjustment to life in Turkey in the meantime, youth were beginning to aspire to futures different from what they had imagined before the war. Most of these youth were imagining those futures in Turkey.

While public discourse in Europe tends to assume that Syrians are only held back from migrating to the West by the 2016 EU-Turkey deal, recent research in Turkey has converged on quite a different finding: that as time passes, European futures have become less desirable (e.g., Düvell 2019; Er-

doğan 2017a, 2017b, 2020; Üstübici, Kirişçiöğlü, and Elçi 2021). The majority of Syrians in Turkey today express a desire to remain in the country, and this number is especially high for the Syrian youth in our study.

Indeed, as young Syrians in Turkey go on with their lives, an increasing sense of normalization enables aspirations to build lives in Turkey. This chapter examines how youth aspire in the context of constraint, and how their aspirations relate to mobility and to what Arjun Appadurai refers to as “cosmopolitanism from below” (2013: 198). In his seminal essay on “the capacity to aspire,” Appadurai noted that aspirations regarding the good life are not individual but are shaped by cultural norms and opportunities. Because of this, he calls the capacity to aspire “a navigational capacity” (2013: 189). While acknowledging that socioeconomic opportunities shape that navigational capacity, Appadurai also argues for a vernacular cosmopolitanism that “begins close to home and builds on the practices of the local, the everyday, and the familiar,” but that stretches the boundaries of what one might consider possible (198). As Samuli Schielke shows in his ethnography of Egyptian youth in the wake of the Arab Spring, cosmopolitanism “is not only about life trajectories that exceed borders but also about expectations that exceed borders” (2015: 153). Through cinema, the internet, and popular culture, youth develop ideas of globality. Cosmopolitanism, then, “is about aspiring to the world, a sense of there being a wider array of paths, possibilities, styles and aims ‘out there’” (Schielke 2012: 29).

While youth in marginalized spaces often imagine fulfilling their cosmopolitan dreams in “the Outside” (Elliott 2021), and many such youth in the Middle East and Africa have focused on Europe as the space to realize such dreams, this chapter shows how many displaced Syrian youth have begun to view Turkey as a place where they can realize vernacular cosmopolitan aspirations. For instance, the number of those wanting Turkish citizenship is high across the board (see also Koser Akcapar and Simsek 2018). For the youth we interviewed, this was in part because it would give them mobility, though not as in the possibility to take refuge elsewhere. Rather, they saw mobility both as moving forward and as a key aspect of a “normal” life (see Greenberg 2011), one where they can study and travel abroad.

However, as we suggested at the end of the last chapter, there is also a group of youth that hopes to move on from Turkey. We examine here the aspirations that give shape to those hopes, and why they perceive that they cannot fulfill those aspirations in Turkey. As Jørgen Carling and Francis Collins (2018: 917) highlight, “People do not aspire to migrate; they aspire to something which migration might help them achieve.” The chapter, then, analyzes aspirations to move on and to stay in relation to broader life goals.

Mobility and Freedom

From Syria to Turkey, it was something great in my life to be honest. How to say that. We were not connected with the world and here in Turkey we feel freer and we saw things that I have never seen. For example, I love movies, but I have never entered a cinema, and I did not know how to buy a film on the internet. Now I can go to the cinema and buy films online. This idea was invisible but now films are my passion. . . . The internet in Syria was . . . It was available in the end, but there were no things . . . Things like free speech, free opinions. Sometimes when I open a political subject with my friends in Arab countries, they change the subject. I do not have this idea in Turkey. I am not afraid to speak about my political opinion in Turkey. . . . So moving to Turkey opened doors that I have never known and helped me to grow up as I moved without my family. Moving to Turkey was the main factor to build a new personality.

Turkish youth may balk at the idea that today's Turkey is a space of openness and political freedom. Indeed, according to the measurements of Freedom House, Turkey is considered "not free." Both political rights and civil liberties have been severely compromised in the country, initially following the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and then increasingly in the wake of the 2016 coup attempt. The views of youths such as Kamal, above, show how relative such freedom is. Originally from Aleppo, Kamal experienced the availability of internet and films in Turkey, as well as the freedom to express political opinions regarding their home country,¹ as an openness to new ideas that seemed revelatory.

Many of the youth with whom we spoke found that life in Turkey provided them with what Michael Jackson (2013) refers to as existential mobility. Mobility, Jackson notes, is not only about survival but must also be understood as "a metaphor for freedom" (144). For many youths with whom we spoke, this freedom could also mean the freedom to develop oneself in new ways. For instance, Ruqa, a young woman from a wealthy Syrian family, had remained in Adana with her mother while her father had moved to Germany for business. Her father had developed his business there but planned to return, while she had become increasingly engaged in civil society organizations. "I think I have two countries," Ruqa remarked. "I'm already like a citizen here. This place is like my country." At that moment, she was working on a project for a civil society organization and felt that she was accomplishing something. "I don't want to return to Syria, because I didn't accomplish anything there. Here, I developed myself in everything. I've done a lot, met a lot of people."

Ruqa, then, saw her experiences in Turkey as important to her own formation. While she thought of going abroad potentially to study in a course or gain work experience, the fact that she had already spent such a sig-

nificant part of her life in Turkey that she already felt like a citizen made any thought of migration elsewhere something only temporary. The idea of going abroad to earn money or to develop a career and then returning to Turkey was not uncommon among the youth we interviewed. Most voiced the aim of ultimately returning to Turkey, especially in order to raise their children there. For instance, computer programmer Musa has had chances to emigrate, but he says that as he has gotten older and seen what other Syrians have experienced in Europe, this idea has become less appealing. “I became certain that I want to raise my children here, in an environment like this, which is conservative but not restrictive.”

Indeed, for youth whose lives were becoming normalized, it became possible to think in terms of expectations of the longer-term future, particularly of a time when they would have their own children and how they would raise them. This longer-term prospect led them to weigh what they expected from their lives in Turkey against what they might expect abroad, ideas about which they had gained from friends and relatives who had moved on to Europe. As a result, questions such as the ability to maintain their culture and to bring up their children in it were prevalent in many people’s minds. In our survey, 39 percent of respondents believed that they would not be able to maintain their culture should they make the journey to Europe, while 34 percent of participants were not sure. In contrast, 55 percent of participants said that they can maintain their culture in Turkey, while only 20 percent said that this was not possible. Moreover, cultural and religious similarities were the main reasons given for wanting to establish a life in Turkey. More than 30 percent of participants mentioned that cultural closeness to Syrian traditions is the main reason behind wanting to stay in Turkey, the second reason being that it is a Muslim country.

In other words, as time passed and refugees became more settled, their lives more “normal,” it became possible for many to make informed choices based on expectations of the long-term future. The cost in terms of uprooting seemed too high, and the cultural differences with Europe too great. While some expressed this as a cultural similarity and ability to maintain traditions, for others it was about what they understood to be different lifestyles and rhythms of everyday life. For instance, Pasha, a twenty-three-year-old man of Circassian background from Damascus whose story was discussed in an earlier chapter, had established himself in a job he enjoyed in one of Turkey’s southern cities and declared,

I don’t like Europe at all. I don’t know. I’m a social person. As far as I understand, there is not much of a social life there. Because I am talking with my friends who are there, like no, there is no social life there for real. You either study or work, there is nothing else. Here you study, work, wander around, get together with friends. You can do everything here. Why would I go there?

Okay, maybe my financial situation would be better there, but you cannot only look at the finances. I would die of boredom there. I would really get bored.

The expectation of boredom in Europe seemed quite widespread among youth who valued their time with friends and family. For example, Heyam, who was twenty-eight years old when we spoke to her and working for an NGO in Gaziantep, remarked that she would like to live for a while in Tunisia, just for the experience. When we asked her why Tunisia but not Europe, she replied,

I do not like Europe, why? I feel that lifestyle is so monotonous. . . . Life in Turkey is nice. Let's say it is exciting. Life here is interesting. If I lived in Europe my life would be sleeping and waking up. The biggest excitement would be if the dustman did not collect the rubbish for a day. And I am like, I do not think that is my lifestyle. Here you are always waiting for something, or there is something happening. . . . Life here is more beautiful.

For Heyam and other youth, then, the routinization of life could lead to boredom and staleness. One young woman studying in Adana, Dalia, thought that life in Europe would be stifling:

I feel like it is a prison there. I know many people who went to Germany and cannot return. I feel like, yeah, they are offering them everything but to stay, not to leave. I do not want something to limit me because my soul is still attached to my homeland. I do not want anyone to prevent me from returning. I did not see in Turkey what I saw in Europe. Thank God, it is good, and I do not feel like it is a prison or a suffocating place and that it would keep me in the future.

Quite a number of the youths we interviewed similarly mentioned the negative reports that they had received about the difficulty and isolation of life in Europe as what discouraged them from thinking about it as an option.

For many youths, then, there was a sense of existential mobility, or having greater freedom in comparison to Syria, that was also available within a culturally familiar environment with a familiar lifestyle and rhythm. In addition to this, however, certain youth found Turkey to be a space where they could pursue social mobility and develop themselves. Young Syrians often remark, "I do not want to start from zero," meaning that they already invested considerable time and resources for their current standing. Indeed, our interviews reveal that among Syrian youth, those who found room for self-improvement, either through work or education, are more satisfied with their lives in Turkey and more likely to aspire to stay (see Üstübcici and Elçi 2022 for a more detailed discussion on social class and aspirations to stay).

Indeed, many young people who settled down in Turkey see "starting from scratch" in a new country as a waste of time. Salih, who is about to graduate from the engineering faculty in Adana, wants to continue his ca-

reer in Turkey. He answers the question of whether he has ever thought of going to Europe as follows:

Neither then, nor now. When you look at it, I graduated from high school in 2011, now it is 2018, and I still didn't graduate from university, didn't take my degree yet. Okay, if I leave everything and go there, I will start over. First, I will learn German, and it takes time. You lose seven years and still are a high school graduate. There is also that. This would be the hardest thing for me.

Salih built a life for himself in Adana, acquired professional experience and has become socially and professionally connected. For him, starting all over as a high school graduate with no social ties in a new place means downward mobility, an experience he wants to avoid.

Similarly, Hilal, a young single man of twenty years old, works as a tailor in Mardin, a city bordering Syria, and has never considered moving on to Europe, as he thinks he cannot adjust to life there. His willingness to stay in Turkey is also conditional, as he is waiting for suitable circumstances to return to Syria. In the meantime, and despite difficulties, he believes that he can improve his work conditions in Turkey and dreams of establishing his own business.

I had the possibility to go there [Europe]. . . . In that time, I had some money! But I didn't go. I didn't like to go there. . . . To be honest . . . the people told us about there . . . like . . . there are different people! We got used to our atmosphere like we are Muslims. . . . I don't mean that there is a racism but . . . like . . . we will go to a different world! We said maybe the situation would be better here, and—thank God!—our situation is better than many people. There are people who have a worse situation!

In sum, many of the youth in our study felt increasingly settled in Turkey and told us that the country provided them with the right sort of freedom—“conservative but not restrictive”—and opportunities to pursue social mobility in a context of cultural familiarity. Nevertheless, their ability to remain in the country was also temporalized by the legal uncertainties of their permanently temporary situation. For this reason, the desire for citizenship was high across the board. As we will see, almost all youth with whom we spoke mentioned that they either had applied or would apply for Turkish citizenship, which they viewed as a solution to their temporal and physical “stuckedness.”

Mobility as Moving Forward

“Of course, I would get the citizenship if they offered it,” remarked Sahban, a mechanical engineering graduate from Aleppo who currently works in

the human resources office of an international company in Istanbul. The company had originally offered him a position in his own field that would have required him to move abroad, to Pakistan or Oman. When they found out that he only had a Syrian passport, they instead offered him a position in the Istanbul office. The experience left him with a lasting desire to have a “real” passport, one that would allow him to travel “normally,” as anyone else with his aspirations would do. He wanted citizenship, he said, “For one reason only, or for two reasons. The first is the horizons that the citizenship would open for me. . . . The second is that I want to be done with the curse of having a Syrian passport. . . . I want to be a citizen who will receive it [a visa to travel] in a normal manner like all the others.”

Refugee youth most often expressed the desire for citizenship as a desire for mobility. This was mobility as aspiration: simultaneously social mobility, as they expected it to provide them with better jobs and opportunities, and physical mobility, giving them the opportunity to freely travel for work or education—part of what they imagined as a “normal,” middle-class life. Sahban dismissed his own country’s passport as abnormal and wanted one that would allow him to go to an embassy and receive a visa without having them “investigate me many times to see why I’m coming [to that country].” As other anthropological work has shown, the hierarchical position of various passports in the global order makes particular ones into “a symbol of free movement and travel” (Jansen 2009: 822) and representative of “a high quality of life” and “respected geopolitical position” (Greenberg 2011: 88).

Indeed, for many of our interviewees, Syrian documents were associated with immobility and abnormality, and Turkish documents were associated with mobility and “normal lives.” Unlike in the former Yugoslav case described by Stef Jansen and Jessica Greenberg, however, this was initially and immediately about ensuring their permanent status in Turkey, their unquestioned right to live and work there and to realize their aspirations there. As stated by Munsef, a Syrian of Turkmen origin who was working as a translator in Adana, “For me, it doesn’t differ much, but only in the future, if there would be any send-backs, staying under temporary protection would be difficult. It is in the name: temporary protection is temporary.”

Turkish citizenship is initially, then, a guarantee protecting them from being returned to Syria and establishing their permanence in Turkey. For instance, Hiba, a mother of two living in Adana, told us that receiving Turkish citizenship altered her aspirations for the future. Hiba’s husband is pursuing an academic career and doing private tutoring on the side. After the war, her sister joined her husband who was already settled in Germany. At first, Hiba was also thinking of joining them, but receiving Turkish citizenship enabled her and her husband to be more settled in Turkey and changed their perceptions on moving onward:

They [the sister's family] always tell us to come to Germany since we would not have to pay rent, and that they would give the children money. When we got to Turkey, I really wanted to go, since my husband had no job. But now with the citizenship, I don't think about leaving anymore.

The sense of permanence is significant in altering visions of the future, also in the way that citizenship enables certain types of jobs and the ability to move up the social ladder. Yasser, who graduated from the law faculty in Syria, supports his family by working as a translator, since his law degree is not recognized in Turkey. The most important expectation of Yasser, who is originally a Turkmen, from citizenship is the opportunity to be able to practice law in Turkey, preferably as a lawyer: "Since they started giving citizenship to Syrians, now they can apply to jobs here. . . . It is possible to be employed." He adds, "If I get the citizenship, there will be many doors opened for me." Similarly, twenty-five-year-old Khaled, who wants to settle in Turkey and works in a company in Istanbul, thinks that citizenship will make his life plans easier if he stays in Turkey. "If I have a citizenship here, I can get married easily; I can invite her [his fiancée, still in Syria] easily. I have my equivalence here, no one will say that my documents are fake." Or Ihsan, a young man living in Adana who had just lost his job when we spoke to him, explained to us why he was seeking to become a Turkish citizen:

My situation depends on finding a job where I can make good money and live comfortably. Only then will I be able to realize my dreams. But if I can't find a job like that, it will be hard. I don't know what the future will bring, and my biggest fear is the future. I'm very hopeful about citizenship.

In the immediate term, then, citizenship opened doors to work opportunities. However, when asked about his dreams for the future, Ihsan also said that the kind of life he imagined was one in which he would be able to travel, and for that reason citizenship was not only a way to a better job, but also the key to free movement and a better life. Indeed, throughout our interviews it became clear that in the years since the EU-Turkey deal was put in place, not only had the desire to move on to Europe significantly declined among Syrian youth, but also their dreams of a normal life—now seemingly reachable from where they found themselves in Turkey—included a passport that would allow them to travel. Yazan, who had been invited to apply for citizenship as a university student in Izmir, commented that he just wanted a passport with which he could travel and be able to see his sister in London. Omayya, another university student in Mardin, explained, "We don't need your citizenship and aren't so keen to get it, but we have to if we want to go anywhere. . . . Moving around will be easier."

This mobility, it should be noted, was primarily class-based, an opportunity to develop oneself. Mobility, in this sense, is imagined as part of a "normal," middle-class life—something that many of our interviews de-

fined as their goal. As Stef Jansen (2009: 817) notes for postwar Yugoslavia, “Paradoxically, while passport applications are usually intended as a first step towards cross-border travel, ever since their creation in the 1990s Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Serbian passports actually certified bodies as immobilized.” Jansen continues by remarking that for those who possessed those documents, “Bosnian and Serbian passports were intimately experienced as rendering people collectively guilty until proven innocent (their future ‘crime’ being the ‘threat of mobility’).” The former Yugoslavia’s red passport, on the other hand, came to be nostalgically viewed as “a symbol of free movement and travel” (2009: 822), something that his informants claim to have used frequently, not only as workers, but also as tourists and shoppers (823). As a result, “Throughout the former Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav red passport (*crveni pasoš*) has become iconic with a high quality of life and the respected geopolitical position of the socialist Yugoslav state” (Greenberg 2011: 88). As both of these articles note, the ability to travel beyond the borders of one’s own state also signaled the ability to have a “normal” life.

Many youths in our study discussed plans to make a life in Turkey but wanted a passport that would allow them to study and travel abroad, in other words, to have the expectations of middle-class normality. Unlike the “entrapment” (Jansen 2009) of the Syrian passport, which many of our interviewees associated with a lack of mobility, most perceived the Turkish passport as one that would enable them to study, visit family, go on vacation—in other words, pursue the aspirations of a “normal” life.

This was especially true of young men, many of whom saw their futures in Turkey but found that the immobility of carrying a Syrian passport limited the options to realize their dreams, or act in agentive ways. One young man commented,

Because I want to stay in Turkey, I want the citizenship so that I can go abroad, and work abroad, and succeed in my dreams abroad. But when I go to Europe, I don’t think to become a European citizen, because that would be hard, I couldn’t live that life or follow those laws. For me, the laws are too strict. But from the perspective of the market, it’s a great market.

Similarly, Zuher, the young nurse living in Izmir from a previous chapter, weighed the possibility that the international organization that sponsors the clinic where he works might not renew his contract, and that, without citizenship, he would not be employable in the Turkish state hospital system. He not only wants Turkish citizenship but also to learn German, which will open the path for him to migrate temporarily to Germany, where his uncle works as a doctor.

For that reason, I’ll apply to work in the German hospitals. . . . I’ll work six or seven years in Germany then return to Turkey and establish my own business.

I don't have to work in my own field. I'll have developed myself, and at least I'll have some property. Or I'll have enough savings to start a family or begin a project. These are my thoughts at the moment.

For some, then, the passport offered them the opportunity to work abroad, build up capital, and return to Turkey. For others, however, it offered the opportunity to study elsewhere. While for some these plans may reflect longer-term migration aspirations, many expressed a desire to develop themselves through education abroad before returning to Turkey. Isra, a medical student whose family is settled in Gaziantep explains:

I want to finish my education and go specialize in England. I have this as a dream for myself. Inshallah, I get the chance to achieve it, I want to get specialized there and come back and work here in Turkey. I want to have the experience in medicine in a developed country, this is what I want.

Similarly, Sumbul is a twenty-two-year-old university student studying management in Adana who comes from an upper-middle-class family near Aleppo. Her father is a businessman who managed to transfer his business to Mersin and get citizenship for the family. The family has no aspirations to move to Europe. "Because we are settled here, I'm in the university, my siblings are in school, and my father's job is stable, so no need for going to a new country and starting everything all over again," Sumbul tells us. Although she never thought about moving on, Sumbul herself is working hard to spend a semester in Germany or France through the Erasmus program: "My parents did not have any problems with me studying here; my father is even telling me to apply for the Erasmus program."

In these various visions of futures, then, we see that the desire for mobility has shifted from one that would enable them to emigrate elsewhere to one that would enable them to "normalize" their lives in Turkey. "Normal," comments Jessica Greenberg, "thus points to the gap between how people see themselves and how they must conform to conditions and realities not of their choosing. Normal serves as a diagnostic category for shifting social, political, and economic relations and the kind of agentive possibilities that emerge in those contexts" (Greenberg 2011: 89). In regard to refugee youths who have now spent a significant part of their adolescent and adult lives in Turkey, "normal" also points to the options available to Turkish citizens of their same class background and education.

Overall, then, aspirations to stay in Turkey are prominent among Syrian youth. Such aspirations may result from lack of capabilities to go elsewhere, but also from a sense of familiarity with the environment or from prospects for social mobility through education or work. At this point, Turkish citizenship gains an instrumental and intrinsic value to ensure permanence and settlement but also to facilitate further mobility if not migration. The pros-

pect of Turkish citizenship may also induce aspirations to stay, as it gives a sense of permanence and offers opportunities specific to Turkey.

Mobility as Moving On

There were, of course, some youth in our study who had not yet established in Turkey the sort of life that they had imagined for themselves and who still considered finding ways to Europe. For the most part, these were young men who had not been able to acquire the education that they wanted or to find jobs compatible with their experience and qualifications. Moneer, a young man of twenty-three living in Mardin, told us about his brother, who was about to begin his studies in Sweden on a scholarship:

Yes, I want [to go to Sweden]. There is a big difference. Here they give you a broom and tell you “congratulations for your new work,” and you start working in bad conditions. When you go there, they give you a pen and a book and they tell you go and study. Which one would you choose? I have my cousins—they were also living in Damascus. They were not good boys. They went there, and now they are studying and really changed for the best.

Other young men in our study had already attempted the trip to Europe during the so-called refugee crisis of 2015–16, when the number of border crossings was high, but could not realize their plans due to lack of financial resources or for family reasons. As such, those mobility aspirations have not been fulfilled, and they remain “involuntarily immobile” (Carling 2002). As Jørgen Carling notes, while much attention is focused on those who migrate, increasing border restrictions also produce large numbers of persons who cannot move. “Indeed,” remarks Carling (2002: 5), “one of the most striking aspects of today’s migration order, compared to the recent past, is the degree of conflict over mobility and the frustration about immobility among people in many traditional countries of emigration.”

While Carling refers primarily to increasing restrictions on migration from countries that have traditionally been sources of labor for Europe, Syrian youth have experienced both prolonged forced migration and potential secondary migration that would enable them to fulfill their life aspirations. For young men, in particular, the potential for that secondary migration is today impeded by migration controls but also by family expectations and responsibilities. Yahya, for instance, was twenty-nine years old at the time of our interview and working in manufacture in Istanbul. Although he had saved money to go to Europe, he had to use those funds to settle his family members instead of traveling. He is still considering going, especially for the job opportunities in Germany.

Yahya: So, my idea was to take my bag and travel. But when my brother, his wife and her brother told me that they are coming to Turkey . . . I couldn't do anything! And my family also wanted to come . . . so I didn't do anything. I endured a lot for all these years! I have saved some money, but I had to spend it when my family came. It's not about money, but I wanted to use this money to travel.

Interviewer: You mean that you wanted to go to Europe.

Yahya: Of course! And moreover . . . there people could open cafés. For example, I know someone from my village; he opened a café in Germany. The government helped him, and he is studying now. He also studied in Syria, but I don't know what his department was. So, the government helped him, and he opened two cafés! Now he is comfortable.

The bad job market experiences of this group, who stayed in Turkey against their will, increase their desire to leave Turkey. For young refugees deprived of durable solutions in Turkey, migration elsewhere appears as the only solution to improve their working conditions and income. Musa, for instance, is a young single man who already crossed to Greece through smuggling once and then was deported back to Turkey. He later joined his childhood friend Hashem in Istanbul, where they were working and living together as day laborers in a restaurant. Both were very discontented with their current conditions and think that going to Europe—to “heaven on earth,” in Musa's words—is the only solution to their problems. Hashem elaborates his frustration as follows:

Let me tell you something. Every single day that passes . . . it passes from our life. It passes in vain. We are losing it! We don't benefit from it! We are just tiring ourselves in vain! For what? For 40 TL a day [around 10 USD in May 2018]! There is no future in that! We want to travel and be able to rest. We don't want to work for twelve hours every day! The maximum work hours in any country are eight hours, and you also have days off weekly. But we have a day off every fourteen days! And sometimes we are asked to work even more.

Being stuck in dead-end jobs, their aspirations to move on are shaped by perceptions of a better life in other destinations (de Haas 2011). “Why did I go to Greece? Because I didn't want to remain a failed person here in Turkey,” Musa explained, saying that his main motivation in trying to reach Germany is to be able to pursue his studies.

It is worth emphasizing that, for the most part, aspirations to move on are gendered. Our own survey and other research have indicated that men are more likely to leave Turkey compared to women (see Üstübcü and Elçi 2022; Üstübcü, Kirişcioğlu, Elçi 2021; Düvell 2019 among others). From our own interviews, we also see that men are not only more inclined to move to new destinations but also are more likely to aspire to return to Syria. Hazem, for instance, was twenty-five years old at the time of our inter-

view and working as a daywork electrician in Izmir. Unable to afford a place to live for himself, he originally wanted to return to Syria but ultimately accepted that this was not realistic. At the time that we spoke, he was trying to reach Germany to join family members there and was pursuing both legal routes and potential smuggling. At the same time, his desire to migrate prevents him from taking steps to establish a more settled life in Turkey:

I am waiting for my passport to be issued, if I could go there legally, it would be great for me. But if I can't, I will search for the illegal way. It's not just dangerous. There are many other problems, but I took my decision! I live here, but I didn't settle down. I sleep two nights here, and I go to another place to sleep for two days. . . . I don't have a place of my own. My sister and her husband are very good to me, but I don't want to bother them. I am shy.

Unlike Musa, who considers Europe as heaven on earth, Taim, a twenty-five-year-old shop owner in Gaziantep, had a more realistic account.

It [Europe] is not heaven at all. . . . There is a group of Syrians who see Europe as the salvation, but it is not. Europe is like Turkey. The only difference is that the European government can help you until you can stand on your feet. Here they are not able to help you stand on your feet. This is what distinguishes Europe from Turkey. But if you do not work or build something, they will kick you out. There are many people who want to return and many people who will be deported. . . . So, the definition of Europe for me is a passport and an ID. This is what I want from Europe, I do not want anything from it.

Such expressions of utilitarian reasons for wishing to move on also confirm studies from throughout the region, which show young men immigrating in order to establish themselves, send remittances to their families, and ensure their futures, including marriage. “To tell a young man in an Egyptian village not to dream of migration is like telling him not to hope,” Samuli Schielke (2020: 54) remarks. For young men throughout the region, going abroad to work is effectively a rite of passage to manhood that enables one to establish a married adult life (Elliott 2021).

For young men, then, aspirations to move on are also aspirations to move forward in one's life, to have the means to become an independent adult who can establish himself and also help support his family. However, the importance of family in such aspirations is not only present among young men. Although fewer women wished to risk moving on to Europe, there were some who considered it to ensure a good quality education for their children. Amar, a twenty-nine-year-old young woman living apart from her abusive husband, stated that because she works as a cleaner, she could lose her job at any time, and she could go to Europe for her children's future and education, even if she didn't want to. For her, Europe means support for her children until they grow up and go to school.

One of the main differences between young men who are planning to move on and families with young children is in how they now consider realizing their migration aspirations. Rather than crossing the borders through smuggling, several families with migration aspirations were considering resettlement to a third country, even though the latter is not guaranteed and may involve years of waiting. Sama, for instance, is a young woman from Aleppo who has been waiting to be placed in the United States through UNHCR, because her father is very ill. Because of changes in the United States' refugee admission policies, they are now waiting to be placed on the resettlement lists of other countries such as Canada² and the UK. Although they know that this process may take many years, they do not think of crossing the border illegally and going to Europe: "We thought about that [going to Europe in 2015]. But my father said, 'It is better for me to spend my life here than something to happen to any of you in the sea. I will not risk my children's lives.'"

Conclusion

At time of writing, more than a decade has passed since the Syrian conflict began and the first Syrian families took refuge in Turkey. This chapter has looked at refugee youth aspirations after the passage of time, when gradual normalization of their situation has made the status quo resistant to change. Even in a state of temporariness, life must go on. People build houses and have children, and they provide for and school those children. They establish businesses, start careers, and aspire to better lives.

Along the way, anticipation gives way to expectation. While anticipation is based on a sense that the future is bearing down on one and that one needs to act in order to shape an oncoming event (Bryant and Knight 2019: 31), expectation is the basis for "the normal" and for "ordinary lives," of "being able to await the future, rather than having always to anticipate it" (52). Expectation's role in defining normality is that the ordinary becomes the expectation of expectation: "One *should* be able to expect, one *ought* to be able to expect, e.g., a state that works, a certain standard of living, or that one can pass on property to one's children without legal challenge" (52). In the context at hand, we see how even temporary arrangements may be normalized and the expectation of expectation may begin to outweigh desires to create lives anew.

Indeed, we can see that it is this shift from anticipation (of violence, poverty, or exclusion) to expectation (the capacity to expect certain types of future and build normal lives) that defines youth mobility aspirations. Those who now have developed expectations (of social mobility, or particular lifestyles) tend to desire to stay where they are, not to "start from zero." The

main aspiration of most is acquiring Turkish citizenship, which will further “normalize” their lives by making it possible for them to realize dreams of further social mobility through increased job and educational opportunities, as well as physical mobility that will give them freedom to see family, take holidays, and study abroad. For those who aim at moving on beyond Turkey, it is generally the continuing entrapment in a state of anticipation—constantly moving house or fear about one’s job—and inability to establish oneself, with stable expectations, that pushes them to look elsewhere.

Notes

1. The crackdown on political dissent in Turkey is limited to Turkish politics and tends not to affect Arabic speakers expressing political opinions about politics outside Turkey.
2. Among those intending to move on, Canada is the most desired destination for resettlement, along with Germany. Canada, especially, is seen as a place one can reach by legal means, establish oneself in the society and build a future for oneself and one’s family.