

Introduction

Becoming and Being a (Dis)Connected Forced Migrant

It is a hot summer night in June 2014. I am watching TV with Kholoud¹ and her family in their small ground-floor apartment in Amman, the capital of Jordan. An Iraqi national, Kholoud and her family had fled in 2006 after the US-led invasion in 2003 resulted in a violent sectarian conflict in Iraq. They first sought refuge in Syria and then in Jordan, where they have been since 2011. Their TV set is tuned to MBC (Middle Eastern Broadcasting Group). The popular Dubaiian transnational broadcaster shows an episode of the popular talent show *America's Got Talent*. Four former Marine Corps soldiers enter the stage. They explain how they met while serving in Fallujah, the Iraqi city renowned for its active resistance in response to the presence of US military. After heavy combat and the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi civilians, the US forces – later accused of war crimes for the use of white phosphorus (Monbiot, 2005: 146) – took control of the city in 2004. The men formed a band to cope with Iraq's reality on the ground.

Back then, in 2014, Fallujah had recently fallen into the hands of the militant Islamist organisation ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIL or by the Arabic acronym Da'esh) and the episode of *America's Got Talent* takes on a patriotic twist. One of the show's judges, Howard Stern, an American television personality, stands up from his chair to thank the former soldiers for 'serving our country'. The audience gives a standing ovation and the bulky men on the stage start to cry. I feel arrested by the complex flows of what I see on TV. My own anger to what I consider the stark realities of global inequality contrast to the calmness I perceive of my friends with their first-hand experiences of war, violence and marginalisation. As of that night, Kholoud and her family had been living for more than eight years in legal marginalisation and social uncertainty. American soldiers are publicly celebrated, whereas people like Kholoud have not only been forced to seek refuge as result of the chaos that erupted in response

to the US-led invasion, but are also continuously mistrusted, feared and forgotten about.

This book seeks to further comprehend how transnational connections, engendered by technological developments, interact with the everyday experiences of people who become forcibly displaced and whose lives are most often characterised by legal and temporal uncertainty and prolonged crisis. Media scholars refer to this dialectical relationship between mediated practices and embodied and embedded realities as mediation (Coul-dry, 2008; Livingstone, 2009). Global inequalities, bordering practices and (anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern/refugee) othering processes are also and increasingly experienced through regional and global media landscapes and messages, images and information obtained via information and communication technologies (ICTs). I provide a situated exploration of the mediated sense-making practices of refugees residing in prolonged conditions of displacement, specifically Iraqi urban refugees in Jordan.

By 2009, it was estimated that between half a million and one million Iraqi nationals had sought refuge in response to the 2003 US-led invasion and the sectarian conflict that erupted afterwards. Most of them were residing in the cities of Iraq's neighbouring countries: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey (Chatelard, 2010). The 'Iraq refugee crisis' (International Crisis Group, 2008) resulted in a large-scale humanitarian response, led by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), the UN agency mandated to protect the world's refugees in accordance with the Refugee Convention. Like many of the largest refugee-hosting countries, Jordan is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention that was established to guarantee the right of refuge and the rights of refugees. Whereas Iraqi refugees in Jordan are legally protected, their stay in Jordan is institutionalised as temporary and does not provide them with the right to work. Life in post-invasion Iraq continues to be marked by the ongoing struggle for safety and financial security (Ali, 2019), and the registration of newly arriving Iraqi nationals seeking refuge in Jordan never came to a full stop. In 2014 and 2015, in response to the extreme violence carried out by ISIS, there was again a relatively steep increase of Iraqi nationals seeking refuge in Jordan (UNHCR Jordan, 2019a).

Months after that particular evening, Kholoud's son Adam told me: 'We take it simple because people out there they never know, they don't know the truth, they don't know what really happened, everything they know is what the media says, so ... We take it simple. You can do nothing about it ... It is normal.' Adam's response points to his perception of the distanced American spectator, ignorant of what actually took place in Iraq and the role he believes the American media played in this regard. His emphasis on 'normal' suggests that this is part of his everyday normality. The process of normalisation of living in difficult structural circumstances is a recurring

aspect of everyday living in crisis. Over the years, I have had recurring in-depth conversations with Iraqi refugees during which deeply personal experiences of a dictatorial regime, a US-led invasion, sectarian violence, ISIS atrocities and structural marginalisation in Jordan were explained to be ‘normal’. ‘Normal’ here implies that disorder associated with crisis has become part of one’s everyday life. This does not imply that this is how they believe things ought to be; normalisation should not be confused with indifference (Vigh, 2009: 11) or with giving in.

The worldwide increase in availability and affordability of technologies has coincided with an increase in numbers of people who have registered as having been forcibly displaced and time spent in prolonged conditions of displacement (Doná, 2015). These conditions are often characterised by limited legal rights – for instance, regarding right to work and access to social services – and by prolonged temporariness: not having the certainty if you can stay and under which conditions. This applies to many refugees residing in the Global South, given the ever more restrictive asylum regimes and containment strategies of Western countries. And those who have managed to seek refuge in the Global North are also increasingly required to make do with restricted rights in place and uncertainty about where they will be geographically located in the future (Doná, 2015: 70).

This study extends the growing body of studies of urban refugees in the Global South. It seeks to comprehend how in their often liminal situation of negotiated limited access to assistance, denial of rights and hopes for the future, people who have become forcibly displaced – specifically Iraqi refugees in Jordan – draw upon technologies to make sense and make do. Making sense consists of seeking meaning and seeking direction (Bourdieu, 2000: 207). It is a movement-seeking affirmative action. In line with Peter Nyers (2006), I consider movement to be an ontological activity. Through mediated and situated movements, bodies encounter other bodies, build up social relationships and develop modes of being in the world. To curtail movement and to sustain border practices and containment practices, nation-states – often aided by international organisations and private partners – are increasingly drawing upon technologies. But digital connections can simultaneously provide new means for seeking movement or mobility – affectively, emotionally, bodily and socially, but only seldomly geographically – and actively respond to one’s situation of prolonged displacement.

Many meaningful studies have shown that years of living and waiting in prolonged displacement with suspended rights tend to require active and affective modes of being. Yet so far, relatively little attention has been given to the role of transnational connections and digital technologies for navigating amid prolonged uncertainty. Studies on mediation of migration provide valuable insights into how digital technologies and the connections they enable interact with locally situated realities, but they have largely focused

on migrants' experiences in Europe. The persisting stereotypical idea of the 'vulnerable' and unconnected refugee 'other' who is located beyond Europe contributes to unsubstantiated optimism about the potentials of technologies. Combined with the presumed neutrality of technologies and their abilities for sustaining distance, this can accelerate structural exclusions.

Here I argue that an understanding of refugees' connectivity in a global and post-humanitarian world therefore require a more situated comprehension of how refugees are digitally connected. Thinking about refugees' connectivity and their connected experiences within a world that is characterised by globalised inequalities, legal, material and embodied constraints, and interactions with humanitarian operations also requires an important additional feature: that of being and feeling (simultaneously) disconnected. Because the paradox of globalisation and digital connectivity is that there is a 'simultaneous global acceleration of inclusion and exclusion' (Lucht, 2012: xi), and this plays out and interact with the lives and subjectivities of (dis) connected refugees and of precarious migrants across the globe.

Experiences of Waiting in Prolonged Conditions of Displacement

Among the world's forcible displaced, waiting has become the rule (Hyndman and Giles, 2011) and uncertainty the norm (Horst and Grabska, 2015). By June 2020, the UNHCR had registered 20.4 million refugees, 45.7 million internally displaced people and 4.2 million asylum seekers, alongside 5.6 million Palestine refugees who are under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (UNHCR, 2020). Most of those refugees are geographically located in the Global South: 85% of the world's refugees are residing for long periods in non-Western low- and middle-income countries (UNHCR, 2019a: 9). Whereas it is difficult to obtain accurate estimates on the length of time that people spend in a refugee-like situation, in 1993 the average refugee situation was considered to last nine years (UNHCR, 2006). In 2011, the average length that refugees were spending in prolonged legal and temporal uncertainty was approaching twenty years (Milner and Loescher, 2011). In 2015, the UNHCR estimated this figure to be twenty-six years (UNHCR, 2015a).²

Given the limited and steering goodwill of resettlement countries, the lack of capacities in hosting countries and the prolonged nature of conflict, unsafety and instability in countries where people come from, the three conventional durable solutions – repatriation, local integration and third-country resettlement – cannot address the needs of the world's refugees. At the time of writing, the UNCHR speaks of solutions, consisting of local integration, voluntary repatriation, third country resettlement and comple-

mentary pathways. The latter takes a meritocratic approach towards ascertaining the rights of some and only gained traction in more recent years as a component of the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (UNHCR, 2018a). Combined with the Global Compact on Migration, initial responses to these nonbinding instruments proposed for rectifying the structural problems relating to refugee protection have received mixed responses (Chimni, 2018; Goodwin-Gill, 2018; Hathaway, 2018).

The UNHCR uses the term ‘protraction’ to demarcate the circumstances of individuals who are recognised as refugees and for whom a so-called durable solution is not reached within five years (Crisp, 2003; Loescher and Milner, 2005; Long, 2011; Milner and Loescher, 2011). The term ‘protraction’ only applies to people possessing the legal label ‘refugee’ and draws upon the reductive understanding that people recognised as such would or should not move. It is a policy-driven concept that excludes internally displaced people, people who are not recognised as such and people who did not (immediately) register as refugees for a myriad of reasons (Janmyr and Mourad, 2018). Moreover, people’s actual experiences and journeys towards seeking stability and security in prolonged refugee situations are not as linear or static. These often involve circular migration as the combination of everyday hardships and hope tends to push people to consider whether return is an actual possibility (Iaria, 2011, 2013). I therefore find forced migration scholar Georgia Doná’s understanding of ‘prolonged conditions of displacement’ (Doná, 2015) a more helpful and inclusive concept to consider prolonged living in restricted legal and social rights and uncertainty about the future.

The term ‘protraction’ is too reductive and state-oriented, yet words like ‘transit’ fail to provide enough space to fully consider the temporal components of living in prolonged uncertainty and how its influence people’s subjective and social experiences. The concept of ‘fragmented journeys’ (Collyer, 2007; Kvittingen et al., 2018; Schapendonk, 2012) moves away from a reductive linear understanding on ‘transit’ as an only a temporary state in-between departure and arrival and does more justice to people’s ongoing search for a sense of stability amidst prolonged uncertainty. Some of the people in this study had been in Jordan for more than ten years. Others had arrived more recently, often following in the footsteps of family members and relatives who have travelled before them. Several, like Kholoud, had initially sought refuge in Jordan. And a few had returned to Iraq, but had come back to Jordan because of the persisting violence there. Yet, regardless of the length of their stay, all the people I worked with described their life in Jordan as ‘waiting’. It is for that reason that this study focuses upon mediated experiences of waiting in Jordan as one prolonged point in the fragmented journeys of Iraqi refugees.

Waiting serves as a common ordering principle that (re)produces voiceless refugee subjectivities through humanitarian technologies of ‘care and

control' (Hyndman and Giles, 2011; Ticktin, 2011) and that is (re)produced by the externalisation of asylum to the Global South, the 'purported benevolence of humanitarian aid' (Hyndman and Giles, 2011: 362). But whereas the term 'waiting' might imply passivity, the people in this study were far from passively waiting for time to go by. Reducing their lives to depictions of 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) or 'wasted' (Bauman, 2004) would be a macro-political theoretical act of violence that ignores and therefore further reduces the agency of refugees in response to humanitarian crises, macro-political development and local constraints (Harrell-Bond, 1986).

Many valuable studies on migrants' prolonged precarious experiences and their negotiations of time and place show that waiting is an active and affective attitude. Studies conducted in camp settings (Agier, 2011; Horst, 2006; Malkki, 1995a; Turner, 2010), on journeys (Anderson, 2014; Khosravi, 2008; 2010; Trimikliniotis et al., 2015), on years spent waiting for papers (Griffiths, 2014; Rotter, 2015), on detention and/or potential deportation (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008; Turnbull, 2016), on enduring illegalisation (de Genova, 2002; 2005; Lucht, 2012) and/or in response to actual deportation (Schuster and Majidi, 2013) have all successfully shown how in the time that is spent 'in-between', everyday life goes on and important subjective and social changes do occur (Crawley et al., 2017). People are seeking meaning and direction in their interaction with the humanitarian infrastructure in place, transnational connections and legal material realities. Yet so far, relatively little attention has been given to how digital technologies interact with the deeply situated experiences of waiting and prolonged crisis of migrants leaving under dire circumstances.

Time is most vividly felt when there is a rupture between our expectations and what the world has delivered (Bourdieu, 2000: 208), for it is especially in these moments that time is experienced as slowed down and as being in a state of 'waiting'. Hope, despair, expectation, anxiety and impatience are but a few states of mind through which time and waiting are experienced (Bourdieu 2000: 214). Like Europe's borders, time in waiting is increasingly stretched out (Tsoni, 2016). The need to seek refuge can be the result of an imminent threat, but one's departure can equally be the result of a long process – for instance, if one's need to leave is a response to living under perpetual threat or because it requires necessary preparations, such as paperwork or financial resources (van Hear, 2004). 'Arrival' can also be a continuation of waiting, for instance, for status or for family reunification. And upon full recognition as a refugee, the consequences that years of living with violence, uncertainty, vulnerabilities, uncertainties and negotiated forms of resilience do not magically disappear (Garnier et al., 2018: 2) and symbolic and legal border practices persist.

People move within the social and material environments in which they find themselves and they are moved by these environments. Crisis is a ter-

rain of meaning and action. It is about finding one's way despite the structural limitations in and, if necessary, beyond one's physical place (Vigh, 2008). 'Crisis' puts a prolonged hold on people and societies. In this book I show how, beyond instrumental functions, digital technologies play important social and subjective roles for navigating in and only sometimes out of crisis. Emotions might wear out and the process is often tiresome, especially if there are only limited means to address or change them. This does not mean that Kholoud and people in similar circumstances are not touched by mediated messages or everyday difficulties.

On the evening when we watched *America's Got Talent*, Kholoud told me she wants to go to the country office of the UNHCR based in Jordan the next day. She had been there many times before to obtain information on whether she and her family could be considered for third country resettlement. The country office of the UNHCR (hereinafter referred to as 'UNHCR Jordan') is located far from their homes and, considering their limited income, paying for the taxi ride there is expensive. These visits tend to disappoint. As on previous occasions, they will tell her they can do little to help her as the capacities of the United Nations (UN) refugee agency are limited. But this time, Kholoud explains, it will be different. A UNHCR Jordan staff member will tell her that they have made a mistake. They will be able to travel to a Western country the day after. She sighs and then tells me: 'It is a dream, Mirjam. I know.' But even 'just dreams' serve a purpose. The act of holding on to hope might be crucial for making do in a structurally unjust world. Amid prolonged crisis, people hold on to life as meaningful in fragmented, ever more volatile worlds. In situations of disorder, people continue to act in the present, hold on to parts of their former lives and try to anticipate the future.

Being-and-Becoming Refugees in Prolonged Conditions of Displacement

Mindful of the potential similarities between mediated practices of everyday experiences of other migrants and their descendants, not-yet migrants and nonmigrants residing in precarious circumstances across the globe, the focus of this book's is on refugees' waiting experience of prolonged displacement in the Global South. The 1951 Geneva Convention for the Status of Refugees and the related 1967 Protocol (hereinafter 'the Refugee Convention') was established to ensure the rights of those people seeking refuge from individually targeted persecution beyond the borders of the nation-state to which they are expected to belong. People categorised as 'refugees' (Janmyr and Mourad, 2018; Zetter, 1991, 2007) became the focal point of a complex network established to ensure international protection and to institutionalise assistance.

The UNHCR is mandated to protect the world's refugees in accordance with the Refugee Convention. Jordan, like many Middle Eastern countries, is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention. In combination with its situated (lack of) rule of law, this has resulted in a rather complex legal interplay pertaining to the roles that the UNHCR, other international organisations, implementing partners, their (Western) donors and private entities have taken on regarding Jordan's protection context. The position of UNHCR Jordan as a 'surrogate state' (Kagan, 2011; Slaughter and Crisp, 2009) and its (post-)humanitarian governance practices require scrutiny as it interacts with and influences the experiences of people seeking refuge. But UNHCR Jordan is but one in a complex network that has been developed for refugee protection in humanitarian settings.

With this geographical and topical focus, I by no means seek to reify the Convention as a *sine qua non* for protection and/or to privilege the UNHCR (and/or states) as norm entrepreneurs and bearers of rights (Cole, 2020). While the Refugee Convention was originally established to ensure the right of refuge and the rights of refugees, this tends to be undermined by the actions of signatory states, through the deployment of xenophobic migration policies that make seeking asylum increasingly difficult and further criminalises migration while encouraging 'humanitarian' containment policies beyond Europe (Ajana, 2013; Anderson, 2014; Costello and Mann, 2020; Duffield, 2019; Hyndman and Giles, 2011).

At the end of my fieldwork in September 2015, UNHCR Jordan had registered 50,340 Iraqi nationals (UNHCR Jordan, 2015a). At that point in time, UNHCR Jordan had registered a total of 686,584 people. The vast majority (628,867 people) hailed from Syria. Like their Iraqi peers, more than 80% of registered Syrian refugees are living in urban settings. UNHCR Jordan had registered 3,473 people from Sudan and 3,914 people with other national backgrounds (UNHCR Jordan, 2015a). A large number of Palestinians in Jordan also found themselves in legal limbo (Ramahi, 2015). Moreover, less privileged Transjordanian and Palestinian Jordanian citizens also experience grievances, including high levels of unemployment, for which Jordan's displaced populations are often too easily blamed (Chatty, 2015).

My academic interest focuses on what happens when humanitarian attention paid to a particular crisis decreases, but people continue to live in prolonged and digitally connected conditions of displacement and legal uncertainty, resulting in a focus on Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Humanitarian aid relates to the attention span of most news media outlets (Chouliaraki, 2013) and is inherently intended to be short term and temporary (Brun, 2016; Fassin, 2012). By 2015, the academic attention paid to Iraqi refugees had significantly reduced, along with international support and media attention. Much of what has been documented about the situation of Iraqi refugees residing in Jordan draws upon assessments and research conducted prior to 2014.

All people in this study were registered with UNHCR Jordan and self-identified as refugees. I therefore refer to them as refugees even if not all of them were formally recognised as such via ‘refugee status determination proper’, the more rigorous process that UNHCR tends to conduct in nonsignatory countries on behalf of Western nation-states (Janmyr, 2017a). In discussions on interactions with the humanitarian regime, I sometimes speak of Iraqi Persons of Concern (PoC) as this was the label that UNHCR Jordan started deploying by 2015. The different labels used for people crossing the borders of nation-states tend to be used to exclude and differentiate (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; Janmyr and Mourad, 2018), and cause further misrecognition that reasons behind any kind of migration are often multicausal and multilayered (Lindley, 2010). The legal refugee status can provide access to rights, but the label ‘refugee’ tends to be appropriated as a stereotyping governing tool (Hyndman and Giles, 2011; Zetter, 1991, 2007), tends to be emotionally loaded and burdensome (Ludwig, 2013), and contributes to the institutionalisation of a ‘state of exception’ (Agamben, 2005; Holmes and Castañeda, 2016), which draws upon conditionality and vulnerability instead of rights.

The social and subjective process of becoming-and-being a refugee is never simply the result of crossing nation-states’ borders and/or of being able to prove one’s individualised persecution. What Liisa Malkki (1995b) described as ‘refugeeness’ is the gradual transformation through which refugees learn from their own and other’s embedded, embodied and mediated experiences, of interactions with local authorities and humanitarian operations, of everyday encounters in place, and the many conditions that this subjectively and socially imposes on people. It is a continuous and dynamic process of (also and never only about) becoming a refugee and intersects with other identity markers.

The Mediation of Migration

Migration is a complex process in which people continuously seek to find a balance between different geographical places and their own place in the world. Feeling at ease and feeling at home – belonging – relates to coexisting and not always competing political projects of belonging that (re)construct boundaries to define and differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘others’ (Yuval-Davis, 2012). Exclusionary grand narratives – often following colonial, capitalist, racialised and/or patriarchal lines – tend to render this as an either/or choice that serves to cast continued or renewed doubts on one’s place in the world of (would-be/descendants of) migrants simply because of their race, religion, name, legal status and other intersecting reasons (Ahmed et al., 2003; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Baubock and Faist, 2010; Brubaker, 2005;

Clifford, 2007; Hall, 1990). Migrants' experiences therefore often consist of acts of cultural maintenance, adaption, creation, repression, resistance and control. The dialectical process between fitting in (and if so, in whose structures) and/or being able to hold on to differences is partly shaped and restricted by localised, national and international national media outlets and transnational connections, but they can also and equally provide resources to negotiate hegemonic structures and power relations (Sinclair and Cunningham, 2001).

For postcolonial thinkers such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1993), diasporic identifications consist of two parts: attachments to one's 'roots', including holding on to a shared history and community, but also to one's 'routes' (future aspirations, transformations and intercultural trajectories). The in-between spaces that migrants inhabit are known as 'diaspora space' (Brah, 1996) or as the interstitial 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994). Moving beyond static understandings of insider/outsider and against methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002), such concepts enable the exploration of how there are multiple performative sites of power that can serve to differentiate and/or confound in relation to oneself, each other and the 'other' (Brah, 1996).

Whereas this study focuses largely on digital connectivity and ICTs, often captured by the term 'new' technologies, it is important to recognise that 'humanity is not one iota more mediated by the rise of the digital' (Miller and Horst, 2013: 3). People's experiences of migration were most probably never a permanent break to the people and places left behind. A wide array of mediated practices – from storytelling (Al-Hardan, 2016) and particular material objects (Dudley, 2010) to letters, video cassettes and radio (Madianou and Miller, 2011; Seufferling, 2019) – enabled means to navigate in new and sometimes deeply uncertain sociolegal environments and to hold on to the past and a sense of stability. The use of technologies by nation-states to curtail movement, enforce symbolic borders or mobilise sympathy for people suffering elsewhere is also not new (Curtis, 2012; Hyndman, 2000; Malkki, 1995a; Seufferling, 2019).

Ethnographic studies on 'new' media often focus on virtual geographies and therefore potentially run the risk of negating how people's mediated practices interact, relate and are layered over material geographies (Krajina et al., 2014; Miller and Slater, 2000; Morley, 2008; Postill, 2011). More contextual attention is needed for what transnational connections, enabled by technologies, do amidst and in interaction with the structural material, social and mediated inequalities that refugees encounter. A short-sighted focus on the 'new' would also negate how 'older' technologies are enduring (Hayes, 2019), given that matters such as class and location influence access to and usage of digital technologies, as well as experiences of being and becoming displaced. And the connections that newer technologies have often do not

replace but have come to exist alongside and interact with other means of staying connected and making sense. Sense-making practices also increasingly occur in an environment of polymedia (Madianou and Miller 2011), as people are increasingly able to access different media forms – TV, social media, written information, etc. – with different characteristics and affordances. ‘Digital exceptionalism’ (Marwick, 2013) would also overlook how, if people have access to this, a wider variety of different media forms and technologies interact and play a constitutive role in relation to people’s relationships, experiences and thoughts (Madianou and Miller, 2011).

Digital technologies can provide additional spaces to manoeuvre, to seek a sense of security and to navigate new environments and sustaining connections. New technological developments including the increased availability of and the persistence and ubiquity of different technologies have provided an important push towards rethinking the intersections of migration and mediation (Hegde, 2016). As migrants’ identities are increasingly interconnected to mediated practices, the ‘diaspora space’ is increasingly becoming a ‘mediated transnational space’ (Hegde 2016: 17). Technologies play a crucial role in migrants’ lives just as they are able to link people – interactively, actively and affectively – to a world beyond their current geographical location and beyond their often precarious legal and social realities.

On Mediation and Affordances

A simplified utilitarian view on connectivity tends to dehumanise refugees and other people residing in precarious circumstances as ‘others’ (Awad and Tossell, 2019). Technologies interact with already existing sociopolitical structures (Madianou et al., 2016: 978) and often also have important yet less apparent social and subjective purposes beyond instrumental functions. What technologies do (or do not do) is not the result of inherent technological features. Instead, they and the people using them act upon the world in which they are situated. How people use technology is influenced by the people’s experiences in world, including their personal and shared socio-historical backgrounds. But digital technologies – as objects and by the information flows they enable – are simultaneously also structuring forces (boyd, 2010): they interact with everyday experiences and potentially alter (perceptions of) often grim and complex material and social realities, and how these relate to matters such as international politics, warfare, humanitarian governance and neoliberal capitalism.

Mediation theory enables further comprehension of the interactions between technologies, social relations and material conditions. It considers the constant presence of media in everyday life, recognises that media audiences are not passive (Ang, 1991; Hall, 1991) and that media can have transformational capacities regarding social processes (Couldry, 2008). The

significance of media relates to its ability to connect and link people as well as households – actively, passively or interactively – to a world beyond one’s geographical locations. People’s understanding of their place in the world, in reference to their immediate surrounding and in the home, is an ongoing mediated and situated processes that interacts with their legal status, class, gender, race, religion, sexuality, educational background, political beliefs, etc.

By crossing the boundaries from the public world into the private world and vice versa, social, cultural and economic relations and ideologies – for instance, concerning nationality and youth – are continuously renegotiated (Anderson, 1991; Gillespie, 1995; Morley, 1986, 2000; Morley and Silverstone, 1990; Silverstone, 1994; Silverstone et al., 1992). Mediated information, images and practices can evoke particular ideas and desires. They can enable particular societal issues to be addressed and can result in social changes. Yet they can equally reinforce exclusionary and/or oppressive ideas, for instance, concerning class or patriarchal norms (Abu-Lughod, 1997; Mankekar, 1998; Schielke, 2015). Technologies can have transformational capacities, but how this occurs is far from straightforward and depends on many factors, including context.

Affordances are the different potentialities emerging from the interaction between an object (in this case technologies) and its user. They can contribute and open up the possibilities for different kinds of communication and interaction and/or might close off others. Affordances go beyond the functional as they relate to one’s presence in the social and material world (Hutchby, 2001). Interactions with technologies are deeply embedded in wider social and material concerns that reach far beyond immediate interactions with a machine or ‘thing’. It is not only about what designers say that a technology is for or what people think technology can do; it is also what they imagine a tool can be used for (Nagy and Neff, 2015). Technologies affect imageries, and the imagination influences how technologies are used. This often occurs in chaotic, complex or previously unintended ways (Sneath et al., 2009). Technologies might ‘afford’ imaginings in unexpected ways (Nagy and Neff, 2015). This does not necessarily imply that outcomes are always unpredictable or incidental; technologies can be used and/or co-opted in *a priori* unimaginable ways, yet imaginations are often also structured and influenced by sociohistorical context and local and global power relationships.

There are of course a wide variety of differences in terms of access to, availability of and use of technologies. Certainly, not all people who become forcibly displaced have equal access to technologies. Digital divides are persisting and map onto already-existing inequalities. Yet it is safe to say that at least to some extent, digital connectivity has become embedded in the everyday experiences of many refugees. For instance, most of this

study draws upon ethnographic fieldwork with Iraqi refugee households residing in Jordan's capital Amman in the first nine months of 2015. Despite sometimes apparent financial struggles, in all Iraqi households, there was a widespread availability of smartphones and the constant presence of the flickering TV screen. In most cases, all adults and teenagers in the household owned a highly personalised smartphone.

Mediated Navigations of Belonging, Identity and Place-Making in Prolonged Uncertainty

The increased availability and accessibility of internet and satellite TV have resulted in important changes with regard to migrants' being in the world. Digital connectivity has pluralised social settings (Moore, 2012). The figure of the 'connected migrant' (Diminescu, 2008) and a wide variety of similar yet different academic buzzwords plays a central role in discussions in Media and Migration Studies (Leurs and Smets, 2018). Dana Diminescu's (2008) epistemological manifesto played a key role in understanding migrants as actors of connections. They are less bounded by physical constraints considering that technologies provide additional means to navigate between their host country, their country of destination and elsewhere.

But being connected often coincides with an increase in experiences of feeling or being disconnected from security or stability and with limited means for movement and social and physical mobility. This certainly is the case for many of the world's refugees, and not only for them. Open for business and connected via technologies and globalised media productions, borders of nation-states are intentionally and porously closed off, enabling the movement of some – often cis, heterosexual, white, middle-class and Western people – while hindering the mobility of most others.

Transnational connections can play a crucial role in coping with the material and legal difficulties of living in displacement and forced separation. For instance, considering that in the lives of many refugees one's physical location cannot offer a sense of stability and familiarity, refugees' home-making practices are often relocated to online spaces (Doná, 2015; Georgiou, 2012a, 2012b; Leurs, 2014, 2016). Digital connectivity can engender ways of 'being there' (Baldassar et al., 2016) despite being geographically distant, further explaining the wide variety of concepts of 'connected presences' (Georgiou, 2006; Licoppe, 2004; Madianou, 2016; Robertson et al., 2016).

Literature suggests that digital co-presence tends to increase the longing to be physically together, resulting in an increase in visits among more mobile and well-off migrants (Baldassar, 2016). But for many forced migrants and other migrants residing in precarious settings, the ability to physically travel tends to be heavily restricted, often due to a combination of legal restrictions and financial uncertainties. And fear that transnational com-

munication can potentially endanger loved ones or oneself can result in self-censorship or in avoiding contact (Opas and McMurray, 2015). Even if communication is possible and safe, dealing with physical separation is still extremely difficult.

And the spaces that enable openness and connections are the same spaces through which surveillance and exclusion can play out. The means for escape and for seeking movement are easily morphed back into spaces of control (Papadopoulos et al., 2008). The same characteristics that enable movement, information-seeking and connections also increase means for ‘digital border policing’ and are used to criminalise migration, further hindering the universal human right to claim asylum. And having access to a wider variety of televised, online and offline sources and means to communicate with people ‘here’ and ‘there’ (Gillespie, 2006: 917) to make sense of events, relationships and identities tends to be crucial, but these connections simultaneously interact with the already-precarious lives of refugees (Wall et al., 2016: 240).

This becomes evident in the following examples. The importance of digital platforms and technologies in migrants’ involvement in the politics of their distanced homeland has been widely documented (Aouragh, 2011; Bernal, 2005; Doná, 2015; Godin and Doná, 2016; Leurs, 2016; Sinclair and Cunningham, 2001). But through networked authoritarianism, oppressive regimes are also able to suppress the voices of dispersed opposition members (Moss, 2018). Online spaces enabled asylum seekers in Germany to present themselves as the people they want to be(come), beyond the figure of the victimised ‘refugee’ (Witteborn, 2015). But conditional and exclusionary refugee reception policies of host countries can also reinforce fears among asylum seekers about their mediated practices – for instance, watching satellite TV was feared by asylum seekers in the UK for not being considered the ‘right’ TV-viewing practices by the racialised and exclusionary nation-state in which they sought asylum (Lentin and Titley, 2012; Moore and Clifford, 2007; Skeggs et al., 2008). And mobile phones are known to function as social warning systems to mitigate the insecurities around informal employment (Collyer, 2007; Harney, 2013; Schapendonk, 2012; Schapendonk and van Moppes, 2007), to sustain one’s wellbeing and to keep an archive (Marino, 2021). But these digital identity archives are now also searched by several Western countries, including the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, and are used to validate or deny asylum claims (Jumbert et al., 2018; Leurs, 2017)

Years after the publication of her manifesto on the ‘connected migrant’, Diminescu (2020) therefore rightfully argued for a more nuanced position towards the potentials of digital connectivity. She likened ICTs to Jacques Derrida’s concept of the pharmakon: it can act simultaneously as a poison and as medicine. Aside from the many positive potentials in migrants’ lives

(including making dangerous journeys more secure, easing the means for staying connected remotely, and establishing new networks and securing money transfers), newer technologies have also brought about ample negative effects, including the constraints of smart border policing and concerns for privacy. In the lives of migrants, technologies tend to have a ‘paradoxical presence’ (Gillespie et al., 2016: 2), given that technologies and their affordances simultaneously provide access to resources, threats and a wide range of things in-between (Hutchby, 2001).

As the connected experiences of refugees interact with everyday experiences of legal, material and embodied constraints, seeing and hearing about lives elsewhere and occurring in interaction with humanitarian actors, I argue that the figure of the connected forced migrant requires an important addition: that of being disconnected. Being disconnected is different from not being connected, ‘just as being hung up on, is not the same thing as never having had a phone’ (Ferguson, 2002: 141). Disconnection implies a relationship. It is the product of active structural and historical disconnecting processes, which is partly (re)produced by a too celebratory and orientalisating understanding of connectivity.

Towards a Situated Understanding of an Increasingly (Dis)Connected, Bordered and Post-humanitarian World

The vignette described earlier on watching TV with Kholoud took place in 2014, when I was in Jordan for a preliminary field visit to prepare my ethnographic research that would last for nine months in Jordan in 2015. My time in Jordan coincided with what was soon framed as Europe’s ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’ crisis, but what perhaps might be better considered as ‘Europe’s crisis’ (Collyer and King, 2016) and a crisis of solidarity (Marino, 2021: 1), for most were concerned with sustaining a (neo)colonial reified Europe (de Genova, 2013: 76), and Europe’s complicity in the reasons for causing and sustaining conditions in displacement was not addressed.

It was largely in response to this ‘crisis’ and its mediated portrayal that there was a ‘technological fetishization of smartphone carrying and selfie-taking refugees’ (Leurs and Smets, 2018: 8). The structural misrecognition for the globalised availability and accessibility of digital technologies breaks down the complex yet connected realities in which many people worldwide find themselves into discriminating dichotomies that once again differentiate the ‘West’ from the rest. Simplified understandings of ‘the’ digital divide split people into the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’. Refugees in the Global South are one of the many groups deemed to be on the wrong side of that equation (Leung, 2020), given how discourses on refugees tend to render qualities present in citizens as being notably absent in refugees (Nyers, 2006). For

instance, during and in response to the uprisings against various dictatorial regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2011, the same people whose prior use of technology was celebrated was immediately forgotten or was depicted as a threat upon crossing nation-state borders to seek refuge (Leurs, 2016). The UNHCR only published its ‘Connecting Refugees’ report in 2016 in favour of recognition of the importance of digital connectivity in refugees’ lives. As this title suggests, in this report the UN refugee agency perceives itself as the ‘connector’, placing itself in-between the Global North and the Global South while ignoring the fact that many of its targeted beneficiaries have long been connected (UNHCR, 2016a).

Humanitarian reason – the deployment of moral sentiments and compassion by the spectacle of suffering (Fassin, 2012) – dehistoricises and depoliticises refugees and elicits the idea that refugees are ‘disconnected others’ who need help with becoming connected. This can encourage the hope that technologies can provide quick fixes for political problems. Over 1,500 apps were developed to aid refugees, largely without refugees’ involvement (Leurs and Smets, 2018). Most of these go unused, yet the enthusiasm of engineers, computer scientists and humanitarian actors to gather in hackathons to develop similar quick ‘solutions’ for refugees continues (Madianou, 2019a; Pascucci, 2019). On the other hand, othering processes are appropriated to politicise the figure of the migrant and to induce unfounded fears – for instance, in relation to the smartphone being a ‘terrorist essential’ (Gillespie et al., 2016). Both are signs of ‘high-tech orientalism’ (Chun, 2003).

The importance of digital connectivity for sharing crucial information and accessing social networks upon more immediate geographical border crossings has been widely documented (Dekker and Engbersen, 2014; Frouws et al., 2016; Gillespie et al., 2016; Zijlstra and van Liempt, 2017, to name but a few). By now, the utilitarian view on migrants’ connectivity has been recognised as empirically and politically problematic due to its potential to simplify and ‘other’ refugees and other migrants (Awad and Tossell, 2019; Marino, 2021). But most critical studies on refugees’ use of media continue to have Europe and/or other Western settings as their main site of inquiry (Leurs and Smets, 2018). Important exceptions will be discussed throughout this book (Almenara-Niebla and Ascanio-Sánchez, 2019; Aouragh, 2011; Collyer, 2007; Danielson, 2012; Jack, 2017; Leurs, 2014; Madianou, 2019a; Pascucci, 2019; Schapendonk, 2012; Schapendonk and van Moppes, 2007; Smets, 2018; Wall et al., 2016; Witteborn, 2021).

‘Methodological Europeanism’ (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013) contributes to persisting stereotypical perceptions on digital divides, refugees and migrants, especially concerning those who are geographically located in the Global South. The Global South and the Global North cannot be differentiated into two separate homogeneous spheres (Chouliaraki, 2013; Sassen, 2001), given

that the combination of digital connectivity and accelerated capitalism further blurs these differences (Duffield, 2019). Yet I draw upon this distinction to emphasise how global divisions of power, the unequal distribution of resources and the accelerating potentials of technologies contribute to reproducing border practices and widening inequalities. This study aims to further comprehend how colonial and capitalist entanglements (Ponzanesi and Leurs, 2014) come into force within refugee households beyond Europe's geographical borders.

A Post-humanitarian Celebration of Connectivity

The lack of little in-depth research on (dis)connectivity in refugees' lives in the Global South contrasts and coincides with a great number of technology-oriented changes in the fields of relief and aid. Speaking of a singular humanitarianism would misrecognise the wide variance and vast differences within the humanitarian sector concerning matters such as directionality, motivation and guiding principles (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Pacitto, 2015). There has been an increasing overlap and crossing over between humanitarian relief and development (Betts, Loescher and Milner, 2012) and 'new humanitarianisms' (armed humanitarianism, for-profit humanitarianism, diaspora humanitarianism, local humanitarianism, etc.) have crowded the humanitarian field, further complicating what humanitarianism is and/or ought to be. The humanitarian principles – a shared humanity, neutrality and impartiality – jostle alongside issues concerning territorial control, private gains, solidarity and religious motivation (Sezgin and Dijkzeul, 2016). Here I focus specifically on neoliberal forms of humanitarianisms and their digital turn.

Critical development scholar Mark Duffield understands this as post-humanitarianism (Duffield, 2019) whereas Media and Migration scholar Mirca Madianou speaks of 'technocolonialism' (Madianou, 2019a). Humanitarian operations are increasingly drawing upon the potentials of connectivity, which includes 'data' mining and machine learning remote management, and additional potentials of innovation, informality and resilience. By default, the UNHCR now obtains biometric data during its refugee registration in the Global South and draws upon other modes of digitisation, meaning the 'conversion, articulation and management of historically analogue information, processes and actions' through digitally connected devices (Sandvik, Jacobsen and McDonald, 2017: 321).

The humanitarian turn to data and technologies largely relates to the belief that this can provide neutral, objective and impartial answers to issues that are deeply political (Jacobsen, 2015). Technologies and technical expertise often function like an anti-politics machine (Ferguson, 1994) as sociopo-

litical questions are transformed into technical problems. This interacts with an unfounded optimism that innovations and private partnerships would be able to establish quick neoliberal fixes in humanitarian situations (Scott-Smith, 2016). By negating politics and situated contexts, the already deeply unequal power relations inherent in humanitarian operations tend to become further entrenched and influence modes of humanitarian governance. Humanitarian governance refers to provision of care while simultaneously imposing control (Barnett, 2013; Jacobsen, 2015; Jacobsen and Fast, 2019).

The optimism for the potentials for technologies in humanitarian crises and to aid refugees (Bessant et al., 2015; Betts, Bloom and Omata, 2012; Betts and Bloom, 2014; Betts, Bloom and Weaver, 2015; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 2013; Meier, 2015; UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2013) resonates with early studies on globalisation that celebrate the potentials of digital technologies for contributing to more egalitarian societies (Appadurai, 1990, 1996; Castells, 2000; Urry, 2000). Connectivity would have equalising capacities and result in a world less bounded by borders. But technological developments cannot efface the unevenness of ‘time-space-compression’ (Harvey, 1990). The powers of neoliberal capitalism, (neo)colonialism and patriarchy predominate. The potential that technologies can be used to reinforce rather than subvert racialised, classed, gendered differences in degree, initiation and control was already pointed out in 1994 by Doreen Massey (1994).

Beyond means to connect and bridge, connectivity provides the means for control, surveillance, exploitation and abandonment (Duffield, 2019). Opportunities for mobility and/or equal access to capital have never been equally available (Ong, 1999; Sassen, 2001), but in the 1960s and 1970s, there was at least the promise of circulation and much fewer restrictions on movement (Anderson, 2017; Anderson et al., 2009; Duffield, 2019). A wide variety of interconnected resurgences of securitisation – the practice of power to define something (drugs, the economy, the potential terrorist, migration) as a threat – have contributed to the feeling of a heightened need for sustaining borders (Chandler, 2007; Duffield, 2001; Emmers, 2007). Advanced economic and technological developments have contributed to the creation of complex instruments that have sharpened the divide between those who have access to social and economic security and those who are denied this access (Sassen, 2014). Digital technologies and connectivity deployed by government but also by UN agencies are widening the possibilities for exceptional measures in relation to curtail and control in border and migration contexts (Achieme, 2020a, 2020b; Kaurin, 2019; Latonero and Kift, 2018; Molnar, 2020). Under the guise of security, biopolitical and necropolitical (Mbembe, 2003) measures have been increasingly deployed, further contributing to highly uneven and discriminatory differentials and

exclusions in relation to mobility and movement (Scheel, 2019). This further points to the urgency to consider what these practices mean for people seeking protection beyond Europe.

There are many other, and often interlinked, concerns about the rather wide range of technology-oriented experimental endeavours with humanitarian technology and its increasingly data-driven protection (Macias, 2020). These include the additional risks for misuse, extraction, exploitation and the potential costs these can have on refugees' rights, protection and dignity (Cheesman, 2020; Hayes, 2018; Hosein and Nyst, 2013; Jacobsen and Sandvik, 2018; Lemberg-Pedersen and Haioty, 2020; Macias, 2020; Madianou, 2019a, 2019b; Sandvik, 2016a). This goes beyond the grave consequences of what can happen when things go wrong. When humanitarian technologies operate 'successfully', they can equally generate harm – for instance, by reconstituting what is considered normatively acceptable (Jacobsen, 2015). Recently there has been more attention paid to personal data protection in humanitarian settings (International Committee of the Red Cross and Privacy International, 2018; Kuner and Marelli, 2020). But many concerns regarding this experimental deployment of technologies and machine learning to make the bodies and lives of people seeking refuge legible remain. This includes the permanence of records, widespread (meta)data sharing, limited meaningful consent and algorithm's tendencies for entrenching structural inequalities.

(Dis)Connectivity in a Globalised World

Broader and decolonised understandings of privacy in the lives of refugees and other migrants (Arora, 2018; Witteborn, 2021) and the risks associated with the digitisation of their protection are crucial, considering that, as Privacy International (2011) put it: 'Getting privacy wrong will get people arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and may sometimes lead to death.' But just like an unfettered optimism about technologies focuses only on the 'good', foregrounding only the 'bad' potentials of technologies in refugees' lives would further contribute to a reification of the world's refugees as 'others' outside of normality. The existence and use of technologies in refugees' lives is a given, simply because they are part of our globally connected and structurally unequal social and material world. But whereas technologies are neither inherently good nor bad, they are not neutral either. Their design, operations, the data they engage with and the output they produce are the result of pre-existing human relationships and their structural inequalities. And they act upon and within the material and social world.

Situated in different differentiating geographies and contexts, the studies of Hans Lucht (2012) and James Ferguson (2002) provide further comprehension on how simultaneous occurrences of (dis)connectivities interact with

everyday experiences of limited opportunities in place and can engender a wide array of feelings and actions associated with loss, hope and of waiting. Ferguson (2002) considers the influence of technological developments in fibre optics in Zambia. In the 1960s, copper connectivity literally held the promise for connection to a global system, and to upward mobility and prosperity. The modernisation plotline – that one can catch up with the ‘West’, be part of ‘full’ humanity and no longer be cast as ‘second class’ – turned out to be a hoax, as the rendered need for Zambia’s copper also rendered the world system’s need to be connected to Zambia and its people. Ferguson draws upon Kristeva’s notion of abjection as a ‘process of being thrown aside, expelled or discarded’ (Ferguson, 2002: 140) to further describe the disconnected experiences of the people in his study. They are not expelled from capitalism. Situated in the ugly underbelly of a globalised capitalist global system, they are actually deeply connected to it as they are forced into accepting exploitative wages and reduced social protection, and are at risk of being left out. Saskia Sassen (2014) calls this the logic of expulsion.

Beyond being thrown out and being thrown down, disconnection tends to imply feelings of humiliation, yet leaves behind ‘the gnawing sense of a continuing affective attachment to that which lies at the other side of the boundary’ (Ferguson, 2002: 140). Anthropologist Hans Lucht (2012) draws upon Ferguson’s notion of disconnection to describe the existential and social longing of Ghanaian fisherman/travellers/labourers, who had lost their livelihoods as a result of EU policies, and the eventual decision to risk the journey, deeply aware of the difficulties are awaiting them on their journey and in Europe. Lucht argues that they put their lives at risk in the hope of belonging to this so-called global world and of securing a ‘moral life’: a life that matters and is worth struggling for (Kleinman, 2006).

In his somewhat similar argument for the imaginative dimensions of immobility in the immobility/mobility nexus, Kevin Smets (2019) points out that acts of disconnecting can be agentic, of deciding who or what to turn to or turn away from. This is also because connections can bring about conflicted and conflicting feelings. One can have conflicted attachments to one’s native country, especially when one’s rushed departure was the result of violence (Dhoest, 2016). Conflicted connections can also apply to one’s current geographical location, perhaps even more so if one is or feels not (fully) accepted there. In my argument for recognition for disconnections, and for how these relate to being transnationally connected and legally marginalised, it is not my aim to add yet another binary either/or logic, for these often mask much more complex realities. The international refugee regime, and the adjacent academic field of refugee studies, is filled with dichotomies with the purpose of ordering, classifying and legitimising; in practice, this often results in fragmentation. Instead, I give primacy to ‘and’ and ‘as well as’ (Hage, 2020).

Situating Media Ethnography within Iraqi Refugee Households in Jordan

I first met Kholoud in 2012, when I first started working with the Iraqi refugee population in Jordan. An Iraqi woman in her late forties, she was much more media-savvy than I likely ever will be. Her smartphone and my laptop enabled us to stay connected over the years and my connections were an important source of inspiration for this research project, and I stayed with her during my brief fieldwork trip in 2014. This and other social relationships I had established during earlier research with Iraqi refugees in Jordan as well as my awareness of the ample media use by Iraqi refugees provided an extra incentive for this focus: longer-term engagement can be a practice for countering exploitative research practices and working towards more accountable research.

The experiences of Kholoud and her close family members play a central role throughout this book. In order to further comprehend how life in prolonged displacement can be simultaneously connected and disconnected, this book largely draws upon ethnographic research conducted for nine months among them and other Iraqi refugee households living in prolonged conditions of displacement in Jordan in 2015 and on their mediated and situated experiences. For some vignettes, I draw upon earlier interactions or on later conversations I had using Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) applications, such as Skype or Facebook Messenger. In Chapter 7, I draw upon data collected in the winter of 2018–19.

Playing closer attention to small, localised experiences is useful to further understanding globalised oppressions and broader struggles (de Genova, 2013). Ethnography as a methodological approach offers a means to capture the localised complexity of mediated and social dynamics that interact with and shape everyday practices and experiences (Miller and Horst, 2013). Physical places and material localities continue to matter, simply because we are embedded and embodied human beings (Braidotti, 2019; Gifford and Wilding, 2013). Online spaces can be lived places, but they are never separate from the offline realm; they interact and are part and parcel of everyday life (Miller et al., 2016). An ethnographic study on mediated practices within refugee households therefore necessitates closer understanding of the legal, social and material realities in which Iraqi refugees in Jordan navigate their lives.

Ethnography is a transdisciplinary, flexible, rather messy and encompassing approach. It draws upon a wide variety of methods to collect data as it recognises the importance of seeking multiple ways to produce situated and always partial knowledge (Haraway, 1988) on people's complex lived realities and meaning-making processes. Knowledge generated through eth-

nography with forced migrants provides a means to capture the complexity of forced migration and keeps open the channel for the voices of forced migrants without the claim to definitely represent them (Rodgers, 2004).

Ethnographic Research within Refugee Households

The study's empirical focus on refugee households is twofold: first, because of financial and legal uncertainty, much of Iraqi refugee life in Jordan took place within their temporary homes. I was often invited into these homes, which allowed me to closely observe the role of digital technologies in people's private lives and to witness virtual and temporary home-making (Doná, 2015). In Western and non-Western settings alike, homes have for a long time been associated with people's private worlds and with the feminine (hooks, 1990; Young, 2005). Arguably, this is currently more the case in the Arabic-speaking world. As in Egypt (Schielke, 2015) and Morocco (Mernissi, 2001), public outside spaces in Amman tend to be more male-dominated, whereas domestic spaces are women-orientated domains. This is by no means to essentialise gender or gendered identities here, but as a cis-woman, I was able to obtain invitations into people's homes, and to hang out and spend time in people's domestic settings. In the last three months of my fieldwork, I moved in with an Iraqi refugee family in East Amman who had a spare bedroom. Before and during the time I lived there, we made clear agreements and had frequent conversations about what (not) to write about in relation to events occurring within the household.

Second, different power differences and sociocultural positionings play out within the household. I draw upon an intersectional lens as my focus on households enabled my understanding of gender – but also religion, generation, class, race and sexuality – as relational (Crenshaw, 1991). Much like the family, the household is a normative ideal and a web of affect, practices and institutions (Mankekar, 1998). Forced displacement often results in fragmentation of families over different geographical areas and therefore also in a reconfiguration of who lives where. My focus here goes out to the material circumstances of living in Jordan, the spatial dynamics of living physically together and the relational dynamic. 'Hanging out' (Rodgers, 2004) with different members refugee households – women and men, children and their parents –, enabled me to consider how lives in prolonged displacement are differently situated and mediated in relation to each other.

Becoming and being displaced tends to require adaptation. This results in space for (re)negotiating social norms and gender relations and reconfigurations in gender identities, but this also, and sometimes simultaneously, can result in (re)productions of unequal power relations within and beyond refugee households (Grabska, 2014). Navigating this 'hybridity of place, identity and self' in processes of social gendered transformation in displacement oc-

curs in interaction with and through mediated practices. Displaced women seeking asylum in Germany would use practices of ‘hiding’ – their physical movement but also their online practices – from strangers they were living with and to accommodate cultural expectations (Witteborn, 2020). Silvia Almenara-Niebla and Carmen Ascanio-Sánchez (2019) shows how young Sahrawi refugee women in Spain not only navigate the potentials of ‘digital transnational gossip’ in order to maintain connections, but also deploy on-line strategies to confront these gendered mechanisms of control. The need to navigate different gendered and generational expectations – for instance, via keeping different online accounts – is not at all specific to forced migration contexts (Costa, 2018), but legal and social uncertainties interact with and can heighten the need for a protective response (Dhoest, 2019).

A focus on refugee households and/or on digital practices heightens the potential for research to be intrusive. Entrance into people’s homes requires patience, invitations, the building up of trust, maintaining relations and respect, ongoing sensitivity towards the boundaries people explicitly or implicitly draw, and frequent reminders of my position as a researcher. Ethnography as a methodological approach has gained a place within the fields of Forced Migration Studies and Media Studies, but it has been rightfully criticised for its orientalising and harmful potentials (Ahmed, 2000). Research, due to its links to colonialism and European imperialism, is a dirty word from the ‘vantage point of the colonized’ (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012: 1). Research on forced migration contexts in the Middle Eastern region can be damaging (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2012) and highly exploitative (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2019). And knowledge practices enact migration management, migration policies and border regimes (Scheel, 2019). This means that there is a heightened need to be(com)ing accountable and reflexive regarding my positioning as a white researcher with access to a Dutch passport and the knowledge a study such as this can (re)produce (Mohanty, 1988: 260). My immersive presence in the field as well as my absence through leaving the field and writing (Mosse, 2006) are deeply embedded and implicated in the broader sociopolitical systems of globalisation, capitalism and (neo)colonialism I am writing against.

Mark Duffield describes post-humanitarianism as the ‘international face of post-humanism’ (2019: 10). Here, he talks about a post-humanist belief that technologies could somehow enable a flat, objective viewing of the world. By ignoring the inequalities and power relations in place, this tends to intensify existing hierarchies. However, Duffield ignores decolonising and feminist approaches to post-human knowledge that foreground relationality, the politics of locations and a decentring of the white, Western men (Braidotti 2019). I will explore this in more detail in the conclusion of this book, where I question if my complicity (in power and knowledge structures) can also be constructive (de Jong, 2017).

Reflexivity includes an important note on language: my understanding of Arabic is good enough to make conversation in more informal settings and to ‘hang out’. Out of the forty-two informal interviews I undertook, twelve were conducted in English. For the other thirty, I relied on translation. Working with translation provides several epistemological and ethical difficulties. Translation adds ‘layers of meaning’ (and confusion and misinterpretation) and can reinforce power differentials (Fontana and Frey, 1994: 367). It might heighten concerns about trust and insecurity among people who already find themselves in extremely vulnerable circumstances, but at times it can also be an advantage, as my otherness might make me more receptive to potential issues that are taken for granted (Borchgrevink, 2003).

Considering that it is extremely uncertain where the future journeys of people in this study will lead to and in order to exclude even the slightest potentiality that people’s participation in this study could somehow hinder a successful or even safe outcome, I hold on to the importance of (sometimes self-chosen) pseudonyms to safeguard the anonymity of the participants to this study as much as possible. I describe participants by their age and gender they identified with. The post-2003 violence in Iraq has been largely linked to US-imposed ethnosectarian differences that have also been rejected in the uprisings in Iraq of young Iraqi nationals in the autumn of 2019 (Ali, 2019). For this reason, I only refer to a person’s religious or sectarian denomination if it provides further comprehension to situated experiences or if a person emphasised this part of their identity at the time of our conversation.

The Outline of the Coverage in the Book

Throughout this book, I engage and connect discussions occurring in different academic fields within the social sciences that speak directly to each other and to the topic of this book. The field of Forced Migration Studies is inherently interdisciplinary and tends to include perspectives from different disciplines such as law, political science and anthropology (Chatty and Marfleet, 2013). I further connect this to discussions in media studies, critical humanitarian studies, critical borders studies and sociology that provide important additional insights into how to understand the social and subjective functions of technologies in the lives of refugees residing in prolonged conditions of displacement.

In the following chapters, I draw upon central themes within literature on the subjective and social functions of technologies in migrants’ lives. These include the role of technologies in sustaining transnational relations, navigating time (ideas and emotions in relation to the past, present and the future, and how these interact and work out in everyday practice) and place (absences

and presences, home-making and place-making, the plurality of places to which people feel attachments to) and seeking security (physical, material, legal, social and ontological) in the midst of perpetual uncertainty. Often these functions overlap, are rather diffuse and are not necessarily straightforward or intentional. For instance, contact with a faraway loved one can make one feel better in the present, and can simultaneously painfully remind someone of loss and can infuse hopes about being reunited in the future.

In Chapter 1, I provide the sociohistorical context of the 'Iraq refugee crisis' and the presence of urban Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Restricted rights combined with the role that UNHCR Jordan has taken on as a 'surrogate state' (Kagan, 2011) and, in comparison to other prolonged refugee situations, a relatively large US resettlement programme has contributed to an experience of life in waiting. I critique a too narrow and short-term understanding of crisis, as in the lives of the people in this study, crisis was the chronic, ever-present and endemic precarious background around which they are navigating their lives.

Chapter 2 considers how modes of waiting for resettlement among Iraqi refugees in Jordan relate to the formal and informal access to information and communication regarding this conventional durable solution. This imposition of waiting is experienced differently as it interacts with gendered roles and patterns of life prior to flight and in Jordan. The lack of clear information about selection procedures and personal progress contributes to a rather anxious drive for comprehending the system and the logic behind it, and for assessing one's chances of resettlement. I understand the sense-making practices of and during waiting by the Iraqi refugees in this study as everyday tactics (de Certeau, 1984), and show how modes of waiting are deeply affective and active.

In Chapter 3, more outspoken actions are discussed in response to Jordan's temporary protection context and border regimes, and their structural implications. These acts of resistance – protests and travelling onwards – should not be read as celebratory. They require a combination of courage, desperation and capital, occur in a context of chronic lack, can result in further exposure to risk and show how the Iraqi refugees in this study are active meaning-making and connected human beings who are continuously seeking ways to navigate and are only sometimes able to overcome crisis.

Chapter 4 explores the local and material experiences of Iraqi urban refugees, as I scrutinise how in displacement, place matters. Embodied experiences of a multi-layered (in)securities associated with and beyond urban life in Jordan mean that much of life takes place in the home. Virtual home-making practices create means for coping and the potentiality for carving out a private sense of space. Gendered and generational dynamics can shift, as material realities become interspersed with digital presences and are simultaneously challenges and maintained.

Digital technologies can also serve as orientation devices making it possible to imagine futures elsewhere, away from Jordan and Iraq, as becomes evident in Chapter 5. Through the interplay of media forms, the Iraqi refugees refract their own lives via the experiences of friends and family members, mediated images of present and past Iraq, and popular culture. Seeing and hearing about life in Iraq can be extremely painful and visceral. But the affordances – the potential of different media forms to bring about affects like hope and anxiety – also enable Iraqi refugees to turn away from Iraq and Jordan and to reorient themselves to particular places and futures elsewhere.

Chapter 6 differs from the other chapters in that it is less empirically driven as it explores how Jordan's protection space is increasingly becoming post-humanitarian. Default biometric registration, the usage of biometric data for a wide variety of purposes and the involvement of big tech raises important concerns (Jacobsen and Sandvik, 2018; Lemberg-Pedersen and Haioty, 2020; Madianou, 2019b). And a short-sighted focus on refugees' economic inclusion through digital connectivity reinforces the expectations on refugees to be resilient in their adversity. By sidestepping important sociopolitical discussions on rights, digital connectivity paves the way for refugees' more immediate inclusion into global capitalism. Digital technology is appropriated to cherry-pick narrow conceptions of some rights – the right to a digital identity and the right to work – while the risks and potential rights infringements, in the process towards and beyond achieving those goals, are wilfully ignored.

The question I engage with in Chapter 7 is whether the logic that humanitarian technology use and connectivity would contribute to accountability and, if so, to whom. In the period between 2015 and 2018, more recognition for refugees' connectivity coincided with more focus in humanitarian operations on (and was perceived as a shortcut to) Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and participation. I draw upon follow-up research conducted in 2018 to show that despite efforts and more means to connect, the disconnect between refugees' needs for information and humanitarian communicative practices remains. This relates to Jordan's protection context, as well as humanitarian tendencies to paternalise and depoliticise.

The importance of hope, simply because of structural inequality, becomes evident in the acts of holding on to hope against all odds by the Iraqi refugees in this study. In the conclusion, I question to what extent tech optimism and academic studies such as this one can also be considered as hopeful, as both hold on to the potential for change (Jansen, 2016). But whereas optimism moves away from social and political context and towards an imagined neutrality, hope is a deeply political, relational and affirmative stance in the midst of structural injustices (Bloch, 1995). This includes a recognition that 'our' lives and struggles are deeply connected, yet

‘we’ are positioned differently, and implies that the onus for change should not be put on refugees for being even more empowered, resilient or innovative, or on humanitarian practitioners on the ground to work harder. It is an argument for moving away from a fleeting and individualising compassion and towards situated and decolonising solidarities in recognition of fellow human(e)ness. The idea that things can and should be different and that ‘we’ should do this together is a conscious act of not settling for the current realities. Such a position is indeed required for a ‘moral life’ (Kleinman, 2006: 5–6) for all: one that matters and is worth living.

Notes

1. Pseudonyms are used to secure anonymity. See p. 24 on why I believe that when referring to people residing in prolonged legal uncertainty, securing anonymity is crucial.
2. Not all UNHCR Global Trends Reports provide detailed information on the average of years that refugees spend in protracted refugee settings. The latest figures I could find date from 2015. Moreover, the accuracy of these numbers can be disputed, bearing in mind discussions on who are and who are not considered as refugees and therefore are (not) included in such estimations. And the tendency to dehistoricise figures on migration runs the risk of framing the situation as exceptional, therefore warranting extraordinary measures. My main concern here is twofold: that, perhaps not unlike before, many of the world’s forcibly displaced people find themselves in legal limbo and that people living in prolonged legal and social uncertainty are equally affected by globalisation, digital connectivity and accelerated capitalism, not least because of technology-driven turns in humanitarian efforts.